"BACK TO THE FUTURE?" GOVERNMENT FORMATION AND PARTY SYSTEM INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN EUROPE (EAST AND WEST)

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Introduction

Party system institutionalization is often treated as part of the larger syndrome of democratization, consolidation or modernization, but to the extent that party systems have a certain amount of autonomy from their social environment, their institutionalization also has its own distinct logic and trajectory. The paper's ambition is to explore this logic and trajectory by addressing three questions: What makes party systems institutionalized? How the level of party system institutionalization changed in Europe? And finally, what are the consequences of party system institutionalization?

Within each of these large questions we focus on a specific, practically or theoretically relevant issue. As far as the sources of institutionalization are concerned, we focus on the role of the age of party systems and of the historical period of their origin. In the section dealing with the temporal changes in the level of institutionalization we concentrate on the question whether the much talked-about dealignment process affected the structure of party competition as much as it affected the individual parties and the electorates, and whether the recent economic crisis made party systems more inchoate. Finally, concerning the consequences of institutionalization we investigate the relationship between party systems and the survival of democracy by comparing party systems rooted in various waves of democratization. The specific analyses are preceded by the introduction of party system closure as a proxy of party system institutionalization, by the operationalization of closure and the presentation of the used dataset.

Measuring institutionalization through closure

Most indicators of party system institutionalization are either based on the number of parties, (e.g. Horowitz and Browne 2005), on electoral volatility (e.g. Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Tavits 2005), both (e.g. Bielasiak 2002; Booth and

Robbins 2010; Morlino 1998) or on the party alliance structures as represented by the composition of governments (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2011; Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2014). The first three solutions have the advantage of being relatively simple and accessible (or at least they appear as such, for technical and substantive complications see Casal Bértoa, 2016; Casal Bértoa et al., 2015) they also have the fundamental problem of not capturing the structure of competition, which is the essence of party systems (Rokkan 1970; Smith 1989).

Indices based on the number of parties assume that larger number of parties provide a less institutionalized environment. But while the number of parties gives us important information about the so-called "streams of interaction" (Sartori 1976), it clearly fails to address how parties cooperate/compete and its relationship to institutionalization is, at best, indirect. While there may indeed exist a weak empirical correlation between fragmentation and stability, it has been frequently demonstrated that multiparty systems, especially if structured into party-blocs, can be perfectly stable and predictable. The fragmentation-based indices are problematic also because they assume that stability in party numbers implies stability in party labels, while in reality, especially in new democracies, many of the parties competing at the previous elections are replaced without any change in the level of fragmentation.

The most often used alternative is the Pedersen's index of electoral volatility. But this index was specifically designed to capture the (in)stability of voters' preferences, which is again a different issue from how parties cooperate and/or compete (1979; Mair 1997). The index also fails to distinguish between party (supply-side) and systemic (demand-side) institutionalization (Luna 2014, 412; Birch 2003; Powell and Tucker 2014, Rose and Munro 2009) and is guilty of "ecological fallacy" by assuming a close link between net change at the aggregate level and the individual changes in party preferences (Altman and Luna 2011, 4),

The closure indices (Mair 2007; Casal Bértoa and Mair 2012; Casal Bértoa and Enyedi's 2014), while somewhat more complicated to calculate, have a number of advantages vis-à-vis the measures briefly summarized above:

a) they focus on the structure of inter-party competition for government, which is "the most important aspect of party systems" (Mair 1997, 206),

b) they operationalizes institutionalization at the systemic level, and therefore keep the study of party institutionalization as a separate issue,

c) they allow for an evaluation of the *process* of institutionalization on a yearly basis, and not only at the time of elections

d) their validity and reliability is well documented (see Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2014).

The party system closure indices are based on the insight of Mair's (1997) that institutionalized party systems are characterized by (1) wholesale (i.e. total or none) alternations of governments, (2) familiar governing formulae and (3) closed (i.e. to a limited number of parties) governmental access. The version proposed by Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2014) measures the degree to which the alternations of political parties are wholesale by an "index of ministerial volatility" (MV) which, following Pedersen´s logic (and formula), substitutes the percentage of votes for a party in a particular election for the percentage of ministers (not ministries!) a party is awarded in a particular cabinet. Because closure is defined as being high when the government alternation is either close to total (100) or to none (0), when the initial score is above 50, then the alternation index equals MV, when it is below 50, it is 100-MV.

The second component, formula, is measured by the percentage of ministers belonging to a familiar combination of parties. Finally the third element, access, is captured by the percentage of ministers belonging to parties that were already present in the previous government.

Table 1. Theoretical examples of government formation in 5 imaginary countries

Cabinet	Country A	Country B	Country C	Country D	Country E
1st	A (100)	A (100)	A (60)-B (40)	A (60)-B (30)-C (10)	A (33.3)-B (33.3)-C (3:
2nd	B (100)	B (80)-C (20)	C (70)-B (30)	D (100)	D (60)-E (60)
3rd	A (100)	A (100)	A (75)-B (25)	A (45)-B (35)-E (20)	F (75)-G (25)
4th	A (100)	B (100)	C (65)- B (35)	D (80)-B (20)	D (60)-E (30)-F (10)
5th	B (100)	B (75)- C (25)	A (55)-B (45)	A (50)-B (25)-F (25)	H (100)

Table 1 presents information on the percentage of ministers (in brackets) per governing party in five different cabinets in a similar number of imaginary (or perhaps not so) countries. Country A reflects the typical two-party system (e.g. Malta, United Kingdom) in which the party winning the elections forms a monocolor majority government. Country B displays the structure of competition in a typical two-block party system (e.g. Portugal, Hungary) in which a party (or block of parties) on the right is pitted against a party (or block of parties) on the left.[1] Country C constitutes a clearly example of Blondel´s (1968) "two-and-a-half party system" (e.g.

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[1] Two-block party systems may take place in both limited (e.g. Albania, Macedonia) and extreme pluralist (e.g. Italy) context.

