

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW SMALL PARTIES –
THE CASES OF REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersignedIva Popova..... hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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Abstract

Republic of Bulgaria and the Czech Republic are Central Eastern European countries, as well as members of the European Union. They experienced similar communist past and transition to democracy period in the early 1990s. Currently the countries are parliamentary democracies with multi-party systems. In their recent history they both experience the phenomenon of fast emergence of new small political parties, which equally fast dissolve from the political arena or transform into different fractions. The purpose of this paper is to analyze this process by identifying the reasons behind its existence and compare it in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic.

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Introduction

The study of political parties in Central and Eastern Europe became a topic of serious discussions after the fall of communism in the early 1990s. The transition to democracy brought new trends, which led to various voters' behaviors. Rapidly, voters were empowered with the decision maker functions and numerous new actors appeared claiming certain position on the political arena (Bielasiak 2002). Various small parties began to raise offering representation to different groups in the society, confirming that the era of free choice had begun. The role of small parties increased immensely in the new democracies in Europe and the debate around their significance is ongoing.

Throughout the last more than 20 years CEE countries went through different stages in their democracy building and the emergence of small parties appears to be one of the common threats in the region (Novak 2000). Republic of Bulgaria and the Czech Republic are two of those countries where small parties were on the rise in the last eight years, performing surprisingly well during elections.

What can also be observed in both countries is that usually these parties equally abruptly fade away, often not even able to make it into parliament in the following elections. Here comes the main research question: What enables this rapid emergence of new small political parties in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic followed by their quick dissolution?

These processes of occurrence, the reasons behind the support of the voters and the volatility in their preferences will be addressed in this thesis work in an attempt to answer the main question why do these parties “come and go” on a regular basis.

The specificities of the issue will be explored and justified with examples from the conducted primary and secondary research trying to add value to the already existing literature covering the issue. The method of comparative analysis is used in combination with qualitative in-person interviews with experts from Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, which led to several conclusions. The primary reason for the emergence of small parties seems to be the open need for change which leads to significant volatility in voters preferences during consecutive elections. People have the opportunity to vote for different parties, as they appear on a regular basis promoting another “messiah”, who promises to solve the problematic issues in the countries in short period of time. As much as addressing people’s demands, sounds like a noble motive in these democratic societies, the research showed that most small parties aim primarily at obtaining the generous state subsidy. Somehow governing Bulgaria and the Czech Republic and shaping its domestic and foreign policies abide to the sides, leaving space for personal ambitions and opportunity to benefit from state funding.

The following parts of the thesis will explain in detail why Bulgaria and the Czech Republic were selected as cases, what are the causes for the emergence of small parties, why they cannot remain factor on the political scene in the countries and how is everything related to the findings of this research.

In order to do so, several clarifications need to be presented, in order for the audience to be properly introduced into the topic. First, it is highly important to be determined what does “new” party mean, when referred to in this paper. The basic feature of a new party in the cases of Bulgaria and the Czech Republic is its emergence shortly before elections. In addition, new parties cannot be

reproached for their past actions, since they don't have such (Tóka 1998). However, it is not always the case that only new political figures enter those new parties (ibid) and voters usually hold them responsible for their individual political past actions, when they were part of different party. Second, the period which will be covered in the thesis is the late post-Communism and more specifically the last 8 years (2005-2013), further explained in the Methodology part. Therefore, two parliamentary elections will be used as examples in both countries – the Czech Republic (2006 and 2010) and Bulgaria (2005 and 2009). These four elections provide relevant examples of new parties, which were created fast and equally, rapidly vanished, or no longer exist in their initial form for more than one-two mandates. They will be analyzed and related to the interviews, in an attempt to answer the main research question regarding the emergence of small parties in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1. Party system after the fall of Communism and the volatility tendencies

The changes that occurred in CEE in the beginning of 1990s covered all characteristics of political life. The new democracies began the long way in establishing their free market economies as well as new institutions and electoral systems. Two of the most important aspects for the functioning of these democracies were acknowledged by Jack Bielasiak (2002), who explained: “The development of electoral systems and political parties is essential for democracies to function well. Therefore, the institutionalization of viable parties within well-established electoral rules is critical to the consolidation of democracy in the former Communist world.”

It is not surprising that the fragile democracies experienced serious difficulties in party building, as peoples’ sincere desire for change materialized rather quickly, but nations building required more time. A very appropriate example of this was the first democratic elections in Bulgaria on 10 June 1990 when the voter turnout was at the record level of 90.3% (interview with Maria Divizieva on 19 May 2013 as part of the research process). The political structure had already changed and the new electoral system was implemented, however, still the Bulgarian Socialist Party (this was the newly given name of the Communist party that ruled for the last more than four decades and people were against its regime) won the elections with 47.2% of the votes (Bielasiak 2002). The Union of Democratic Forces, whose members were some of the main figures at the protests, came second with 36.2%. This result came as a major disappointment for the society, but at the same time very well showed that political parties need more time to be established and institutionalized within the system, so historically speaking the victory of the Socialist Party followed certain logic and was not extremely surprising. The case of the Czech Republic’s (still Czechoslovakia at the time) first

democratic elections in June 1990 was more favorable for the supporters of the change regime, as the Civic Forum (newly formed movement during the Velvet Revolution) won 36% and comfortable number of seats in parliament.

In terms of the capacity of the post-communist states to establish viable party systems Bielasiak isolated two theories that explain the processes differently, but thoroughly – the *tabula rasa* perspective and the structure perspective. The former one emphasizes on the lack of democratic experience leading to weak party formation tendencies, whereas the latter one focuses on the concretion of new political projects around “well-defined issues represented by established parties” (ibid). When discussing the *tabula rasa* theory, the author emphasizes on the fragile state of democracy right after the fall the old regime, when the existing ideologies did not represent the public, therefore new political actors raised fast, without any defined party programmes, as if they just wanted to try the role of decision makers. This rather unexpected rise was determined by Bielasiak as rather confusing for the voters, with high percentage of volatility between elections, with more parties, than the society could support. When it comes to the structure perspective, the author explains that scholars perceive the discussed states more as defined systems. He used Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Toka’s analysis of party systems (1999) who did not argue that the post-communist party systems are consolidated but rather that: “citizens and politicians learn to act on well-understood self-interests in new democracies quite rapidly,” progressing “toward durable features shaping the new politics for some time to come.” That explains the emergence of large number of parties in those years, which again shows some of the reasons for the voters’ volatility tendencies. Bielasiak stressed on the fact that currently, different research shows that people are somewhat able to identify different party positions, but also there is evidence that voters follow a tendency of changing their preferences, which affects their support in different elections. The

volatility that voters showed in their party support preferences was touched upon by both theories, confirming its importance for party formation and explaining the desire to initiate new party projects.

