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

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Abstract

While parties in many new democracies frequently split, merge, change labels, and make and break electoral alliances, comparative systematic research on how these changes are related to each other is limited. Literature on political parties often treats different forms of party change as manifestations of a singular and single-dimensional phenomenon of party instability. This study examines the dimensionality of party structural change in 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe. We apply Multiple Correspondence Analysis to an original dataset that differentiates between five types of party structural change and examines 780 party-electoral term dyads. Our findings contradict the idea of party structural change as a uni-dimensional phenomenon. Instead we distinguish between between two types of change: temporary change (entry to and exit from electoral coalitions and changes in electoral labels) and permanent change (splits and mergers). A more fine-grained classification also discerns between change that brings about party system aggregation and fragmentation. These findings imply that different types of party structural change can not be accounted for by the same factors.

1   Introduction

Political parties and party systems are crucial institutions for the functioning of a modern representative democracy. Among other functions, political parties aggregate and represent various interests in policy-making and ensure the accountability of democratic government to voters. The ability of parties to fulfil these functions varies across democracies and time periods though. The literature on third wave democracies, in particular, has called into question parties' ability to assure voter representation, electoral accountability and effective governance. This is to large extent because in newer democracies, unlike in many older democracies (with notable exceptions of Italy or, more recently, Greece), party alternatives that voters face at elections change frequently. New parties emerge and existing parties disappear, split, merge or combine themselves into fluid electoral alliances.[1] Such instability of party alternatives in elections may undermine the representation of citizens' preferences because voters are not able to learn about parties' policy positions (Marinova 2015). Voters' ability to form stable partisan attachments is also impeded; indeed, several recent studies suggest that the instability in party alternatives is closely related to high levels of electoral volatility in newer democracies (Tavits 2008a; Powell and Tucker 2014). In addition, the electorate is less likely to be able to hold parties accountable if they undergo structural changes between elections (Birch 2003; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). In this paper, we offer a qualified critique of such claims by demonstrating that some forms of party change that are permanent and largely clarify party systems are clearly distinct from temporary forms of change that may be more likely to confuse voters.

The importance of party instability notwithstanding, the causes and consequences of its different forms have not received equal attention in the party politics literature. On the one hand, the emergence of new parties has been studied extensively (Harmel and Robertson 1985; Hug 2001; Lucardie 2000; Sikk 2005; Tavits 2008b). Also, a number of theoretically

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

and empirically sophisticated studies examined party instability from the perspective of individual legislators or candidates (Aldrich and Bianco 1992; Laver and Benoit 2003; Kreuzer and Pettai 2003; Shabad and Slomczynski 2004; Desposato 2006; Heller and Mershon 2008; McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011; Mershon and Shvetsova 2013). On the other hand, only more recently, several systematic studies have examined other types of party instability, including electoral (pre-)coalitions (Kaminski 2001; Golder 2006; Blais and Indridason 2007; Ibenskas 2015b), party survival and death (Bakke and Sitter 2013; Bolleyer 2013), party splits (Ceron 2015) and mergers (Bélanger and Godbout 2010; Lees, Hough and Keith 2010; Ware 2009; Ibenskas 2015a).

An important gap in this literature concerns the lack of theoretical and empirical analysis of the relationship between different types of party instability. It is often assumed that new party entries, splits, mergers, electoral coalitions and party dissolutions cluster into a single dimension that captures the amount of change (but see, for example, Kreuzer and Pettai (2003)). Thus, the extent of instability at the level of individual parties, electoral terms or countries is considered to be higher when more transformations are experienced[2] and when the extent of these individual changes is more substantial.[3] For instance, Janda (1980) develops an ordinal scale of organisational discontinuity (as one indicator of party institutionalisation) that uses the number and extent of party mergers and splits. Rose and Mackie (1988) study "party careers" in terms of four-item ordinal scale: persistence without change, minor modifications (minor splits and mergers), structural changes (major splits and mergers), and party dissolution. More recently, Litton (2013), Marinova (2015) and Casal-Bertoa, Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2015) have proposed indexes of party instability / volatility that seek to summarise the number and/or extent of splits, mergers, entries to and exits from electoral coalitions, genuinely new parties, and party dissolutions. Such aggregate measures of party instability could potentially provide a measure of an alternative of the

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[2]In a similar vein, most studies on legislative party switching also do not differentiate between different types of switching (e.g. defections by individual legislators, party splits and mergers).

[3]For example, several studies differentiate between major and minor splits in terms of the share of elites or activists who leave to establish a new party.

widely-used Pedersen's index of electoral volatility (Pedersen 1979) by analysing the causes and consequences of elite-level instability separately from voter volatility. They assume though that party instability is a single-dimensional phenomenon. Whether and how much different types of party instability are manifestations of a single phenomenon and dimension, however, is an under-researched empirical question. Thus, our main research question is *how do different types of party instability cluster empirically?*

To answer this question, we focus on party splits, mergers, entries to and exits from electoral coalitions, and changes in the electoral labels of parties as forms of *party structural change.* Unlike some of the above-mentioned studies, we consider party structural change as a distinct phenomenon both from new party emergence and disappearance (party dissolution or hibernation). In the next section we discuss theoretical arguments for and against the single-dimensional view of party structural change. We argue that for this approach to be supported, different types of change have to be accounted for the same factors. Following that, we present the results of our empirical analysis of parties in 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the period between 1990-2015. Our findings suggest that party structural change is a multi-dimensional phenomenon: temporary and permanent change emerge as two distinct dimensions in the Multiple Correspondence Analysis of 780 party-electoral term dyads (i.e. our unit of analysis is each party in each electoral term). The electoral term refers to the period between two elections i and $i+1$. Moreover, both temporary and permanent change can either lead towards fragmentation or aggregation. These distinct types of party structural change are also present at the level of parties, electoral terms and countries. Using this four-dimensional view, we discuss the patterns of party structural change in Central and Eastern Europe in the last 25 years. Furthermore, we also examine the correlations between these dimension scores and several key explanations of party structural change, and provide insights on why such a clustering emerges. In the final section, we summarise our results.

2   Theoretical expectations

To develop theoretical expectations about the co-occurrence of different types of party structural change, we consider their various explanations. By different types of party structural change we mean mergers, splits, the entry to and exit from electoral coalitions, and the change in electoral labels. If the same underlying factors affect all of them, then it is likely that these different types of change will form a single dimension - i.e. occur together in party-election dyads. One end of this dimension would represent the presence of change and the other end would its absence. In contrast, if the underlying reasons for different types of transformations are different, a single stability-change dimension would be unlikely to surface; instead, the forms of party structural change and stability will be clustered in several dimensions. In this section we discuss theoretical factors behind party transformation; the empirical analysis below explores how much these theoretical expectations are supported by empirical evidence.

Different types of party structural change may cluster on a single dimension for a number of reasons. First, all forms of party structural change are more likely when the voters of individual parties or the electorate as a whole have weak partisan attachments. For example, Desposato (2006) and Mershon and Shvetsova (2013) argue that the electoral costs of legislative switching are lower when their parties do not have strong partisan following in the electorate. Similarly, Ibenskas (2015b) finds that party mergers are more likely when constituent parties have weakly partisan electorates.

Second, a related finding shows that internally weakly institutionalised parties are also more likely to change (Harmel and Janda 1994). Indeed, Janda (1980) uses party name changes, splits and mergers as indicators of party institutionalisation. The two well-established dimensions of internal party institutionalisation - low routinisation of internal party rules and procedures and weak attachments of the members to the party as an institution (i.e. low value infusion) (Levitsky 2003; Randall and Svasand 2002) - limit parties' ability to solve internal conflicts without splits. For the same reasons, low internal institutionalisation

should also reduce the costs of adopting other types of change, such as the change of label or the formation or termination of electoral coalitions, as a part of party's electoral strategy.