Germany). Two instances of more or less pluralist party systems are depicted in the last two countries.[2]

Table 2. Calculations of iPSI (and final scores) in 5 fictional countries

Cabinet	Country A			Country B			Country C			Country D			Country E		
	Alt	*For*	*Acc*	*Alt*	*For*	*Acc*	*Alt*	*For*	*Acc*	*Alt*	*For*	*Acc*	*Alt*	*For*	*Acc*
1st	FG			FG			FG			FG			FG		
2nd	100	0	0	100	0	0	70(40)	0	30	100	0	0	100	0	0
3rd	100	100	100	100	100	100	75(50)	100	100	100	80	80	100	0	0
4th	100	100	100	100	80	100	75(50)	100	100	80(60)	0	100	100	90	100
5th	100	100	100	100	100	100	65(30)	100	100	90(80)	75	75	100	0	0
TOTAL	*100*	*75*	*75*	*100*	*70*	*75*	*42.5*	*75*	*82.5*	*85*	*38.8*	*63.8*	*100*	*22.5*	*25*
iPSI	*250/3=* **83.3**			*245/3=* **81.7**			*200/3=* **66.7**			*187.6/3=* **62.5**			*147.5/3=* **49.2**		

Notes: Alt = alternation; For = formula; Acc = access; FG = founding government.

Following the instructions mentioned above, table 2 calculates the governing alternation (Alt), formula (For) and access (Acc) scores for each of the cabinets in each of the countries referred to in table 1.[3] It is important to note here that, because the alternation scores go from 50 to 100, rather than from 0 to 100 as in the other two cases, a standardization is needed according to the formula: (Alt-50)*2. The eighth row in the table above simply computes the average for the different criteria in each of the countries examined.[4] Finally, a *composite index of party system institutionalization* (iPSI) is calculated by combining the three features of *stability* into one unique (averaged) measurement.

Dataset

In order to measure to what extent European party systems have institutionalized, we have created a new dataset covering all European democracies since 1848. In particular, for a country to be considered democratic and, therefore, to be included in the dataset it needs to fulfill the following three conditions: (1) display a score of 6 or more in the Polity IV index, (2) have held universal (male) suffrage elections at least once, and (3) being governed by cabinets relying on parliamentary support, rather than on the exclusive will of the head of state. The dataset contains information on cabinet duration, the partisan composition of cabinets, and on the number of ministers belonging to each governmental party. The end result is a dataset

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[2] The Czech Republic and Poland until 2006 could be their main reflection in the real world.
[3] Had there been any years between elections or cabinet changes, all the three components would have received a score of 100.
[4] If two cabinet changes took place during the year the indicators are averaged (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi, 2014).

with 48 countries, divided into 66 party systems.[5] Some countries like for example France or Poland comprise, respectively, four and two different periods. Some countries, like Austria or Germany, refer to two different party systems (1st and 2nd Republic or the Weimar and the Bonn Republics). In the analyses below we present data for the entire life-span of only 64 European party systems as (1) the Czechoslovak 2nd Republic democracy collapsed before any governmental change had taken place, and (2) all Belarusian cabinets between 1991 and 1994 were formed by independents and experts, rather than by party members. It is important to note also that in some instances the period of time under study is extremely short, for example in the case of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes' (KSHS) party system only one year (i.e. 1921), while in others, for example in the Swiss case, an entire century and a decade, from 1897 till 2014. For this reason and because we will be testing various hypotheses referring to different time-periods, our focus on the core dataset will be complemented with analyses employing various subsamples, like young (less than 24 years old) and recent (1990-2011) party systems. Investigating multiple subsamples is not only in line with general methodological recommendations aimed at increasing the number of observations (King et al. 1994: 24), but it has the additional advantage of providing samples within which the age, the geographical area, the historical era or the time-length of the party systems are held constant and therefore the comparability of the cases is less disputable. Obviously, for most of the actors a governmental formula that hasn't been used for many decades can represent as much change as a completely new formula. Since no obvious temporal threshold can be defined, the best strategy is to examine the relationship on samples with both varying and uniform time frames.

Party System Development in Europe: a Historical Analysis (1848-2014)

Let us first characterize the party systems by the closure scores which aggregate the information from all years of the lifetime of a particular. The ranking of European party systems (Table 3) shows a familiar picture. The Western, wealthy and parliamentary countries, as expected, are overrepresented in the institutionalized categories. In the most institutionalized group one finds mainly proportional systems, but the two most majoritarian European countries, UK and Malta, are also in that

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[5] For a full list, see table A in the online Appendix.

group, indicating that a strong direct relationship between closure and type of electoral system is unlikely. The party systems of the European periphery tend to be placed on the less institutionalized spectrum, accompanied by Italy. Among the most institutionalized regimes one finds only currently existing systems, while on the least institutionalized end the Ukrainian system is the only party system that is still functioning.

Table 3. Party system institutionalization in Europe according to the cumulative closure index (1848-2014)

	Low (<80)	Low-medium (≥80-<85)	Medium (≥85-<90)	High-medium (≥90-<95)	High (≥95)
Party Systems	Latvia II Portugal I Finland I Germany I Ukraine Greece III Estonia I *France III* *Spain II* *Latvia I* *Russia* *San Marino I* *Poland I* *France I*	Italy Bulgaria Spain I Estonia II Lithuania Serbia Turkey II *Kosovo* *KSHS*	Macedonia Turkey III Finland II Czechoslovakia Slovakia Romania Croatia Moldova Austria I Czech R. Cyprus France II Poland II Slovenia *Greece II*	Portugal II France IV Germany II Luxembourg Iceland San Marino II The Netherlands Andorra Hungary Belgium Albania *Georgia* *Turkey I*	Switzerland Malta UK Greece IV Ireland Spain III Liechtenstein Norway Denmark Austria II Sweden *Armenia* *Montenegro*
N	*14*	*9*	*15*	*13*	*13*

Note: Party systems that lasted 10 years or less in italics.