The author's deeper analysis of volatility among voters showed that the fast transition led to support for new parties, as the society wanted to express their frustration with the status quo that had to be changed. Therefore, Bielasiak explained the high volatility in the region, with the swing between existing established parties and the opposition parties. Comparing Bulgaria and the Czech Republic it is interesting to note that after the fall of Communism Bulgaria followed the trend of high volatility in voters' preferences, whereas the Czech Republic had the lowest volatility rates in the first four elections after the change of the regime (*ibid*). Bielasiak summarized:

Such swings in support are possible precisely because the impact of policy is not mitigated by a strong party system in which voters identify with and are loyal to specific parties. Instead, parties often appear on the political scene or greatly increase previously minor electoral support, and other parties disappear as viable contenders. The resulting volatility and the extensive multipartism of the postcommunist countries signify the lack of an institutionalized party system.

Another important factor that characterizes the stable party systems is the number of parties discussed further by the author. Research on the issue shows that the number of new parties in post-communist countries is larger compared to previous transition stages in history. Therefore, after applying Sartori's party system framework, after identifying the relevant actors Bielasiak determined the existence of conditions for extreme pluralism in these new democracies. This reality stimulated volatility among voters, as the effective number of electoral parties is larger than that of already established democracies and these tendencies can be seen in today's political arena in CEE.

1.2. Young democracies effect

Following the logic of the previous section, the main difference when the emergence of new parties is discussed in the party politics literature is the type of democracy where the process is taking place, which determines not only the number of newly formed parties, but also their effectiveness at the political arena. Therefore, one of the hypothesis of this paper is that the reason why there is way higher number of new small parties in CEE compared to Western Europe is the fact that the countries in CEE are mostly new democracies, where the environment and acceptance of new political projects seems to be way higher than the one in the already established democracies of the West. The progress and successful performance during elections of the new parties can be considered rather common than exception in the new CEE democracies in contrast to the established democracies where there is hardly any proliferation of new actors on the party arena (Tavits 2008). Tavits outlines the major reasons for emergence of new parties very precisely and in a relevant manner to the cases of Bulgaria and the Czech Republic – “new party entry is more likely when the cost of entry is low, the benefit of office is high and the perceived level of electoral viability is high”. The three factors that Tavits emphasizes represent the current reality in both countries and to a high degree can explain the existence of numerous new small parties. Starting with the low cost of entry, in both countries the articles of the Constitution and the pieces of legislation that address political parties are rather simplified and the procedure of creating a party seems completely achievable at rather low cost, which creates strong incentives for creation of new parties. This can be illustrated by James Pardew’s comment (interviewed in May 2013 for the purposes of this research paper) who said that in Bulgaria it is easier to form a party, than to start a business. When it comes to the benefit of the office, in addition to the general prestige of being in politics and attempting to reach a decision-making level, there is the motivation of acquiring the state subsidy. It is accrued to

parties that have gained more than 1% voters support during elections in Bulgaria and 1.5% voters support in the Czech Republic (Bertoa and Spirova 2013). This rather low threshold that if overcome provide for state subsidy shows clearly the benefit of the office and can also be considered as a strong incentive for the emergence of new parties. Bertoa and Spirova added that: “The relationship between the availability of state financing of parties and their development is far from irrelevant”, which comes to show that the subsidy plays a very important role for the preservation of these small parties. Therefore, the lack of state subsidy can explain the fast fading away of some of the small parties, which were not able to maintain the required support for two consecutive terms and lost the privilege of state subsidies. Last but not least, the high levels of electoral viability discussed by Tavits (2008) in relation to the creation of small parties go back to the fluctuations of voting preferences in new democracies, where the level of disappointment with the ruling parties is more visible, which explains the high volatility in voting preferences and redistribution of votes towards smaller new parties with the expectation of new options and better solutions offered by the new ruling elites.

1.3. Cleavage Theory

The classic piece of analysis that is referred when cleavage theory is being implemented is that of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) who differentiate four major cleavages, which lay the ground for further analysis of party emergence – center/periphery, land/industry, owner/worker and church/state. In the case of Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, the first three cleavages can be considered relevant when we observe the creation of new parties. The center/periphery cleavage corresponds very well to the differentiation between capital cities (Sofia and Prague) and big cities in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic and smaller cities and rural areas, which usually support different party entities. This theory is a clear example of how new small parties find their niche and voters, but corresponding to the needs and demands of the population, representing certain cleavage in the society. The

limitations of Lipset and Rokkan's cleavage theory when applied in CEE counties are discussed in N. Sitter's (2002) work, where the author outlines three major specificities of the party politics in the region: the importance of parties, the contest driven development of parties, willing to define the post-communist right and the development of relatively stable party systems. Also, Sitter stresses on the importance of the voters' volatility which seems to be different from the case of Western European countries. The major relationship between party-voter is also being put into the center, where special attention is given to each micro case that is forming the major picture. This approach depicts the specificities of the region and adds value to the implementation of the cleavage theory in the case of parties in CEE.

Going back to the application of the cleavage theory, Marks and Wilson (2000) use it to explain the European integration processes in the region. The fact that most countries in CEE joined the European Union with the last two enlargements (including both the Czech Republic and Bulgaria), makes the process of European integration and the position of different new parties on this matter crucial when it comes to voters' preferences. It is interesting that both pro-European and Eurosceptic parties experienced success in the last two elections in both countries, showing that the population in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic still is not united in its opinion of the union and both types of parties have an opportunity to win votes supporting each of the two positions.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In order to determine what stimulates the development of small political parties and their rapid dissolution, it is necessary to isolate the conditions that are responsible for this causal mechanism. Since the question at hand refers to political parties competing in national parliamentary elections, the analysis must be between like national parties in different countries; comparing the development and dissolution of small political parties within a single state would not provide clues for a cross national causal mechanism, but rather on those specific political parties. In other words, it is important to compare national level parties of different countries because, if the same phenomenon is found to occur in two different countries with different political actors, history, etc., it will be easier to isolate the necessary conditions for this event.

Methodologically speaking, comparing political phenomena between states is difficult largely because of the small number of cases available for analysis. Since a method of comparative analysis is the best way to research a small number of cases with limited time and resources (Lijphart 1971), I chose to select two cases to compare in order to isolate the causal mechanisms or conditions that facilitate the formation, and abrupt dissolution, of small political parties. Firstly, I will systematically reduce the number of cases to similar cases for comparison: the states for comparison should not have any drastic differences that could account for the causation of the phenomenon. Secondly, from these like cases, I will choose the cases that differ most in order to conduct a comparative analysis based on the method of difference. Since, according to Mill, “if two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance in which alone all the instances agree, is the cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon,” than by isolating a common condition in both different cases, I will be able to determine the causation of the formation, followed by dissolution, of small parties (Mill 1898).