Third, party structural change is also more likely when the composition of the dominant coalition or the leadership of the party changes (Harmel and Janda 1994). A new dominant coalition or leader are more likely to change the party's relationship with other parties, either by initiating mergers or electoral coalitions, or terminating existing alliances. At the same time, loss of power or changes initiated by new leadership may motivate others to defect or create a splinter party.

Fourth, the failure to achieve party's goals is also an important factor of all types of party structural change (Harmel and Janda 1994). For instance, electoral losses are related to party platform change (Budge, Ezrow and McDonald 2010; Somer-Topcu 2009). Similarly, parties may respond to electoral losses by merging with other parties (Coffé and Torenvlied 2008), entering or leaving electoral coalitions, or changing electoral labels. Other authors argue that the *expectations* of electoral decline may drive party structural change. For example, parties may change their platforms in response to the changes in the ideological positions of their voters or the electorate (Adams, Clark, Ezrow and Glasgow 2006; Ezrow, De Vries, Steenbergen and Edwards 2011). Similarly, such expectations also make party switching more likely (McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011; O'Brien and Shomer 2013).

However, different types of party structural change may also not cluster around the single dimension. For example, the expected effect of electoral system disproportionality may be different on party splits on the one hand, and mergers and the formation of electoral alliances on the other hand. Parties should be more likely to split under proportional institutions while lower proportionality should encourage party mergers (Coffé and Torenvlied 2008; Bélanger and Godbout 2010; Ibenskas 2015a) and electoral coalitions (Kaminski 2001; Golder 2005; Blais and Indridason 2007; Ibenskas 2015b).

Several other factors such as party size and government status may affect party structural transformations in different ways. While small parties are more likely to enter electoral

coalitions and merge, larger parties may also use these strategies to form the largest legislative bloc (Golder 2006; Spirova 2007; Ibenskas 2015b) or become pivotal in a larger number of alternative coalitions (Ibenskas 2015a). The effects of party size on splits is less well-established, although the literature on party switching often argues that larger parties are less likely to lose MPs due to their higher legislative influence (Heller and Mershon 2008). For splits, however, the opposite may also hold: splinters from larger parties are more likely to be big enough to have a chance of legislative representation. Furthermore, we also examine the relationship between party structural change and government status. Ceron (2015) finds that opposition parties are generally more likely to split while government parties split with a greater probability when the government has a large parliamentary majority. its probability among government parties depends on the size of government majority. Ibenskas (2015a) shows that the experience of cooperation in government increases the probability of party mergers. Finally, ideological positions of parties may also affect mergers, splits, electoral coalitions and label changes in specific ways. Specifically, radical left and right parties are less likely to participate in electoral coalitions (Ibenskas 2015b).

3 Data and measurement

As a first step to uncover the dimensionality of party structural change, we analyse data for 11 current EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe from the first democratic election to 2015 using Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). The unit of analysis is a party in a electoral term. The dataset covers those parties that received at least one percent of the vote in election i).[4] We exclude parties that dissolved during the electoral term or did not run in the following election (election *i+1*). In total, the dataset includes 780 party-electoral term dyads in 71 electoral terms.

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[4]For countries with bicameral legislatures, the electoral results in the lower chamber are considered. The vote share of the parties included in an electoral coalition is estimated as the product of the vote share of that electoral coalition and the ratio of seats won by that party to the number of won by the coalition. For coalitions that received no seats, equal vote shares for all constituent parties are assumed.

Five dichotomous variables capture the following types of party structural change: party splits, party mergers, entries to a joint list, exits from a joint list, and the change of the electoral label. We select only those parties whose actual or estimated vote share was one percent or higher in election i regardless of their electoral results in $i+1$. For example, a split is recorded if the splinter won less than one percent of votes after leaving the parent party, as long as this splinter party contested next elections. Table 1 presents the cross-tabulation of all five types of party structural change. In the remainder of this section, we briefly describe the coding of each of these variables.

Table 1: Frequency of the types of party structural change

		Split		Merger		Exit		Entry		Name	
		no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Split	no	620	0	503	117	467	153	434	186	287	333
	yes	0	160	128	32	125	35	111	49	75	85
Merger	no	503	128	631	0	484	147	450	181	336	295
	yes	117	32	0	149	108	41	95	54	26	123
Entry	no	467	125	484	108	592	0	459	133	328	264
	yes	153	35	147	41	0	188	86	102	34	154
Exit	no	434	111	450	95	459	86	545	0	328	217
	yes	186	49	181	54	133	102	0	235	34	201
Name	no	287	75	336	26	328	34	328	34	362	0
	yes	333	85	295	123	264	154	217	201	0	418

Party splits. We only code splits after which the splinter party participated in election $i+1$ as an independent entity or as part of an electoral coalition. Thus, the switching of individual members or splinter factions between parties is not considered as a split.

Party mergers. Mergers are operationalised as the amalgamation of two or more autonomous parties into a single party organisation. We consider only those mergers that involved parties that gained at least one percent of the vote in election i.

An entry into an electoral coalition. Electoral coalition is operationalised as the formation of a joint candidate list for the participation in national election by two or more parties without integrating their organisations.[5] We only include new coalitions, that is if

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[5]The focus on joint candidate lists is justified by the fact that the countries analysed here used PR or mixed

(1) the coalition in which the party participates in election *i+1* includes at least two parties that obtained at least one percent of the vote in election *i*, and (2) when at least one of these parties did not already form an electoral coalition with other parties in this coalition in election *i*. Thus, if two parties participated in election *i* independently or in different coalitions, and formed an electoral coalition in election *i+1*, both of them are considered as having entered an electoral coalition. Also, if two parties formed an electoral coalition for elections *i* and *i+1*, but a third party joined this coalition only at election *i+1*, all three parties are considered as having entered a new electoral coalition.

An exit from an electoral coalition is coded as such when (1) the coalition in which the party participated in election *i* includes at least two parties that obtained at least one percent of the vote in this election, and (2) when at least one of the parties in this coalition did not form an electoral coalition with other parties in this coalition at the time of election *i+1*. Thus, if two parties participated in election *i+1* independently or in different electoral coalitions, and they formed an electoral coalition in election *i*, both of them are considered as having exited an electoral coalition. Also, if two parties formed an electoral coalition for elections *i* and *i+1*, but third party is a member of this coalition only at election *i*, all three parties are considered as having exited an electoral coalition in this electoral term.

The change in electoral label is coded as such when the label under which the party runs in election *i+1* is different from that under which it ran in election *i*. The coding does not distinguish between reasons of electoral label change, which may include mergers, entries to and exits from electoral coalitions, or strategic moves to increase party's electoral appeal.

4 Empirical analysis

We use Multiple Correspondence Analysis for analysing our dataset. MCA is a well-established exploratory technique for analysing multivariate categorical data (Bartholomew,

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electoral systems. One exception is the 1990 election in Croatia, for which majoritarian electoral system was used. We code joint candidates in single-member districts for this particular election. Furthermore, we also do not consider weaker forms of electoral cooperation, such as public commitments to govern together.

Steele, Galbraith and Moustaki 2008; Greenacre 2007; Le Roux and Rouanet 2010). MCA allows us to scale our categorical raw data on party structural change along the lines of one or several dimensions. The substantive meaning of these dimensions (also called "axes" of the MCA solution) can be uncovered by analysing how variable categories (i.e. dichotomous categories for the presence or absence of the five types of party structural change) are placed with regard to each dimension, and how much these categories contribute to the variance on each axis. Additionally, MCA also can place the individual observations (i.e. party-electoral terms) and supplementary variables (i.e. other variables that do not affect the solution of the analysis, but are likely to be causally related to some or all types of party structural change) in the same space as the categories.