Are the traditional, established democracies, as the literature suggests, indeed more predictable, more institutionalized than the new ones? In order to test this question we break down the old vs. new dichotomy into its three manifestations. First, we contrast post-communist countries with Western European democracies, then we check the difference between established Western countries and those party systems that originated in the third and fourth waves of democratization (i.e. we add Southern European countries[6] to the non-Western group) and finally, we contrast democracies with continuous democratic history and European countries that lived under authoritarian rule for a considerable amount of time (practically we add Austria, Italy and Germany to the Eastern and Southern European cases).

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[6] Spain, Greece, Portugal, Turkey, Liechtenstein, Andorra and Cyprus.

Table 4. The impact of region, time of transition and democratic breakdown on the 1990-2104 closure index of the current party systems, N=43, ANOVA-analysis

Western	Eastern	Pre-1974	Post-1974	Continuous	Discontinuous
92.2	86.2	92.2	87.9	93.5	88.6
difference = 6, F = 16.82, sig. = .000, eta = .485		difference = 4.3, F = 7.157, sig. = .011, eta = .351		difference = 4.9, F = 6.46, sig. = .015, eta = .369	

Table 5. The impact of region, time of transition and democratic breakdown on the all-years closure index of the current party systems, N=43, ANOVA-analysis

Western	Eastern	Pre-1974	Post-1974	Continuous	Discontinuous
93.8	86.4	94.1	88.1	95.2	89.2
difference = 7.4, F = 32.27, sig. = .000, eta = .664		difference = 6, F = 15.84, sig. = .000, eta = .528		difference = 6, F = 9.67, sig. = .003, eta = .437	

Whether one calculates the closure indices based on data between 1990 and 2014 (Table 4) or all years (Table 5), the contrast of group-averages shows that indeed post-communist, post-1974 and discontinuous systems are less predictable than the Western, old and continuous ones. Communist background seems to provide the strongest divide, the other two grouping principles appear as roughly equally strong.

Figure 1. Scatterplot of all years closure index and year of democratization, currently existing party systems
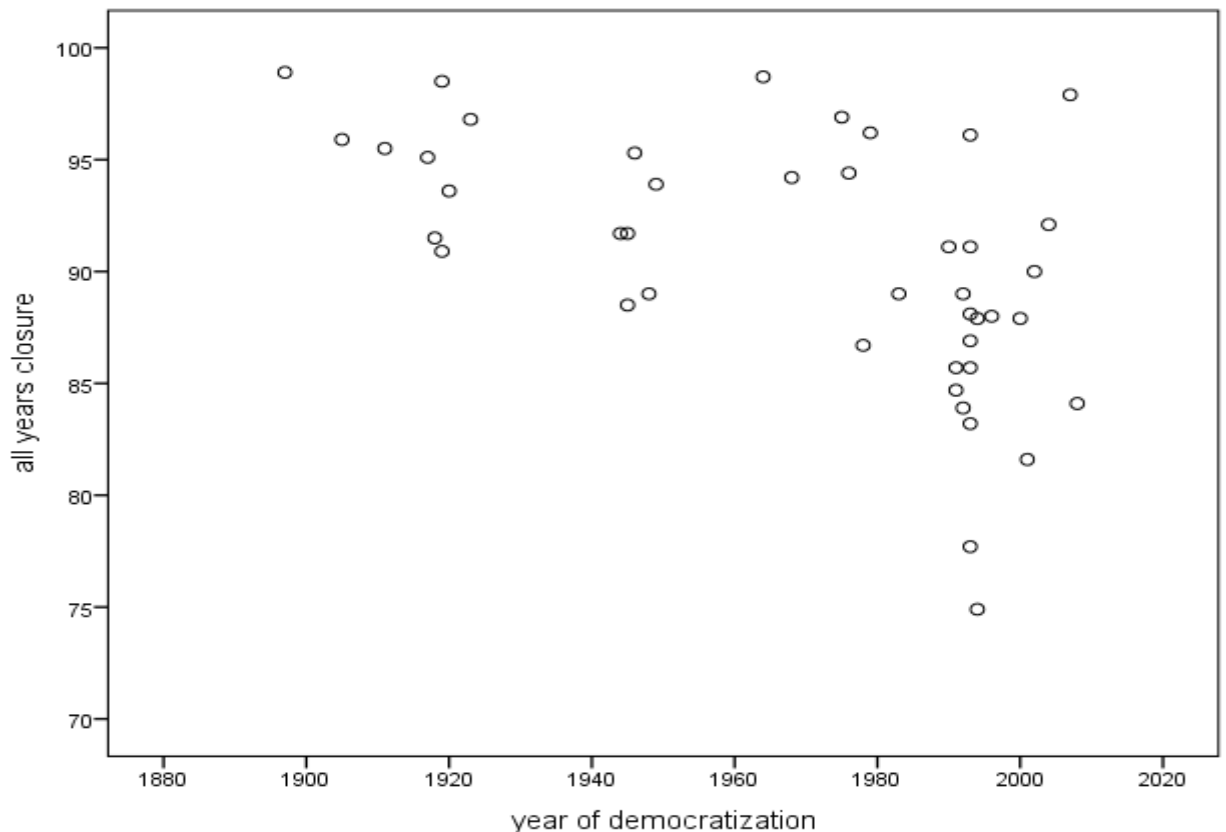
The results support the common wisdom that that longer time passed since democratization, more institutionalized a system becomes. The correlation between the year of democratization and the closure index, -.52 (sig. .000) also confirms this observation. (Using the 1990-2014 closure index: -.43, sig. .004). The scatterplot (figure 1) indicates, however, that there may be a curvilinear component in the relationship, the regimes dating to the decades between 1960 and 2000 are higher on the closure index than expected from a simple linear relationship. It is not possible to assign exact numerical values to the linear vs quadratic relationship, due to the high collinearity (even for centered variables) in this sample.