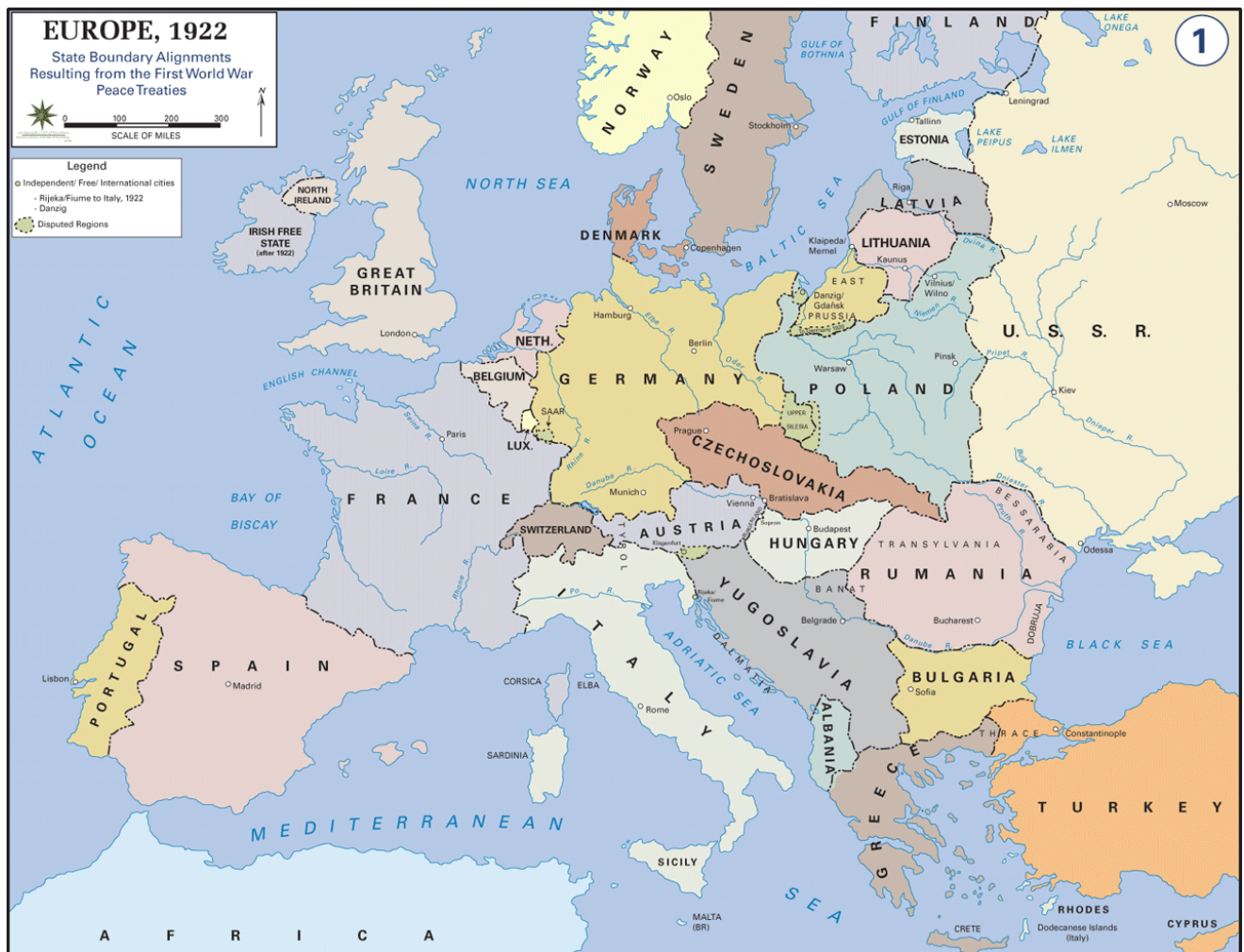
2.1. Setting the parameters for case selection

In order to observe and isolate the causation of the phenomenon in question, it is important to disregard any cases that may have strong, divergent factors of political influence that could be misconstrued for causation. Namely, it is important to select the two cases for the method of difference comparison from a group of somewhat homogenous cases, which have similar political influences, both currently and historically.

Firstly, since national political parties cannot be fully examined without the consideration of civil society (Gershman 2004) it is also important to consider major factors that may have had an impact on civil society. Considering the history of the states within the current parameters for selections, one must take into account the fact that they are, in many ways, newly independent. Furthermore, political scientists have attributed “interwar statehood,” or independent statehood between World War I and World War II, as having a significant effect on political and civil society (Pop-Eleches 2007), it is important that the cases selected for comparison have experienced interwar independence.¹

¹ Although the Czech and Slovak Republics were not independent of each other during the interwar period, they did not experience a political regime under the rule of another; they were not part of an empire.

Figure 1: Interwar Map of Europe



University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2013

Secondly, since it has been shown that the phenomenon of the rapid creation and dissolution of small political parties is specific to post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, this restricts the case selection to former Warsaw Pact states.² Since, in 1994, Czechoslovakia transformed into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, this analysis will include these states as separate cases for analysis. Similarly the states that devolved from the FUSSR will also be included as separate

² Those states included the Soviet Union, Albania (until 1968), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (until 1990), Hungary, Poland and Romania.

cases. Furthermore, since this is an analysis of post-communist countries in Europe, only FUSSR countries in Europe will be included.

Figure 2: Warsaw Pact countries



Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2013

The next criterion that will be applied to the mentioned cases is membership to the European Union. Rules and conditions for EU membership led to massive changes in public policies of the CEE countries and also accounted for drastic restructuring of government institutions (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). Therefore, it is important to exclude any national political systems that did not experience this profound influence. Furthermore, it is possible that political parties that exist at the European Union level (cross-nationally, within the EU parliament) may have some effect on the

development of these small national parties. Thus, it is vital that all cases analyzed are members of the EU.

Figure 3: Map of the European Union



Nations Online Project, 2012. Note: Croatia is currently a member state.

Finally, since the Soviet Union had such an enormous impact on the development of state structures and other institutionalization of civil society, former members of the USSR left in this case group – Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia—have been excluded.

These criteria have narrowed the acceptable cases for selection to:

- Bulgaria
- Czech Republic
- Hungary
- Poland
- Romania
- Slovakia

2.2. Selecting the two cases for comparison

In order to conduct a comparative analysis using the method of difference, it is important to select cases that are the most different within the above-mentioned selection parameters. If a specific condition can be found in both cases, it will indicate that this condition may account for the occurrence for the phenomenon (Mill 1898). So, if two cases are chosen that are very different, but still experience the same phenomenon, the condition facilitating this phenomenon is easier to isolate, since it is clear that the other conditions (the ones that are so different between the two cases) cannot account for the phenomenon, since they are not the same in both cases.

In order to choose the cases that differ the most within the group of cases narrowed by the selected parameters, I will employ a rough ranking system based on indicators that affect political systems. Since the discussed cases are all post-communist countries that have been relatively recently accepted in the EU, the study of the formation of small political parties within these countries is largely combined with the political change and development of these states. Thus, in order to select the

cases that are the most different within this selected group of cases, I will rank them based on indicators of their political development.