4.1   Interpreting the dimensions

We are able to interpret meaningfully four axes of the solution that together explain 89.7 percent of the total variance. While the first dimension accounts for by far the most variance (35.4 percent), the other three dimensions are also important and explain 20.4, 19.6 and 14.3 percent of the variance, respectively.

As a first step towards the substantive interpretation of the four axes, we present the squared correlations between the variables and each of the dimensions in Figure 1. The figure shows that the entry to and exit from electoral coalitions correlate highly with the first and fourth dimensions; the merger and split variables correlate with the second and fourth dimensions (although the merger variable also correlates moderately with the first dimension); and name changes are related to the first dimension only. This strongly suggests that different types of party structural change do not cluster into a single stability vs change dimension.

As the second step in our analysis, we report the positions and contributions of 10 variable categories in Table 2. As recommended by Le Roux and Rouanet (2010, 52), when interpreting the substantive meaning of individual dimensions, we examine those categories

Figure 1: Squared correlation between the variables and MCA dimensions
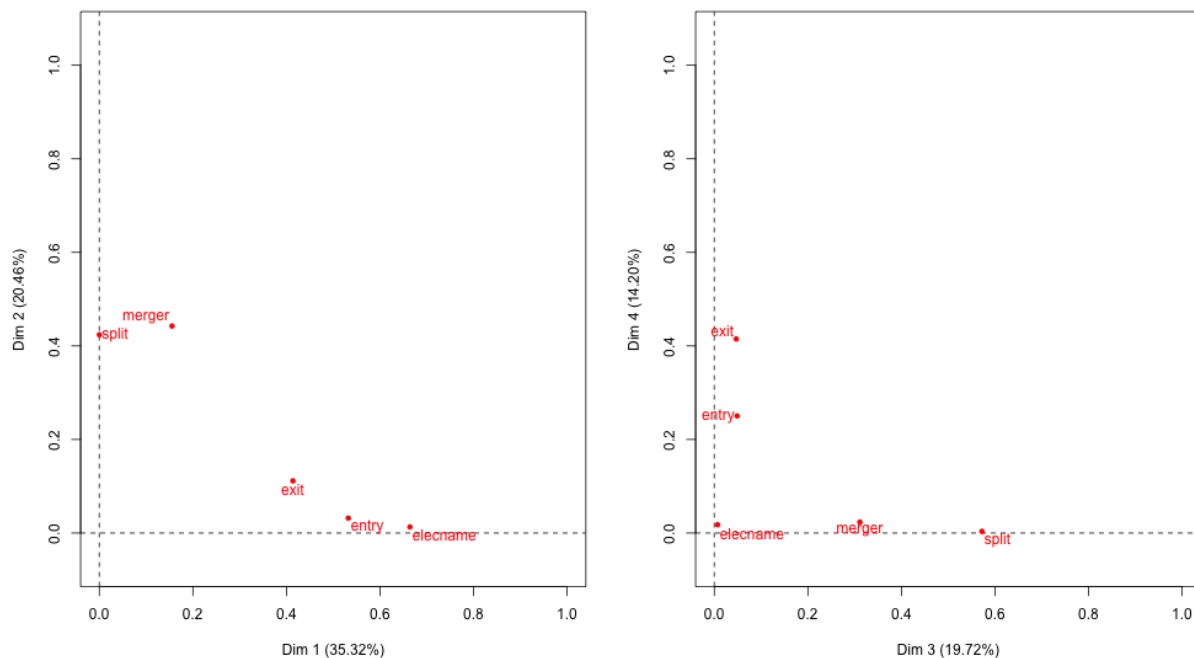
whose contributions to the variance of the dimension are close to or exceed the average contribution of 10 percent (obtained by dividing the total variance of 100 percent by 10 categories used in the analysis).

Had different types of party structural change clustered into a single dimension, we would expect to observe (1) the positions of all "yes" categories on one end of the first dimension of the MCA solution and all "no" categories on the other end of this dimension, and (2) similar contributions of all categories to the first dimension. The results of our analysis indicate a rather different pattern. The contribution of four categories (*"entry_yes"*, *"exit_yes"*, *"namechange_yes"* and *"namechange_no"*) to the first dimension substantially exceeds 10 percent, and the contribution of two further categories (*"entry_no"* and *"merger_yes"*) is close to 10 percent. The contribution of all other categories is substantially less than 10 percent. Among the categories that contribute to the first dimension most, *"entry_yes"*, *"exit_yes"*, *"namechange_yes"* and *"merger_yes"* have positive values while *"namechange_no"* and *"entry_no"* have negative values. We therefore interpret this dimension as *Temporary*

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change vs stability.[6]

Table 2: Multiple Correspondence Analysis of party structural change

Category	Dim 1		Dim 2		Dim 3		Dim 4	
	Coord.	Contrib.	Coord.	Contrib.	Coord.	Contrib.	Coord.	Contrib.
entry_yes	1.1	21.1	-0.3	2.2	0.3	3.5	-0.8	24.6
exit_yes	1.1	17.8	-0.6	8.3	0.4	3.6	1.1	44.3
elecname_no	-0.9	20.2	-0.1	0.7	0.1	0.4	0.1	1.3
elecname_yes	0.8	17.5	0.1	0.6	-0.1	0.3	-0.1	1.2
merger_yes	0.8	7.1	1.4	35.0	-1.1	25.5	0.3	2.7
split_no	0.0	0.0	-0.3	8.5	-0.4	11.9	0.0	0.1
split_yes	0.0	0.0	1.3	32.9	1.5	46.1	0.1	0.4
merger_no	-0.2	1.7	-0.3	8.3	0.3	6.0	-0.1	0.6
exit_no	-0.4	5.6	0.2	2.6	-0.1	1.1	-0.4	14.1
entry_no	-0.5	9.1	0.1	0.9	-0.1	1.5	0.3	10.6

Unsurprisingly, the categories that contribute to the second dimension most are those with limited contribution to the first dimension. Thus, categories *"merger_yes"* and *"split_yes"* have positive values on this dimension, while category *"split_no"* has negative values.[7]. We interpret this dimension as *Permanent change vs stability.*

The same categories contribute to the third dimension, although this dimension contrasts *"split_no"* and *"merger_yes"* on the one hand and *"split_yes"* and *"merger_no"* on the other hand. We interpret this dimension as showing the type of permanent change in terms of party aggregation vs fragmentation (*Permanent aggregation vs fragmentation*).

Finally, among the categories that contribute to the fourth dimension we find that *"entry_yes"* and *"exit_no"* have negative values and *"exit_yes"* and *"entry_no"* have positive values. We interpret this dimension as the type of temporary change (*Temporary aggregation vs fragmentation*).

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[6]The moderate contribution of *"merger_yes"* to this dimension could be interpreted as a result of the temporary nature of some mergers, which makes them quite similar to the formation of electoral alliances.

[7] *"merger_no"* is also on the left of the second dimension although its contribution to this dimension is only 6.4)

4.2 Patterns of party stability and change in Central and Eastern Europe

To substantiate the results of MCA, we discuss the patterns of party stability and change in terms of the four dimensions in each of the 11 countries in our sample. Given a large number of party-electoral term dyads (780 in total), we are unable to report the placement of all parties in all electoral terms. We therefore use an important feature of MCA - its ability to place the so-called supplementary variables in the same space with the categories of the variables used in the analysis. Supplementary variables can be causes or consequences of the phenomena examined by MCA, but for multi-level data they may also indicate the placement of the units in which the observations are nested (e.g. countries or time units). Substantial distances between the categories of supplementary variables on the dimensions uncovered by MCA indicate that these variables are likely to account for the variation in the scores of this dimension. Le Roux and Rouanet (2010, 59) suggest that the differences of 0.5 are "notable" and the differences of 1 are "large".

