

# **YOUNG OR NEW? A TEMPORAL APPROACH TO THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF EUROPEAN PARTY SYSTEMS**

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## **Introduction**

This paper's ambition is to address the role time plays in the institutionalization of European party systems.

There are a number of distinct ways of how time and party system institutionalization can be related. One way is to consider the differences in the average stability across subsequent different historical eras, from the end of the nineteenth century until today, looking for period effects. Such an exercise can take the standard narrative of the temporal changes in European history as its starting point. According to this narrative competitive party politics began to structure government-building in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a limited number of European countries. The competition was based on a very limited electorate and it was organized into a bipartisan, conservative vs. liberal, opposition. Real mass politics only started at the end of the First World War (WWI), when suffrage was extended to at least the majority of adult males on the majority of the continent. The decades that followed produced fragmented, but 'frozen' party systems. Lipset and Rokkan's seminal essay from 1967, the study that shaped our image of European party politics more than any other, has been typically interpreted as projecting a very high degree of stability in party relations, party organizations and party support between the 1920s and 1960s. There is some uncertainty about when exactly the 'golden age' of stable and institutionalized party systems started and when it ended, but this era has definitely included the 1950s, and probably a few decades before and after the 1950s.

Then, at the end of this period (around the end of the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s) a number of prominent earthquake elections shattered the image of stability (and prompted a new, electoral volatility-focused research agenda within political science, cf. Pedersen 1979). The quasi-consensual image of de-freezing party systems was partially questioned by Bartolini and Mair's (1990) work, which found that in terms of the fundamental party blocs and their electoral support little had changed during the 1970s and 1980s compared to the previous decades. The

evaluation of the three decades that followed (i.e. 1980s-2000s) is, however, relatively unanimous: they are viewed by most observers as decades of progressive de-alignment. To the point that the voice of those claiming continuous systemic stability is a tiny minority by now (Enyedi 2014).

One alternative to the comparison of historical periods is to think in terms of the life-cycle of party systems. Most scholars who adopt this approach assume, or find, a positive association between time and stability: young party systems tend to be inchoate, but as they mature they develop predictable patterns of behavior. This is plausible given that the passage of time can help parties to develop strong organizations, comprehensive programmatic profiles, stable party identifications, and linkages to social groups and economic interests (e.g. Brader and Tucker, 2001; Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Converse, 1969; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Mair, 1997). The institutionalization-literature (e.g. Panebianco, 1988; Huntington, 1968, etc.) is most linked to this perspective. The linear relationship between the age of the party systems and their institutionalization is however, even more debated than the characterization of the historical periods. A number of scholars have questioned the deterministic logic of progressive stabilization (Bielasiak, 2002; Casal Bértoa and Mair, 2012; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006; Mainwaring and Zoco, 2007; Rose and Munro, 2003; Shamir, 1984: 49), and the most recent signs of instability across the whole continent provide plenty of ammunition for the skeptics.

The third principal way of combining time and stability is to think in terms of party system cohorts. In this framework the stability and the degree of institutionalization of party systems is expected to be dependent on their time of origin: that is, in which historical era were they 'born'. Most typically the expectation is that the earlier a party system was born, the higher its potential for institutionalization (Mainwaring, 1999: 225–33; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006). As many scholars argue, having one's 'formative years' in the post-cold war, TV- and social media-dominated is less beneficial for institutionalization than 'growing up' in the era of the extension of suffrage, the rise of mass parties, working class movements, peasant parties and Christian democracy (Chalmers, 1964; LaPalombara and Weiner, 1966, Mair, Pizzorno, 1981; Schmitter, 2001). In the industrial period the mobilization and the encapsulation of the citizens was crucial for party survival. The structures developed in those years created lasting patterns of loyalties and based the inter-party relations on polarized competitive patterns. In the postindustrial era, on the

other hand, parties are only marginally involved in fulfilling the function of social integration and they play an even more marginal role in the everyday life of their supporters. Accordingly, Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) found that “competitive regimes inaugurated in earlier periods have much lower electoral volatility than regimes inaugurated more recently” and Mainwaring et al. (2016) re-confirmed that “[d]emocracies established in earlier historical periods have much lower extra- and within-system volatility than third- and fourth-wave democracies.” Among the three temporal patterns discussed so far the latter one is the least debated.