Whether in linear or curvilinear form, time seems to matter. The relevance of time for institutionalization has been, however, questioned by Mainwaring and Zoco (2007). They demonstrated that electoral volatility, i. e., their proxy for institutionalization, is affected more by the time-period of democratization, and less by the age of the party systems.

If we want to examine the difference between these two factors for closure, we need to take certain differences between the two forms of operationalization into account. While electoral volatility figures refer to specific points in time, general elections, closure is measured on a yearly basis (more precisely, the units of measurement are the characteristics of the governments that were in office in a particular year), but the index is able to capture the nature (the predictability) of the party system if it is based on a longer period. The cumulative indices we are working with in this paper characterize the state-of-affairs in a particular year by reflecting on information gathered from all the preceding years. As a result, we need to employ analyses that are different than used by Mainwaring and Zoco (2007).

Above we looked at the closure indices of the last year of existing systems. In this case there was no difference between age of party systems and the year of their origin (democratization). But if one adds to the pool of examined cases party systems which are defunct by now, then it becomes possible to disentangle the two. Twenty-one such systems exist in our data-set: Armenia, Austria I, Czechoslovakia, Estonia I, Finland I, France I, France II, France III, Germany I, Greece II, Greece III, KSHS, Latvia I, Poland I, Portugal I, Russia, San Marino I, Spain I, Spain II, Turkey I, and Turkey II (see the starting and closing dates of these regimes in the Appendix).

Taking both defunct and existing party systems into account, and using the form of the closure index that considers all years spent under democratic conditions,

the negative correlation between year of democratization and the closure index disappears. The correlation becomes actually positive, .22 (sig. .008, N=64), indicating that systems which originated in earlier periods used to be rather inchoate. In this case it is possible to contrast linear and curvilinear patterns. Regressing closure not only on year but also on the squared form of year increases the R square from .048 to .136 (F-change = 6.203, F-value = 4.796, sig = .012), indicating that there is indeed a robust curvilinear aspect to the relationship. The plot and the coefficients indicate that the later created systems are on average more institutionalized, but there is a strong downward trend affecting systems originating at the end of the century.

Figure 2. Scatterplot of all years closure and year of democratization, with regression lines, all party systems
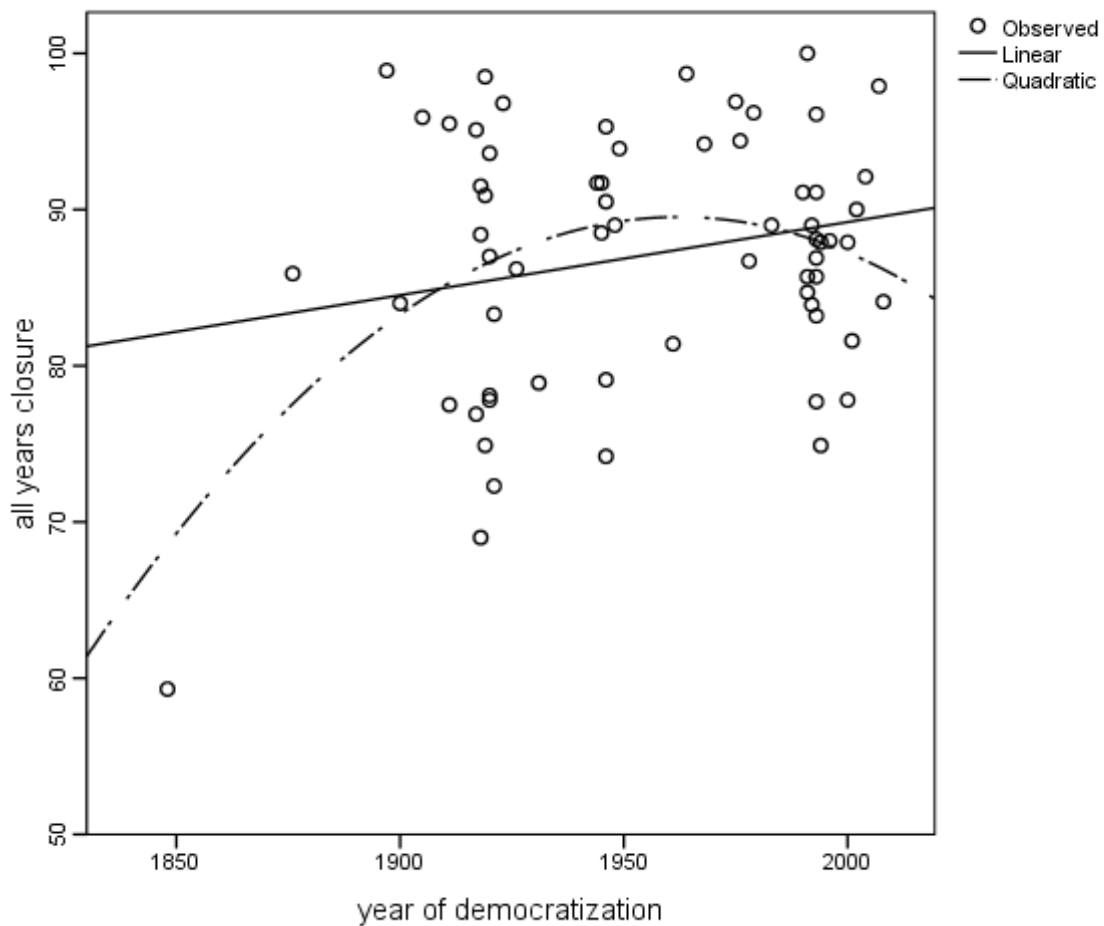
One may suspect that this pattern is an artifact, a result of the fact that the data-set includes a number of party systems which lasted such a short time that the application of the closure concept is problematic. In order to double-check this possibility we re-examined the association between year of democratization and closure by excluding those systems (Armenia, Montenegro, Georgia, Turkey I,

Greece II, Kosovo, KSHS, France III, Spain II, Latvia I, Russia, San Marino I, Poland I, France I) which had less than 11 years of existence. In this case the correlation coefficient was -.14 (sig. 35, N=49). The positive correlation disappeared, but the expected significant[7] negative correlation did not materialize.