Measuring the development of countries is a difficult and controversial practice. There are no agreed upon indicators that can definitively determine the development of a state. Particularly, this paper is dealing with the democratic development within the selected cases. Though the specific variables may differ, researchers usually include indicators related to economic development, structure and transparency of government institutions, and social inclusion (WorldSavvy.org 2013) in measuring democratic development. Based on these general indicators, I have selected a set of data within each sphere – GDP per capita as an indicator of economic development, the Corruption Perceptions Index as an indication of transparency of government institutions, poverty and social exclusion indicators, as well as scores from the Human Development index to represent social inclusion. Since a free press is integral to any young democracy (Sen 1999) I have also added an indicator for press freedom. Lastly, since starting a political party has to deal with many of the same issues as starting a business, I have included indicators that measure the ease of doing business in each country.

Though each of these indicators is only a rough valuation of each aspect of democratic development, it does offer a rough rubric which helps the ranking of each of these cases. In order to determine which cases are the most different, I will use a rough ranking system. According to each set of indicators, the cases will be ranked within the group. For example, the cases will be ranked according to the highest GDP per capita—first place—and the least, which would be in the last sixth place. Similarly, the country with the most press freedom would be in first place, and the country with the least in last. Thus, one country could be first in economic development (1) and last in social inclusion (6). Finally, I will average the internal ranking scores and give each country a final ranking.

The countries will then be ordered according to ranking, and the countries in first and sixth place will be chosen for comparative analysis.

This methodology clearly has several faults. Firstly, as mentioned, the data provided may not illustrate an accurate picture of the reality within the country. For example, the GDP per capita does not give more information about economic growth over time or sources of wealth. Secondly, I am using very few data points, making my research highly dependent on several data sets. Thirdly, there is some danger of endogeneity with some of the variables – social inclusion scores and press freedom scores, for example, may draw on some of the same statistics, thus giving the additional indicator undue weight in the final ranking. Though this process is rough, it does provide a general picture of the discussed cases, allowing for the selection of the most different cases.

2.3. Final Case Selection

The above mentioned method is implemented in Table 1. The cases are listed alphabetically, and then assigned an internal ranking based on a number of indicators. The internal overall ranking indicates that, according to these variables, the Czech Republic is the most democratically developed and Bulgaria is the least. Therefore, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic are likely the best cases for comparison.

Table 1: Comparison of Democratic Development

Country	Economy		Institutions		Press		Demographics				Overall
	GDP per capita*****	GDP per capita Internal ranking	CPI Score*	CPI Internal Ranking	Press Freedom**	Press Freedom Internal ranking	Poverty/Social exclusion***	Poverty/Social exclusion Internal Ranking	HDI score****	HDI Internal Ranking	Internal Ranking overall score
Bulgaria	6986,00	6	75	6	80	6	0,049%	6	57	6	30
Czech Republic	18608,00	1	49	3	14	1	0,015%	1	28	1	7
Hungary	12622,00	4	46	2	40	4	0,032%	4	37	3	17
Poland	12708,00	3	41	1	24	2	0,026%	3	39	4	13
Romania	7943,00	5	66	5	47	5	0,044%	5	56	5	25
Slovakia	16932,00	2	62	4	25	3	0,021%	2	35	2	13

* Figure represents overall ranking in the Corruptions Perceptions Index from 0-100, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 100. Transparency International, 2013.

**Represents overall rankings from the Press Freedom Index 2011/2012. Reporters without Borders, 2012.

*** Represents the percent of the population that is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Eurostat, 2012.

**** Represents the overall ranking within the Human Development Index, 1 representing “Very High Human Development” and 186 representing “Low Human Development.” Though Human Development Report, 2012.

*****Gross Domestic Product, per capita in US dollars. World Bank, 2012

In addition to the democratic development rankings, ease of doing business rankings, illustrated in Table 2, provide similar evidence that the Czech Republic and Bulgaria are appropriate cases for the method of difference comparisons. While the Czech Republic is by far the most difficult place to “do business” or start a business, Bulgaria is one of the easiest. Though Hungary beats out Bulgaria in this ranking as the “easiest” place to do business, this ranking combined with that of the democratic

development ranking still suggests that Bulgaria and the Czech Republic are the best cases for comparison from the selected cases.

Table 2: Ease of Doing Business

Country	Starting a Business*	Ease of doing Business**
Hungary	54	52
Bulgaria	58	57
Romania	65	73
Slovakia	80	43
Poland	124	48
Czech Republic	140	68

* Economies are ranked from 1-189, 1 being the easiest to start a business, and 189 being the most difficult. The “Starting a Business” ranking includes indicators such as number of procedures, number of days, cost, and paid-in minimum capital. Data is compiled from World Bank and International Finance Corporation databases. Doing Business Project, 2012.

** Economies are ranked 1-189, 1 being the easiest economy in which to do business, and 189 being the hardest. The ranking averages countries’ rankings in 10 different topics related to conducting business. World Bank, 2012.

2.4. Quantitative Method for Comparison

The cases of Bulgaria and the Czech Republic have been chosen in order to compare trends and developments involving their national political parties. The national political parties of the two cases will be compared to determine whether there has been a trend of small party rapid emergence and then dissolution. If it is shown that there is such a trend, the country level conditions of each case will be examined and compared. If there are common conditions within each that seem to have an impact on the development and dissolution of small political parties, then a causal mechanism may be determined.

Figure 4: The Czech Republic and Bulgaria



Wikipedia, 2013

The first part of the analysis focuses on determining whether there has been a rapid emergence and subsequent dissolution of small national political parties. It will be conducted through a simple quantitative method. I will analyze data from the European Election Database to determine if the phenomenon is in fact present in both countries.

2.5. Method of Process Tracing

Once it has been shown that the phenomenon is present, I will proceed to challenge the more difficult and important question of “why?” or “what conditions have facilitated this phenomenon in both countries?” Since there is no clear or reliable quantitative data that can properly examine the relevant question, the second part of the analysis will be conducted using qualitative methods. In

this instance, I have chosen to use a system of process tracing since it “can contribute decisively both to describing political and social phenomena and to evaluating causal claims” (Collier 2011). Process tracing, or “systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analyzed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator” is a useful tool in this instance because it will allow me to consider various types of evidence for the comparison (Collier 2011). This is important, not only to take into consideration as many factors as possible (since any one of them could, theoretically, be the cause of the phenomenon), but also because, as mentioned, methods of comparative analysis are highly limited due to the small number of cases examined, therefore, the more types of evidence included in the investigation, the more reliable the conclusions of a two-case comparative analysis will be.