Table 3: Prevalence of the patterns of party structural change: electoral terms

		Permanent change		
		Limited	High: aggregatory	High: fragmentary
Temporary change	Limited	23 (32%)	8 (11%)	8 (11%)
	High: aggregatory	9 (13%)	3 (4%)	5 (7%)
	High: fragmentary	7 (10%)	6 (8%)	2 (3%)

Note: Cells indicate the raw number of electoral terms for each constellation of party structural change. The share of electoral terms from the total number of periods (71) is reported in parentheses.

In this section, we use electoral terms and key individual parties as supplementary variables. As mentioned above, the electoral term refers to the period between two elections; however, in the plots below we identify a term by the first election in it.[8] For the ease of interpretation, in Table 3 and Table 4 we present the patterns of party structural change

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[8]In the case of splits, we consider the main successor party as a continuation of the original party; in the case of mergers, we consider the merged party as a continuation of one of the constituent parties if the latter was substantially larger than other constituent parties.

Table 4: Prevalence of the patterns of party structural change: parties

		Permanent change		
		Limited	High: aggregatory	High: fragmentary
Temporary change	Limited	94 (29%)	29 (9%)	32 (10%)
	High: aggregatory	34 (11%)	14 (4%)	11 (3%)
	High: fragmentary	57 (18%)	30 (9%)	18 (6%)

Note: Cells indicate the raw number of parties for each constellation of party structural change. The share of electoral terms from the total number of periods (319) is reported in parentheses.

and stability in terms of 9 categories. Specifically, we code the electoral term or party that had scores lower than 0 on Dimension 1 (*Temporary change vs stability*) as having experienced limited amount of change. For the electoral terms or parties that had scores higher than 0 on this dimension, we differentiate (based on the scores on Dimension 4 - Temporary aggregation vs fragmentation) between those where the change was predominantly of aggregatory nature (i.e. the scores on this dimension were below 0) and those where it was mostly fragmentational (i.e. the scores on this dimension were above 0). Similarly, for permanent change, we first capture the amount of change based on the scores on Dimension 2 (*Permanent stability vs change*), and then capture its type based on Dimension 3.

Both tables indicate that the patterns of party structural change do not cluster on a single dimension when electoral terms or individual parties as opposed to parties in electoral terms are examined. For example, according to Table 3, 23 electoral terms (32 percent of the total) could be classified as having experienced limited temporary and permanent change; both temporary and permanent change was high in 16 or 22 percent of elections. Out of the remaining 32 electoral terms, half experienced high temporary change but limited permanent change, and in the other half the temporary change was limited but permanent change was high. Similarly, 29 percent of individual parties experienced limited temporary and permanent change; both temporary and permanent change was high in the case of 22 percent of parties; 29 percent of parties had high temporary and limited permanent change; and the remaining 19 percent were more prone to permanent than to temporary change.

To provide further insights into the patterns of party structural change, for each country we present two plots. The plots on the left report the scores of Dimension 1 on X axis and the scores of Dimension 4 on Y axis. Thus, they present the amount of temporary change and its type. The plots on the right show the amount of permanent change (Dimension 2) on X axis and the type of permanent change (Dimension 3) on Y axis. Thus, in each plot, the top left quadrant indicates limited (temporary or permanent) fragmentation; the top-right corner represents substantial fragmentation; the bottom-right quadrant shows substantial aggregation; and the bottom-left corner shows limited aggregation.

Based on the observed patterns, we can differentiate three groups of countries. The first group, represented by Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania in Figure 2, exhibits (1) moderate levels of permanent change leading to fragmentation throughout the period under study, (2) substantial levels of temporary change throughout the whole period, although with distinct cycles of fragmentation and aggregation.

Specifically, in Bulgaria, in all electoral terms with the exception of the 1994-1997 period fragmentation was the dominant type of permanent party change, although the levels of this change were rather limited. Splits were experienced by the parties across the ideological spectrum, including the leftist Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the centrist Simeon the Second Movement (NDSV), the rightist Union of Democratic Forces (ODS) and the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), the agrarian Bulgarian National Agrarian Union - People's Union (BZNS-NS), the nationalist Ataka and the ethnic Turkish party Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS). The 1994-1997 period stands out as an exception due to the formation of the ODS party through a merger of a large number of small rightist parties.

In contrast, high levels of aggregation and fragmentation were present in Bulgaria when it comes to temporary party change. The cycles of aggregation and fragmentation have been primarily driven by the dynamics among the centre-right parties. The fragmentation of the main coalition on the right, the Union of Democratic Forces, in the 1990-1994 period, was

Figure 2: Patterns of party stability and change: Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania
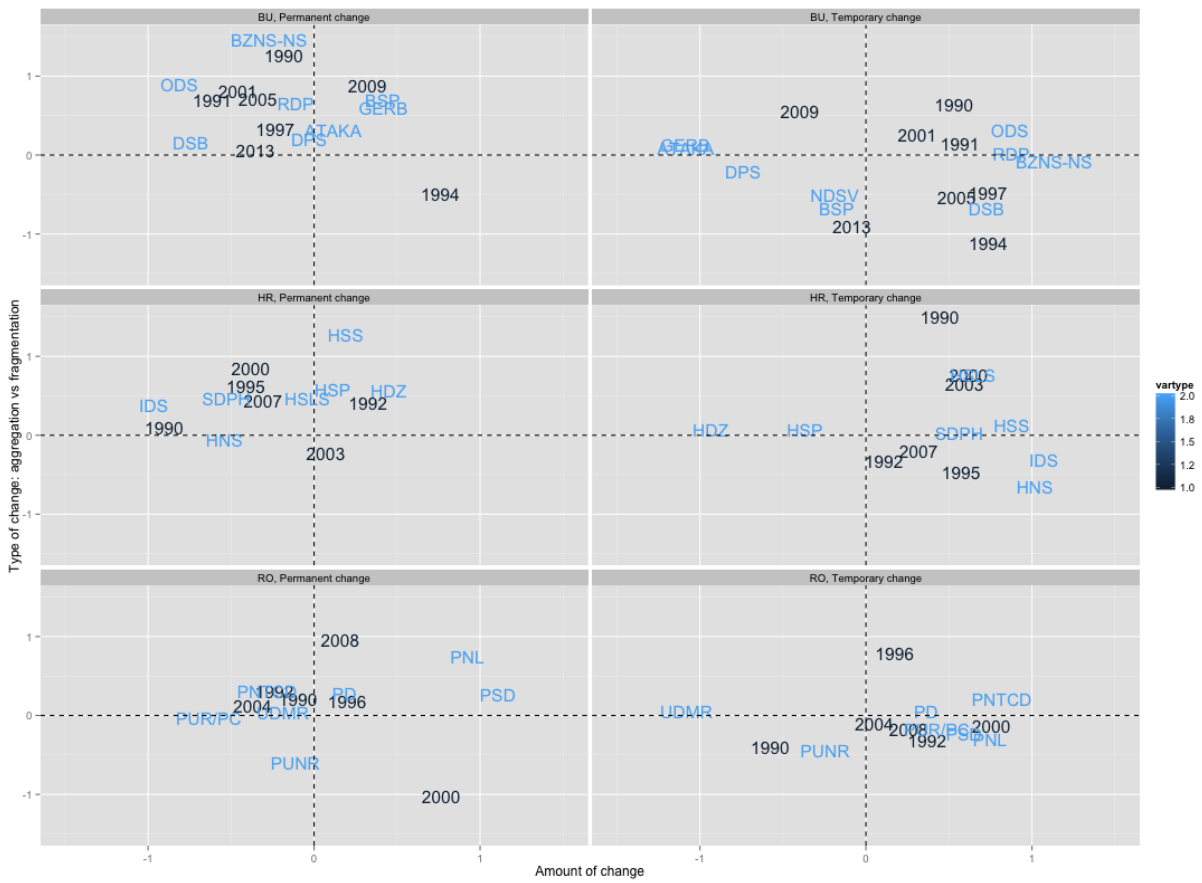
contained by a merger of its constituent parties and the formation of the broad United Democratic Forces coalition before the 1997 parliamentary election. The fragmentary tendencies, however, returned before the 2005 election, when most rightist parties re-grouped into two electoral coalitions (the United Democratic Forces and the People's Union), and yet another party, the Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB), ran as an independent entity. The small rightist parties including the ODS and DSB then formed the Blue Coalition for the 2009 election, dissolved it before the 2013 election, and re-coalesced in the Reformist Coalition for the 2014 election. Other parties, however, also participated in electoral alliances: the BSP formed coalitions with different small leftist parties in the 1990s, and the DPS entered into an alliance with several small parties for the 1997 election, although it dissolved it after the election.

