

The Role of Structural Factors and Party Agency in Shaping Post-Soviet Party Systems

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Political Science

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Political Science

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Budapest, Hungary

2019

Abstract

There has been considerable debate regarding factors that shape post-communist party systems. Scholars typically try to explain party systems with societal and institutional (structural) variables. As a result, the role of elite choices (agency) is somewhat neglected. The thesis focuses on six post-Soviet countries and aims to examine structural- as well as agency-approaches. Its contribution can be divided into three parts. Firstly, party systems of six post-Soviet countries are systematically described. Secondly, through the analysis of six post-Soviet countries, this thesis illustrates that societal and institutional factors leave party system differences largely unexplained. This finding is grounded on regression analysis of electoral volatility and associations between various societal and institutional factors on the one hand, and party system fragmentation and stability on the other. Thirdly, the party system of Georgia is focused upon as it is not very different from the other 5 countries in respect to structural factors, but displays markedly dissimilar party system characteristics. Through the analysis of the Georgian case, it is demonstrated how agency can make a difference – i.e. choices of party elite in the middle of 2000s shaped the cleavage structure of society which has had a decisive impact on the party system. These findings are based on secondary literature, expert interviews and most importantly, directed acyclic graphical (DAG) and path models. The latter method relies on survey data and has not been used extensively to examine party-related questions (partly because of its novelty). It is shown how useful such methods can be in addressing questions which reside at the intersection of sociology and party politics.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Tamás Rudas and Zsolt Enyedi. I could not have imagined having better advisors for my MA thesis.

Besides my supervisors, I would like to thank the staff at CEU for their availability and willingness to assist.

I would also like to thank my family for their unconditional support and finally, in order to partly account for not being on her birthday, I want to dedicate this work to my daughter – *Elene*.

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Introduction

One of the most fundamental debates in social and political sciences refers to the relationship between structure and agency. Is the social world primarily determined by superstructure or individual agents have the capacity to construct and reconstruct the environment around them? The following thesis addresses this broad debate in the domain of post-Soviet party politics. More specifically, it is examined to what extent structural and agency-based approaches explain the contours of party systems. Ultimately, it is argued that while dealing with post-Soviet party systems, an approach which emphasizes the dialogue between structure and agency is optimal.

Peter Mair (1997) notes that there are a number of factors which decisively influence post-communist party systems. He predicts the continuous instability of this region for several reasons: democratization in these countries happened in the absence of “real civil society”, electorates are more open and available and therefore, more volatile and uncertain. Finally, the context of competition is different because in post-communist countries political elites are less motivated by organizational loyalties.

Even though it is undeniable that these factors indeed affect post-communist party systems, it is also true that post-communist party systems vary considerably. Therefore, a more specific question which is addressed throughout the study is the following: which factors influence additionally party system development in post-Soviet countries? In order to answer this question, three theoretical approaches are formulated and applied to the post-Soviet party systems – “bottom-up” sociological approach, institutional approach and “top-down” sociological approach. The first two emphasize the role of structural factors only while the third one stresses the importance of dialectic relationship between political elites and socio-structural environment.

However, before the examination of factors, the thesis sets its initial goal to locate post-Soviet party systems in a broader context and systematically describe them.

Generally, it's believed that the party systems of post-communist countries can be characterized by uncertainty, high fragmentation, instability, high electoral volatility and poor party development (Kopecký 1995; Shabad and Słomczynski 2004; Conrad and Golder 2010; Bakke and Sitter 2005; Lewis 2000; Bielasia 2002).

However, variations among post-communist countries are often surprising and it would be wrong to assume that this region is, more or less, homogeneous in terms of party system characteristics. Enyedi and Casal Bértoa (2017) demonstrate that differences in party system characteristics within post-communist European countries are greater than between post-communist and Western countries. These differences become even more interesting when juxtaposed with theoretical expectations. On the one hand, it has been claimed that, over time, patterns of party competition might stabilize because voters start to identify with parties and attachments are deepened as well (Converse 1969). On the other hand, due to weak civil society and fluid social structures it was predicted that post-Communist party systems would not stabilize even in the long-term (Mair 1996, 1997).

The following thesis focuses on post-Soviet countries and their party system characteristics. More specifically, six countries are selected based on minimal criteria of democracy. These countries are: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Even though these six countries differ in respect to quality of democracy, they are still treated as one group as long as they satisfy a minimal standard of electoral democracy. However, ultimately, it is claimed that future studies might distinguish two groups among them but not because of different levels of democracy *per se*. Instead, it is suggested that countries which have resolved the issue of international status and identity might experience qualitatively different dynamics of party politics.

Therefore, the structure of the thesis is the following: Chapter I gives several justificatory reasons about the focus on post-Soviet (vis-à-vis post-communist in general) countries and case selection. Chapter II discusses three major party system dimensions and concepts. Chapter III describes party systems of post-Soviet countries across the dimensions emphasized in Chapter II and discusses the applicability of those concepts which were devised in the context of Western countries. Chapter IV overviews the relevant literature about party system development and three major theoretical frameworks to analyse party systems – sociological, institutional and rational models. Based on these three broad theories, three specific theoretical approaches are formulated which are relevant for the post-Soviet context – “Bottom-up” sociological approach, institutional approach and “top-down” sociological approach. The thesis does not have a separate section that explicitly describes the methods used because it would take a disproportionately large space. However, proper references are included. Chapter V applies first two approaches, namely, the “bottom-up” sociological and institutional approaches. More specifically, regression analysis of electoral volatility is conducted. Also, associations are examined between various societal and institutional factors on the one hand, and party system fragmentation and stability on the other. Chapter VI applies the third approach – “top-down” sociological approach – to the most concentrated party system of Georgia. Particularly, with the help of expert interviews and secondary literature it is demonstrated how party agency tried to influence the cleavage structure of society. In addition, with the help of survey data, directed acyclic graphical (DAG) and path models it is shown how voting behaviour and the structure of competition were affected. The chapter concludes by discussing implications for the post-Soviet level. Finally, concluding remarks are provided which summarize the whole thesis, discuss parallels and implications for a broader context and present limitations as well as questions that need to be addressed in future.

Chapter I – Scope of the study

1.1. Why Post-Soviet Countries?

After the collapse of the USSR, 15 countries which previously were the member-republics of the Soviet Union took vividly different trajectories. Some countries took an authoritarian path like Belarus, Russia, Azerbaijan and the Central Asian countries; some immediately adopted full-fledged democratic practices (the Baltic states); and others struggled (and arguably are still struggling) with democratization to different extent – Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia.

Despite the differences, there seems to be some reasons to look at post-Soviet countries as somewhat jointly different from other post-communist European countries. Namely, some non-communist parties used to exist in Eastern European countries. For example, the United Peasants Party in Poland and the General Union of Romanian Trade Unions (Epperly 2011, 8). Even though these parties were under the strict control of communists, still, the nominal existence arguably indicates that some parts (though tiny) of society were represented by them (2011, 9). Moreover, it has been claimed that the annihilation of social divisions by Moscow was more successful in the Soviet republics than in other communist regimes (Epperly 2011, 9–10). Also, mass deportations of local people were much more widespread within the Soviet Union than in countries which were not sub states.

Not only historical and theoretical reasons exist to treat post-Soviet countries as a subject of study (vis-à-vis post-communist in general). Empirically, Bielasiak (2002) has demonstrated that in post-Soviet countries electoral volatility is significantly higher than in other post-communist countries.

Therefore, a broad scope of the study is post-Soviet countries and excludes those countries that were not member states of the Soviet Union.

1.2. Case Selection

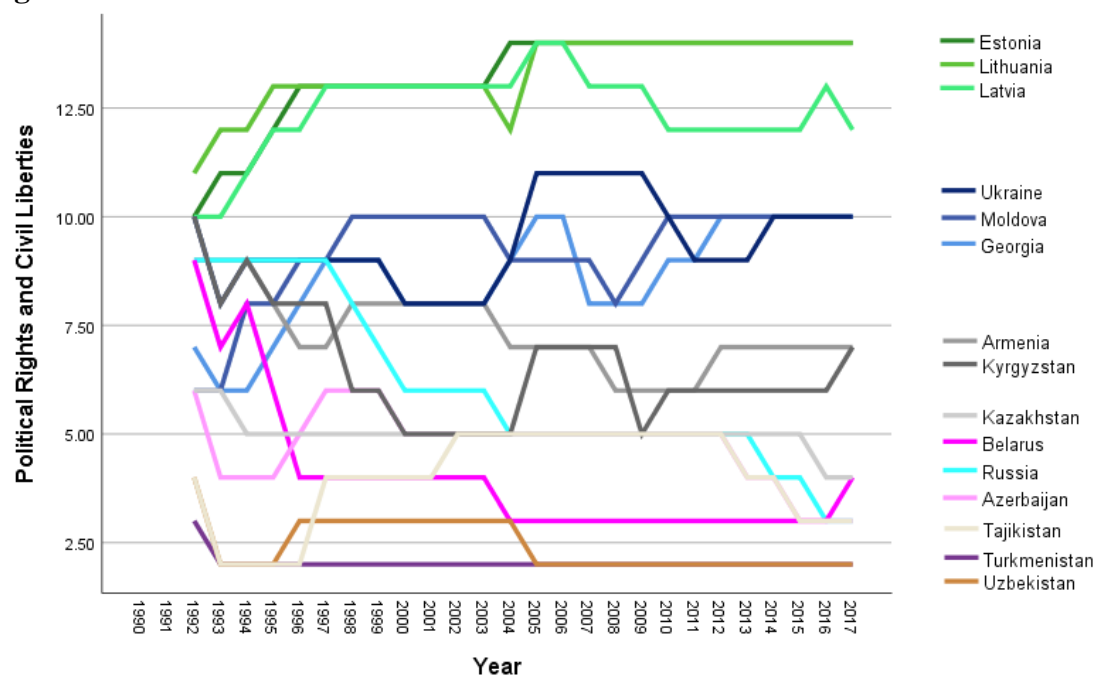
Despite the focus of the study on post-Soviet countries, it is undeniable that they constitute a heterogeneous group of countries. These 15 countries vary hugely along a number of dimensions. For instance, can Turkmenistan and Estonia be meaningfully compared when one wants to scrutinize party system dynamics? The answer is obviously not. But what is the reason; why cannot they be compared? The reason cannot be that these two countries have different cultural contexts or geographical location *per se* or economic prosperity or population size. They cannot be meaningfully compared because Turkmenistan and Estonia have drastically different political regimes and that has a decisive impact on the dynamics of party politics.

Therefore, if one wants to investigate parties and party systems, it is necessary to distinguish cases which can be meaningfully compared from those cases in which parties and party competition are largely shaped by authoritarian tendencies.

Post-Soviet countries vastly differ in regard to political regimes. One way to overview these differences is to look at Freedom House Scores. Annually, Freedom House (2019) assigns two ratings for each country or a territory – political rights and civil liberties. Each of the two ratings originally ranges from 1 to 7, with 1 expressing the greatest degree of freedom and 7 – the smallest.

Figure 1 presents annual ratings of 15 post-Soviet countries from the collapse of the Soviet Union until 2018 (Freedom House 2019). Rankings are reversed and two ratings are summed up for the presentation purposes and therefore, a minimal possible score for a country is 2, representing the smallest degree of freedom while a maximum possible score is 14, indicating the greatest degree of freedom according to both components.

Figure 1 - Freedom House Scores of Post-Soviet countries



According to the Figure 1, it is possible distinguish some countries from the others: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia have higher scores than the other 9 countries. However, It should be noted that the latter 3 (Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia), are less sharply distinguishable from less free 9 countries especially in the first half of 1990s. In order to make sure that the case selection is reliable, it is important to triangulate and look at other indices as well. Thus, in what follows 15 countries are rank ordered from two additional perspectives – Electoral Democracy Index and Autonomy of Opposition parties.

Robert A. Dahl (1998) developed a concept of polyarchy which can be perceived as the concept of electoral democracy as well. The idea is that rules should be made responsive to citizens for the approval of a broad electorate during periodic elections (Coppedge et al. 2016). Accordingly, the following political institutions are crucial for country to qualify as an electoral democracy: (1) elected officials; (2) free and fair elections; (3) freedom of expression; (4) freedom of association; and (5) universal suffrage.

The Varieties of Democracy project (V-Dem) constructs electoral democracy index which measures all five of the abovementioned aspects. The scale on which they report the

electoral democracy index for each country is 0-1. When a country has the electoral index score above 0.5, scholars usually consider it as an electoral democracy in a minimal sense (Coppedge et al. 2016, 587).

Figure 2 - Electoral Democracy Index of Post-Soviet Countries

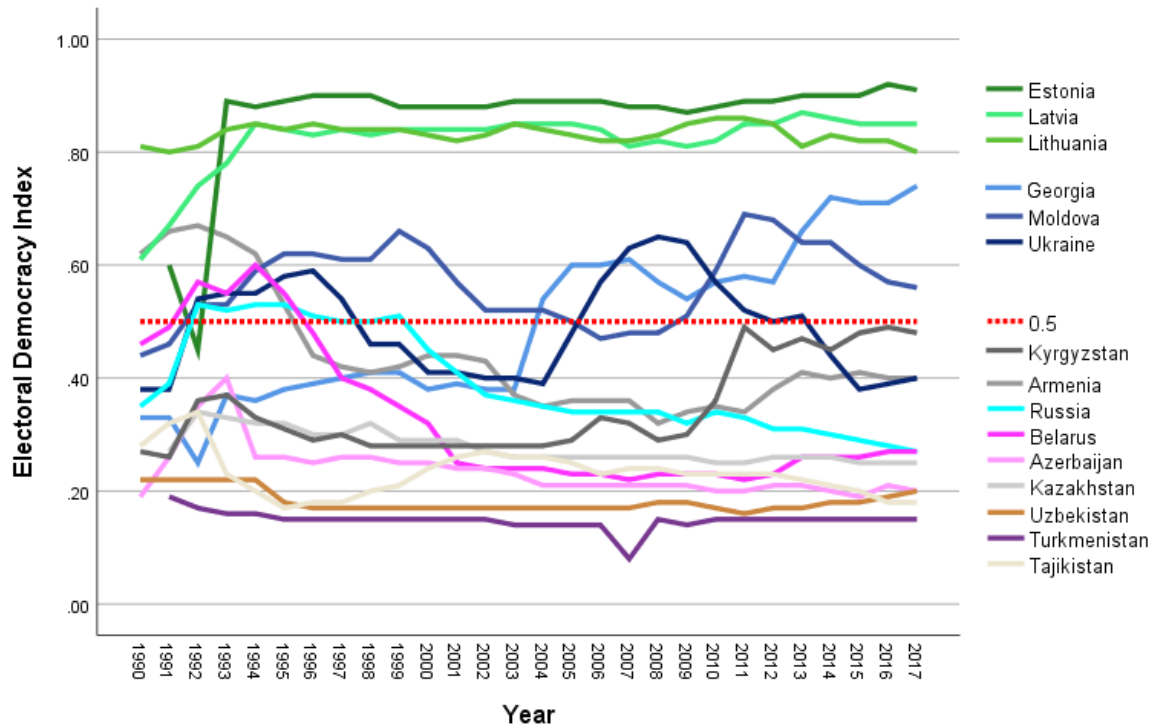


Figure 2 displays Electoral Democracy index for 15 post-Soviet countries since 1990 until 2018 (V-Dem 2018). The picture is not significantly altered; in addition to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania which are full-fledged electoral democracies, 3 countries can be underlined: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

However, one might question the autonomy of opposition parties in those countries that do not have high scores according to Freedom House and the V-Dem reports. If opposition parties are controlled by the ruling political organization, then, there is no point in studying parties and party systems in such systems.

Additionally, V-Dem surveys 6 experts in each country every year and measures to what extent opposition parties are autonomous. The results are reported on a 0-4 scale on

which 0 implies that opposition parties are not allowed while 4 means that all opposition parties are autonomous and independent of the ruling regime.