I will analyze data within a framework of process tracing as described by Collier (2011) supported by definitional influences of Waltz (1979). Firstly, I will conduct the analysis within a predetermined conceptual framework, or “identify and link the topics seen as meriting analytic attention” (Collier 2011). To a large extent, the conceptual framework has been set in the shaping down of cases for analysis: cases with similar political histories have been chosen, and then contrasted by current developmental standards. Within this conceptual framework, many potentially influential factors can already be accounted for, simplifying my subsequent analysis.

Secondly, I will analyze the information collected to determine if there are any established patterns related to the development and dissolution of small political parties. Waltz (1979) calls these patterns “recurring empirical regularities,” which can be used to examine whether a connection is coincidental or systematic. In order to determine whether these regularities are the conditions that facilitate the phenomenon, I will then qualify them with existing literature and hypotheses, strengthening the possibility that there is a causal mechanism (Waltz 1979). During this final stage, it will be important

to determine whether these relationships illustrate factors that are sufficient conditions for the phenomenon to occur, or simply necessary (Van Evera 1997). In other words, it is important to determine whether *X* always facilitates the development and subsequent dissolution of small political parties. Or if *X* is necessary for the phenomenon to occur, but not always produce the same phenomenon if present.

2.6. Data Collection and Analysis

As already mentioned, it is difficult to collect data in order to perform a comparative analysis of political phenomena. Moreover, since my research question may largely include questions of intention, motivation, etc., it is impossible to collect such data without large field research. Therefore, the data analyzed within the method of process tracing is dependent on careful description of related events and background information in order to provide “good snapshots of specific moments” for analysis (Collier 2011). In this instance, the snapshots in time are focused around the national elections. While the results of the elections show whether small parties were rapidly formed and voted into office, events leading up to the elections will explain the development of the parties. Similarly, the events following the elections – specifically, snapshots between elections – should provide evidence as to why the parties lost power.

In order to assemble these “snapshots,” I will analyze various documents. Additionally, I have conducted a series of interviews with experts in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. Experts range from former politicians to academics and were asked a standardized set of questions.³ Though

³ Experts were selected according to publications related to the research question or direct participation in the elections. They were asked a standardized set of questions that can be found in the appendix. Experts were interviewed in person, or over email. Bulgarian experts were interviewed in Bulgarian, while Czech experts were interviewed in English.

experts responded to a provided set of questions, in person interviews allowed for a dialogue between them and myself. This “richness of response” captured by a dialogue (not just a static answer to questions) is the main justification for in person interviews versus the use of a questionnaire (Arksey and Knight 1999). Answers to these questions were catalogued and analyzed together with the documents.

2.7. Methodological Challenges

As already mentioned, there are many challenges to comparing political phenomena. Firstly, a cross national comparison of political parties encounters a validity issue – is the comparison of two instances in two countries going to be applicable in other countries? In order to strengthen the validity of my results, I would include more cases for comparison, or apply my final theory to other cases. However, due to time and resource constraints, this is beyond the scope of this paper. However, testing my final theory would provide interesting additional research.

Secondly, due to the short time span for analysis, it is difficult to assess a robust trend over time. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and all of the post-communist democracies in CEE have existed in their current configuration for a little over two decades. Furthermore, due to time and resource constraints⁴, only elections from the past eight years will be analyzed in depth. This short time frame limits the process tracing which is best done over a longer period of time (Collier 2011). Since there is usually only a major election every few years, that limits the scope of the analysis to about four elections.

⁴ Though there were also parliamentary elections in both countries in 2013, the data for this election was not available soon enough for inclusion in this paper.

Finally, since information gathered during the interview process is foundational to this analysis, the common challenges to using interview data are present in this analysis. Specifically, the information transmitted within the dialogue is influenced by many factors that may affect its final analysis. For example, the questions provided may have guided the respondents to answer in a particular way. Most importantly, since interviewing is based on hearing the meaning of the response, interpretation of interview answers are framed by different cultural, educational, social and other understandings (Spradley 1979). Therefore, the information gathered from the interviews may be highly influenced by external factors and, on its own, cannot provide for complete analysis. In order to account for this, the conceptual framework, analysis of quantitative data as well as analysis of documentation should ground and qualify the information gathered from the interviews.

Chapter 3: Analysis

3.1. Is there a trend?

3.1.1. Bulgaria

Bulgaria was under Communist regime for 45 years (1944-1989) and when the regime fell, there was a period of transition to democracy and free market economy (Spirova 2005). The country became part of the European Union in 2007, along with Romania. The country is multi-party parliamentary democracy where both the president (5 years mandate) and the unicameral parliament (4 years mandate) are elected directly from the citizens. There are 240 members of parliament who are parts of different political parties or coalitions and the threshold to enter the parliament is 4%.

Table 3: Voting Results in Bulgarian National Parliamentary Elections⁵

Party *					SD S	RZ S	NDS V	DS B	EvroLe v	BN S	BB B	BZNS -DP
Year	GERB	BSP	DPS	ATAKA								
1994	-	125	15	-	69	-	-	-	-	-	13	18
1997	-	58	19	-	137	-	-	-	14	-	12	-
2001	-	48	21	-	51	-	120	-	-	-	-	-
2005	-	82	34	21	20	-	53	17	-	13	-	-
2009	116	40	38	21	15	10	-	-	-	-	-	-

European Election Database, 2013

3.1.2. Czech Republic

The Czech Republic was under Communist regime for 41 years (1948-1989) and when the regime fell, there was a period of transition to democracy and open markets (Tavits 2011). The country became part of the European Union in 2004 during the big CEE enlargement.

⁵ Party abbreviations and translations can be found in the annex.

The country is multi-party parliamentary democracy where both the president (5 years mandate) and the bi-cameral parliament are elected directly from the citizens. The parliament has a Chamber of Deputies with 200 representatives (4 year term) and a Senate with 81 representatives (6 year term, where 1/3 of them are replaced every 2 year) (websites of the Czech Chamber of Deputies and the Senate 2013).

Table 4: Voting Results in the Czech Republic⁶

		Political Party (percentage of votes)											
		OF	KSCM	MORSL	KDU-CSL	CSSD	ODS	TOP 09	SZ	VV	ODA	US	RMS
Election Year	1990	49.5	13.24	10.03	8.42	4.11	-	-	4.1	-	-	-	1
	1992	-	14.05	5.87	6.28	6.53	29.73	-	6.52	-	5.93	-	5.98
	1996	-	10.33	-	8.08	26.44	29.62	-	-	-	6.36	-	8.01
	1998	-	11.03	-	9	32.31	27.74	-	1.12	-	-	8.6	3.9
	2002	-	18.51	-	14.28	30.21	24.48	-	2.37	-	0.51	-	0.97
	2006	-	12.81	-	7.23	32.32	35.38	-	6.29	-	-	-	-
	2010	-	11.27	-	4.39	22.09	20.22	16.71	2.44	10.88	-	-	-

European Election Database, 2013

The above table only includes political parties that have reached the 5% threshold to be able to hold seats in Parliament. Other parties with less than 5% were omitted from the table. This table shows that new parties took a significant number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 2006 and 2010 – the major new actors on the arena were Christian Democrats, TOP09, the Green party and the Public Affairs.