In Croatia, most of the parties that have been relevant since 1990, such as the rightist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the communist successor Social Democratic Party (SDPH), the centre-right Croatian Social Liberal Party, the centrist Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) and the radical right Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), experienced at least one split, although at different time points. Mergers were rare, although the Croatian Popular Party (HNS) and the HSLS each merged with smaller liberal parties in the 2003-2007 period, making it somewhat of an exception compared to other periods. However, Croatian parties, especially the centrist and leftist ones, have been involved in a large number of electoral coalitions. Two major electoral coalitions that lost the 1990 election (the leftist coalition of former communist and the Coalition of National Understanding) were dissolved by the 1992 election, which explains the high temporary fragmentation score of this electoral term. Parties in opposition to the dominant HDZ formed electoral coalitions for the 1995 and especially the 2000 parliamentary elections, but these coalitions changed substantially or were terminated in the 2000s, after the opposition won the 2000 election. Only for the 2007 election several main parties of centre-left (SDPH, HNS, Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS) and the Croatian Pensioners' Union) formed the Kukuriku electoral coalition.

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Finally, in Romania, permanent party change has been fairly limited, and mostly involved splits and mergers of small liberal parties in the 1990s. A major exception, however, is the 2000-2004 electoral term, which witnessed the merger between the communist successor party called the Social Democracy of Romania (PDSR) and historical social democratic Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR), as well as a number of mergers on the right, with several small rightist parties being incorporated into the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the merger between the National Peasant Party - Christian Democrats (PNTCD) and its splinter National Christian Democratic Peasant Alliance (ANCD). In the 2008-2012 period, the Social Democrats (PSD), PNL and the Hungarian ethnic party UDMR experienced minor splits, resulting in a high temporary fragmentation score for this period.

Figure 3: Patterns of party stability and change: Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia
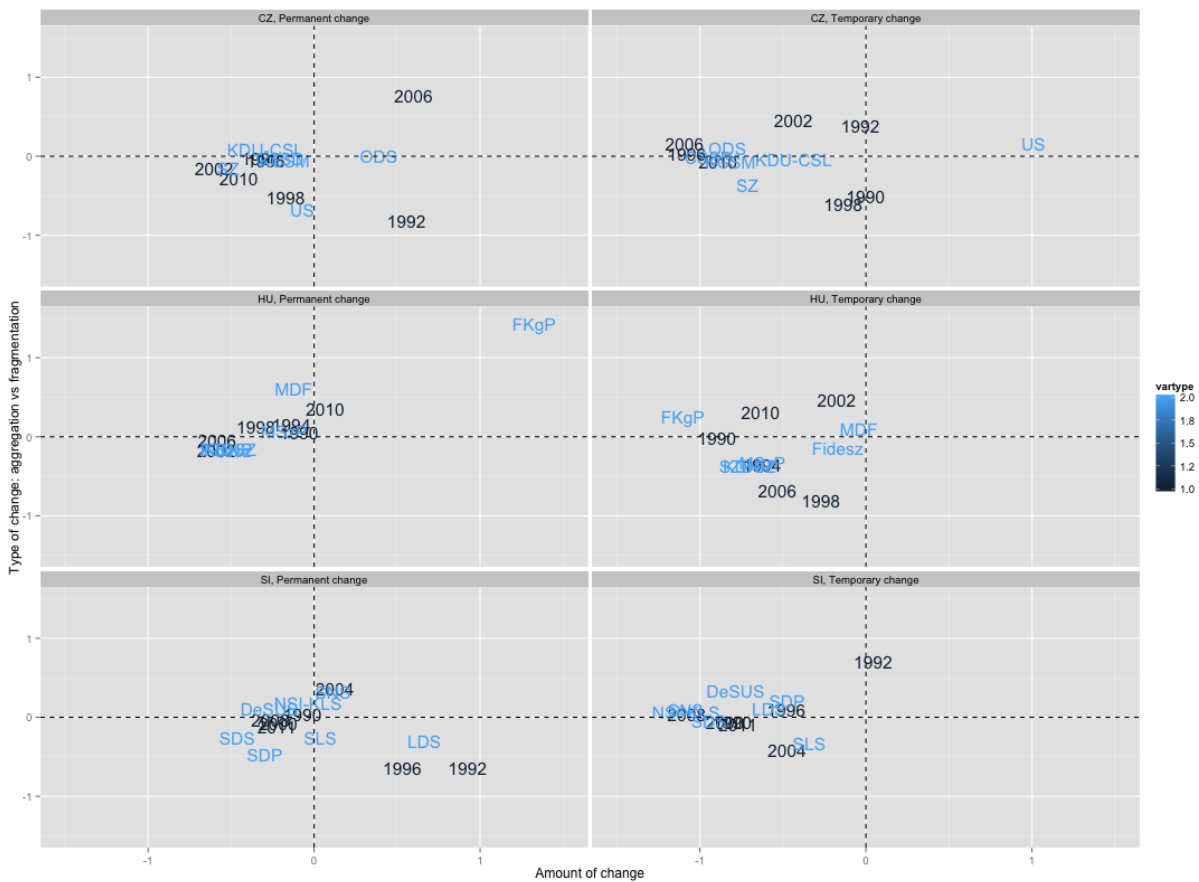
With regard to temporary party change, Romania experienced cycles of aggregation

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and fragmentation similar to those in Bulgaria and Croatia. The electoral dominance of the former communists in the early 1990s led to the formation of broad centre-right coalition (the Romanian Democratic Convention) before the 1992 and 1996 elections, albeit its membership has shifted quite substantially. Furthermore, the Democratic Party (DP) and the PSDR formed the Social-Democratic Pole (USD) coalition for the 1996 election. In the 1996-2000 election, however, the fragmentary tendencies prevailed, as the USD coalition was terminated, and the PNL and some smaller parties left the Democratic Convention coalition, although the PDSR formed a coalition with PSDR and the Romanian Humanist Party (PUR; later the Conservative Party - PC). In the 2000-2004 election, the major centre-right parties, the DP and PNL, formed an electoral coalition called "Justice and Truth". The alliance was terminated in 2007, and for the 2008 election the PNL allied with the remnants of the PNTCD. Finally, the 2008-2012 period witnessed important temporary aggregation when the PSD, PNL, PC and the National Union for the Progress of Romania (UNPR) formed the Social Liberal Alliance (USL), while the PD allied with the PNTCD and two other miniscule parties.

Three countries in the sample demonstrated moderate levels of both permanent and temporary change, although with some notable exceptions (see Figure 3). In the Czech Republic, among the parties that competed in all elections since 1990, the Communists (KCSM), the Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL), the Social Democrats (CSSD) and the Civic Democrats experienced at least one split each; the last three parties split in the 2006-2010 electoral term, which explains a high temporary fragmentation score of this period. The 1992-1996 period by contrast witnessed some permanent aggregation as a result of the mergers between the ODS and a small Christian Democratic Party (KDS), the Civic Movement (OH) and the Liberal National Socialist Party (LSNS), and agrarian and Moravian regionalist parties. In terms of temporary change, the Liberal Social Union electoral coalition was formed for the 1992 election between agrarians, greens and the LSNS, only to be dissolved by 1996; similarly, the Freedom Union - Democratic Union (US-DEU) and KDU-CSL formed

an alliance for the 2002 election, but dissolved it after the election. This explains why these two pairs of electoral terms are on different sides of the temporary aggregation-fragmentation dimension in Figure 3.