Figure 3 - Autonomy of Opposition Parties

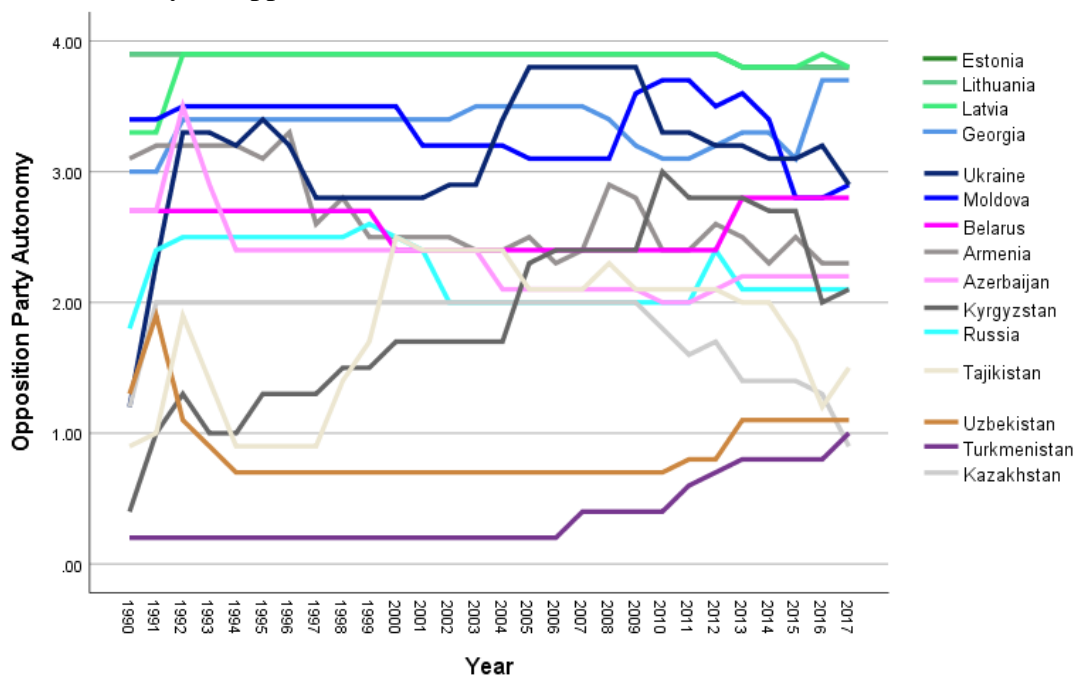


Figure 3 presents the results of the expert surveys about opposition parties. Similarly to Freedom House scores and Electoral Democracy index, 6 countries can be pointed out which fare better than others – Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova.

Thus, based on the data presented in this section, the case selection is the following 6 post-Soviet countries – Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. Therefore, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia, and 5 Central Asian republics are excluded.

Chapter II – Party System Dimensions and Concepts

2.1. What is a party system?

Bardi and Mair (2008) discuss two approaches to the question – what constitutes a party system? On the one hand, there is a traditional numerical approach which “sees party systems as little more than sets of parties” (Bardi and Mair 2008, 152). According to this approach, a party system is a set of individual components (parties) and the inter-party relationship is deemed as secondary.

On the other hand, there is a systemic approach which is based on Sartori’s framework that assigns central importance to the patterns of interaction between parties. According to this approach, individual components are less central. For illustration of the systemic approach, it can be argued that the embeddedness of the patterns of interaction facilitates the survival of individual parties and not vice versa (Bardi and Mair 2008, 153).

According to the numerical approach, the parties constitute the system while the systemic approach says that the system as such enjoys its own independent status.

Even though scholars are typically sympathetic towards the systemic approach, it cannot be smoothly adopted throughout this study. As it has been noted elsewhere, post-communist party systems are so volatile, inchoate and weakly structured that a set of patterned interactions is problematic to observe (Bardi and Mair 2008; Mair 1997; Toole 2000).

However, despite the awareness of complications regarding the systemic approach in post-Soviet countries, in what follows the author of the thesis will be relying on the systemic approach.

2.2. Classic Dimensions of Party Systems

Party systems have a number of distinct features on which they may vary. These features include number, size or strength of parties as well as the dimensions on which they

compete and the willingness to cooperate in forming a government. Different authors, trying to capture the most important dimensions, have proposed a number of typologies. Arguably, the most influential classification advanced by Giovanni Sartori (1976) is a fourfold typology which focuses on two crucial dimensions of party systems – fragmentation and interaction (emphasis on polarization).

Sartori (1976) criticized earlier typologies for being too crude. Namely, he argued that Duverger's typology of party systems (Duverger 1954a) – one-party, two-party and multi-party systems – was too simplistic. Instead he initially suggested to classify party systems as one-party, hegemonic party, predominant party, two-party, limited pluralism, extreme pluralism and automatization. These 7 types of party systems were solely based on numerical characteristics. However, as long as the definition of party system implies the interaction aspect between parties he later excluded non-competitive regimes such as one-party system.

Sartori (1976) pointed out that mere counting of parties is not enough to properly reflect party system dynamics. He argued that in addition to “numerical” dimension, another one is necessary – ideology. Based on the ideological dimension scholars can characterize the degree of polarization and whether party competition is centripetal or centrifugal. Sartori argued that the mechanics of party competition and the extent of polarization were more important than the number of relevant parties. Therefore, he ended up with a fourfold typology: predominant party systems, two-party systems, moderate pluralism and polarized pluralism.

Even though these 2 dimensions – fragmentation and interaction – continue to be crucial characteristics of party systems, it is becoming increasingly vivid that significant differences exist within those categories. Sartori's typology fails to perfectly adapt with the contemporary situation around the world because the category – polarized pluralism is being emptied out while moderate pluralism is increasingly crowded (Mair 1996).

2.3. Stability Dimension of Party Systems – Institutionalization

Finding a third dimension on which party systems would be adequately and more meaningfully described, compared and categorized may not be easy. Sartori's two-dimensional typology is based on the sharp distinction between non-systems and consolidated party systems.

However, this dichotomy can't fully grasp the vast differences within those categories and too many cases are left in grey zones. These differences are especially vivid in democracies and semi-democracies that emerged after the third wave of democratization and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Scott Mainwaring, with other authors, pointed out that instead of the dichotomous distinction between non-systems and consolidated systems, it is better to treat party system consolidation as a continuum and proposed a dimension – party system institutionalization – which would overcome this limitation (Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). Therefore, “an institutionalized party system [...] is one in which actors develop expectations and behaviour based on the premise that the fundamental contours and rules of party competition and behaviour will prevail into the foreseeable future” (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006, 206). The authors conceptualized four sub-dimensions of party system institutionalization: (1) stability in patterns of party competition (electoral volatility), (2) the strength of party roots in society, (3) the legitimacy of parties as such and (4) strong party organization (independence from ambitious leaders) (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring 1999, 22–39). As a result, scholars could try to place party systems on a continuum from weakly to strongly institutionalized cases. Subsequently, scholars who study party system consolidation picked the concept and applied it in various settings across the globe (Kuenzi and Lambright 2001; Lindberg 2007; Hicken and Kuhonta 2011; Croissant and Völkel 2012; Bielasiak 2002; O'Dwyer and Kovalčík 2007).

One of the issues with this concept is that its dimensions are not equally conceivable to operationalize. Scholars frequently mono-operationalize the concept and use electoral volatility (the first sub-dimension) as an indicator of party system institutionalization. As it was indicated elsewhere, this might be a problem (Luna and Altman 2011; Luna 2014; Wolinetz 2006, 59–60). For instance, scholars have criticized the concept because its sub-dimensions do not necessarily go together (Luna and Altman 2011). So, mono-operationalization raises the issue of validity as well as reliability.

Therefore, throughout the thesis party system institutionalization (as it is conceptualized by Mainwaring and others) will not be employed. Instead, electoral volatility will be used as an indicator of stability of voting behaviour, which is a narrower concept.

Other attempts to conceptualize party system consolidation and stability have been presented as well. Namely, Enyedi and Casal Bértoa (2017; Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016) revisited the concept of party system closure which was originally developed by Peter Mair (1996, 2001, 2007) and refined it by proposing a new index and indicators. The conceptualization aims to capture the stability and predictability aspect of party systems (like the Mainwaringean one) while staying close to one of the most crucial aspects of party system – the pattern of inter-party competition (unlike the Mainwaringean one).

The concept looks at the governmental arena and is composed of three components – *alternation in government* which can be wholesale, partial or non-alternation, *government formula* that looks at the partisan composition of government to determine whether it is innovative or familiar and *access to government* which assesses the access of novel parties to the governmental arena – and based on them, one can measure the degree of party system closure/openness.

The governmental arena is only one functional arena in a polity which might be quite different from other functional arenas – electoral and parliamentary¹ (Bardi and Mair 2008). Thus, it is important to describe and compare party systems and patterns of inter-party competition in post-Soviet countries across different arenas as well as different dimensions.

Therefore, the subsequent chapter aims to answer the following questions: How fragmented are party systems of the selected 6 post-Soviet countries at the electoral as well as parliamentary arenas? How polarized are party systems? How stable is voting behaviour in these countries (electoral volatility)? How closed/open are the party systems?

However, one could ask why is it necessary to describe party-systems across so many dimensions? Is not it enough to classify them based on fragmentation only? The author of this thesis argues that it is not because otherwise the full picture cannot be portrayed. For instance, party systems of Estonia and Ukraine fare similarly on fragmentation but they differ markedly based on stability (volatility and closure, see below). What about stability then? Is not it enough to come up with a typology based on stability only? Similarly, the author argues that it is not enough because party systems that have similar scores on stability might also have very different party systems from the point of view of fragmentation (e.g. Estonia and Georgia have similar electoral volatility scores but sharply differ in terms of fragmentation, see below).

Therefore, in what follows the party systems will be described across several dimensions and subsequently, it will be decided which of them captures the most substantively significant differences.

¹ Though parliamentary and governmental arenas are closely related

Chapter III – Description of Post-Soviet Party Systems

3.1. Fragmentation of party systems

How many parties operate in a political system is a crucial question. Too fragmented systems might bump into a quite problematic and delayed process of government formation. Extreme fragmentation can undermine government stability as well. It may also make parliament decision-making quite troublesome (Jungerstam-Mulders 2017, 7). In addition, it typically increases uncertainty and makes elections less consequential (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2017, 437).

However, despite its significance there have been different positions regarding how to count parties and how to classify party systems accordingly. Counting actual number of registered parties as well as looking at those parties which participate in parliamentary elections cannot provide a meaningful picture because it is probably inevitable that only a fraction of them affect policies and functioning of the system. Thus, this way one might get a bunch of irrelevant and unsuccessful parties that have very limited influence on the party system.

Arguably, one of the first attempts to assign relative weights to parties and count in that respect was by Jean Blondel (1968) who distinguished two- and two-and-a-half party systems (a system dominated by two large and one relatively minor party). Later, Sartori (1976) argued that parties should be counted based on their relevance and whether a party is relevant or not ought to be decided according to its coalition and blackmail potential.

The problem of counting parties has been more or less resolved after Laakso and Taagepera (1979) devised an index which assigns greater weight to big parties and less weight to smaller ones. The index is called effective number of parties and it can be employed for counting parties in legislatures as well as at elections. Nowadays, the index is widely accepted and used to investigate party system fragmentation.

Post-Communist party systems have been reported to be quite fragmented according to every standard (Bielasiak 2002; Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2017). However, differences within the group of post-Communist countries are huge and surprising. For instance, Hungary and Montenegro display less party system fragmentation than the Western European average (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2017, 437–39).

Despite the existence of several databases which contain data about effective number of parties, throughout the thesis the index was calculated by the author because none of the existing databases [known to the author] publish all those details about party system fragmentation that are relevant for the study. The calculations rely on election data that come from Central Electoral Commission reports in each country (See Appendix 1 for more details).

Table 1. Party System Fragmentation of Six Post-Soviet Countries at the Electoral Level

Country (period included)	ENEP
Estonia (1992-2018)	6
Georgia (2004-2018)	2.52
Latvia (1993-2018)	6.75
Lithuania (1992-2018)	6.74
Moldova (1994-2018)	4.25
Ukraine (1998-2018)	6.53
Total Average	5.47

NOTE: Average Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) in six post-Soviet countries

Source: Own Calculations. Election results are taken from Central Electoral Commission reports of respective countries

Focusing on only those countries that once were the members of the Soviet Union does not change the picture dramatically. A first glance at the fragmentation of party systems in six post-Soviet countries reveals that across the region high fragmentation is the norm (Table 1). Party systems are very fragmented. However, there are sharp and vivid differences within the group. At the electoral level, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine experience the most fragmented pattern (6+) which is followed by Moldova (4.25) and finally by Georgia (2.52)

that apparently, has quite concentrated party system not only by the regional standards but in general as well.

It is also interesting to look at the parliamentary arena because the number of parties competing at the electoral level might be quite different from the number of parties that operate at the parliamentary level. One possible reason might be the restrictive electoral rules which deter some parties from entering the legislature. Disproportional electoral systems have been reported elsewhere to be adopted in the post-communist setting (Casal Bértoa 2013).

Indeed, as it can be seen from Table 2, electoral fragmentation does not directly translate into fragmentation in the national legislature. At the parliamentary arena, fragmentation is reduced in all six cases but not to similar extent though. Namely, while Lithuania and Latvia had almost the same fragmentation at the electoral level, it is not the case at the parliamentary level – the difference here is [slightly greater than] one point. That is probably due to their electoral systems – members of the Lithuania’s Seimas are elected through the mixed system while members of the Latvia’s Saeima are chosen through the proportional representation system.

Table 2. Party System Fragmentation of Six Post-Soviet Countries at the Parliamentary Level

Country (period included)	ENPP
Estonia (1992-2018)	4.74
Georgia (2004-2018)	1.91
Latvia (1993-2018)	5.46
Lithuania (1992-2018)	4.49
Moldova (1994-2018)	3.01
Ukraine (1998-2018)	4.99
Total Average	4.1

NOTE: Average Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP) in six post-Soviet countries

Source: Own Calculations. Election results are taken from Central Electoral Commission reports of respective countries

Notwithstanding, the countries can be grouped in the same way as it was done at the electoral level. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine comprising the most fragmented

systems followed by Moldova, which is exactly a point below the regional average, and Georgia seemingly standing alone extraordinarily as an outlier with a relatively concentrated party system.

Apparently, the party system in Georgia is relatively less fragmented. However, one could claim that this conclusion might be deceiving because there are only four consecutive elections from Georgia (2004-2018) included in the study while for other countries there are more than that. Table 3 shows party system fragmentation in all six countries at the electoral as well as at the parliamentary levels only for those elections that took place after the year of 2000².

Even though there are some significant changes (e.g. less fragmentation in Estonia at the electoral level and in Ukraine at the parliamentary level, more fragmentation in Lithuania in both levels), the bigger picture is the same. Moldova and Georgia (even more vividly) are below the average fragmentation level.

Table 3. Party System Fragmentation After 2000

Country	ENEP	ENPP
Estonia	5.09	4.4
Georgia	2.52	1.91
Latvia	6.32	5.17
Lithuania	7.25	5.01
Moldova	4.04	3.0
Ukraine	5.69	4.04
Total Average	5.15	3.92

NOTE: Average Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) and Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP) in six post-Soviet countries after 2000

Source: Own Calculations. Election results are taken from Central Electoral Commission reports of respective countries

² In Georgia, parliamentary elections took place in 2003 as well as in 2004. The election of 2003 is not included because of the reported systematic election fraud (OSCE 2003) and the subsequent Rose Revolution in the country.

3.2. Polarization

In addition to fragmentation, polarization is one of the most important aspects of party systems. Extreme polarization might result in the breakdown of democracies (Dalton 2008), cabinet instability (Warwick 1992) and legislative gridlocks (B. Jones 2001). However, despite its crucial implications the state of arts in the field is far from a consensus about its operationalization.

Nonetheless, the element of extremism is often regarded as a core of the concept of polarization (Pelizzo and Babones 2007; Warwick 1992; King et al. 1990). Therefore, the success of extreme parties is argued to indicate a high degree of polarization. This line of thought originates from Sartori (1976) who elaborated on the concept of extreme and anti-system parties as a characteristic of his most polarized type of party systems³ – polarized pluralism. In other words, extreme parties that are far from the ideological centre undermine (or threaten) the constitutional setting. Thus, the higher the degree of polarization in a party system, the greater is the success of extreme and anti-system parties.

The following data about the six countries come from the Database of WHO governs Europe and Beyond (Casal Bértoa 2019). Ideological polarization is calculated by looking at votes acquired by anti-system parties. A party qualifies as an anti-system when fulfils all three of the following criteria: “(1) it perceives itself as a challenger to the parties that make up the political establishment; (2) it asserts that a fundamental divide exists between the political establishment and the people (implying that all establishment parties, be they in government or in opposition, are essentially the same); and (3) it challenges the status quo in terms of major policy issues and political system issues” (Abedi 2004; Sartori 1976; Karvonen and Quenter 2003).