⁶ Since Bulgaria has a unicameral parliamentary system, the Senate of the Czech Republic will not be covered in this work; the Chamber of Deputies represents enough the participation of small parties in the government.

3.2. Why is there a trend?

3.2.1. What happened in Bulgaria?

In 2005 twenty-two parties and coalitions entered the parliament and the political arena seemed rather fragmented. The government was formed through a coalition between Coalition for Bulgaria (Socialists), National Movement Simeon II (Liberals) and Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Liberal, considered the strongest ethnic party supported by the Turkish population in Bulgaria). The main conclusion is the fact that NMSS which was a small new party in the previous elections, lost a lot of its power and voters support, therefore they were second power in these elections and had to form an undesired coalition (Savkova 2005).

In 2009 the big winner were Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) which being a rather small new party won 39.72% of the votes (Savkova and Stoyanov 2009). It is interesting that this party was a fraction that separated from NMSS and the prime-minister Boyko Borissov was a very charismatic person who managed to reach this impressive result through populist talking and huge promises.

Furthermore, the current strong political parties in Bulgaria commented by J. Pardew (interviewed in May 2013) can be described:

To me, Bulgaria has only one national party, the BSP. It has been around for 100 years, it has a clear agenda and it has an effective national organization and national leadership. (The MRF is a special case because of its association to the Turkish community in Bulgaria). The UDF had the potential to be the primary party on the center right, but the UDF lost sight of its political enemy (BSP) and destroyed itself with bad governance when in power and destructive internal fighting afterwards. The UDF committed suicide. On the right, the small parties are personality based: Kostov, Simeon, Borisov...When the personality is no longer favored by the voters, the party fades as well and new parties with various personalities and agendas pop up in their place.

This opinion summarizes the current situation in Bulgaria and once again confirms that the parties, which stay and have constant support, are somewhat bigger with clearer agenda and goals.

3.2.2. What happened in the Czech Republic?

In 2006 the Civic Democrats (opposition center-right party) won the elections and gained more support than expected. The Social Democratic party came as a close second and a total of five parties made it into the Chamber of Deputies (in addition to the already mentioned ones – KSCM, KDU-CLS and SZ won enough support) (Hanley 2006). Smaller parties like the Communist party and the Christian Democrats did not make the threshold, but the big news was that the Green party made it into parliament alone, for the first time. The overall assessment of the 2006 elections was that the “pattern political deadlock” defining Czech politics for the last decade continued, namely the “succession of minority or weak majority governments sustained by unstable left-right co-operation” (ibid). The elections raised some major issues as to whether the electoral system should be more proportional or majoritarian, which would help clarifying the role of the major parties (ibid).

In 2010 one of the major issues was the absence of European issues in any of the discussions. The Czech Social Democratic Party held the first place with 22%, followed by the Civic Democratic Party with 20% (Hloušek and Kaniok 2010). The authors commented on the interesting distribution of votes in the Chamber with:

“The Czech left, namely the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), won 100 seats. Right-wing and centrist parties - namely the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak Peoples’ Party (KDU-ČSL) and the Green Party (SZ) - also won 100 seats. This situation only exacerbated the fragility of governance and the impossibility of reaching a clear governing majority.”

The outcome of the elections was seen as turbulent by Hloušek and Kaniok’s report. They’ve described the somewhat change of the status quo with two parties, which lost their representation (KDU-CSL and SZ) and the very successful entrance of two new small parties, which were just created (TOP 09 and VV). All in all, the authors defined the elections as somewhat positive, as the

traditional left-right axis was broken which could have been a potential good sign for the stability of the government.

3.3. Regarding the emergence of new parties: Are there any patterns/recurring empirical consistencies?

Analyses of parliamentary elections in both countries between the period of 2005-2010 show that there was, indeed, an emergence of small political parties. Not only were these parties rapidly established, but they also gained a significant number of seats in parliament. In reference to these two elections, and sometimes more broadly, interviewees offered a plethora of theories describing why the rapid emergence of these parties had occurred. However, despite the variation of nationalities and expertise – ranging from professional politician to academic – there were several recurring themes and theories to describe the political phenomenon. Broadly speaking, these themes fell within the categories of structural changes, disillusionment with the status quo, and attempts to fill a political void. Each of these categories, with their respective sub-themes are discussed below.

3.3.1. Structural changes

New changes in the political systems

- Maria Divizieva commented on the need of change of the mentality of party leaders in Bulgaria, who have to focus on long-term tasks, instead of quick win, followed by dissolution of the party before the following elections. In order for this to be achieved, she suggested that the “political nomadism” needs to be overcome, which would probably affect positively the political system and bring back the faith in individual politicians.

Dissolution of the bigger parties into smaller entities

- The phenomenon of dissolution of bigger parties is specific for Bulgaria and all the interviewees mentioned examples like NMSS, UDF, etc. which seem to be having prosper

future ahead of them, but instead inter-party clashes were the reason for splitting, which led to serious crashes during elections.

Government subsidies for new parties

- The question of subsidies for small parties was elaborately discussed by all the interviewees from both countries. Dr. Sean Hanley commented on the small parties in the Czech Republic that: “I think on the whole proliferation is related to the change in rules concerning electoral deposits and election campaign funding”.
- It appears that the currently the subsidy is extremely generous: in Bulgaria all the parties that have passed the 1% threshold receive 12 leva (6 euro)/per vote which compared to Germany for example is outrageous (0.85 euro cents/per vote), commented the sociologist Tsvetozar Tomov. In the Czech Republic the threshold is a little bit higher 1.5%

3.3.2. Disillusionment with the status quo

Disillusionment with the status quo accounts for most, if not all, major political change in the world. With regards to the parliamentary systems of Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, this is often specifically related to disappointment with the old, establish political parties of their respective countries. Currently, “voters are not happy with any of the large parties who have already been in power in the past” (Nikolay Vassilev during an interview in May 2013). Generally, voters feel that they and their interests are not adequately represented within the structure of political decision making.

In Bulgaria, this misrepresentation is two-fold. Firstly, Bulgaria is predominately a center-right country, within only one real left party with limited support – the rest is fragmented (Pardew during an interview in May 2013). In addition to the limited scope of representation, the individuals that are

elected to office “fail to govern effectively” and are “viewed as corrupt, failed to deliver economic development, rule of law and allowed the mafias to flourish” (ibid).