Similarly, in Hungary, both permanent and temporary change has been relatively rare. The rightist parties, including the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the Hungarian Christian Democratic Party (KDNP) and especially the Hungarian Smallholders' Party (FKgP), experienced multiple splits in the 1990s, and the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) split after its disastrous defeat in the 2010 election. As in the Czech Republic, several short-lived electoral coalitions were formed among centrist and rightist parties, leading to moderate cycles of temporary aggregation and fragmentation. These coalitions included the joint list between Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (MPP) and the MDF formed for the 2002 election (the two parties also presented joint candidates in the 1998 election, but did not establish a joint candidate list in the PR tier of the electoral system), only to be dissolved by the 2006 election; the Centre Party coalition formed for the 2002 election and dissolved by 2006, which included the KDNP and its splinter, the Hungarian Democratic People's Party (MDNP); and the coalition between the MDF and SZDSZ founded before the 2010 election, which did not last long due to the dissolution of the latter party after the election.

In Slovenia permanent change was also relatively rare. The 1992-1996 and 1996-2000 electoral terms stand out most clearly due to the mergers leading to the formation of the Liberal Democracy (LDS) and United List of Social Democrats (ZSLD, later SDP) in the first of these periods, and the merger between two key rightist parties (the Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and the Slovenian Christian Democrats (SKD)) in the second one. Most Slovenian parties also experienced at least one split, although they did so at different points in time, meaning that no electoral term has a high score in terms of permanent fragmentation. Electoral coalitions by contrast have been quite rare in Slovenia: only the 1992 election has a relatively high score on temporary fragmentation as a consequence of the pensioners' party DeSUS to not terminate its electoral cooperation with three leftist parties that formed the

Figure 4: Patterns of party stability and change: Poland and Slovakia
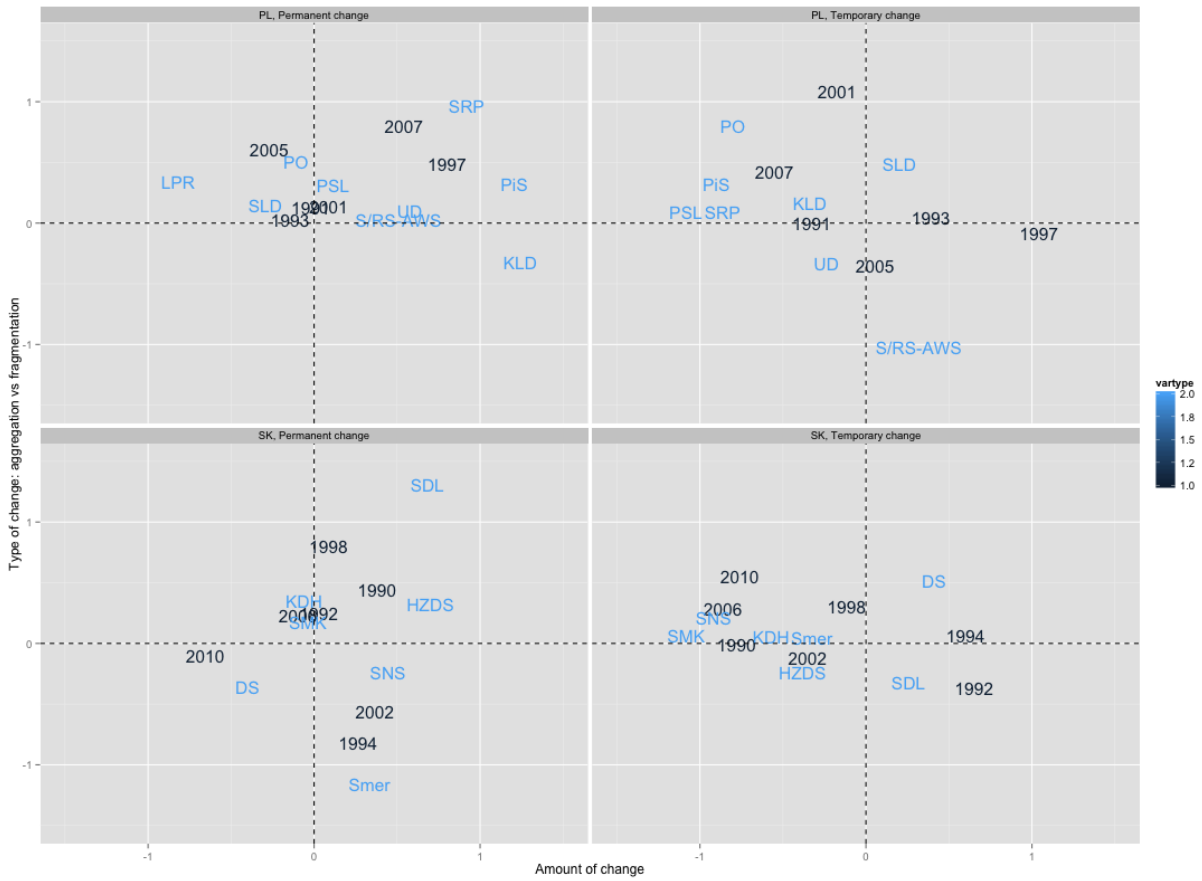
ZLSD.

Figure 5: Patterns of party stability and change: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
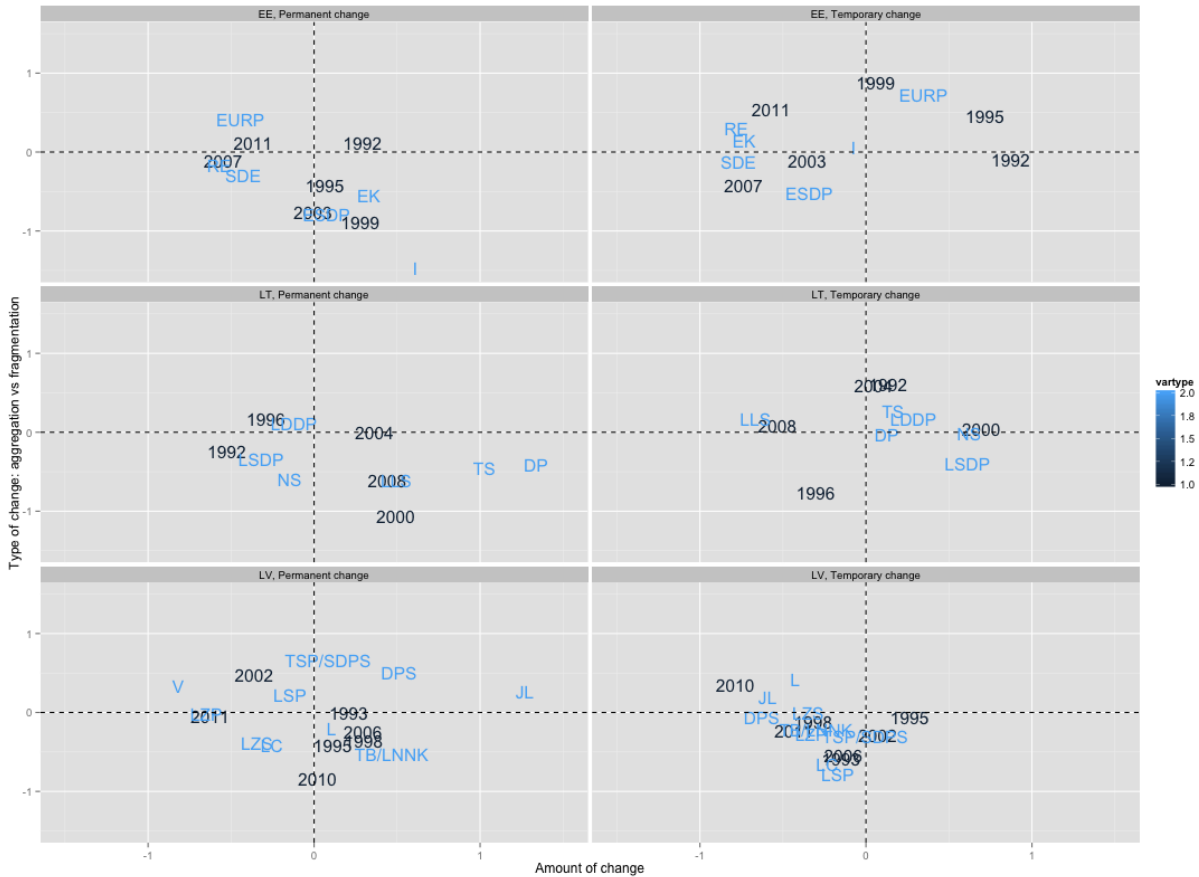
In the remaining five countries the patterns of party stability and change have been more diverse. For the lack of space, we do not summarise them here in greater detail.