³ If we do not count automatization.

Table 4. Party System Polarization in Six Post-Soviet Countries

Countries Elections	Estonia (1992- 2018)	Georgia (2004- 2018)	Latvia (1993- 2018)	Lithuania (1992- 2018)	Moldova (1998- 2018)	Ukraine (1998- 2018)
I elections	17.6	5.8	26.6	4.8	22.4	15.6
II elections	7.3	7.4	23.9	10.4	32.4	43.5
III elections	1.6	1.3	18.5	4.9	51	28.7
IV elections	0.9	15.4	7	12.2	54.7	9.2
V elections	7.4		18.1	18.4	47.3	8.3
VI elections	4.2		11.3	18.6	39.7	26.3
VII elections	9.3		15.2	16.6	44.8	
VIII elections			26.3			
IX elections			30.2			
Average	6.9	7.5	19.7	12.3	41.8	21.9

NOTE: Entries refer to percentages of votes obtained by anti-system parties in national legislative elections

Source: The Database of WHO governs Europe and Beyond (Casal Bértoa 2019)

Party system polarization, like other indicators, is dissimilar across the countries. The percentage of votes obtained by anti-system parties (which is treated as an indicator for party system polarization throughout the study) varies from quite low – 6.9 in Estonia – to substantively high – 41.8 in Moldova. Apparently, there is no obvious/meaningful way [at least to the author’s knowledge] to connect polarization to party system fragmentation. The least fragmented party system of Georgia is as polarized as Estonia and Lithuania, the latter being one of the most fragmented in the region (in terms of effective number of electoral – 6.74 – as well as parliamentary parties -4.49). Latvia and Ukraine which have quite fragmented party systems (respectively, 5.46 and 4.99 effective number of parliamentary parties) regularly face fairly successful anti-system parties. Finally, Moldova which has a relatively concentrated party system according to the regional standards is very polarized.

3.3. Party Continuity

This section briefly overviews the continuity of parties themselves. There are possibly many ways to study party continuity, but one of the most frequently adopted strategies is to

look at age of parties (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2017). Even though age of parties is not a very informative indicator, it can still convey useful information about the party system.

Table 5 shows average age of those parties that passed the threshold in the most recent parliamentary elections in each country. Variations are huge ranging from 4 years in Ukraine to 18.5 years in Lithuania. However, it is important to take into account that those numbers (in the second row) are not weighted and therefore, a party which receives 50% of votes, for example, and one that receives 10% are not differentiated.

The table 5 (the third row) also includes average years of only those parties which are relatively significant than others. Variations increased which signals that it is necessary to distinguish between parties which obtained a fair number of votes and ones that received less support. In Estonia, the average jumped from 13.8 to 22.5 years which probably means that the legislature in 2015 might be attended by relatively new parties as well but the two most successful parties are fairly old if one takes the post-Communist setting into consideration. The opposite happened in Moldova and Ukraine (less significantly in Latvia).

Table 5. Average Age of Parties in Most Recent Parliamentary Elections

	Estonia	Georgia	Latvia	Lithuania	Moldova	Ukraine
Number of parties that passed the threshold	6	3	7	6	5	6
Average age of parties (years)	13.8	7.7	6.4	18.5	16.6	4
Average age of two most successful parties (years)*	22.5	9.5	5	19	12	1

*Two parties that acquired most votes in the multi-member national constituency

NOTE: In the mixed electoral systems, the calculations are based on the PR component.

Source: Own calculations. The data come from party websites. Relevant parties are identified based on Central Electoral Commission reports.

Generally speaking, in the post-Soviet democracies and semi-democracies both relatively old as well as new parties manage to dominate the electoral arena. Namely, in Estonia in the 2015 parliamentary elections two parties that obtained the most votes – Estonian Reform Party and Estonian Centre Party – are 21 and 24 years old respectively. On contrary, in Ukraine in the 2014 parliamentary elections two parties that received the most

votes – People’s Front and Petro Poroshenko Block “Solidarity” – were founded several months before the elections.

3.4. Party System Stability

As it was noted in section 2.2, party system stability might be conceptualized in two different ways. One way is to follow the Mainwaringean path and to conceive party system institutionalization as comprising four sub-dimensions: electoral volatility, party roots in society, legitimacy of parties and the strength of party organization. The other way is to look at the governmental arena and investigate party system institutionalization as party system closure/openness (Mair 2007; Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016).

3.4.1. Electoral Volatility

Electoral volatility is a sub-dimension of party system institutionalization (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). It is aimed to measure the stability of voting behaviour. In other words, electoral volatility refers to the degree of change in voting behaviour between two consecutive elections. As it was argued above (see page 12), electoral volatility is not used as an indicator for party system institutionalization. Instead, it is used as an indicator for a narrower concept – stability of voting behaviour.

It is usually measured by the Pedersen index (Pedersen 1979), which is the sum of the absolute changes in vote shares divided by 2. It has been widely applied in studies of party politics (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006; E. N. Powell and Tucker 2014). However, net electoral volatility does not distinguish volatility between established parties from volatility that is attributable to new party entries (E. N. Powell and Tucker 2014; Mainwaring, Gervasoni, and Espana-Najera 2016). E. N. Powell and Tucker (2014) argued that scholars who compare aggregate electoral volatility of post-communist countries to aggregate electoral volatility of Western European countries basically compare

“oranges to apples” (E. N. Powell and Tucker 2014, 141) because net electoral volatility in post-communist countries is primarily driven by votes going to new parties while net electoral volatility in Western European countries is driven by vote change between established parties.

Throughout the thesis, the calculation of electoral volatility is based on the rules described by Powell and Tucker (2014). For specific formulas which were used to calculate total, extra-system and within-system volatility scores see Appendix 2.

Table 6 displays average total electoral volatility as well as extra- and within-system volatility scores for six post-Soviet countries. In addition, alternative total volatility scores are listed which are based on different inclusion criteria.

Several comments offer themselves; Despite the fact that author’s calculations and alternative scores from the Database of WHO governs in Europe and Beyond (Casal Bértoa 2019) are based on different inclusion criteria, the order of the cases is almost identical. The only exception is Ukraine, which has higher total volatility score than Latvia according to the Casal Bértoa Database while according to author’s calculations Latvia has greater total volatility.

Table 6. Total, Extra-system and Within-system Volatility Averages for Six Post-Soviet Countries

	Total Volatility	Extra-system volatility	Within-system volatility	Total Volatility (from Casal Bértoa Database)
Estonia (1992-2015)	35.13	20.12	15	21.3
Georgia (2004-2016)	31.9	18.3	13.6	19.8
Latvia (1993-2018)	51.6	37.6	14.1	31.9
Lithuania (1992-2016)	54.1	40.9	13.2	35.5
Moldova (1994-2014)	47.2	33.5	13.7	27.8
Ukraine (1998-2014)	48.6	32.6	15.9	32.46*

Source: Own calculations (except the last column). Information about the results of elections comes from Central Electoral Commission reports of respective countries.

*Casal Bértoa Database does not contain information about electoral volatility of Ukraine between 2012 and 2014 elections; Therefore, the average is based on 1998-2012 period.

It is confirmed that total electoral volatility in post-Soviet countries is mainly driven by vote shifts which are attributable to new party entries. Interestingly, even though there is a big variation in total volatility scores, within-system volatility is similar for all the six countries.

Lithuania and Latvia have the highest total volatility as well as extra-system volatility scores. While Georgia and Estonia experience the lowest level of total as well as extra-system volatility. This observation once again challenges the prevailing (sometimes unarticulated) assumption that three Baltic countries represent a somewhat homogeneous group and should not be compared to other post-Soviet countries.

It should also be pointed out that Georgia, which has the most concentrated party system in the region and Estonia, which has one of the most fragmented party system, experience roughly similar levels of volatility. In addition to fragmentation, Georgia and Estonia differ markedly in terms of tightness of the competition. In Estonia, party competition is quite tight at the electoral as well as at the parliamentary arena while in Georgia one party typically outperforms the runner-up especially at the parliamentary arena because Georgia has the mixed electoral system and the differences in votes at the electoral level are even more disproportionately translated into the parliamentary arena.

Thus, one has to be cautious when dealing with electoral volatility as a measure because it might cover other crucial differences in party systems. As it was demonstrated, disentangling total electoral volatility into extra- and within-system volatility provides a more nuanced picture but still, other important aspects are left behind by the index.

3.4.2. Party System Closure

While electoral volatility looks at the electoral arena and does not capture the interaction aspect between parties, the concept of party system closure refers to the governmental arena and is primarily concerned with coalition/cooperation patterns of party competition. As it was mentioned above, party system closure was originally developed by

Peter Mair (1996, 2001, 2007). Quite recently, Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2016) criticized existing dichotomous as well as continuous operationalizations as being crude and flawed. Ultimately, they refined the concept by proposing a new index and indicators which are valid as well as reliable.

Party systems which are closed can be perceived as stable and predictable. Consequently, indicators/dimensions are proposed: alternation in government, familiarity of governing formulae and access of novel parties to government (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016). In order to decide about a score for each dimension one has to look at percentages of ministers in cabinet according to their party affiliation. Therefore, a final closure score for a party system is a number ranging from 0 to 100 where 0 implies an open party system and 100 implies a closed one.

Table 7. Party System Closure of Six Post-Soviet Countries

Country	Party System Closure
Estonia (1992-2015)	83.63
Georgia (2004-2016)	92.88
Latvia (1993-2018)	81.58
Lithuania (1992-2016)	82.58
Moldova (1994-2014)	87.32
Ukraine (1998-2012)	75.49

Source: The Database of WHO governs in Europe and beyond (Casal Bértoa 2019)

Table 7 displays party system closure scores for the six countries. Georgia, like in almost all the other party system characteristics, has the most consolidated party system. Ukraine, on the other hand, seems to be the most open party system among the six countries. Interestingly and unlike the electoral volatility scores, according to party system closure three Baltic countries are quite close to each other.

Georgia and Moldova have relatively closed party systems and this observation resonates with tightness of the competition. In these countries, one party typically outperforms the runner-up. However, tightness of the competition cannot explain why

Ukraine and Estonia have so different party system closure scores. In Ukraine as well as in Estonia, party competition at the electoral as well as at the parliamentary level is quite tight.

- Ordering of party systems

Finally, it seems reasonable to look at a bigger picture. Table 8 rank orders countries and respective party systems across five dimensions of party systems – fragmentation, polarization, party continuity, electoral volatility and party system closure.

Table 8. Ordering Six Post-Soviet Countries According to Party System Characteristics

Fragmentation* <i>(from least to most)</i>	Polarization <i>(from least to most)</i>	Party Continuity** <i>(from most to least)</i>	Electoral Volatility <i>(from least volatile to most)</i>	Party System Closure <i>(from most closed systems to least)</i>
Georgia	Estonia	Estonia	Georgia	Georgia
Moldova	Georgia	Lithuania	Estonia	Moldova
Lithuania	Lithuania	Moldova	Moldova	Estonia
Estonia	Latvia	Georgia	Ukraine	Lithuania
Ukraine	Ukraine	Latvia	Latvia	Latvia
Latvia	Moldova	Ukraine	Lithuania	Ukraine

*Fragmentation is based on average effective number of parliamentary parties (see section 3.1. above);

**Party Continuity is based on average ages of two most successful parliamentary parties in most recent elections in each country (see section 3.3. above)

As it can be observed from the table, according to the party system characteristics there is Georgia on the one hand that arguably has the most concentrated and relatively stable party system. On the other hand, there are Latvia and Ukraine that (more or less) consistently reside at the lower part of the table which implies that their party systems are least consolidated and most fragmented. Also, fragmentation and stability (electoral volatility and closure) go hand in hand more or less.

It must be pointed out that polarization and party continuity are based on conceptualizations which can be disputed. Polarization was measured as percentages taken by anti-system parties. In the post-communist setting, this might be problematic because polarization often manifests itself in confrontational behaviour between actors (Enyedi 2008,

288). Regarding party continuity, it was measured at one point in time. It is not a very informative indicator for party system characteristics because the formal existence of a party is inconclusive. Therefore, in what follows the thesis will focus on fragmentation, volatility and closure.

The following chapter discusses major theoretical approaches to party systems. These approaches and theoretical explanations to differences in party system characteristics were basically devised in the context of Western European countries. Therefore, their application to post-Communist context will also be discussed.

Chapter IV – How to Explain Party System Development? –

Theoretical Explanations of Party Systems

4.1. General Theories

Boix (2007) overviewed the literature on theoretical explanations of party system development. He divided the literature into two broad theoretical streams: sociological-historical and institutional branches. However, it has been argued that in order to shed more light, it is necessary to differentiate a third approach, which can be called the rational approach (Morgan 2015).

Throughout this chapter, it is argued that the combination of sociological and rational-agency approaches might be the most suitable for understanding post-Soviet party systems. The role of agency in shaping the dynamics of party politics arguably attracts the smallest amount of attention from scholars (Deegan-Krause and Enyedi 2010). This unpopularity is unfortunate because it has been demonstrated that political agency can play a crucial role in shaping structure of party competition especially in the post-communist context (Enyedi 2005). In the subsequent chapters, the suitability of this approach is demonstrated by analysing the Georgian case and its party system which is atypical for the post-Soviet context.

Therefore, 3 theoretical approaches can be pointed out when dealing with the origins and development of parties and party systems⁴. First, the sociological approach famously pronounced by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), looks at party systems as echoes of underlying societal divisions. This theory has been quite influential throughout the 20th century as it accurately explained the class-based party systems which prevailed in Western polities. This approach is often referred to as cleavage based politics as well. However, the term – cleavage – has been used quite differently by various scholars. It was only when Bartolini and Mair (1990) refined the concept when some order was brought. Bartolini and Mair built on Taylor

⁴ The differentiation of three approaches is based on Carles Boix (2007) and Jason W. Morgan (2015).

and Rae's (1969) 3 types of division – ascriptive, attitudinal and behavioural – and proposed that a cleavage constitutes social stratification, group consciousness and an organizational structure at the same time. However, this definition is too demanding and often it does not allow referring to divisions and conflicts as cleavages. Therefore, some scholars have adopted a looser definition (Enyedi 2005, 3).

According to this model, political parties should be seen as a reflection of societal divisions.

Second theoretical approach emphasizes the role of political institutions in developing party systems. Arguably the most prominent author in this line of thought is Duverger (1954) who famously connected electoral systems to party systems. Also, Katz (1980) extensively scrutinized the effects of electoral formula, nature of choice, district magnitude and intraparty electoral choice on party organizations. In addition, Cox (1997) elaborated on that arguing the number of viable candidates in any individual multi-member district is limited by an upper bound of the district magnitude + 1. According to this model, party systems are shaped by electoral rules and constitutional arrangements through psychological, strategic and mechanical effects on voters (Morgan 2015, 19).

Third, the rational approach mainly focuses on rational actors and calculations. For instance, Aldrich (1995) has suggested that on the one hand, rational individual politicians have an incentive to join or start a party in order to overcome the collective action problem. On the other hand, from the point of view of voters, the affiliation of a politician with a party decreases the information costs. In addition, the theory of spatial voting which originates from Anthony Downs (1957) deals with voting behaviour and is based on the assumption of self-interested choices. According to this theory, self-interested voters assess candidates and/or policy alternatives and vote accordingly.

The agency-based approach, which can be seen as a part of the rational approach, emphasizes the role of elite choices that might have a decisive impact on outcomes. Therefore, this approach goes beyond the proposition that elite choices merely reflect social pressures (Deegan-Krause and Enyedi 2010, 687). Thus, the role of specific actors is central from the point of view of the agency approach and in that it is similar to the rational approach. However, in contrast to the most rational approaches, the agency approach is usually confined to explaining cases and typically cannot come up with predictive propositions and law-like generalizations.

4.2. Post-Communist Party Systems

These three models were constructed in the context of Western democracies. Thus, their direct application in post-communist and post-Soviet countries has caused some valid criticisms because, as it was noted above, formerly communist regimes were inaugurated in a different world occupied by mass media and the functions of parties were also not the same (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). That looked like throwing children, who didn't know how to swim, in a swimming pool in which other children had been swimming for quite a long time⁵.

Theoretically, the post-Soviet space is very rarely in the focus. And for that reason, the literature review focuses on the post-communist context in general.