Contrary to these negative or non-significant correlations, closure correlates significantly with the age of the party systems, i.e. the number of years passed since the origin of the party system. The Pearson coefficients are .55, if all 64 cases were taken into account, and .63, if only those systems that lasted at least 11 (both sig. at .001) were considered.

Regressing the closure index on both age and year of transition shows both factors to have a significant positive effect (Table 6). While in the case of age positive coefficient implies that old age goes together with institutionalization, as expected, in case of year of transition it implies that systems that appeared later in time are more predictable. In other words, systems that originated after the second world war or later have a bias towards stability, a phenomenon that is partly masked by the fact that they do not possess yet a long enough past, which is another important ingredient of stable and predictable interactions.

Table 6. The impact of age and year of democratization on the all-years closure index of all party systems, linear regression analysis, N=64

	B	Std. error	significance
constant	-118,778 (-49,189)	40,495 (50,031)	,005 (,331)
age	,191 (.179)	,025 (.028)	,000 (,000)
year of democratization	,102 (.067)	,021 (.025)	,000 (,011)

Table 7. Closure of party systems produced by the five waves of democratization, ranked from least to most closed

Current systems (all years)		Current systems (post-90)		Current systems (first 24 years)		All systems (all years)[8]		Long-lived systems (all years)	
1989-	87,2	1989-	87,2	1989-	87,2	1918-1940	**84,7**	1989-	86,3
1974-	92,6	1945-	90,7	1974-	90,9	-1914	**85,3**	1918-1940	**88,2**
1945-	92,9	1974-	91,7	1945-	92,4	1989-	87,2	1945-	89,9
1918-1940	94,4	1918-1940	92,7	1918-1940	92,7	1945-	89,0	-1914	**90,7**
-1914	96,8	-1914	95,1	-1914	95,3	1974-	92,6	1974-	92,6

Note: Pre-WWI (-1914), Inter-war (1918-1940), Post-WWII (1945-), Third Wave (1974-), and Post-Berlin Wall (1989-).

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[7] The party systems in the data-set are not a sample of all European party systems, but cover virtually all of the cases in the 'universe'. Therefore the levels of significance are noted simply as indicators of the strength of the relationship, along other coefficients.
[8] Without Greece I.

One can get a more precise picture of the character of the different periods of origin if one groups the party systems into clusters. Given the history of democratization the most logical division is the following: pre-1918 (N=7[9]), inter-war (N=17), post-1945 (N=12), post-1974 (N=5), and post-1989 (N=23)[10]. Table 7 shows how the clusters differ in terms of closure if we consider various logics of case-selection and index-construction.

In the first column, which considers the currently existing systems based on closure-indices which aggregate the indicators for the entire life-time of the systems shows a linear relationship between historical periods: more recent the period of origin, less institutionalized the party systems are.

The picture changes somewhat if closure indices are calculated not for all years but only for the last 24 years. Doing so we largely control for the age of party systems, although not perfectly as some of the systems democratized later than 1990 (e.g. the Kosovo party system's year of origin is 2008, Montenegro's 2007). But the only difference in the ranking of the waves is that this time systems originating in the post-War period appear as marginally less institutionalized than those which appeared after 1974.

Using a life-cycle frame one may suspect that when they were young the historical systems were as unpredictable as the recent systems. But a comparison of the party systems which uses only information from their first 24 years of existance disconfirms this expectation. As column three in Table 7 shows, the first decades of the oldest systems were more orderly than the first decades of the current systems.

A much larger change appears if we consider all of the party systems that ever existed in Europe. In this case the pre-1945 systems appear as the most inchoate ones. The most recent systems have a medium-level closure and the most stable ones are the ones which originated in the decades after World War II.

Finally, cleaning the data from all short-lived systems (10 years or less), the rank order changes again. Post-1989 systems appear as most unpredictable, in line with Mainwaring and Zoco 2007. But they are followed not by the third wave systems, but by those which originated in the inter-war period. The post-1974 systems appear actually as the most predictable.

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[9] Plus Greece I.
[10] Considering the first 24 years of these party systems the ranking is similar: pre-WWI: 84.5, inter-war 84, post-war 88.7, post-70's 90.9, post-1989 87.2.

The comparison of the columns in tables 7 shows that it is primarily the pre-Second World War systems which are sensitive to the composition of the data-set. If defunct regimes are excluded, then they appear as very institutionalized. If, however, all systems are considered, the advantage of the first waves of democratization largely disappears. The period that gave rise to the most consolidated, predictable systems was not the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, but the decades following the Second World War, particularly the seventies and eighties, the period of rapid economic growth, Cold War, and the development of welfare state.

Another way to examine the impact of the year of democratization and the age of party systems on closure is to consider countries that had more than one party system. In each instance we report the closure of the final year of the system, but in order to minimize the differences in the age of the systems a cap of 24 years is introduced, as above. As Table 8 shows, out of the 12 countries which had more than one party system, Turkey is the only country in which earlier systems were more institutionalized than the more recent ones. Contrary to that, the longer-lived systems were in all instances, with the exception of Latvia and Turkey, more institutionalized. Apparently, high closure tends to characterize systems that survived for long, and not systems that were established earlier.

Table 8. First 24 years closure scores in countries with more than one party system

France		Greece		Spain		Turkey		San Marino		Portugal	
I	59,3	I	89,4	I	84	I	90,5	I	77,8	I	77,5
II	85	II	86,2	II	78,9	II	81,4	II	97,2	II	91
III	79,1	III	74,2	III	94,4	III	85,7				
IV	92	IV	95,4								
Austria		Estonia		Finland		Germany		Latvia		Poland	
I	87	I	72,3	I	76,9	I	74,9	I	77,7	I	69
II	97,6	II	83,9	II	87	II	89,5	II	77,7	II	85,7

The conclusion of this section must be that the relationship between time of democratization and institutionalization must be nuanced. Those currently existing regimes that democratized early are more institutionalized, but early democratization often produced systems which were inchoate. But because most of those systems have not survived, they are not part of data-sets containing only current systems, and thereby the link between early democratization and institutionalization appears I many existing studies stronger than it is in reality.