4.3 Understanding the patterns of party structural change and stability

The patterns of party structural change and stability suggest little evidence to the single-dimensional view of these phenomena. A logical implication of these results is that different types of change can not be accounted for by the same factors. The limitations of space prevent us from testing this hypothesis more systematically, and we leave this task for future research. Nevertheless, in this sub-section we explore the effect of several explanations of

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party structural change by using supplementary variables that are its potential causes. For the ease of interpretation, we recode continuous supplementary variables into categorical ones.

We first examine the effect of (1) the number of democratic parliamentary elections held by the country and (2) the age of party. Both variables are proxies to test the theoretical hypotheses according to which party structural change and stability is a uni-dimensional phenomenon. Specifically, partisan attachments tend to be weaker in younger democracies, leading to higher rates of structural change. The voters of younger parties also tend to be less partisan (Converse 1969; Huber, Kernell and Leoni 2005; Dalton and Weldon 2007; Lupu and Stokes 2009); furthermore, younger parties are, on average, less institutionalised internally (Harmel and Janda 1994) and have less stable dominant coalitions. Thus, younger parties should also be more susceptible to experience all forms of change examined here. If, however, we find that the age of democracy and the age of party are not related to some or all dimensions uncovered by MCA, this would provide insights into why a uni-dimensional pattern of structural change was not present in the results of empirical analysis.

Figure 6: The number of democratic electoral terms and party structural change

Figure 6 provides the placement of the categorical variable of the number of elections

Figure 7: The age of parties and party structural change
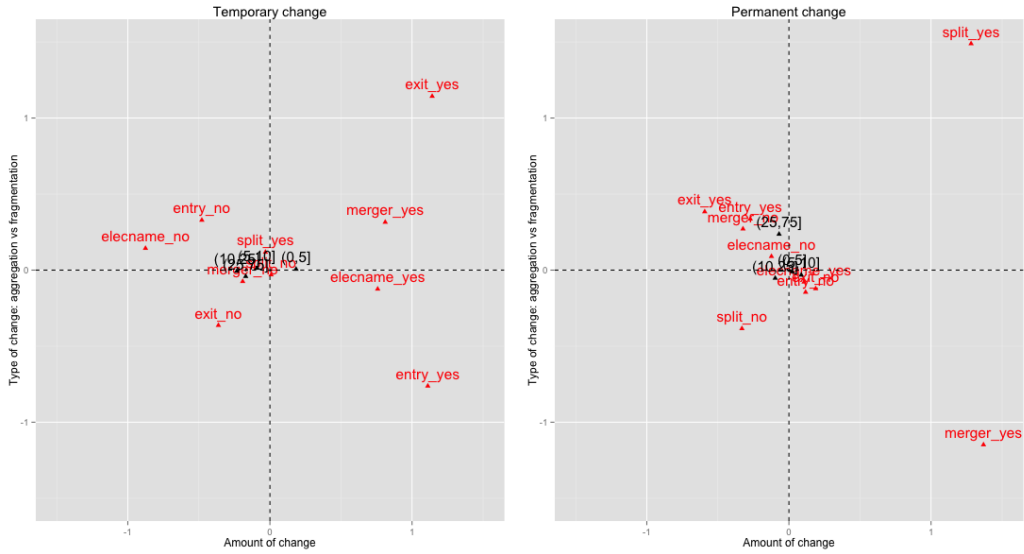
held in relation to the four dimensions in our analysis. The graph on the left suggests that the amount of temporary change tends to be higher in the second, third and fourth electoral terms, especially compared to the fifth, sixth and seventh periods. The type of temporary change (aggregation vs fragmentation) is less related to the age of democracy, as only the eighth electoral term stands out, but this result is less reliable since only Bulgaria held nine elections since the fall of communism. According to the graph on the right, there is also a limited relationship between the amount or type of permanent change and the age of democracy, as only the third electoral term stands out clearly in comparison to other electoral terms by having more change of aggregatory type. Thus, a somewhat stronger effect of the age of democratic electoral competition on temporary change in comparison to permanent change may, at least partially, be accountable for why different types of structural change do not cluster into a single dimension.

Figure 7 indicates that the age of party also appears to have a stronger effect on the amount of temporary change as opposed to permanent change. Parties that were 5 years old or younger at the time of the election in the beginning of the electoral term are in particular more likely to enter and exit electoral coalitions while a similar effect appears absent in the

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case of splits and mergers. The age of party, however, seems to have an effect on the type of permanent change: older parties (aged between 25 and 75 years) seem to be more likely to split than to merge.

Figure 8: District magnitude and party structural change
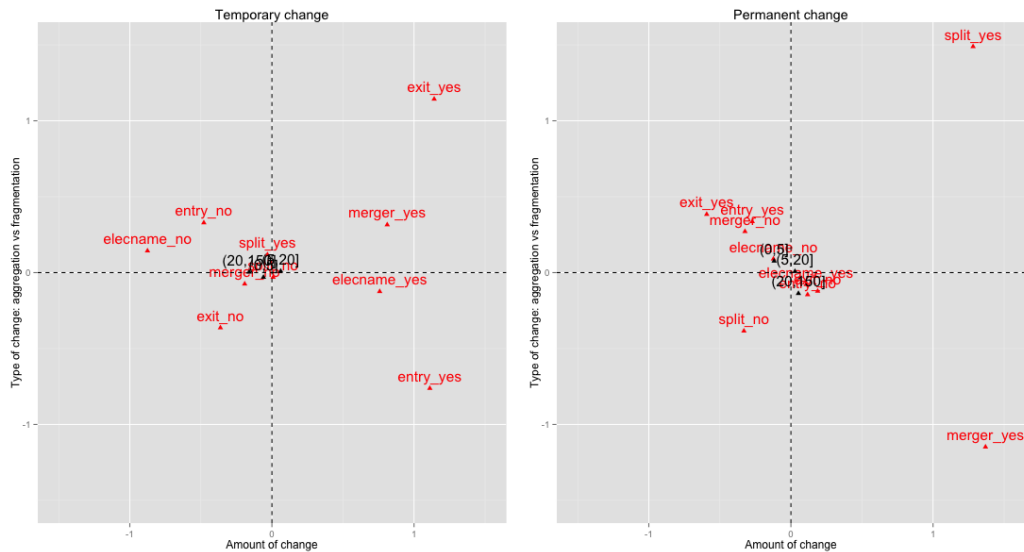
Electoral system disproportionality, at least as measured by the average district magnitude, seems to have a limited effect on the amount and type of both temporary and permanent change (Figure 8).[9] In fact, where district magnitude seems to have an effect (the type of permanent change), it is in contradiction to the theoretical expectations, as splits appear to be the dominant form of permanent change in the countries with low district magnitudes while mergers seem to be more frequent in the countries with high district magnitudes.