4.2.1. Sociological Model

The sociological approach was vigorously applied after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Evans and Whitefield (1993) argued that depending on socio-historical characteristics of a country, post-communist states would encounter different cleavages – ethnic, socio-economic and “political” ones. According to them, party systems with prevalent “political” cleavages would face higher instability while countries with prevalent ethnic cleavages would have relatively predictable party systems. Kitschelt (1995, 2001) proposed that economic-

⁵ Apparently, the new children have failed to learn swimming for too extended periods

distributive cleavages would lead to more structured party-systems than cultural or historical-regime cleavages. One source of confusion with studies dealing with cleavages in post-communist countries is that they don't always adhere to the demanding proposition by Bartolini and Mair. Therefore, "the concept of cleavage is often either reduced "down" to that of "social cleavage" or raised "up" to that of "political cleavage"" (Bartolini and Mair 1990, 215).

Casal Bértoa (2014) has satisfied this requirement and studied cleavage structures in the Visegrad countries. He concludes that neither type, nor number, nor strength of cleavages affects party systems. The approach of Casal Bértoa can be characterized as "bottom-up". Others have approached cleavage structures of post-communist countries from "top-down" perspective and have combined the sociological and agency approaches. For instance, Raymond (2014) emphasizes the role of agency in forming cleavages. In a similar vein, Enyedi (2005), relying on the Hungarian case, underscores the role as well as the limitations of agencies in cleavage formation.

The application of sociological model to post-communist countries faces certain problems. Recent studies have demonstrated that voters in post-communist Eastern Europe exhibit high levels of distrust of the major institutions as well as low organizational membership (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2011; Rose 2009).

In addition, the application of sociological model inevitably implies the relationship between social divisions and party politics. Such connections are challenging to observe in post-Soviet countries because as it was argued above, the annihilation of social divisions by Moscow was even more successful in the Soviet republics than in other communist regimes (Epperly 2011, 9–10).

Also, Peter Mair (1997) notes that in post-communist states electorates are more open and available and therefore, more volatile and uncertain. This is mainly due to weak cleavage

structures and lack of crystallization of identities. Such crystallization was quite slow process in the established democracies according to Mair.

Cleavages in Western Europe which were emphasized by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) were closely connected to democratization, national and industrial revolutions. As Claus Offe (1992) famously argued, post-communist Europe faced a “triple transition” – simultaneous processes of democratization, marketization and state-building. On contrary, these 3 processes “were mastered over a centuries-long sequence in the case of western European countries” (1992, 14).

Based on the abovementioned, it is not a big surprise that post-communist countries have unpredictable electorates. The societal level turns out to be too diverse and poorly crystalized. Therefore, the analytical utility of the “bottom-up” sociological approach is highly problematic. However, completely abandoning the social basis of party system as useless would be a big mistake because democratic development is indispensable without functionally connected parties and societal interests.

4.2.2. Institutional Model

The role of institutions has also been scrutinized in post-communist countries. Political institutions and especially electoral rules are so close (in terms of a causal chain) to the contours of party systems that it’s impossible not to take its effects into account. For instance, Toole (2000) studied party systems of Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic and concluded that party system stabilization could be partly attributed to electoral system design. Exclusively focusing on post-Soviet countries, Maleshevich (2007) has claimed that proportional electoral rules and parliamentary systems in the Baltic states resulted in relatively high party system institutionalization because parties of power could not materialize⁶. Also, with the help of regression analysis, Tavits (2008), Birch (2003), and Sikk

⁶ He compared Baltic states to Russia and Ukraine. However, his case selection raises a question. If the rationale of selecting these 5 countries is “the most similar design”, then, it is problematic. Therefore, it is not a surprise

(2005) have shown that post-communist party systems with mixed electoral system are significantly less volatile.

However, treating the institutional model as an optimal approach raises some concerns. Most importantly, political institutions and electoral rules are not exogenous variables (Morgan 2015). Politicians have been shaping and changing institutional constraints regularly in post-communist countries.

Moreover, countries with similar political institutions and constitutional arrangements might have very different party system dynamics. For illustration, Lithuania and Georgia both have mixed electoral systems combined with semi-presidentialism⁷ but have experienced drastically different party system dynamics (for more details see Section 5.3., page 44).

It seems reasonable to remark that the institutional approach is almost trivially important because it directly affects party systems. However, the fact that in the post-communist context they are often manipulated and designed deliberately by politicians reduces its analytical utility. Additionally, institutional and constitutional constraints don't determine the trajectory or development of party systems to a great extent.

4.2.3. Rational Approach

The third theoretical approach which mainly relies on rational actors has also been applied to the post-communist context. However, it should be pointed out that this approach seems to be less attractive among scholars of this region.

Studies that rely on the theory of spatial voting are typically concerned with voting behaviour and how voters juxtapose their ideal points against different party platforms (Tucker 2006; Powers and Cox 1997). Understandably, this stream of the literature is less connected to party systems. On the other hand, there are studies that are similarly located

that he treats the Baltic party systems as relatively institutionalized. But, as it was demonstrated above, the Baltic states are not relatively institutionalized if different countries are in focus.

⁷ In Georgia, the constitutional changes shifted the system from semi-presidentialism towards parliamentarism in 2013. However, Georgia still has a directly elected president.

within the rational approach but are concerned with the supply-side of politics. More specifically, they deal with political elites and their impact on party systems, cleavage structure and political discourses (Enyedi 2005; Raymond 2014; Zielinski, Słomczynski, and Shabad 2005; Zielinski 2002).

For instance, Zielinski (2002) develops an argument that in Eastern Europe political elites can translate pre-existing social cleavages into political conflict. However, the term “translation” might be misleading (Enyedi 2005, 3) because it might blur the difference between the mere translation of social divisions and deliberately shaping oppositional camp identities by agency (this point is key to distinguish “bottom-up” and “top-down” sociological approaches). Zsolt Enyedi (2005) argues that the decisions of a party leadership (Fidesz) influenced the cleavage structure in Hungary and therefore, the transformation of party system can be attributed to the work of political agency.

Raymond (2014) also draws upon research that emphasizes the role of parties in cleavage formation and argues that the absence of cleavage effects in Romania might be attributed to behaviour of political parties.

Problems associated with this model are assumptions of fixed rules of the game and rational calculations.

Certain theoretical frameworks selected by scholars often implicitly indicate their views about a better approach. Three broad theories and their applications to the post-communist countries were presented in this chapter. In addition, it was briefly discussed what issues those approaches face in that particular setting.

Based on the abovementioned discussion, it is possible to point out three theoretical approaches which might be of particular relevance for studying post-Soviet party systems:

1. “Bottom-up” sociological model

2. Institutional model
3. “Top-down” sociological model

First two emphasize the role of structural factors only, while the third approach stresses the importance of dialogue between structure and agency.

Factors that might influence party systems of post-Soviet countries will be analysed with the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Particularly, several analyses which will be conducted can be grouped:

1. Quantitative analyses of structural factors (Chapter V). More specifically, in Section 5.1. regression analysis of electoral volatility is applied. Sections 5.2. and 5.3. deal with associations between structural factors on the one hand, and party system fragmentation and stability on the other. Thus, the first part deals with societal and institutional factors and their associations with party system characteristics.
2. Second part (Chapter VI) analyses the Georgian case with the help of expert interviews, secondary literature, survey data and directed acyclic graphs (DAG). More concretely, “top-down” sociological approach is applied. Therefore, it is explained why Georgia has so different party system in comparison with the other 5 countries while according to the social and institutional factors it is not so different from them.

Chapter V – Structural Factors and Post-Soviet Party Systems

5.1. Large-N Analysis of Electoral Volatility in Post-Soviet Countries

Scholars have been studying determinants of electoral volatility globally (Mainwaring and Torcal 2005; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Mainwaring, Gervasoni, and Espana-Najera 2016) as well as specifically in post-communist countries (Sikk 2005; Tavits 2005, 2008; Birch 2003; E. N. Powell and Tucker 2014).

Mainwaring and Zoco (2007), with the help of regression analysis, demonstrate that the period of inauguration of a democracy is a significant predictor of electoral volatility globally. They argue that how long ago a country democratized does not matter. What matters is when it democratized – parties in older democracies had different functions: they served as agents of political mobilization, pushed for the incorporation of new citizens into politics. Media effects also make a difference – in older democracies, the absence of mass television motivated politicians to develop organizational ties to voters.

But this finding cannot explain why electoral volatility varies in post-communist countries when the period of democratization (or inauguration of a democracy) is controlled for.

In respect to the scholarship specifically focused on the post-communist context, two comments are immediately available; First of all, such studies rarely focus on post-Soviet (vis-à-vis post-communist) countries. If the rationale of studying post-communist party systems is the approximation of “most similar design” due to the communist past, then, post-Soviet countries arguably constitute a better design in this regard than post-communist countries. Secondly, and more importantly, scholars do not agree upon factors affecting electoral volatility.

For example, Tavits (2008) found that GDP change between elections, electoral system and time (since the collapse of the Soviet Union) had an impact on electoral volatility in post-

communist countries. According to Birch (2003), only whether a country has mixed electoral system or not was a statistically significant predictor of electoral volatility. Sikk (2005) came to the similar conclusion. E. N. Powell and Tucker (2014) found that none of the abovementioned factors are significant and there is only one significant predictor of electoral volatility in post-communist countries – economic performance relative to where it was at the beginning of the transition.

This section builds on these studies in the following way: it is exclusively focused on post-Soviet countries and similarly to the abovementioned scholars, a regression analysis is used to test the impact of social, institutional and economic factors on electoral volatility.

- Dependent variables

For each consecutive pairs of elections all three of the following indicators are calculated: total electoral volatility, within-system volatility and extra-system volatility (for more details, see section 3.4.1). Number of observations (N) is 35.

- Independent variables

Party continuity – for each elections, average age of parties (that passed the threshold of 10%) are calculated. The underlying idea is that in a party system with older parties there might be less electoral volatility.

Fragmentation – for each elections, effective number of parties are calculated (for more details, see section 3.1). The argument is that heavily fragmented systems should demonstrate higher electoral volatility.

Permissiveness – for each election, the quantified measure of barriers to parties is used. The Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem 2018) surveys 6 experts for each country every year and reports whether there are substantial barriers to forming a party or not. They report the measure on a 0-4 scale, from “parties are not allowed” to “there are no substantial barriers”.

Polarization – for each election, party system polarization is calculated (for more details, see 3.2). Scholars disagree about the effects of polarization on volatility.

Economic performance – for each elections, two economic indicators are calculated: GDP growth rate and inflation. Particularly, yearly averages (12 months before the elections) are measured. The data come from the World Bank (World Bank 2018).

Social cleavages/divisions – for each country, two indicators are calculated: Ethnic heterogeneity and urban-rural divisions. Ethnic heterogeneity is measured by a Herfindahl-Hirschmann index of concentration for ethnicity: $\sum p_i^2$ where p_i is the share of i^{th} ethnic group in the population. The data about ethnic composition of countries and their respective size come from Central Intelligence Agency (2016). In regard to urban-rural divisions, the absolute difference between the share of urban and rural populations is calculated for each country. The information about the share of urban and rural population for each country is taken from the World Bank (World Bank 2018).

Time – it might be the case that electoral volatility diminishes over time and therefore, years after the first democratic national legislative elections are included in the analysis.

Thus, three different analyses are conducted for three different dependent variables. Only those elections are included when the country scored higher than 0.5 in V-Dem Electoral Democracy index. For national legislatures, six countries have either full-fledged proportional representation (PR) systems or mixed systems. For the latter, only the PR component of elections is included.

- Results and discussion

For three dependent variables (total volatility, extra-system volatility and within-system volatility), three sets of models were attempted. Regression model does not fit for extra-system volatility at all (R-squared = .06) while for within-system volatility models fit very poorly (R-squared = 0.2) (for more details see Appendix 3).

Concerning total electoral volatility, two models are presented (Table 9). Model 1 is estimated without any interaction terms while Model 2 includes one interaction⁸. The issue of potential multicollinearity between independent variables were tested in R with the help of the variance inflation factor (VIF) function⁹. The variance inflation factor for all of the predictors is below 5, which does not satisfy quite conservative approach to multicollinearity (that acceptable VIF is below 2), but still can be treated as acceptable (for other assumption diagnostics see Appendix 4).

Table 9. Multiple Linear Regression. Total Electoral Volatility

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	19.8 (17.2)	10.5 (17.3)
Party Continuity	0.06 (0.5)	0.11 (0.5)
Fragmentation (ENEP)	3.7*** (1.2)	4.1*** (1.2)
Polarization	0.07 (0.17)	0.001 (0.17)
GDP growth rate	-0.78** (0.3)	-0.85*** (0.29)
Inflation	0.37* (0.2)	0.52 (0.55)
Ethnic Heterogeneity	12.8 (21.5)	13.8 (20.6)
Urban-Rural division	-10.7 (29.9)	11.6 (31.5)
Inflation * Urban-Rural division		2.6* (1.5)
Time	-0.9* (0.5)	-0.94* (0.49)
N	35	35
R-squared	0.53	0.59
Adjusted R-squared	0.39	0.43
P-value	< .01	< .01

Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

*,** and *** indicate significance at the 90%, 95% and 99% level respectively.

⁸ Other interaction effects were attempted as well. However, only this is statistically significant.

⁹ Package (“car”) has the VIF function

Two models (Table 9) do not fit very well but R-squared of 0.39 and 0.43 still allow to gain some insights. However, it should be pointed out in the first place that the variance in electoral volatility is largely unexplained.

Regarding interpretation, fragmentation (ENEP) and electoral volatility go hand in hand. If one assigns an interpretation, every 1 point increase of effective number of electoral parties is associated with nearly 4% increase in electoral volatility.

Also, good economic performance before elections is associated with a slight decrease in electoral volatility. More specifically, for every 1% increase of annual GDP growth one year before the elections, electoral volatility goes down by nearly 0.8%. And for every 1% increase of inflation, electoral volatility goes up by 0.37% (Model 1).

Time passed since the first democratic election is also significant according to both models (though at the 90% significance level). As time passes, both models predict that electoral volatility would decrease slightly.

Inflation is significant in Model 1 and the interaction of inflation and urban-rural division is significant in Model 2. However, both of them are basically driven by two outliers. In Estonia inflation reached 47.7% in 1994 and in Lithuania it was 39.6% in 1995. After removing these two outliers, neither of the effects is significant.

Apparently, social factors, party continuity and polarization do not influence electoral volatility in this context.

Overall, the regression analysis does not allow promising interpretations and conclusions for several reasons. First of all, the model fit implies that the variance in electoral volatility is mainly unexplained. Secondly, the number of countries in the dataset relative to the number of total observations is rather large. Thirdly, although it is true that the problem of multicollinearity is not severe, it is still present ($VIF < 5$). In addition, multiple regression analysis depends on the assumption of no specification error, which implies that all variables

that should be included are included, and all variables that should not be included are not. Given the post-Soviet context, this assumption is arguably problematic. And finally, one of the most important predictors – fragmentation – needs to be explained itself. After removing fragmentation as a predictor, model fit dropped from 0.39 to 0.17 with p-value of 0.08.

The following sections aim to explore the associations between sociological and institutional factors on the one hand and party system fragmentation and stability on the other.

5.2. “Bottom-up” Sociological Approach

Based on the sociological model, one would expect that social segmentation results in fragmented party systems because the sociological model looks at party systems as a reflection of society (Cox 1997; B. G. Powell 1982; Spirova 2007). Therefore, the hypothesis is the following:

Societies with greater social segmentation will have more fragmented party systems

But what type of social segmentation is relevant? A widely used and relevant division in the post-communist context is believed to be the ethnic cleavage (Whitefield 2002; Stoll 2008). But in addition to it, scholars typically measure other relevant divisions too such as economic inequality and urban-rural cleavage (Tavits 2005; Casal Bértoa 2014).

Moreover, it seems plausible to assume that more populous societies tend to be more heterogeneous rather than smaller countries. Therefore, another expectation might be that the size of population would be positively related to party system fragmentation.

The economic division is measured with the help of Gini index. The index ranges from 0 to 100 where 0 implies total economic equality and 100 – total inequality. Ethnic heterogeneity is measured by a Herfindahl-Hirschmann index of concentration for ethnicity: $\sum p_i^2$ where p_i is the share of i^{th} ethnic group in the total population. The rural-urban division is measured by the urbanization index.