Disappointment with the old established parties⁷

- 1) Voters are not happy with any of the large parties who have already been in power in the past (Vassilev)
- 2) Disillusionment with existing parties prompts a “search for new alternatives...the phenomenon of ‘newness’” (Cisar) and voters are disappointed or disgusted with the big party and find an alternative in the small party (Pardew)
- 3) Those alternatives are either voting for new parties or a negative/protest vote
 - Despite their “lack of organization, experience, clear programme (or real difference from established parties) and (often) limited resources” small parties are often “chosen by voters as a means of protesting and/or as a novelty” (Hanley)
 - Sometimes, these parties represent a very specific agenda (the Green Party, the Agrarians). In some cases, they are protest votes against the established parties (Pardew)
 - When voters have supported new parties (1998, 2006, 2010) it has been related to dissatisfaction with one or both of the main established parties and a perception that the new parties in question are politically credible and stand a chance of being elected. This is in turn related to the new parties' abilities to accumulate enough publicity and resources to get their message across to the electorate (Hanley). An example can be VV in the Czech Republic.

⁷ Information provided during the interviews

3.3.3. Filling the Void

Desire for Adequate representation

1) Ideological void

- The number of small political parties in Bulgaria represents an attempt to fill a void on the center right (Pardew)
- In the last election, if you take away the 50% of eligible voters who did not vote and the 25% of those who did but voted for parties which are not in parliament, a lot of Bulgarians are not represented in this parliament. There is a great opportunity for someone who can capture the disgusted voters in Bulgaria. (Pardew)

2) “There are amounting problems both with ‘representation quality’ and accountability, thus there is a space for new parties or at least for new party projects” (Strmiska)

Excitement/enthusiasm for individuals – messiah

1) Many voters are not strongly associated with a party, therefore are more likely to follow individual

- “they are undecided – more generally in the Czech Republic as elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe there very few voters who identify strongly with a political party” (Hanley)
- Some aspects of the Bulgarian electorate are very predictable. BSP probably has 15-20% it can always count on in an election. The MRF vote is fairly

fixed. Ataka probably has 3-5%. That leaves a majority of Bulgarians on the center-right but without a fixed major party (Pardew)

- In some cases, it is the appeal of the individual who represents the party, a personality cult if you will (Pardew)

2) “Many new potential leaders are willing to try to become a factor in the political life in the country” (Vassilev)

3) The relatively easy process of creating a party, makes more people willing to try and join the political arena (Stoyanovich)

3.4. Regarding the process of fading away: Are there any patterns/recurring empirical regularities?

Whereas a large number of theories were offered to account for the emergence of small parties, there were fewer opinions regarding their quick dissolution: they could not keep their promises, the personalities fell, and this was not surprising.

Though unfulfilled election promises can be taken for granted in the study of politics – much of the electorate considers it the norm from politicians – unfulfilled promises made by newly formed political parties can be particularly damaging. Since, as has been shown, these small parties were elected on the basis of new promises and credibility, the failure to complete commitments made failure the only foundation on which the parties were established, with non-existing historical legacy, these parties have no other record to refer to. According to Hanley (interview in May 2013), this failure can usually be attributed to “to their lack of organization, experience, clear programme (or real difference from established parties) and (often) limited resources.”

More damaging to the party image than the inability to fulfill promises is the inability to differentiate themselves from the established parties. Once voters realize that these parties “have not been able neither to substitute the established parties and to give new life to the established party system, nor to change it and/or to open a distinctly new path,” their major platform resting on “newness” is undermined (Strmiska – interview in May 2013). This can be seen in the Czech Republic with the example of Věci veřejné: though they ran on a platform of transparency and credibility (their name literally meaning “public affairs”), corruption scandals associated with their top party leaders completely delegitimized their existence.⁸

The second major reason for the downfall of newly developed political parties also rests on one of their election assets: the cult of personality. As I have shown, enthusiasm and hope personified in new (or newly visible) public figures often attracts voters to new parties. However, when this person is shown to be similar to existing politicians, voters sink back into a state of disillusionment. Since personalities go down when they do not govern effectively in power (Pardew’s interview), the fall of personalities are often associated with the first point (unfulfilled promises) thus amplifying public dissatisfaction. For this reason, “the phenomenon of ‘newness’...tends to work one term only” (Cisar’s interview). This is clear in the case of Bulgaria: the small parties on the right which are personality based – Kostov, Simeon II, Borisov – faded when the respective personalities were no longer favored by voters (Pardew’s interview).

In this way, these political parties seem to be stuck in a cycle: a new party emerges to fill the void of disillusionment left by the established party, only to disappoint voters and drive them back to the old parties that are sure to disappoint them once more. As Pardew points out, this cycle can be seen in the case of Bulgaria:

⁸ For example, party boss Vít Bárta was associated with several scandals including bribing MPs and illegal wire tapping.

The trend as I see it in Bulgaria is for a center-right party to win an election and fail to govern effectively. They became viewed as corrupt, failed to deliver economic development, rule of law and allowed the mafias to flourish. A disenchanted population then threw them out in favor of the default party, the BSP. The BSP then govern effectively and the cycle repeated itself with a new personality on the right.

Though the parties are stuck in a cycle, it is really the voters that are trapped between a bad and a worse political decisions. Though this is beyond the scope of this paper, and interesting topic for research would be to examine the learning curve of voters to see if they continue to trade in old parties for the new.

Conclusions

The emergence of new small parties is a phenomenon that is widely spread in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic in the last decades. It started after the fall of Communism and is particularly tangible since the last two parliamentary elections in the countries. The method of comparison, as well as the primary findings from the conducted interviews show several trends which lead to the following particular conclusions.

First, new parties emerge easily because there is need for change. The population in both countries is dissatisfied with the status quo and show willingness to support any change that is offered in the political arena. This explains the high volatility in voting preferences in both countries. New politicians use very adequately this fact and exercise their creativity in political promises in order to gain political trust, which later on is visible through votes during elections.

Second, the high number of new small parties creates the feeling of infinity of the political stage and different people with various backgrounds decide that they can fill a particular niche, hoping to get enough votes during elections if not to enter the parliament, at least to reach the minimum level that allows for receiving state subsidy. The discussion with specialists in the field convinces me that, the incentive for small parties to be created because of the subsidy appears to be very strong.

Third, both Bulgaria and the Czech Republic nations are looking for the figure of the leader, who will come and solve all the complicated political riddles in front of the countries. This reason also explains the quick fading away, as the popularity of the leader collapses, so does the party itself. Examples of small parties who are led by messiah leaders are numerous and they usually achieve very

impressive results during elections – Bulgaria (significant examples: NMSS, GERB) and Czech Republic (significant examples: TOP09 and Veci Verjene).

Naturally, an obvious reason for the creation of new parties is also the breakup of already existing party in several fragments. Usually, the reason behind this is the conflict created between several strong figures in the party who seek dominance. They form different circles of influence around themselves which usually lead to the creation of new political formation. The examples from Bulgaria and the Czech Republic shows that such parties in general could not maintain long political life and even if they manage to enter the parliament, they are not reelected in the elections, which leads to their disappearance.