Institutionalization or de-institutionalization: trends in European politics

The consolidation of democratic politics in Europe in the 19th and 20th century was accompanied by the nationalization of party politics, the integration of freshly enfranchised (or-waiting-to-be enfranchised) citizens into mass organizations, the stabilization of party labels, the development of blocs of parties based on common ideological and economic interests, the crystallization of party identifications, and the stabilization/consolidation/freezing of electoral markets. Since the 1970's, however, and especially since the 1990s, the most frequently used term of the analysts is 'dealignment'. The alienation of citizens from traditional and institutionalized politics, the weakening of subcultures around parties and the decline of ideological commitment of mainstream political actors ten to be reflections of external social processes, but dealignment may be further amplified by the short-term perspective of political entrepreneurs and the bureaucratic interests of the office-holders.

The logic of dealignment should lead to a growing turbulence in party supply, increased electoral volatility and more 'promiscuity' in party behavior: a lack of loyalty to traditional partners and hence a growing unpredictability of coalition governments. These phenomena can be, and often are, opposed in the literature to Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) 'freezing' thesis, although, as Peter Mair (2001) pointed out, out of the three listed aspects of party behavior (party stability, electoral stability and party system stability) in fact only the last one was implied by the freezing (hypo)thesis.

By comparing the decade-by-decade electoral volatility, party stability and party system closure scores of Western European[11] countries since the 1910s till the 2010s it is possible to examine how much dealignment affected these three aspects of party politics. Electoral volatility is measured by the Pedersen index, the dominance of traditional party labels by Lewis's (2006) party stability index, and the stability of the party system by the closure index. The closure scores are reversed in order to make them comparable to Pedersen's volatility index, and thereby they actually show the openness or instability of party systems.

Figure 3 below shows that all three aspects could be considered to be frozen until the 1970s. But after that decade both the electorates and especially the parties themselves became exponentially less stable. Voters tend to look for new political

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[11] Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and UK.

options and traditional party labels are often replaced by new brands. But the alliance structures as measured through the composition of governments, continue to be characterized by stability. While important exceptions exist (think of Italy), the structure of competition has remained more or less the same in all those consolidated democracies. And it is significantly more predictable than during the first decades of the 20th century.

Figure 3. Systemic, partisan and electoral instability in Western European consolidated democracies (1848-2014)
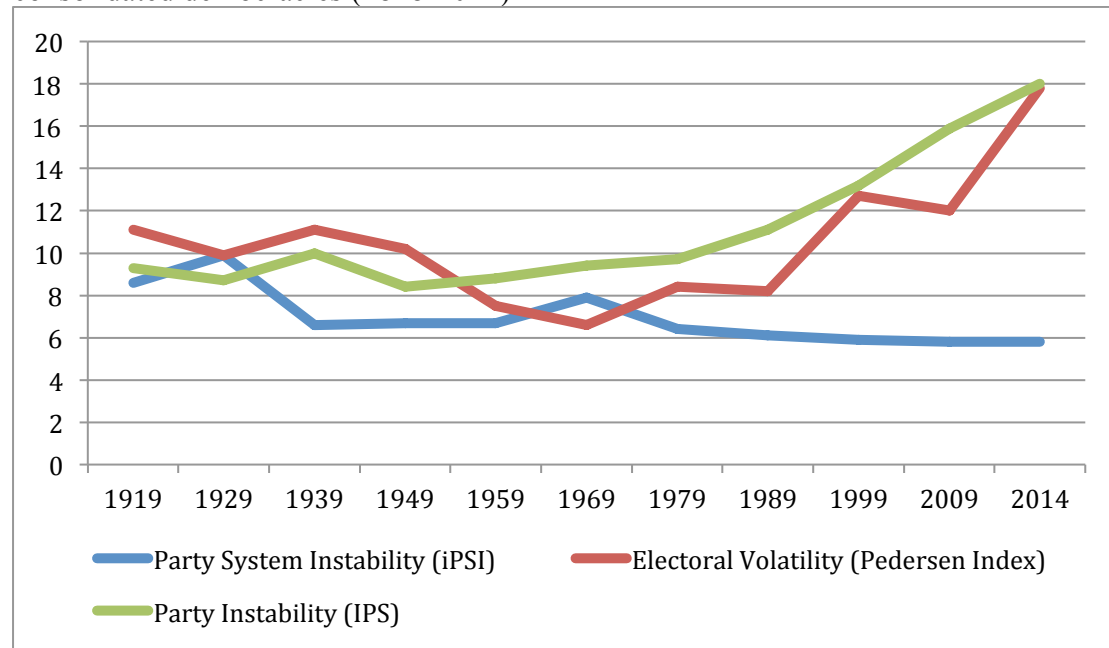

Note: Higher scores mean lower stability.

Of course, party politics is not influenced only by large-scale socio-political processes, like the ones discussed above, but also by short terms shocks like economic crises. The 2008 recession is a particularly likely candidate for transforming the party systems given that it affected profoundly the European integration process, increased unemployment, led to deep cuts in welfare provisions and delegitimized many of the ruling (neoliberal) ideas that governed state-society relations. During economic hardship citizens are expected to turn their back on incumbents and look for new political alternatives, either in the traditional opposition or at the fringes of the political spectrum (Duch, 2001; Fidrmuc, 2000; Pacek, 1994; Tucker, 2006). This can increase party system instability (Remmer, 1991; Madrid, 2005; Mainwaring, 1999; Roberts and Wibbels, 1999, Tavits, 2005). Negative economic performance is expected to undermine "existing party loyalties, or, more relevant in the case of young democracies, prevent[…] these loyalties from emerging" (Tavits, 2005: 286-287;

Mainwaring and Zoco, 2007). Given the turbulence in electoral behavior, parties may also find it very difficult to behave in a stable and predictable manner. The effects can be disproportionately harsh for new democracies: "economic crisis makes it more difficult for a nascent party system to institutionalize, [...although] it does not inevitably bring about the deinstitutionalization of an established party system" (Mainwaring 1999: 241).