Table 10 demonstrates societal factors and party system fragmentation scores for six post-Soviet countries. Scores for fragmentation are averages from all the election cycles for each country during which the country satisfied a minimal standard of electoral democracy. But one might question the reliability of those averages because for Georgia only period from 2004 to 2018 is included while for the other five countries the time span goes deeper in the past. Therefore, fragmentation averages for each country after the year of 2000 are also presented (last column).

Table 10. Social Factors and Party System Fragmentation

	Economic Inequality	Ethnic fractionalization	Urbanization	Population size (million people)	Fragmentation (enep/enpp)	Fragmentation (enep/enpp) after 2000
Estonia	34.8 (2015 est.)	0.534	68.9% (2017 est.)	1.3 (2017 est.)	6/4.74 (1992-2018)	5.09/4.4
Georgia	40.1 (2014 est.)	0.759	58.6% (2017 est.)	3.7 (2017 est.)	2.52/1.91 (2004-2018)	2.52/1.91
Latvia	34.5 (2015 est.)	0.451	68.1% (2017 est.)	1.9 (2017 est.)	6.75/5.46 (1993-2018)	6.32/5.17
Lithuania	37.9 (2015 est.)	0.715	67.7% (2017 est.)	2.8 (2017 est.)	6.74/4.49 (1992-2018)	7.25/5.01
Moldova	26.8 (2015 est.)	0.577	42.6% (2017 est.)	3.5 (2017 est.)	4.25/3.01 (1994-2018)	4.04/3.0
Ukraine	25.5 (2015 est.)	0.635	69.4% (2017 est.)	44.8 (2017 est.)	6.53/4.99 (1998-2018)	5.69/4.4

NOTE: Fragmentation is calculated by the author (see section 3.1). Data about population size and urbanization rate come from World Bank (2018). Information about relevant ethnic groups and their respective size was taken from Central Intelligence Agency (2016). Gini index (Economic inequality) for the six countries was taken from Central Intelligence Agency (2016).

None of the factors seems to be systematically associated with party system fragmentation at the cross-case level. Moldova which is ethnically more heterogeneous than Ukraine has less fragmented party system. In respect to population size, Ukraine and Estonia which have the most and least populous societies respectively, have very similar scores on party system fragmentation. Another illustration of the abovementioned point would be

Georgia and Lithuania that have similar scores for every societal factor but ended up with drastically different outcomes.

- Stability and societal factors

It must be pointed out that an ethnically heterogeneous society does not automatically imply ethnicity as an important factor. It has been claimed that in post-communist context, party systems with dominant ethnic cleavages would be more stable and predictable because ethnicity is strongly intertwined with identity and voters would find it difficult to cross this line (G. A. Evans and Whitefield 1993; G. Evans and Whitefield 1995). According to this logic, ethnic cleavages are expected to go hand in hand with party system stability. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that:

Societies with prevalent ethnic cleavages would have lower electoral volatility and higher party system closure

According to Saarts (2011), ethnic cleavages play an important role in party politics of Latvia and Estonia (in Estonia, to a lesser degree though). Additionally, Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2009, 291) have found that ethnicity is important for party competition in Moldova as well.

As it is seen from the Table 11, the prevalence of ethnic cleavages is not associated with neither fragmentation, nor total volatility, nor party system closure. Therefore, the hypothesis that ethnic cleavages lead to higher party system stability cannot be supported based on this group of countries.

Table 11. Ethnic Cleavages and Party Systems

	Prevalent Ethnic Cleavage	Fragmentation (enep/enpp)	Total Volatility	Party System Closure
Estonia	Yes	6/4.74 (1992-2018)	21.3	83.6
Georgia	No	2.52/1.91 (2004-2018)	19.8	92.88
Latvia	Yes	6.75/5.46 (1993-2018)	31.9	81.58
Lithuania	No	6.74/4.49 (1992-2018)	35.5	82.98
Moldova	Yes	4.25/3.01 (1994-2018)	27.8	87.32
Ukraine	No	6.53/4.99 (1998-2018)	32.46	75.49

Source: Information about ethnic cleavages comes from articles by Saarts (2011) and Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2009). Fragmentation is measured by the author (for more details see section 3.1 above). Data about party system closure and total volatility are taken from the Database of WHO governs in Europe and beyond (Casal Bértoa 2019).

5.3. Institutional Approach

Besides social factors, institutional variables are usually believed to be important in shaping party systems in general and fragmentation in particular (Duverger 1954; Riker 1982). More specifically, it has been claimed that federalism and political decentralization negatively affect party system concentration and nationalization (M. P. Jones and Mainwaring 2003; Chhibber and Kollman 2004; Harbers 2010). Even though there are scholars who found limited support to this theory (Brancati 2008), it still seems reasonable to expect that:

Greater decentralization will be associated with greater fragmentation

In addition to decentralization, electoral system is an important factor indeed. Six countries have either pure proportional representation (PR) systems or mixed systems with parallel majoritarian and PR components. Based on the Duverger's logic and other relevant theoretical propositions (Duverger 1954; Rae 1967; Clark and Golder 2006), it is possible to expect that higher district magnitude will lead to higher fragmentation. And therefore, it is conceivable to hypothesize that:

Pure PR systems will experience higher fragmentation than Mixed systems

Table 12 presents information about decentralization, electoral systems and fragmentation for the six countries. Decentralization is measured with the help of Government Closeness Index (GCI) discussed extensively by Ivanyna and Shah (2012). It is a composite index which aggregates information on fiscal, administrative and political decentralization and summarizes with one number. Higher numbers imply greater decentralization. The table also includes broad types of electoral system for respective countries. It is true that there are many nuances and big variations within those types, but arguably, if electoral system importantly influences party system fragmentation, then, it should be visible at this level too.

Table 12. Institutional Setting and Party System Fragmentation

	GCI	Electoral System		Constitutional configuration	Fragmentation (enep/enpp)
		Family	For National Legislature		
Estonia (1992-2018)	2.21	PR	List PR	Parliamentarism	6/4.74
Georgia (2004-2018)	6.75	Mixed	Parallel (Majority and list)	Semi-presidentialism	2.52/1.91
Latvia (1993-2018)	5.17	PR	List PR	Parliamentarism	6.75/5.46
Lithuania (1992-2018)	3.39	Mixed	Parallel (Majority and list)	Semi-presidentialism	6.74/4.49
Moldova (1994-2018)	1.89	PR	List PR	Parliamentarism	4.25/3.01
Ukraine (1998-2018)	4.31	Mixed*	Parallel (Majority and list)	Semi-presidentialism	6.53/4.99

*In Ukraine, parliamentary elections in 1998, 2002, 2012, and 2014 were held via the Mixed system. But in 2006 and 2007, the elections were held through PR system.

Note: Government Closeness Index (GCI) – aggregate decentralization index (Ivanyna and Shah 2012); The data about electoral systems come from Electoral System Design Database (2019).

As it is seen from the table, institutional factors do not seem to explain party system fragmentation. Two countries with the most concentrated party system – Georgia and Moldova – take the highest and lowest values on decentralization. Therefore, decentralization is not associated with high fragmentation.

Regarding electoral systems, mixed systems translate electoral-level fragmentation into the parliamentary level more disproportionately than PR systems. For illustration, one can

look at Latvia and Lithuania which have almost identical fragmentation at the electoral level (6.75 and 6.74 respectively). But at the parliamentary level, the difference is approximately 1 point (Latvia – 5.46, Lithuania – 4.49). This might be attributed to the institutional design. However, it must be pointed out that largely differences in party system fragmentation are unexplained.

Chapter VI - The Role of Agency in Party Politics: Case of Georgia

The discussion above indicates that structural (societal and institutional) factors alone cannot explain why 6 countries have so different party system dynamics. Especially, the case of Georgia seems interesting because according to societal and institutional factors it is not very different from the other 5 countries but when it comes to party systems, it has a vividly dissimilar outcome.

This chapter argues that in the post-Soviet setting where structural factors alone do not sufficiently explain party systems, the approach which emphasizes the role of agency needs to be employed. More specifically, the chapter builds on previous studies (Enyedi 2005, 2008; Deegan-Krause and Enyedi 2010) that connect the sociological approach with political agency. This combination can be called “top-down” sociological approach. According to this approach, choices of political elites can influence cleavage structure of a society.

It must be pointed out that cleavage politics can be understood differently. For instance, Bartolini and Mair’s (1990, 212-220) demanding definition of cleavage implies social closure (or closed social groups) which is produced by the combination of societal stratification (census divide), group identity (value divide) and organizational membership (behavioural divide). This definition is too conservative even for Western European context and narrows down the applicability of the concept in post-communist countries. Throughout the thesis, a looser definition is employed. Thus, cleavage politics is defined as “a pattern of political competition embedded in the cognitive, emotive or social structures of the voters as opposed to one determined by day-to-day issues, evaluations of government performance or personalities” (Enyedi 2005, 2).

An ideal research design for studying the role of agency in post-Soviet party politics would be to have comparative dataset observations for all the 6 countries and to look for

associations between the work of agency (X) and party system characteristics (Y). However, this is not possible for at least two reasons. First of all, the role of agency as a factor is of primarily qualitative nature and accordingly, it is very hard to come up with cross-country comparable observations. Secondly, research on how elite choices have influenced or have failed to influence the environment requires a deep understanding of local context and specificities which is far beyond the capabilities of the author. For that reason, the case study of Georgia is conducted in order to demonstrate a link between the work of political agency and the party system characteristics of Georgia. More specifically, the following questions will be answered: (1) What exactly did the political elite in Georgia do to influence cleavage structure? (2) How voting behaviour was affected? And (3) Did the pattern of competition become embedded? The first question will be answered with the help of secondary literature and expert interviews. The second and third questions will be answered with the help of directed acyclic graphical (DAG) and path models which rely on survey data.

6.1. Context

The political landscape of Georgia from 2003 has been dominated by two major political organizations – [previously ruling] party of United National Movement (UNM) and [now ruling] party of Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (GD)¹⁰. Table 13 displays percentages jointly taken by these two parties in three pairs of elections in the period from 2011 until today.

This bipolar structure can explain low fragmentation and relative stability of party system in Georgia. In other 5 countries, one cannot find such a period during which the electoral arena was so heavily dominated by two political parties. But, what can explain this bipolar structure? It is argued throughout the thesis that choices made in the middle of 2000s by the leadership of UNM and its popular leader – president Mikheil Saakashvili (2004-2013)

¹⁰ Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia entered politics in 2011

– influenced and shaped cleavage structure of society and the bipolar pattern which now prevails can be seen as a reflection of it.

Table 13. Percentages of Votes Taken by UNM and GD

	Percentages jointly taken by Georgian Dream party (GD) and United National Movement (UNM)	
Parliamentary elections	95.3% (in 2012)	75% (in 2016)
Presidential elections	83.8% (in 2013)	87.3%* (in 2018)
Local elections	73.2% (in 2014)	83.3% (in 2017)

Source: Central Electoral Commission of Georgia

*Formally, in 2018 presidential elections, GD did not have its candidate. However, the party supported an independent candidate but as political observers pointed out the candidate's independence was only "symbolic" (JAMnews 2018)

6.2. The Work of Party Agency: What did UNM and Mikheil Saakashvili do exactly? West versus Russia

In what follows, the author relies on the integrated typology of elite actions with impacts on structures of party competition. The typology was offered by Deegan-Krause and Enyedi (2010, 705). They theorize how agents might achieve impact on political institutions, positional alignment, society and temporal stability. Throughout the study, 4 semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts and political observers from Georgia (see appendix 5 for respondents' profiles). Therefore, the analysis presented in this section is based on secondary academic literature, author's personal observations and expert interviews.

UNM and Mikheil Saakashvili gained power after the bloodless 2003 Rose Revolution. UNM maintained majority in parliament for 2 election cycles until 2012 parliamentary elections when GD defeated it. Similarly, Mikheil Saakashvili served 2 terms as a president (maximum according to the Georgia's constitution) until 2013 presidential elections, in which GD's candidate won. However, after the power transition, UNM continued to play a crucial role in party politics while Mikheil Saakashvili left the country.

When they were about to come to power in 2003, UNM and Mikheil Saakashvili positioned as a strictly anti-corruption political actor. While in 2012 and 2013, they were actively conveying a message that they were the only viable pro-West political force. GD which defeated UNM in 2012 parliamentary elections was portrayed by UNM as a pro-Russia actor. As majority of scholars have observed GD indeed supported the “normalization” policy towards Russia with softening political rhetoric and restored economic relations. However, GD cannot be categorized as a pro-Russia party (Kakachia, Minesashvili, and Kakhishvili 2018; Kakhishvili 2016). It would be more accurate to characterize GD as a pragmatist towards Russia (Kakhishvili 2016, 168–171). But UNM sees not only GD differently but the whole political landscape. According to the understanding of UNM, “Georgia’s foreign policy is a zero-sum game in which every step towards the West is a step away from Russia, and vice versa” (Kakhishvili 2016, 165).

Therefore, it can be argued that UNM created this jointly exclusive and mutually exhaustive divide in party politics: West versus Russia. On the one hand, there is an uncompromising pro-West orientation and on the other hand, there is a pro-Russia orientation which consists of pragmatist, neutral and/or pro-Russia positions.

This dichotomous understanding was initiated by UNM; it was not prevalent before the party came to power. Even though Russia as a factor has always been crucial in Georgian politics, the sharp contradiction between West and Russia was not translated into the political arena in the 1990s and in the first half of 2000s¹¹. According to a recent article by O’Beachain and Coene (2014), during the UNM’s rule the political elite used the discourse of Georgia’s European identity to gain popular legitimacy at home and Western patronage. Moreover, “it can be argued that the political discourse on Georgia’s Europeanness and pro-western foreign policy [...] was created by the former ruling party UNM” (Kakhishvili 2016, 173).

¹¹ However, labelling opponents as “Russian agents” has been prevalent from the early 1990s.

UNM established a clear symbolic continuity between the actors of the past and itself. In 2004, the UNM-dominated parliament adopted a new national flag of Georgia¹². The five-cross flag (that was adopted in 2004) was used in the 1990s by the Georgian patriotic movement and it symbolised the independence from the Soviet Union and Russia.

Since 2005, UNM has been presenting political struggles in value terms. The West versus Russia divide was portrayed as a civilizational choice. This civilizational choice is strongly intertwined with values and identity (Kakhishvili 2016, 167).

UNM de-emphasized other societal divisions that had potential to become relevant for party competition. In Georgia there are significant ethnic (Azerbaijani 6.3% and Armenians 4.5%) as well as religious minorities (Muslims 10.7%)¹³. UNM incorporated representatives and leaders of those groups – they were recruited in party-lists as well as candidates in majoritarian elections. Also, UNM tried to socialize new generations into its orientation. Thus, the above mentioned social divisions do not play a role in party competition.

UNM shaped bloc logic of party competition. The party and its leaders have regularly emphasized that they would not cooperate in any form with political forces that served the Russia's interests. This logic was even more strongly promoted after UNM became an opposition party and the leaders started emphasizing the necessity of a unified pro-West opposition.

Finally, UNM and its leadership used formal tools for political participation and mobilization. More specifically, in 2007 a referendum was initiated by the party that asked voters whether Georgia should pursue integration with NATO or not¹⁴.

But now, another question needs to be addressed – how did this West versus Russia divide actually work? With the help of survey data and directed acyclic graphs (DAG), the

¹² For more details: <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2017/81> Accessed on 30 April, 2019

¹³ For more details, see General Population Census of 2014. Link: http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=53&lang=eng Accessed on 30 April, 2019

¹⁴ The referendum was held on 5th of January 2008. The results were 77% for and 23% against.

subsequent sections examine the trickle-down effects of the West versus Russia divide at the level of voters and the implications for party identification and choice.

6.3. The West-Versus-Russia Divide and Party Identification

6.3.1. When UNM was a ruling party

While dealing with survey data, party identification can be operationalized in many different ways. The most straightforward way would be to investigate respondents' responses to the following questions: "Which party do you identify with?", "Which party is closest to you?", However, none of the abovementioned strategies will work in this particular case unfortunately. There are two reasons for it. First, even though there are surveys in Georgia that ask such questions to respondents, they do not measure respondents' attitudes towards Russia/West which is a key aspect of this study. Therefore, there are no datasets that contain information about attitudes towards Russia/West and direct party identification at the same time. Second reason is that such questions (e.g. "which party is closest to you?") have a big number of non-responses as well as a huge proportion of respondents who believe none of the existing parties is closest to them. This raises the problem of validity.