When it comes to the quick fading away of such small parties in both countries – the reasons are also pretty similar. The major one is the fact that usually parties that are formed rather quickly shortly before elections usually don't have the necessary political experience to create stable and feasible platform, which will offer actual solutions, instead of only pointing out the weaknesses of the current political decisions. The role of the platform is key for the future of any party, therefore its qualities are determinant for the success during and after elections.

When it comes to the future of new small parties, the experts who took part of the interview process did not engage with definite predictions, but the overall opinions show that these parties will continue to rise and fall quickly until the moment when the party model is completely changed, which is nowhere in the near future.

Appendix

Interview List

(Interviews conducted in the period 7 May – 21 May 2013)

	Name	Position	Previous position (if relevant)	Discussed country
1.	Adelina Marini	Editor-in-chief EU Inside online media		Bulgaria
2.	Boryana Dimitrova	Managing partner at Alpha Research – Marketing and Social Research Agency		Bulgaria
3.	James W. Pardew	US Diplomat	Former US Ambassador to Bulgaria (2002-2005)	Bulgaria
4.	Kolyo Kolev	Chief sociologist at Mediana – Political, Marketing and Social Studies Research Agency		Bulgaria
5.	Lenka Andrysova	Member of the Chamber of Deputies in the Czech Parliament; member of LIDEM political party	Former member of Veci Verejné political party (until 2012)	Czech Republic
6.	Lubomir Kopecek, Ph.D.	Associate professor at the Department of Political Science and International Institute of Political Science; Faculty of Social Studies; Masaryk University; Brno		Czech Republic
7.	Maria Divizieva	Chief of Cabinet of the Prime Minister in Bulgaria; Member of NMSS political party	Former Deputy Minister of State Administration and Administrative Reform (2005-2009)	Bulgaria
8.	Maxmilian Strmiska, Ph.D.	Professor at the Department of Political Science; Faculty of Social Studies; Masaryk		Czech Republic

		University; Brno		
9.	Nikolay Vassilev	Managing partner at Expat Capital; Member of NMSS political party	Former Deputy Prime Minister (2001-2005); Minister of Economy (2001-2003); Minister of Transport and Communications (2003-2005); Minister of State Administration and Administrative Reform (2005-2009)	Bulgaria
10.	Ondrej Cisar, Ph.D.	Editor-in-chief of “Czech Sociological Review”, Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science; Charles University; Prague		Czech Republic
11.	Peter Stoyanovich	Minister of Culture	Former leader of Gergiovden political party (2007-2010)	Bulgaria
12.	Dr. Sean Hanley	Senior Lecturer in the School of Slavonic and East European Studies; University College London		Czech Republic
13.	Tsvetozar Tomov	Managing sociologist at Skala – Political and Social Research Agency		Bulgaria

Interview Questions

1. How would you explain the quick emergence of a large number of rather small parties, which also equally abruptly fade away, in the recent Bulgarian/Czech political history (last 8 years)?
2. Do you find the communist past (one ruling party, no actual voting choice) as a factor influencing the creation of new parties (confidence that there will always be at least some voters' support/the choice factor that is always important to contemporary Europeans)?
3. According to you, what are the potential reasons for the difference in political atmosphere between Bulgaria and the old established democracies in terms of allowing new actors to influence the decision making process?
4. Do you think there is a correlation between entering the EU (large EU party families supporting their MS representative parties) and the growing number of new parties? Do newly elected small parties in parliament have more confidence in their ability to influence the agenda setting in the country if they manage to become part of a European Parliament represented party?
5. What are the potential driving incentives behind the voters' support for small parties in the country?
6. How would you explain the volatility in the voting preferences of undecided voters who tend to support different party in each following elections?
7. Do you think that a possible incentive for the creation of small parties in the country might be the generous state support for every party that passed the 1% voters' support threshold?
8. What are your predictions for the near future and do you think that this trend of emerging of new parties, which usually stay in parliament for not more than 1-2 terms, will continue to exist?

Party Abbreviations and Translations

- OF - Civic Forum (Obcanské fórum)
- KSCM - Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
- MORSL - (HSD-SMS) - Movement for Autonomous Democracy - Party for Moravia and Silesia (Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii - Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko)
- KDU-CSL - Christian Democratic Union and Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie - Československá strana lidová)
- CSSD - Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická)
- ODS - Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)
- SZV - Alliance of Farmers and the Countryside (Spojenectví zemědělců a venkova)
- TOP 09 - "Tradition Responsibility Prosperity 09" (Tradice Odpovědnost Prosperita 09)
- SZ - Green Party (Strana zelených)
- VV - Public Affairs (Veci veřejné)
- CSS - Czechoslovak Socialist Party (Československá strana socialistická)
- ODA - Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance)
- SZZJ - Movement of Pensioners for Social Guarantees (Strana za životní jistoty)
- SD-LSNS - Free Democrats-Liberal Social National Party (Svobodní Demokrati-Liberalní Sociální Národní Strana)
- SCPZR - Party of Czechoslovak Entrepreneurs, Small Businesses and Farmers (Strana Československých Podnikatelů, Zivnostníků a Rolníků)
- KAN - Club of Active Non-partisans (Klub Angažovaných Nestraníků)
- US - Freedom Union (Unie Svobody)
- SNK - Association of Independents (Sdružení nezávislých)
- SNK ED - SNK European Democrats (SNK Evropsští demokraté)
- SPOZ - Party of Civic Rights – Zemanovci (Strana Práv Občanů – Zemanovci)
- Suveren. - Sovereignty - Jana Bobosikova Bloc (Suverenita - blok J.Bobosikové)
- RMS - Republicans of Miroslav Sladek (Republikáni Miroslava Sladka)
- DEU - Democratic Union (Demokratické unie)
- BSP - Bulgarian Socialist Party (Balgarska Socialističeska Partija)
- SDS - Union of Democratic Forces (Suyuz na demokratičnite sili)
- GERB - Citizens for European Development of Bulgarian (Graždani za evropeysko razvitiye na Balgariya)
- NDSV - The National Movement for Stability and Progress (Nacionalno dvizhenie za stabilnost i vazhod) - former National Movement Simeon II (Nacionalno Dvizenie - Simeon Vtori), acronym the same.
- DPS - Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Dvizhenie za prava i svobodi)
- ATAKA - National Union Attack (Natsionalen Sayuz Ataka)
- DSB - Democrats for a strong Bulgaria (Demokrati za Silna Balgarija)
- EvroLev - Euroleft (Evrolevitsa)
- BNS - Bulgarian People's Union (Balgarski Narodni Sajuz)
- BBB - Bulgarian Business Block (Balgarska biznes blok)

- BZNS,DP - Popular Union of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union and the Democratic Party (Naroden suyuz - BZNS, DP)
- RZS - Order, Lawfulness, Justice (Red, zakonnost i spravedlivost)
- Other

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