The studies conducted so far on the role of time in party system institutionalization suffer, however, from a number of deficiencies. First, they do not have a proper conceptualization and operationalization of party system institutionalization. They typically focus on electoral instability and project the tendencies found in the electoral arena on the level of party systems. Below we suggest to separate the two, and to ask a question that has been neglected so far in the literature: how the tendencies in the stabilization and destabilization of the electorates diverge from the parallel tendencies pertaining to party relations in the governmental arena?

The second problem with the state-of-the-art is that most studies consider only currently existing party systems. Party systems that existed in the past are neglected, and, therefore, the results suffer for a ‘survival bias’. We remedy this problem by including into our analysis democracies that collapsed and systems that are consequently defunct by now.

Finally, the existing analyses of the timeline of European party politics are either confined to Western European countries or consider Eastern European countries only in their post-communist phase. We offer below a comprehensive account of party politics both in terms of geography and time, while extending the analyses of the entire dataset with the examination of temporally or geographically bound subsets of data.

### **Measuring institutionalization of party systems and of electorates**

First, we need to tackle the challenge of conceptualization and operationalization.

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), on 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, 2016a; Casal Bértoa et al., 2015). But they have the fundamental problem of not capturing the structure of competition, which is the very essence of party systems (Rokkan 1970; Smith 1989).

Indices based on the number of parties assume that large number of parties provide a less institutionalized environment than fewer parties. Indeed, the number of parties gives us important information about the “streams of interaction” (Sartori 1976). But the number (or the degree of fragmentation) of parties fails to address how parties cooperate/compete. While there may exist an 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. In reality, especially in new democracies, a large proportion of the political parties are frequently replaced by new generation of parties without any change in the level of fragmentation.

The most common solution in the field of party system institutionalization is to rely on Pedersen’s index of electoral volatility. This is, however, also a less-than-fortunate choice. The index was designed to capture the (in)stability of the preferences of voters, and not the way how parties cooperate and compete with each other (1979; Mair 1997). The index is also guilty of “ecological fallacy” by assuming a close link between changes of party preferences at the aggregate and at the individual levels (Altman and Luna 2011, 4). On the other hand, one must acknowledge that electoral volatility, as opposed to fragmentation, indeed taps the degree of continuity versus discontinuity, albeit not at the level of party relations but at the electoral level. Therefore in the analyses below we will use volatility as the indicator of the stability of the electorates, and not of party systems.

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

- 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 allow for an evaluation of the *process* of institutionalization on a yearly basis, and not only at the time of elections
- c) their validity and reliability has been 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 coalition formulae and (3) the limited access of parties to the governmental arena (i.e. the difficulty of new parties to obtain executive power).

In the version of the index proposed by Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2014) alternation, the first dimension of party system closure, is measured taking into consideration the degree of ministerial volatility between two elections (MV). Pedersen’s formula is used for calculating the degree of alternation, except that the input is not the percentage of votes given to parties but the percentage of ministers belonging to governing parties. When this figure is between 50 and 100 percent, it shows how close is the particular case to total alternation (when every single party in government is replaced). When the figure is between 0 and 50 then the relevant question is how close the case is to a complete lack of change. Therefore the index of alternation in the latter instances is not MV but its inverse: 100-MV.

The second component, stability in coalition formula, is measured by the percentage of ministers belonging to a familiar combination of parties: to parties that have already governed together in previous occasions. Finally the third element, access, is captured by the percentage of ministers belonging to parties that were already present in previous governments.

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

| <b>Cabinet</b>        | <b>Country A</b> | <b>Country B</b> | <b>Country C</b> | <b>Country D</b>     | <b>Country E</b>           |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>1<sup>st</sup></i> | A (100)          | A (100)          | A (60)-B (40)    | A (60)-B (30)-C (10) | A (33.3)-B (33.3)-C (33.3) |
| <i>2<sup>nd</sup></i> | B (100)          | B (80)-C (20)    | C (70)-B (30)    | D (100)              | D (60)-E (60)              |
| <i>3<sup>rd</sup></i> | A (100)          | A (100)          | A (75)-B (25)    | A (45)-B (35)-E (20) | F (75)-G (25)              |
| <i>4<sup>th</sup></i> | A (100)          | B (100)          | C (65)- B (35)   | D (80)-B (20)        | D (60)-E (30)-F (10)       |

|                       |         |                |               |                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------|
| <i>5<sup>th</sup></i> | 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) belonging to governing party in five different cabinets in five countries. Country A reflects the typical two-party system (e.g. Malta, United Kingdom) in which the party winning the elections forms a monocolour 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.<sup>1</sup> Country C constitutes an example of Blondel's (1968) "two-and-a-half party system" (e.g. Germany). The last two columns present fragmented party landscapes.<sup>2</sup>