While the effects of the crisis are visible in the rise of some radical and populist parties and in the defeats of the center-left, the closure indices (measured taking into account the years between 1990 and 2014) show no move towards de-institutionalization. Figure 4 show that to the extent that there was a change, it was rather in the direction of further institutionalization. This applies both for Western and Eastern Europe.

Figure 4. Closure of European party systems before and after the 2008 economic crisis (1990-2014)
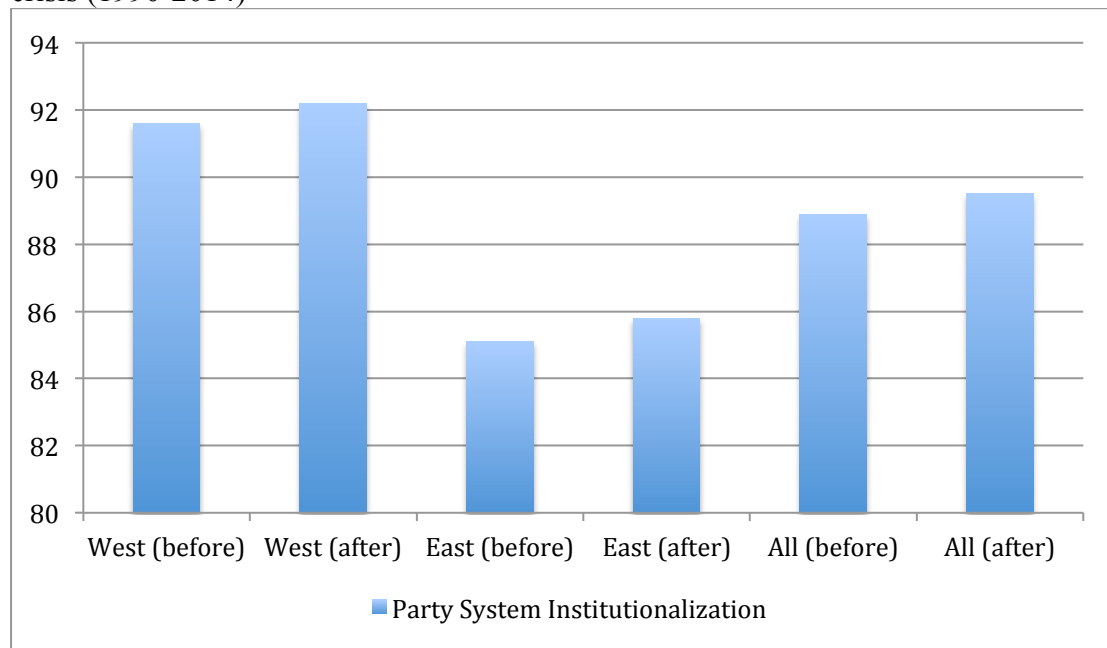
In fact, in the majority of the countries closure increased between 2007 and 2014 (Table 9). Apparently citizens and politicians rather closed ranks as opposed to panic and revolt during the crisis. This is, of course, not to deny that the crisis propelled a number of new political actors into the parliaments, and in few cases, into the governments as well.

Table 9. Countries experiencing PSI change: 2007 and 2014 in comparative perspective

	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Europe
Increase	16	10	26
Decrease	8	7	15
Total N	*24*	*17*	*41*

Party System Institutionalization and Democratic Survival

Finally, after discussing the origins and the trends of institutionalization, we need to address the question of its consequences. Party system institutionalization receives considerable amount of attention currently due to its assumed impact on the stability and quality of democracy. As Diamond put it:

> institutionalized party systems […] increase democratic governability and legitimacy by facilitating legislative support for government policies; by channelling demands and conflicts through established procedures; by reducing the scope for populist demagogues to win power; and by making the democratic process more inclusive, accessible, representative, and effective (Diamond 1997, xxiii).

In weakly institutionalized systems citizens may become frustrated with the (democratic) system, turn to extra-constitutional means, walk out entirely of electoral politics or endorse populist and demagogic leaders (Mainwaring 1998, 1999; see also Innes 2002; McGuire 1997). Researchers across the board seem to agree that "the historical evidence […] suggests that the crucial consideration for democracy is … the degree of party [system] institutionalization" (As Diamond and Linz 1989, 21).[12]

Table 10. First 24 years closure scores of successful and failed systems

Democracy	pre-WWI	inter-war	post-WWII	Post-Berlin Wall	Total
Survived	92	92	91.8	87	89.7
Collapsed	73.6	78.4	81.3	88.9	79.4 (78.2)
Difference	18.4	13.6	10.5	-1.9	10.3 (11.5)
Significance	.025	.000	.002	.691	.000
Eta	.77	.822	.703	.088	.599

Note: 'Post-WWII' includes two previous categories, 'post-war' and 'third wave', because the number of cases in these categories is too low to be divided into subgroups.

Given that our data-base contains both failed and surviving systems, the difference between them can be used to confirm or reject this widely held belief for

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[12] For an in-depth study of why P(S)I should positively affect the level of democracy see also Thames and Robbins (2007).

Europe. The failed systems are identical with the systems called above 'defunct', with the exceptions of inter-war Czechoslovakia, 1876-1940 France and pre-WWI Greece, which we consider defunct but not failed.

Table 10 shows that indeed, closure tends to be higher in those countries where democracy survived. The only exception is the post-Berlin Wall (i.e. 1989-2014) category. But in this case the jury is still out. There are only two clear failure cases in this category, Armenia and Russia, and free party competition had a very short span in both countries. In any case, the close relationship between failure and institutionalization does not seem to apply to the latest wave of democratization. Party systems survive, in spite of relatively large unpredictability of party relations.