Therefore, a different strategy is employed. Throughout this section, attitudes towards one particular party (UNM) will be investigated. This strategy can be supported by two arguments. First is theoretical – in Georgia and in post-Soviet countries in general, attitudes towards political parties are very negative (Klingemann, Fuchs, and Zielonka 2006; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2011). As it has been demonstrated elsewhere, citizens are atomized, cynical and do not express positive views regarding political parties generally (Przeworski 1991). Therefore, if respondents express positive attitudes towards a particular party that typically cannot be because they like political parties as such; it is likely that they identify with them (relatively strongly than with other parties). On contrary, if respondents express negative attitudes towards a party it is hardly imaginable that they would identify with them.

The second supporting argument for the chosen strategy is empirical – respondents who say that they hold positive attitudes towards UNM overwhelmingly identify with it. There is only one dataset (named “Survey on protest and politics in Georgia” published by CRRC-Georgia - (CRRC 2009)) that measures both attitudes towards UNM and party identification. According to it, 92% of respondents who expressed positive attitudes towards UNM think that the party closest to them is UNM and 3% of respondents who expressed negative attitudes towards UNM reported that the party closest to them is UNM¹⁵. So, the dependent variable has three categories: positive, neutral, and negative attitudes towards UNM.

The data that will be used for analysis come from Caucasus Research Resource Centre in Georgia. The name of dataset is “Survey on protest and politics in Georgia” (CRRC 2009). The survey was conducted in 2009. The variable of interest – West-versus-Russia – can be operationalized in the following way: respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought Georgia should choose aligning with the West rather than with Russia.

In addition, a third variable will be investigated. There is a substantively important divide in Georgia - rural vs. urban - and no study of party-voters relationship in Georgia has the luxury to neglect it. According to the census which was conducted in 2014, 42.8% of Georgia’s population lives in rural areas¹⁶. People living in rural areas of Georgia are quite different from people living in urban areas. More specifically, people residing in cities and towns have an easy access to internet and major services by the government while that’s not the case with people living in rural areas. Thus, it’s reasonable to assume that between-groups variations (rural vs. urban) is bigger than within-group variations. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the rural/urban cleavage is very important in respect to party politics and party system (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Kitschelt 1992).

¹⁵ Even in this case, “party closest to you” has many non-responses. However, it still indicates that the chosen strategy does not suffer from the validity problem severely.

¹⁶ National Statistics Office of Georgia. Link: www.geostat.ge , Accessed on April 8, 2019

The operationalization of the rural/urban divide is quite straightforward: almost every survey that was conducted by CRRC-Georgia reports respondents' settlement type. Therefore, the variable has two categories – rural and urban.

- Analysis

First of all, the chi-square statistic is used for testing relationships between the West-versus-Russia orientation, settlement type and attitudes towards UNM. The null hypothesis is that no relationship exists between the variables and they are independent. The null hypothesis was rejected ($p < .05$) in respect to all three pairs of variables. Therefore, it seems that none of the variables are independent from one another.

However, one might ask, does the West-versus-Russia orientation have an effect on identification with UNM or vice versa? Conventionally, it seems more plausible to expect that because they have certain orientation, respondents and voters favour and identify with the party that matches their orientation. However, the theoretical underpinning in this case is that UNM emphasized and activated the hitherto not-so-relevant relationship between the West-versus-Russia orientation and party identification. Therefore, both directions can be expected.

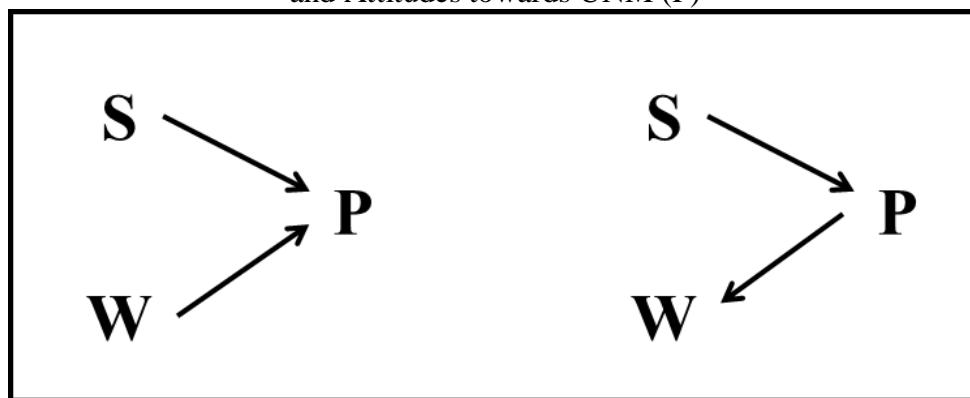
Németh and Rudas (2013, 80–88) have demonstrated how direct acyclic graphs (DAG), also called Bayesian networks, can be used to study associations that are not symmetric and represent relations of response and dependence. A DAG model is a graph in which vertices are connected with arrows under the constraint that no directed cycles are present. As they point out, “the arrows of a DAG have no individual meaning” (p. 81) and only the structure as a whole should be interpreted. Németh and Rudas show that in some cases, a comparison of model fit permits to decide about the direction of a particular effect (p. 88).

In what follows, the same logic is applied to the data to investigate the relationship between settlement type, West-versus-Russia orientation and attitudes towards UNM. Both,

settlement type and West-versus-Russia orientation have only two categories; either rural or urban and either pro-West or pro-Russia respectively¹⁷. Attitudes towards UNM has three categories: positive, neutral, and negative.

Figure 4 displays two DAG models. The first model implies marginal independence between S and W. While the second graph implies that S and W are conditionally independent given P. Based on the data, one can decide which model, and therefore which direction, to choose. If none of the two models fit, it might mean that there should be an arrow between S and W.

Figure 4. DAG Models for the Association of Settlement Type (S), West-versus-Russia (W), and Attitudes towards UNM (P)



The likelihood-ratio statistics for the first model is 4.17 on 1 degree of freedom. While for the second model, it is 1.7 on 3 degree of freedom. P values are 0.03 and 0.63 respectively¹⁸. This means that the first model fits quite poorly and therefore, S and W are not marginally independent. While the second model fits reasonably well and therefore, S and W are conditionally independent given P (See Appendix 6 for R code).

Generally, one has to be cautious when interpreting such results. Results, in itself, do not automatically imply effects and less so, that there is a causal effect. Also, the assumption

¹⁷ Generally, it might not seem perfectly reasonable to assume that if a person is not pro-West then, he/she is automatically pro-Russia. However, in the Georgian context this assumption probably holds. More importantly, this is exactly what UNM has been doing. They have been dividing political landscape and party alternatives into two exclusive categories: pro-Western and pro-Russian camps. Holding the position that favours neutrality or non-alignment is widely believed to be in the Russian interests.

¹⁸ P-values higher than 0.05 are conventionally treated as acceptable fit.

that there is a set of variables that influence the outcome and nothing else, suggests that the application of such methods in political science should be very careful and tailored to the context specificities and research interests. But given the research question and the background context, this particular result can be treated as a confirmation of what has been expected. As chi-square test indicated, settlement type and West-versus-Russia orientation did not seem independent from each other. However, as DAG models and respective goodness of fit suggested, if one knows person's attitudes towards UNM, then, settlement type does not give any additional information about the West-versus-Russia orientation.

In order to investigate the relationship more accurately, the following section will apply the same method to the data that come from 2015, when UNM was not a ruling party anymore.

6.3.2. When UNM became an opposition party

An initial intent was to exactly replicate what was done in the previous section. However, it is not possible unfortunately because the variable West-versus-Russia cannot be operationalized in the same way. Therefore, a proxy variable will be included.

In 2015, CRRC-Georgia conducted a survey called "Knowledge of and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia, 2015" (CRRC 2015). The dataset measures attitudes towards UNM and settlement type in exactly the same way and therefore, their operationalizations are identical to the previous ones. In regard to the West-versus-Russia orientation, Attitudes towards NATO is taken as a proxy measure.

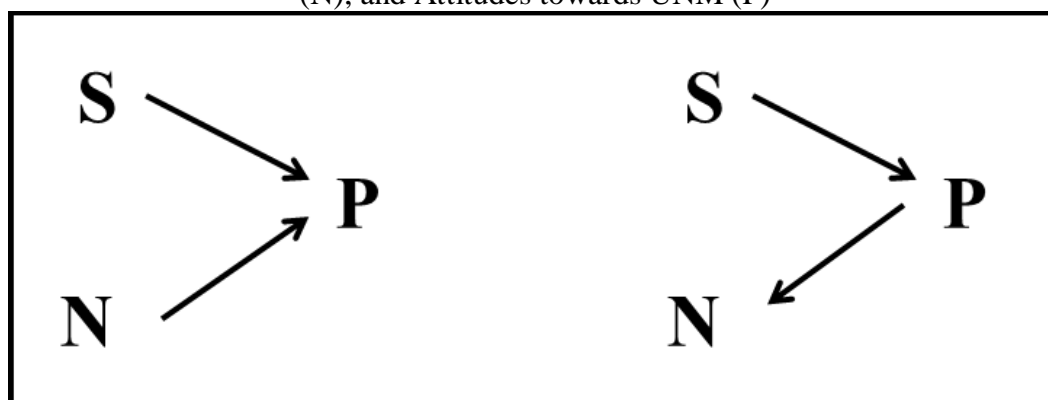
Attitudes towards NATO is a principal aspect of the West-versus-Russia orientation. UNM is not only very sympathetic towards NATO from its birth until today, but it played a very important role in emphasizing/activating it. When UNM was a ruling party, there was a referendum proposed by the party leader (and then president of Georgia – Mikheil Saakashvili) in 2007. The referendum asked people whether they approved joining NATO or

not. The results were in favour of joining. Therefore, given the Georgian context, positive attitudes towards NATO can be treated as a pro-West orientation, while negative attitudes towards NATO – as a pro-Russia orientation. Therefore, the variable of interest has 3 categories: positive, neutral, and negative attitudes towards NATO¹⁹.

Figure 5 displays another pair of DAG models. The first model implies marginal independence between S and N. While the second model implies that S and N are conditionally independent given P. Based on the data, one can decide which model, and therefore which direction, to choose.

The likelihood-ratio statistics for the first model is 2.68 on 2 degrees of freedom. While for the second model, it is 17.4 on 6 degrees of freedom. P values are 0.26 and 0.008 respectively. This means that the first model fits quite well and therefore, S and N are marginally independent. While the second model fits poorly and therefore, S and N are not conditionally independent given P (See Appendix 7 for R code).

Figure 5. DAG Models for the Association of Settlement Type (S), Attitudes towards NATO (N), and Attitudes towards UNM (P)



An instant interpretation would be that settlement type and attitudes towards NATO have an effect on people's attitudes towards UNM. In comparison to the previous analysis (in 2009), the model suggests that the direction of relationship between the West-versus-Russia

¹⁹ It is possible to treat the “neutral” category as a Pro-Russia position and have only two categories, however, as long as it is a proxy measure, it is better not to simplify categories too much.

orientation and identification with UNM reversed after UNM's transition in opposition. But how plausible is it?

Based on theoretical expectations, it is indeed plausible. In 2009, UNM was in government, had supermajority in parliament and was actively shaping the political landscape in terms of the West-versus-Russia orientation. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that voters who were sympathetic towards UNM and its leader – President Mikheil Saakashvili, were nudged to favour West over Russia. On contrary, in 2015, UNM was in opposition and was stripped off all its governmental powers. However, the West-versus-Russia orientation continued to play a role.

It is important to demonstrate that the West-versus-Russia orientation does not similarly influence attitudes towards the party which defeated UNM in 2012 and is the ruling party since then. The party is called Georgian Dream (GD) and is the arch-enemy of UNM. If the West-versus-Russia orientation is similarly relevant for attitudes towards GD, then, one has to conclude that there is nothing special about the relationship between the West-versus-Russia orientation and UNM. According to the chi-square statistics, attitudes towards GD and attitudes towards NATO are not dependent (for more illustration follow the link in the respective footnote²⁰).

Despite such a promising interpretation, now it is time to reflect on limitations which are impossible to override. First of all, the fact that the West-versus-Russia orientation was operationalized in two different ways has probably influenced the results. Unfortunately, there were no alternative ways to operationalize (at least to the author's knowledge) that could be used for validation. This undoubtedly shakes the findings. Also, there were only three variables included in the DAG models and this constitutes a very strong simplification.

²⁰ Attitudes towards GD and attitudes towards NATO – link:
<https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/eu2015ge/FEELGED-by-NATOPR-withoutdkra/>
 Attitudes towards UNM and attitudes towards NATO – link:
<https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/eu2015ge/FEELUNM-by-NATOPR-withoutdkra/>
 Accessed on 30 April, 2019

In order to partly account for the latter limitation, a DAG model (with more variables) is applied to investigate party choice, which is understandably more relevant for the contours of party system than party identification and attitudes towards UNM. The following section presents a DAG model for party vote based on data that come from 2009 when UNM was a ruling party.

6.4. The Role of West-Versus-Russia Divide and The Charismatic Leader in Party Choice

When dealing with DAG models, there are several concepts of graph theory that are necessary to bring up for this section. Namely, “parents of a vertex - vertices from which arrows point to the given vertex and descendants – vertices that are reachable from the given vertex through a directed path” (Németh and Rudas 2013, 81). It should also be pointed out that one needs to give Markov Properties (MP) – which are conditional independence statements²¹.

Numerous different DAG models with different socio-demographic or attitudinal variables were tested and finally, a model that fits is presented. Figure 6 and Table 14 display the DAG model and fit statistics respectively (See Appendix 8 for R code).

All the six variables in Figure 6 are binary: **G** – male/female, **A** – (age) below/above the medium, **S** – rural/urban, **M** – (Mikheil Saakshvili – UNM leader and then president) dislike/like, **W** – pro-Russia/pro-West, and **P** – (voting) not-for-UNM/for UNM²².

²¹ For detailed discussion, see (Németh and Rudas 2013, 80–88)

²² Data come from “Survey on politics and protests in Georgia, 2009”. It was conducted by CRRC-Georgia.

Figure 6. Directed Acyclic Graph for Party Vote

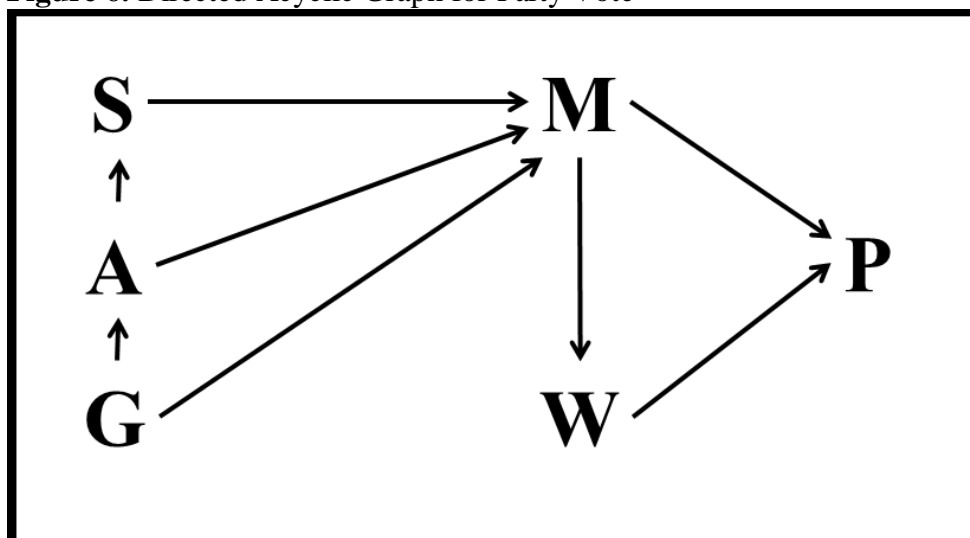


Table 14. Fit Statistics for the Model in Figure 6

Loglikelihood Ratio	p ($df = 46$)	BIC	n
57.5	0.12	-255.2	996

Note: BIC = Bayesian information criterion

A general method of obtaining a proper parameterization is based on a well numbering of the variables. Accordingly, one applies a certain interpretation based on well-numbering. Namely, a variable X is conditionally independent of those nondescendants (excluding the parents of X) that precede X , given the parents of X (Lauritzen et al. 1990; Rudas, Bergsma, and Németh 2006; Németh and Rudas 2013).