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

| <b>Cabi<br/>net</b>   | <b>Country A</b>   |                 |                 | <b>Country B</b>   |                 |                 | <b>Country C</b>   |                 |                 | <b>Country D</b>     |            |                 | <b>Country E</b>        |            |                 |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------|
|                       | <i>Al<br/>t</i>    | <i>F<br/>or</i> | <i>Ac<br/>c</i> | <i>Al<br/>t</i>    | <i>F<br/>or</i> | <i>Ac<br/>c</i> | <i>Al<br/>t</i>    | <i>F<br/>or</i> | <i>Ac<br/>c</i> | <i>Al<br/>t</i>      | <i>For</i> | <i>Ac<br/>c</i> | <i>Al<br/>t</i>         | <i>For</i> | <i>Ac<br/>c</i> |
| <i>1<sup>st</sup></i> | FG                 |                 |                 | FG                 |                 |                 | FG                 |                 |                 | FG                   |            |                 | FG                      |            |                 |
| <i>2<sup>nd</sup></i> | 10<br>0            | 0               | 0               | 10<br>0            | 0               | 0               | 70(4<br>0)         | 0               | 30              | 100                  | 0          | 0               | 10<br>0                 | 0          | 0               |
| <i>3<sup>rd</sup></i> | 10<br>0            | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0            | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0         | 75(5<br>0)         | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0         | 100                  | 80         | 80              | 10<br>0                 | 0          | 0               |
| <i>4<sup>th</sup></i> | 10<br>0            | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0            | 80              | 10<br>0         | 75(5<br>0)         | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0         | 80(6<br>0)           | 0          | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0                 | 90         | 10<br>0         |
| <i>5<sup>th</sup></i> | 10<br>0            | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0            | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0         | 65(3<br>0)         | 10<br>0         | 10<br>0         | 90(8<br>0)           | 75         | 75              | 10<br>0                 | 0          | 0               |
| <i>TOT<br/>AL</i>     | 10<br>0            | 75              | 75              | 10<br>0            | 70              | 75              | 42.5               | 75              | 82.<br>5        | 85                   | 38.<br>8   | 63.<br>8        | 10<br>0                 | 22.<br>5   | 25              |
| <b><i>iPSI</i></b>    | 250/3= <b>83.3</b> |                 |                 | 245/3= <b>81.7</b> |                 |                 | 200/3= <b>66.7</b> |                 |                 | 187.6/3= <b>62.5</b> |            |                 | 147.5/3=<br><b>49.2</b> |            |                 |

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. Because the alternation scores go from 50 to 100, rather than from 0 to 100, as in the other two cases, a linear transformation of the alternation index is necessary in order to make the scores of the three components comparable. The formula used is (Alt-50)\*2. The eighth row in the table above shows

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

<sup>2</sup> The Czech Republic and Poland until 2006 could be their main reflections in the real world.

the mean of the five governments within the countries on each of these three variables.<sup>3</sup> Finally, a *composite index of party system institutionalization* (iPSI) is calculated by averaging the three features of stability. Because the index aggregates information from the entire history of the party system, it shows less the state-of-affairs at a particular point in time and more the overall degree of exposure of a system to repetitive, rigid, predictable forms of interactions among parties in the governmental arena.

### **Dataset**

In order to measure to what extent European party systems have institutionalized, we have created a new dataset covering all democracies since 1848.<sup>4</sup> For a country to be considered democratic and, therefore, to be included in the dataset, the following three conditions need to be fulfilled: (1) a score of 6 or more in the Polity IV index, (2) universal (male) suffrage elections, and (3) 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 result is a dataset with 48 countries, divided into 67 party systems.<sup>5</sup> One country can be represented by more than one party system (e.g. Austria by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic, Germany by the Weimar and the Bonn Republics). The country that produced most party systems is France, represented by four cases in our dataset. In the subsequent analysis we exclude the Czechoslovak 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic, because its democracy collapsed before any governmental change had taken place, (2) Armenia, because it had no free and fair elections, and (3) Belarus, because its 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) the party system is represented by one year (1921), while in others, for example in the Swiss case, the included period is an entire century and a decade,

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<sup>3</sup> If two cabinet changes took place during the year, their indicators are averaged (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> In this paper we will present only information on the 20th and 21st century, due to the small number of cases in the earliest period.