Table 10. Party System Institutionalization and Democratic Survival (1st 24 years)

Democracy	Before WWI	Inter-war	After WWII	After 1989	Party systems
Survived	Switzerland Denmark Norway Greece I France II	Ireland UK The Netherlands Belgium	Austria II San Marino II Malta Greece IV Spain III France IV Portugal II	Montenegro Liechtenstein Georgia Andorra Hungary Albania	Institutionalized (≥90)
	Greece I* France II	Luxembourg Sweden Czechoslovakia		Macedonia Slovakia Romania Croatia Moldova Czech R. Poland II Slovenia Bulgaria Kosovo Estonia II Lithuania Serbia Latvia II Ukraine	Non-Institutionalized (<90)
Collapsed	Portugal I France I	Austria I Greece II KSHS Spain II Latvia I San Marino I Finland I Germany I Estonia I Poland I	Turkey I Iceland Germany II Italy Cyprus Finland II Turkey III Turkey II France III Greece III	Armenia Russia	

Notes: Countries where democracy collapsed despite high level of closure are underlined. Countries where democracy would eventually collapse are marked with an asterisk (*).

This phenomenon is underlined even more by Table 10, which uses closure score 90 as threshold to differentiate between institutionalized and under-institutionalized systems. There is a very strong link between institutionalization and the survival of democracy up until 1989. Four systems, Luxembourg, Sweden, Czechoslovakia and inter-war France (though the last case is arguable) survived in spite of relatively inchoate functioning, and one, pre-1953 Turkey, collapsed in spite of predictable party relations, but otherwise the character of the party system and the fate of democracy were closely intertwined. Closure appears as a necessary and almost sufficient condition for democratic survival. After 1989, however, institutionalization eases to be a necessary condition, although it may survive as a sufficient one (Casal Bértoa, 2015a).

The weakening of the relationship can have two explanations. One is that under the conditions of the early 21th century the fundamental structure of democratic regimes are less vulnerable to the challenges coming from the nature of party systems. The largely beneficial international and economic conditions provide a buffer even for the societies with the most chaotic party politics. The other explanation for the lack of robust link is that challenges nowadays come not only from under-institutionalization, but also from over-institutionalization. In Eastern Europe one finds among the most institutionalized party systems Montenegro, Georgia, Albania and Hungary. These are all countries which have either never fully democratized or where the quality of democracy has deteriorated rapidly during the last decade. The most successful countries of the region, both in economic and democratic terms, the Baltic countries, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland or the Czech Republic, all have more turbulent party scene, characterized by fragmentation, the frequent change of party labels, short-lived governments, great victories by newcomers and unpredictable coalition compositions.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in the paper demonstrated that in Europe the age of party systems had a positive impact on the level of institutionalization (measured in the form of closure). This finding is in line with the literature, just like the observed weakness in terms of institutionalization of systems established in the last wave of democratization. But according to our data it is not true that further in time a system was created, more institutionalized it is. Actually party systems from the inter-war period never achieved high level of institutionalization, and the post-WWII systems,

particularly the ones created at the beginning of the third wave of democratization, are very stable and predictable. The difference between our results and findings of other (especially Mainwaring and Zoco) can be due to the different operationalization of institutionalization and the different cases studied. But most likely the crucial difference lies in the fact that others have not included historical party systems into their analysis.[13]

The paper also demonstrated that the tendency of party systems to become increasingly institutionalized as time goes by was not fundamentally disturbed neither by the dealignment of party politics, not by the economic crisis. The widely held belief in the destructuration of party systems is exaggerated (Enyedi, 2014).

Finally, our data confirmed that party system institutionalization was closely linked to the survival of democracies, throughout the one-and-a-half century of European politics. The only period where the link becomes weak or non-existent is the most recent period. The current ability of inchoate party systems to survive may have much to do with the international environment (particularly the European Union), but may also signify the declining relevance of party politics for the wider context. Finally, it is also possible that in the context of 20th century post-communist politics the lack of flexibility, pragmatism and openness became as important challenge to democracy as the unpredictability of party relations.

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[13] Their study only includes post-WWII democracies.

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Appendix

Table A. European democracies since 1848.

Country	Period	Country	Period
Albania	2002-	Kosovo	2008-
Andorra	1993-	Latvia I	1920-1933
Armenia	1991-1994	Latvia II	1993-
Austria I	1920-1932	Liechtenstein	1993-
Austria II	1946-	Lithuania	1993-
Belarus	1991-1994	Luxembourg	1920-
Belgium	1919-	Macedonia	1992-
Bulgaria	1991-	Malta	1964-
Croatia	2000-	Moldova	1994-
Cyprus	1978-	Montenegro	2007-
Czechoslovakia I	1918-1938	The Netherlands	1918-
Czechoslovakia II	1946	Norway	1905-
Czech Republic	1993	Poland I	1918-1926
Denmark	1911-1934	Poland II	1991-
Estonia I	1921-1934	Portugal I	1911-1925
Estonia II	1992-	Portugal II	1976-
Finland I	1917-1930	Romania	1996-
Finland II	1945-	Russia	2000-2006
France I	1848-1851	San Marino I	1920-1923
France II	1876-1940	San Marino II	1945-
France III	1946-1957	Serbia	2001-
France IV	1968-	Slovakia	1993-
Georgia	2004-	Slovenia	1993-
Germany I	1919-1932	Spain I	1900-1923
Germany II	1949-	Spain II	1931-1936
Greece I	1875-1914	Spain III	1979-
Greece II	1926-1936	Sweden	1917-
Greece III	1946-1948	Switzerland	1897-
Greece IV	1975-	Turkey I	1946-1953
Hungary	1990-	Turkey II	1961-1979
Iceland	1944-	Turkey III	1983-
Ireland	1923-	Ukraine	1994-
Italy	1948-	United Kingdom	1919-
Kingdom of SHS	1921		

Source: (Casal Bértoa, 2015b).