In contrast, party size is related to the amount of both temporary and permanent change and the type of permanent change, as Figure 9 reports. Specifically, smaller parties are more likely to experience temporary change but less likely to undergo permanent change than larger parties. Moreover, when smaller parties experience permanent change, it is more likely to be mergers, while larger parties are more likely to split, although there is no evidence for the relationship between party size and the type of temporary change. This complex

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[9]We use district magnitude because the variation in the type and size of the legal threshold was limited: in most electoral terms analysed here legal threshold was nationwide and ranged between 3 and 5 percent.

relationship thus potentially provides an important explanation for the multidimensional nature of the structural change phenomenon.

Figure 9: Vote share, government status and party structural change
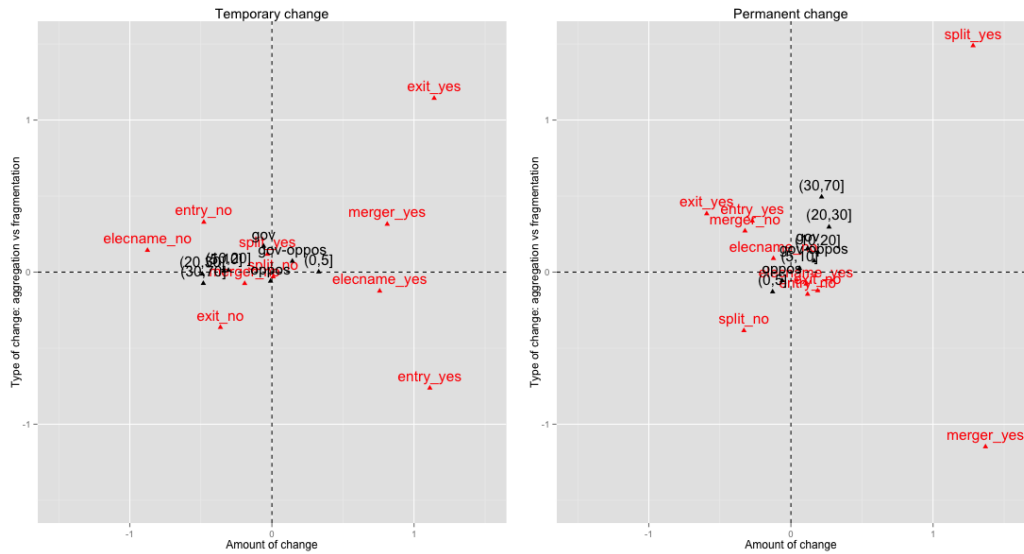

On the other hand, there appears to be a limited relationship between party structural change and government status. Even when we use a trichotomous variable for the participation in government that accounts for the parties that were in power for the whole electoral term, those that were in opposition for the whole period, and those that were members of government for some time, we only find a modest relationship between the type of temporary change and government status.

Finally, Figure 10 presents the placement of the supplementary ideology variable, where each party is coded as affiliated with one of 11 ideological families.[10] Party ideological family seems to have a stronger impact on temporary than permanent change. As expected, radical left and right parties are less likely to enter to and exit electoral coalitions in comparison to all other parties with a notable exception of ethnic parties. Christian Democratic parties are particularly likely to undergo temporary change. At the same time, there is little evidence

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[10]Party family variable was coded primarily based on Döring and Manow (2012). The more refined variables of party policy based on party manifestos or expert surveys had too many missing values to be used in the present analysis.

Figure 10: Party ideological family and party structural change
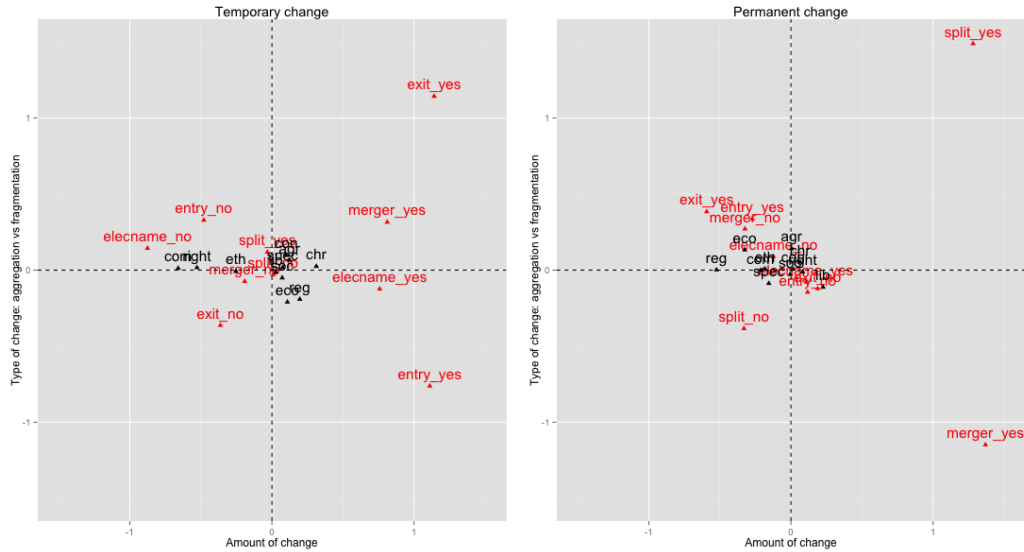
that party ideology affects the type of temporary change. Moving on to permanent change, we find less of distinction between radical and moderate parties, although the communist parties, together with ecological, regional, ethnic and special issue parties, seem to be somewhat less likely to split and merge in comparison to agrarian, Christian Democratic, social democratic, radical right and particularly liberal parties. The differences between party families with regard to the type of permanent change are, however, quite limited.

5 Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to uncover the patterns of party stability and change in post-communist democracies and to examine some explanations for these patterns in an exploratory manner. We apply Multiple Correspondence Analysis to an original dataset that records five types of party structural change whilst using the party-electoral term dyad as a unit of analysis. The findings of empirical analyses contradict the notion that party stability and change is a uni-dimensional phenomenon. Instead we suggest it is important to distinguish between two types of change: temporary change (entry to and exit from electoral

coalitions and changes in parties' electoral labels) and permanent change (party splits and mergers). A more fine-grained understanding should also discern between aggregation and fragmentation within each of these two types of structural change.

By using electoral terms and parties as supplementary variables in our analysis, we show that these distinct patterns of change are not an outcome of our choice of the unit of analysis. In other words, a single dimension of party stability and change does not emerge when we look at individual parties, electoral terms or countries. We were, however, able to tentatively divide the countries in our sample into three groups in terms of their patterns of party stability and change. Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania exhibit moderate levels of permanent change, mostly fragmentation, and higher levels of temporary change, both aggregation and fragmentation. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia have had moderate levels of both permanent and temporary change of aggregatory and fragmentary type. The amount and type of change in the third and largest group that contains the Baltic states, Poland and Slovakia has varied more than in the other two groups, although the levels of change in these countries, especially in Estonia and Slovakia, tend to decrease.

Finally, our exploratory analysis also suggests several insights to account for the lack of a single-dimensional pattern of stability and change. Specifically, we find that the age of democratic electoral competition and parties are more strongly related to temporary than to permanent change. Furthermore, the direction of the relationship between the amount of temporary change and party size is reverse to that of the correlation between the amount of permanent change and size. There is also tentative evidence that parties that belong to different ideological families undergo different types of change. These insights, in combination with existing research on party mergers, splits, and electoral coalitions, provide the basis for advancing the theoretical understanding of party stability and change.

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