<sup>5</sup> For a full list, see table A in the online Appendix.

from 1897 till 2015. We employ various strategies to assure that the results are not driven solely by these differences in duration. We reexamine the relationships found on the entire data-set by excluding short-lived systems (for which the application of the closure concept is problematic) and by considering subsamples with similar time-lengths. 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 they strengthen our belief in the comparability of the cases.

The differences between the lengths of the periods pose particular challenge to our closure index, which considers a configuration to be novel if has never occurred, it assuming a particularly long ‘memory’ on behalf of the actors in systems like the Swiss one. In reality for most of the actors a governmental formula that has not been used for many decades may represent as much change as a completely new formula. Unfortunately there is no obvious temporal frame, and the memories of the players probably vary both within and across systems. Therefore, the best way to get around this problem is to analyze both the entire dataset and its various subsections.

One solution used below is to fix the starting point of the history to 1990 for all systems. Not even these calculations guarantee complete equality, as there exist party systems which were established after 1990 and are less than 25 years old, but for the bulk of the cases this way of calculation provides for the same time-span. One may argue that this way of calculating the indices err on the opposite side than considering all years: they treat old systems ‘unfairly’ because they don’t allow the memory of governmental coalition to go back in a more distant past. As there is no perfect solution, using both approaches is the safest way forward.

### **The time-line of European party systems: comparison of decades**

First we consider whether the literature’s assessment concerning the dynamics of stability across the last century is accurate, whether the institutionalization of party systems differ according to specific periods. First we do this by contrasting the average volatility and closure of decades, aggregating information from all the party systems existing in that particular decade. Due to the low number of countries that conducted free elections prior to WWI<sup>6</sup> the graphs below start wither with the 1900s or with the 1920s.

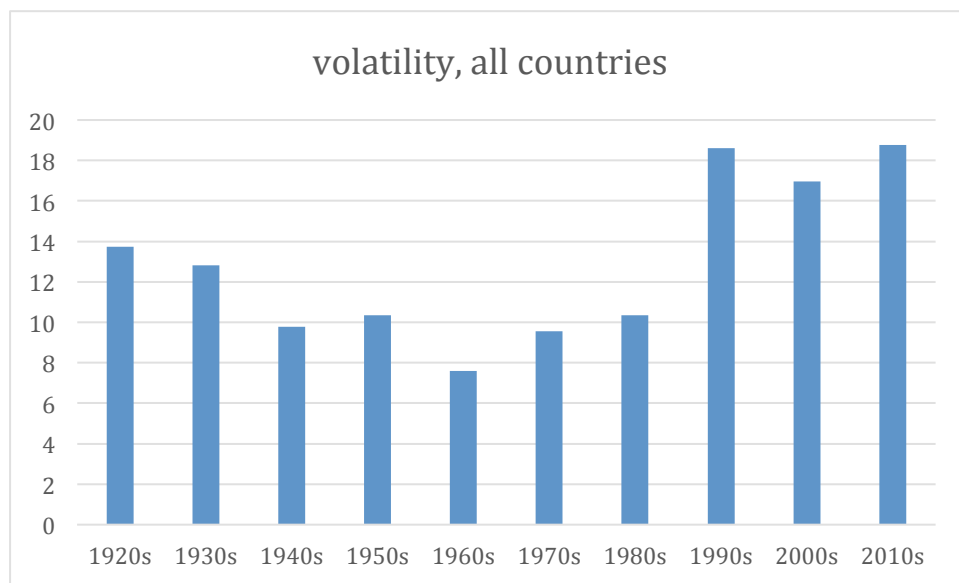
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<sup>6</sup> Denmark, France, Greece, Norway, Spain and Switzerland.