A well-numbering of variables in this case is GASMWP and therefore, marginals are G , GA , GAS , $GASM$, $GASMW$ and $GASMWP$. One might ask why attitudes towards Mikheil Saakashvili (M) precedes the West-versus-Russia orientation (W). Firstly, Saakashvili has been quite popular from 2003 Rose Revolution and only after several years he and UNM started to intensively activate the West-versus-Russia orientation. Secondly, the data above indicated that in 2009, the direction can be from attitudes towards the West-versus-Russia orientation.

Interpretation of the graph is the following: party vote is conditionally independent from gender, age and settlement type given the attitudes towards the party leader and the West-

versus-Russia orientation ($P \perp GAS | MW$). Also, the West-versus-Russia orientation is conditionally independent from gender, age and settlement type given the attitudes towards the party leader ($W \perp GAS | M$). And finally, settlement type and gender are conditionally independent given the age ($S \perp G | A$).

According to the conditional independence statements, parameterization of the graph is conducted (See Table 15). All the other effects, which contain variables that are conditionally independent from each other, are set to zero (see Appendix 8 for detailed R code).

Table 15. Parameterization of the Graph Model in Figure 6

Marginal	Nonrestricted effect
G	G
GA	A, GA
GAS	S, AS,
GASM	M, GM, AM, SM, GAM, ASM
GASMW	W, MW
GASMWP	P, MP, WP, MWP

- Path Model for Party Vote

Rudas, Bergsma, and Németh (2006) defined discrete path models by restricting discrete DAG models. The idea is that in the hierarchical marginal log-linear parameterization higher than first-order effects are set to zero. Path models are marginal log-linear models and they have a straightforward interpretation as well as all the desirable statistical properties of the initial graphical model (Németh and Rudas 2013, 95).

So, in order to apply a path model to the above mentioned problem, GAM, ASM and MWP effects need to be set to zero additionally. Therefore, the model assumes only separable effects.

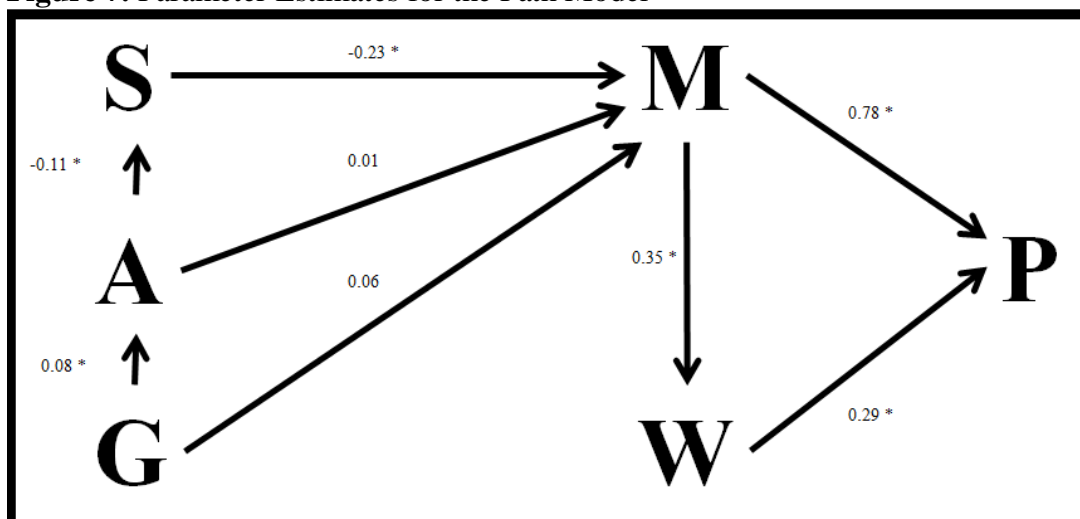
After restricting higher than first-order effects to zero, the path model fit is acceptable. Table 16 summarizes fit statistics for the path model (see Appendix 9 for details).

Table 16. Fit Statistics for the Path Model

Loglikelihood Ratio	p ($df = 49$)	BIC	n
64.4	0.07	-268.7	996

Note: BIC = Bayesian information criterion

Parameter estimates are given in Figure 7 (see Appendix 10 for detailed R code). All the variables are binary and for that reason, only the nonredundant parameters pertaining to the first categories are present²³. The asterisk * next to the numbers indicates the significance level. It was calculated by imposing zeros for each effect. The asterisk * implies that after restricting that particular interaction, the model fit was not acceptable (i.e. p-value did not pass the conventional threshold of .05).

Figure 7. Parameter Estimates for the Path Model

There are six significant parameters. A positive parameter of 0.08 next to the GA arrow implies that there are more women in the category of older people (above the median, which is 48). -0.11 next to the AS arrow resonates with the common sense that younger people are less likely to live in rural areas than older people. However, values in both cases are quite modest and do not carry much substantive significance.

The other four significant values are quite high as well as substantively important. When age and gender are controlled for, people residing in rural areas like Mikheil

²³ G: 1st category is Male, A: 1st category is age Below the median, S: 1st category is Rural, M: 1st category is Dislike towards Saakashvili, W: 1st category is Pro-Russia, P: 1st category is vote for non-UNM.

Saakashvili more than in urban areas. The highest value (0.78) is on the MP arrow, which very interestingly demonstrates how strongly party choice might be dependent on a charismatic leader. The West-versus-Russia orientation also has significant positive value (0.29) which implies that people with pro-Russia orientation are clearly less likely to vote for UNM even when attitudes towards the charismatic leader and settlement type are controlled for. This inevitably means that people with pro-West orientation are more likely to vote for UNM.

To conclude, as the analyses demonstrated the West-versus-Russia seems to be playing an important independent role in determining party choice. However, party choice as well as the West-versus-Russia orientation itself heavily depends on the charismatic leader, which is not a big surprise. In Georgia, charismatic leaders had always been central to politics. But when a leader invests in party building and politicizes a crucial orientation, the party might attract votes even after that leader and party lose the governmental power and the leader leaves the country (as it is the case with Mikheil Saakashvili and UNM).

6.5. Bi-Polar Structure of Party System

In order to further demonstrate how this structure actually works, one can survey the recent political landscape of Georgia. In addition to UNM and its archenemy - GD, other smaller parties and their behaviour can indicate how embedded the bipolar structure is.

2018 presidential elections were a clear demonstration of the bi-polar structure. According to Central Electoral Commission of Georgia, in the first round, candidates which were supported and nominated by the two major parties – UNM and GD – received 37.7% and 38.6% of votes respectively. According to the constitution of Georgia, if no candidate can secure more than 50% of votes in the first round, the most successful two candidates have to

compete in the second round. GD's candidate received 59.5% of votes in the second round and therefore, became a president of Georgia. But what is interesting is how smaller parties behaved between the first and second rounds. More specifically, which candidates they supported.

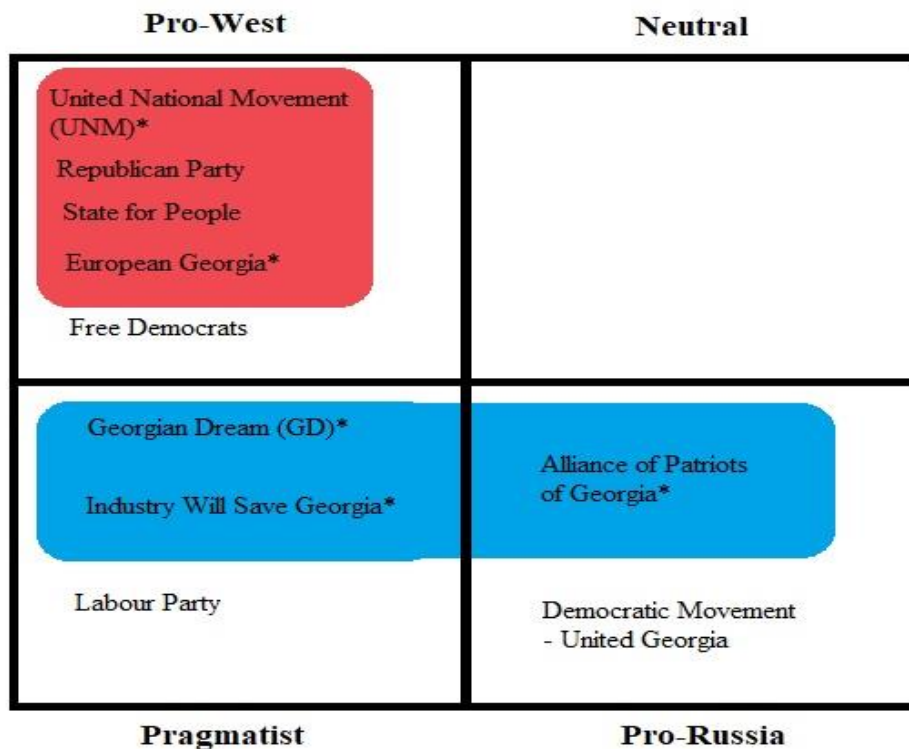
Figure 8 groups political parties of Georgia into 4 categories according to their international orientation. This categorization relies on Kakhishvili's article (2016) but is slightly amended based on the expert interviews because Kakhishvili's article deals with Georgian political parties in 2012 while the current categorization is based on more recent developments (e.g. 2016 parliamentary elections and 2018 presidential elections).

Figure 8 Includes 9 parties which received more than 1% of votes in the 2016 parliamentary elections²⁴. An asterisk next a party name implies the parliamentary presence (at least one seat in the 2016 parliament). Republican Party, State for People and European Georgia (the latter is a splinter of UNM) supported UNM's candidate. Free Democrats which also belong to the pro-West camp did not support UNM's candidate but the party had no candidate in the presidential elections and aligned with European Georgia in April 2019. Alliance of Patriots of Georgia and Industry Will Save Georgia supported the candidate that was affiliated with GD. Democratic Movement-United Georgia which is believed to be a pro-Russia political organization, did not support GD's candidate but had no candidate in the presidential elections and was vividly hostile towards UNM.

As it is seen from the Figure 8, the bi-polar pattern that was initiated by UNM in the middle of 2000s works in party politics of Georgia even in 2018. Smaller parliamentary as well as non-parliamentary parties typically align based on foreign policy.

²⁴ A political party "Industry Will Save Georgia" received less than 1% but its representative gained a seat in the parliament through a single-member constituency

Figure 8. Alignment of Smaller Parties According to the Bi-polar pattern



Source: The categorization comes from Kakhishvili's article (2016). But it is amended based on expert interviews.

NOTE: Relative positions within categories do not have any meaning. The red background indicates that those parties officially supported the UNM's candidate. The blue background implies the support for the candidate affiliated with GD. An asterisk * indicates parliamentary presence.

6.6. Back to the Post-Soviet Level

The fact that the dominant conflict dimension in the most concentrated party system of Georgia is related to foreign policy deserves more attention. Zsolt Enyedi (2008, 297-298) has noted that in post-communist Europe one of the most embedded attitudinal conflict is, what the author calls, "Westernization". What is meant is the attitude to European integration for example. Therefore, this dimension in post-communist countries has a clear foreign policy component.

Theoretically, in the post-Soviet space, the foreign policy component should be of different kind than in post-communist European states that were not member-states of the Soviet Union for at least two reasons. First reason is geographical proximity with Russia. Secondly, In addition to being under the Moscow's rule throughout the 20th century,

Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia were annexed by the Tsarist Russia during the 19th century too. Therefore, international status of these countries is arguably more strongly intertwined with the issue of identity and is of more dichotomous nature – West versus Russia (while in post-communist European states there is a room for manoeuvre).

However, this dichotomous division may not be equally central for all the six post-Soviet countries and respective party system dynamics. In countries which have more or less resolved the issues of international status and identity, other [arguably domestic] divisions are expected to arise to the surface. Accordingly, two groups can be underlined; On the one hand, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that are integrated with Euro-Atlantic structures (European Union and NATO) and therefore, have more or less resolved the issue of international identity. On the other hand, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia for which the question of West versus Russia might play a greater role.

In order to test this proposition, party manifestos are compared. Comparative Manifesto Project studies platforms and manifestos of those parties that gained at least one seat in parliament. The project covers 56 countries that come from OECD and Central and Eastern Europe. The time span is from the first democratic election until 2017. Therefore, for post-Soviet countries the project contains party platforms from 1991 until 2017.

Two indicators are used - “Russia/USSR/CIS: Positive” and “Russia/USSR/CIS: Negative”. They measure favourable and unfavourable mentions of Russia in parliamentary party manifestos.

Table 17 presents the number of pre-elections platforms of parliamentary parties that mentioned Russia either favourably or unfavourably in 5 post-Soviet countries before and after 2004 (For Georgia, the two indicators are not measured). In 2004, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became members of the European Union and NATO.

As it can be seen from Table 17, Russia as a factor for party competition has been weakened in three Baltic countries after they resolved the issue of international identity. For Moldova and Ukraine it still plays an important role.

Table 17. Emphasis on Russia in Party Manifestos

	Number of parliamentary party platforms that mentioned Russia before 2004 (either favourably or unfavourably)	Number of parliamentary party platforms that mentioned Russia after 2004 (either favourably or unfavourably)
Estonia	15	0
Latvia	15	1
Lithuania	14	0
Moldova	13	13
Ukraine	25	6

Source: Krause, Werner, Lehmann, Pola, Lewandowski, Jirka, Matthieß, Theres, Merz, Nicolas, and Regel, Sven (2018): Manifesto Corpus. Version: 2018-2. Berlin: WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

NOTE: For Estonia, pre-election manifestos are included for the following national legislative elections: 1992, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015. For Latvia, pre-election manifestos are included for the following national legislative elections: 1993, 1995, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2014. For Lithuania, pre-election manifestos are included for the following national legislative elections: 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012. For Moldova, pre-election manifestos are included for the following national legislative elections: 1994, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2014. For Ukraine, pre-election manifestos are included for the following national legislative elections: 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2007.

Therefore, it might be more meaningful to divide these 6 countries into two groups; Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia that are different from Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine but not because of the quality of democracy *per se* as it is often expressed, but because of the international status. Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia do not have consolidated international status and identities and therefore, foreign policy must be more central for party competition. Moreover, in these countries foreign policy should be of more dichotomous nature.

If we divide countries into two groups, rank-ordering their party systems along the key dimensions makes more sense (Table 18). In the group of Baltic countries, Estonia has the most consolidated party system while Latvia has the least. Regarding the other group, the

party system of Georgia seems to be the most concentrated and relatively stable while Ukraine has the most fragmented and unstable system.

Table 18. Two Groups of Party Systems and Their Party System Characteristics

Fragmentation* (from least to most)	Polarization (from least to most)	Party Continuity** (from most to least)	Electoral Volatility (from least volatile to most)	Party System Closure (from the most closed to least)
Georgia	Georgia	Moldova	Georgia	Georgia
Moldova	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova	Moldova
Ukraine	Moldova	Ukraine	Ukraine	Ukraine
Fragmentation* (from least to most)	Polarization (from least to most)	Party Continuity** (from most to least)	Electoral Volatility (from least volatile to most)	Party System Closure (from the most closed to least)
Estonia	Estonia	Estonia	Estonia	Estonia
Lithuania	Lithuania	Lithuania	Latvia	Lithuania
Latvia	Latvia	Latvia	Lithuania	Latvia

Note: the table is based on Chapter III (see above).

*Fragmentation is based on average effective number of parliamentary as well as electoral parties after 2000 (see section 3.1. above);

**Party Continuity is based on average ages of two most successful parliamentary parties in most recent elections in each country (see section 3.3. above)

However, this does not mean that the issue of Russia is not important in the Baltic countries. Saarts (2011) has overviewed the literature on party systems of three Baltic states and noted that the issue of Russia is to some extent incorporated in other domestic divisions such as ethnic cleavages (in Latvia and less strongly in Estonia), socio-economic cleavages (in Lithuania and less strongly in Estonia) and communist/anti-communist cleavages.

Concerning the other group of countries, it was demonstrated that in Georgia, the foreign policy dimension plays a principal role in party competition. In Ukraine it is undeniable that the West-versus-Russia divide is a decisive aspect of politics as it was exemplified by the 2014 Maidan Revolution when then president of Ukraine - Viktor Yanukovich – did not sign the association agreement with the EU and as a result had to face the revolution and fled the country. In Moldova, as 2010 and 2014 parliamentary elections

had shown the main dividing line between parties was country's future either with the EU or Russia (Socor 2014).

But why then Moldova and Georgia have so different party systems²⁵? The thesis cannot convincingly answer this question because it was only demonstrated that party agency influenced cleavage structure in Georgia and the case of Moldova has not been studied sufficiently deeply. However, one illustrative point can still be made.

Table 19. Political Actors Associated with Euro-Integration in Moldova and Georgia

Moldova		Georgia	
Party/Leader	% of respondents who believe they are associated with European integration	Party/Leader	% of respondents who believe they share European values
Liberal Democratic Party/Vlad Filat	38.5%	UNM/Mikheil Saakashvili	47%
Liberal Party/Mihai Ghimpu	37.3%	Republican Party/David Usuphashvili	26%
Democratic Party of Moldova/Marian Lupu	21.8%	Georgian Dream/Irakli Gharibashvili	24%

Source: For Moldova the data (2013) is taken from Public Opinion Barometer, Institute of Public Policies. For Georgia, the data is taken from Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC 2015).

Note: Both of the datasets consist of many other parties/leaders as well but for the presentation purposes, only those three parties/leaders are shown that had highest percentages.

Table 19 demonstrates that in Georgia, the pro-West position is unequivocally dominated by one party. While in Moldova, the competition for the pro-West profile is tight. This might be another indication of the successful work of party agency in Georgia.

²⁵ The 2014 revolution and the subsequent annexation of Ukrainian territories by Russia do not allow comparing Ukraine to the two countries.

Conclusions

The thesis challenged the deterministic structuralist position according to which a political outcome is fundamentally determined by superstructure. It was argued theoretically and demonstrated empirically that in new democracies and semi-democracies of the post-Soviet space, where deep-rooted socio-cultural divisions had been kept detached from politics throughout the 20th century, there is a bigger room for the work of agency because deep-seated societal divides do not tie the hands of agency to the same extent as in other democracies.

The principal goal of the study was to examine factors which affect party systems of post-Soviet countries and that could account for variations in fragmentation and stability. Accordingly, the thesis distinguished and applied three theoretical approaches to party systems – the “bottom-up” sociological, institutional and “top-down” sociological approaches. As it was demonstrated, the first two approaches cannot say a lot about party systems of post-Soviet countries. “Bottom-up” sociological and institutional theories do not take the role of specific actors into account and try to look at party systems as mere reflections of societal stratifications and/or institutional-constitutional design.

Consequently, the author took the case of Georgia in order to assess the “top-down” sociological approach which connects the societal level with agency. The case of Georgia was interesting from two viewpoints. Firstly, it has clearly dissimilar party system from other post-Soviet (and post-communist in general) countries while in terms of other structural factors it does not look that different. Secondly, throughout the 2000s Georgia’s political life was heavily dominated by the charismatic leader –Mikheil Saakashvili – and its party (UNM). After 2012, when UNM was stripped off its governmental powers and Mikheil Saakashvili left the country, UNM maintained its mainstream position in party politics. If a party and

politics depend so heavily on one person, then after that person is removed one might expect that the whole structure collapses. That did not happen in Georgia.

It was shown that Mikheil Saakashvili and UNM leadership shaped the cleavage structure of society which plays an important role even today. This was done with the help of directed acyclic graphical (DAG) models. The method has not been used extensively in party-related researches partly because it is rather novel. However, the thesis has shown how helpful it might be in studying questions that reside at the intersection of sociology and political science.

Thus, party agency can make a big difference and it is optimal to approach party systems from “top-down” sociological perspective. In other words, the societal level and political agency interact with each other and this interaction is a key for understanding party systems. Socio-structural environment on the one hand, and agency on the other, should be perceived as a two-way street. When they meet each other, as it happened in Georgia, seemingly idiosyncratic party system dynamics can be explained. Especially, it has already been demonstrated how party agency decisively affected another concentrated party system in the post-communist setting - Hungary (Enyedi 2005).

Throughout the thesis, structural factors were examined in six post-Soviet countries. Three of them (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia) are full-fledged democracies while the quality of democracy of the other three countries is deficient. However, the difference between the quality of democracy *per se* was disregarded as a factor for case selection. But the thesis has concluded that the differentiation between the Baltic countries and Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine might be meaningful when one studies party systems and factors affecting them because in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania domestic divisions might play a greater role in party system dynamics while in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine international status and identity, that are still to be resolved, are of primary importance.

The thesis has several evident limitations. First of all, the research design is not perfect. Ideally, the role of agency should have been studied in all the six countries. Unfortunately, such research design was not possible. Instead, the case of Georgia has been studied and the link between the work of party agency and the bi-polar structure has been demonstrated. Also, the thesis has not dealt with implications for democracy. The relationship between party system characteristics and the quality of democracy cannot be overstated.

The latter point needs to be addressed by future research as well. If one surveys post-communist countries, it is clear that less fragmented and relatively stable party systems also struggle with the quality of democracy. For instance, Hungary, Montenegro and Georgia which have the most concentrated and stable party systems in the post-communist region were labelled as “Partly Free” by Freedom House (2019)²⁶. On the other hand, those post-communist countries that do not struggle with the level of democracy typically have quite fragmented and volatile party systems. For example, Estonia and Slovenia which had the highest combined Freedom House scores in 2019 in the region. Therefore, a widely accepted proposition that a stable and consolidated party system is vital for democracy does not perfectly reflect the post-communist reality and needs to be explored in future.

²⁶ Even though Hungary was an exemplary case of post-communist democracy, its level has been continuously declining since 2010

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Appendix

Appendix 1

How to calculate Effective Number of Parties

Fragmentation of party systems – measuring how many parties, weighted according to their size, are in a party system in a given election is calculated with the help of the following formulae:

- How fragmented is the party system at the level of elections – Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP)

$$\text{ENEP} = 1 / \sum v_i^2$$

Where v_i stands for the proportion of votes of the i^{th} party

- How fragmented is the party system at the level of parliament – Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP)

$$\text{ENPP} = 1 / \sum s_i^2$$

Where s_i stands for the proportion of seats of the i^{th} party

Appendix 2

How to calculate total, extra-system and within-system volatility scores

1. Total electoral volatility:

$$\text{Volatility} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n |p_{it} - p_{i(t+1)}|}{2}$$

In the abovementioned formula, n represents the number of parties while p_i is the percentage of votes received by that party in the parliamentary elections at time t as well as at $t+1$.

2. Electoral volatility which is attributable to new parties. Mainwaring, Gervasoni, and Espana-Najera (2016) called it “extra-system volatility” while Powell and Tucker (2014) labelled it as Type A Volatility:

$$\text{Type A Volatility} = \frac{|\sum_{o=1}^n p_{ot} + \sum_{w=1}^n p_{w(t+1)}|}{2}$$

In the formula, o implies old parties that contested only the election at time t and disappeared at time $t+1$ while w refers to new parties which contested only the election at time $t+1$ (and not at time t). Therefore, this measure only captures volatility that is driven by new parties entering the party system.

3. Electoral volatility driven by vote switches between established parties. Mainwaring, Gervasoni, and Espana-Najera (2016) called it “within-system volatility” while Powell and Tucker (2014) referred to it as Type B Volatility:

$$\text{Type B Volatility} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n |p_{it} - p_{i(t+1)}|}{2}$$

This formula is basically the same as the first one (Total volatility), but one caveat is essential – it is only calculated among established parties. In other words, only those parties in the party system which are present at the time of both the current election ($t+1$) and the previous election (t).

Appendix 3

Multiple Linear Regression. Within-system and Extra-system Volatility.

	Within-System	Extra-System
Intercept	86.9*** (20.14)	35.5 (70.9)
Party Age	-0.52 (0.3)	-0.64 (1.06)
ENEP	2.47** (0.7)	2.52 (2.6)
Barriers to Parties	-17.8** (4.9)	-2.31 (17.3)
Polarization	-0.37** (0.1)	0.08 (0.35)
GDP growth rate	-0.2 (0.16)	-0.53 (0.57)
Inflation	0.07 (0.1)	0.06 (0.36)
Ethnic Heterogeneity	-2.08 (11.01)	9.2 (38.8)
Urban-Rural division	-4.18* (1.62)	-0.7 (5.71)
Time	0.35 (0.26)	-0.69 (0.93)
R-squared	0.46	0.32
Adjusted R-squared	0.26	0.06
P-value	< .05	=0.3

Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

*, ** and *** indicate significance at the 90%, 95% and 99% level.

Barriers to Parties - as a variable was omitted from the analyses because it varies only slightly.

Appendix 4

Assumption diagnostics of multiple linear regression. Total Electoral Volatility

It can be argued that the variables are normally distributed because all the values of skewness and kurtosis are between -2 and 2. It was tested by DESCRIBE function from package (“psych”).

The assumption of homoscedasticity is met and is confirmed by chi-square test: 0.024, degree of freedom = 1, $p = 0.87$. It was tested by NCVTEST function from package (“car”)

Appendix 5

Respondent Profiles

Occupation	Date
Policy Analyst at Georgian Institute of Politics	April, 2019
Deputy Director at Georgian Institute of Politics	May, 2019
Professor of Political Science at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	May, 2019
Director of Caucasus Research Resource Center – Georgia	May, 2019

Appendix 6

R code. Settlement type (S), West-vs-Russia orientation (W), and identification with UNM (P)

```
SPW <- read.csv("spw.csv")
```

```
# data is SPW[,4]
```

```
library("cmm")
```

```
margSWP=c("S","W","P")
```

```
margSW=c("S", "W")
```

```
margSP=c("S", "P")
```

```
margWP=c("W", "P")
```

```
##marginal independence of S and W.
```

```
#Maximal interactions are S and W in the marginal table SW:
```

```
bt = ConstraintMatrix(margSW, list(c("S"),c("W")), c(2,2))
```

```
at=MarginalMatrix(margSWP,margSW,c(2,2,3))
```

```
model <- list( bt, "log", at)
```

```
fit=MarginalModelFit(SPW[,4],model>ShowCoefficients=FALSE)
```

```
# p = 0.041, likelihood ratio=4.172
```

```
##conditional independence of S and W.
```

```
#Maximal interactions are SP and PW in the marginal table SWP:
```

```
bt = ConstraintMatrix(margSWP, list(margSP,margWP), c(2,2,3))
```

```
at=MarginalMatrix(margSWP,margSWP,c(2,2,3))
```

```
model <- list( bt, "log", at)
```

```
fit=MarginalModelFit(SPW[,4],model,ShowCoefficients=FALSE)
```

```
# p = 0.63; likelihood ratio = 1.7
```

Appendix 7

R code. Settlement type (S), Attitudes towards NATO (N), and identification with UNM (P)

```
SNP <- read.csv("2015_snp.csv")
```

```
# data is SNP[,4]
```

```
margSNP=c("S", "N", "P")
```

```
margSN=c("S", "N")
```

```
margSP=c("S", "P")
```

```
margNP=c("N", "P")
```

```
library(cmm)
```

```
##marginal independence of S and N.
```

```
#Maximal interactions are S and N in the marginal table SN:
```

```
bt = ConstraintMatrix(margSN, list(c("S"),c("N")), c(2,3))
```

```
at=MarginalMatrix(margSNP,margSN,c(2,3,3))
```

```
model <- list( bt, "log", at)
```

```
fit=MarginalModelFit(SNP[,4],model,ShowCoefficients=FALSE)
```

```
# p=0.2607; Likelihood ration = 2.688797
```

```
##conditional independence of S and N.
```

```
#Maximal interactions are SP and NP in the marginal table SNP:
```

```
bt = ConstraintMatrix(margSNP, list(margSP,margNP), c(2,3,3))
```



```

at=MarginalMatrix(margSNP,margSNP,c(2,3,3))
model <- list( bt, "log", at)
fit=MarginalModelFit(SNP[,4],model,ShowCoefficients=FALSE)
# p=0.0079257; likelihood ratio=17.39829

```

Appendix 8

R code of DAG model. Gender (G), Age (A), Settlement type (S), Attitudes towards Mikheil Saakashvili (M), West-vs.-Russia orientation (W), and Vote/No Vote for UNM (P)

```

Library(cmm)
DATA <- read.csv("gasmwp.csv")

# data is DATA[,7]

bt1 = ConstraintMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),
list(c("G","A","S","M","W"),c("M","W","P")), c(2,2,2,2,2,2))
at1=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2)
)

bt2 = ConstraintMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W"), list(c("G","A","S","M"),c("M","W")),
c(2,2,2,2,2))
at2=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M","W"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))

bt3 = ConstraintMatrix(c("G","A","S","M"), list(c("A","S","M"), c("G","A","M")), c(2,2,2,2))
at3=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))

at <- rbind(at1, at2, at3);
bt <- DirectSum(bt1, bt2, bt3);
model <- list( bt, "log", at)

fit=MarginalModelFit(DATA[,7],model,ShowCoefficients=F)
# p=0.1189, BIC = -255.1972, DF = 46, Loglikelihood ratio = 57.50807

```

Appendix 9

R code of Path Model. Gender (G), Age (A), Settlement type (S), Attitudes towards Mikheil Saakashvili (M), West-vs.-Russia orientation (W), and Vote/No Vote for UNM (P)

```

Library(cmm)
DATA <- read.csv("gasmwp.csv")

# data is DATA[,7]

```

```

bt1 = ConstraintMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),
list(c("G","A","S","M","W"),c("M","P"),c("W","P")), c(2,2,2,2,2,2))
at1=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2)
)

bt2 = ConstraintMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W"), list(c("G","A","S","M"),c("M","W")),
c(2,2,2,2,2))
at2=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M","W"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))

bt3 = ConstraintMatrix(c("G","A","S","M"), list(c("G","A","S"),c("S","M"),c("G","M"),
c("A","M")), c(2,2,2,2))
at3=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))

bt4 = ConstraintMatrix(c("G","A","S"), list(c("A","S"),c("G","A")), c(2,2,2))
at4=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))

at <- rbind(at1, at2, at3, at4);
bt <- DirectSum(bt1, bt2, bt3, bt4);
model <- list( bt, "log", at)

fit=MarginalModelFit(DATA[,7],model,ShowCoefficients=F)
# p=0.068974, loglikelihood ratio=64.101, df=49, BIC=-268.6941

```

Appendix 10

R code for parameter estimates of Path Model. Gender (G), Age (A), Settlement type (S), Attitudes towards Mikheil Saakashvili (M), West-vs.-Russia orientation (W), and Vote/No Vote for UNM (P)

```

Library(cmm)
DATA <- read.csv("gasmwp.csv")

# data is DATA[,7]

Parameters <- function(data=c(1:64))
{ fit=MarginalModelFit(data,model,ShowCoefficients=FALSE,ShowParameters=FALSE,ShowProgress=FALSE)
cat("-----GA marginal-----")
at3=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))

```

```

coeff2=list("log",at3)
stats1=ModelStatistics(data,fit$FittedFrequencies,model,coeff2,ShowCoefficients=F,ShowParameters=F,CoefficientDimensions=c(2,2),Labels=c("G","A"))
cat("-----GAS marginal-----")
at3=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))
coeff2=list("log",at3)
stats1=ModelStatistics(data,fit$FittedFrequencies,model,coeff2,ShowCoefficients=FALSE,ShowParameters=F,CoefficientDimensions=c(2,2,2),Labels=c("G","A","S"))
cat("-----GASM marginal-----")
at3=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))
coeff2=list("log",at3)
stats1=ModelStatistics(data,fit$FittedFrequencies,model,coeff2,ShowCoefficients=FALSE,ShowParameters=F,CoefficientDimensions=c(2,2,2,2),Labels=c("G","A","S","M"))
cat("-----GASMW marginal-----")
at3=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M","W"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))
coeff2=list("log",at3)
stats1=ModelStatistics(data,fit$FittedFrequencies,model,coeff2,ShowCoefficients=F,ShowParameters=F,CoefficientDimensions=c(2,2,2,2,2),Labels=c("G","A","S","M","W"))
cat("-----GASMWP marginal-----")
at3=MarginalMatrix(c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c("G","A","S","M","W","P"),c(2,2,2,2,2,2))
)
coeff2=list("log",at3)
stats1=ModelStatistics(data,fit$FittedFrequencies,model,coeff2,ShowCoefficients=F,ShowParameters=T,CoefficientDimensions=c(2,2,2,2,2,2),Labels=c("G","A","S","M","W","P"))
}

```

```
Parameters(data=DATA[,7])
```