Let's look first at the difference between decades considering net electoral volatility (Note that higher figures indicate lower level of institutionalization of the electoral arena.). Figure 1 largely supports the image of frozen decades followed by de-alignment. But it also modifies it to some extent. The post-1990 decades appear indeed as particularly instable, but the 1970s and the 1980s are in fact rather less, than more turbulent than the 1920s and 1930s. Examining the figure it becomes understandable why the "freezing hypothesis" was born exactly in the 1960s: that decade was indeed particularly and unusually 'frozen'. The relatively stable period lasted between the 1940's and the 1980's.

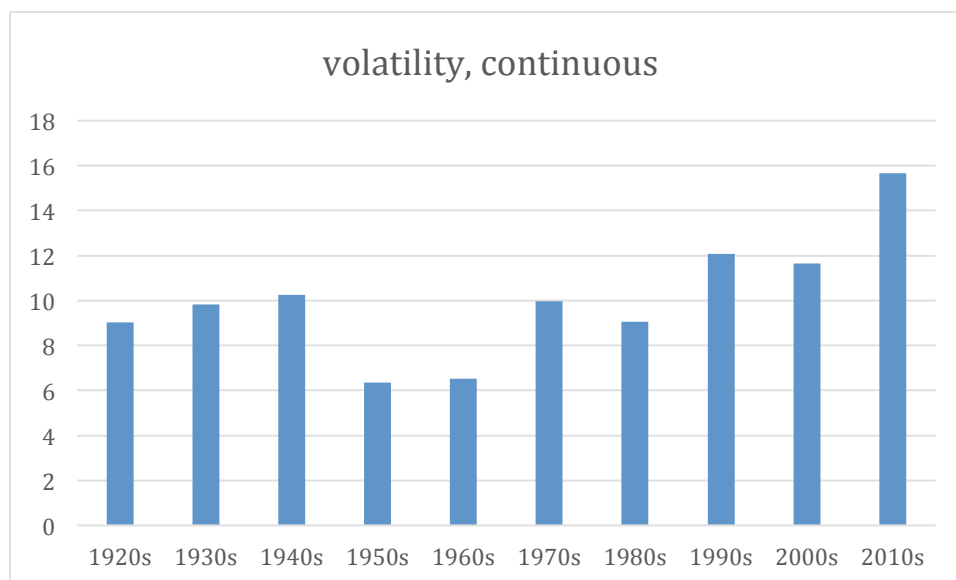
Figure 1.



One may question the strategy of considering all systems for drawing a timeline. The changes (or the lack of changes) in Figure 1 have two sources: the genuine modifications in the degree of electoral stability and the compositional effect: the fluctuation in the pool of countries, due to waves of democratization and de-democratization in various parts of the continent. Most obviously the big jump after 1990 is likely to be a function of the extension of party politics to new Eastern European countries, but similar logic may have operated in the years after the Second World War, when a number former fascist dictatorships joined the pool. Cleaning the data from the latter effect by focusing solely on the 11 continuous Western European

democracies<sup>7</sup>, the picture changes somewhat (Figure 2). Most importantly, as suspected, electoral volatility in the 1950s and in the 1990s appears as lower than in the previous figure.

Figure 2.



The claim according to which the tendency towards de-alignment started already in the 1970s is confirmed more clearly in this case. The last years appear, again in line with the standard narrative, particularly turbulent.

But both ways of looking at the data contradict the assessment according to which the pre-WWII decades were characterized by high levels of stability<sup>8</sup>, and that the 1970s brought an end to a long period of inertia. In fact the 1970's and the 1980's can be considered unstable only compared to the previous two decades and not compared to average values of volatility.

As emphasized above, we do not consider volatility to be a proper indicator of party system institutionalization as it taps only the stability of the electoral markets, and not the institutionalization of the party relations. Our preferred alternative indicator, the closure of party systems, shows slightly different dynamics in Europe. (Note that in this case higher figures imply higher level of institutionalization.) According to Figure 3, it is not the 2010's, but the 1920's and the 1930s, when

<sup>7</sup> Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and United Kingdom. These countries had elections across all the analyzed decades, with the exception of Iceland in the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>8</sup> "Most Western European and Anglo-American democratic party systems were stable from the 1920s until 1967, when Lipset and Rokkan (1967) published their seminal contribution on the "freezing" of party systems." (Mainwaring et al 2015:1).

Europe was characterized by most open, least institutionalized forms of party competition.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 3.

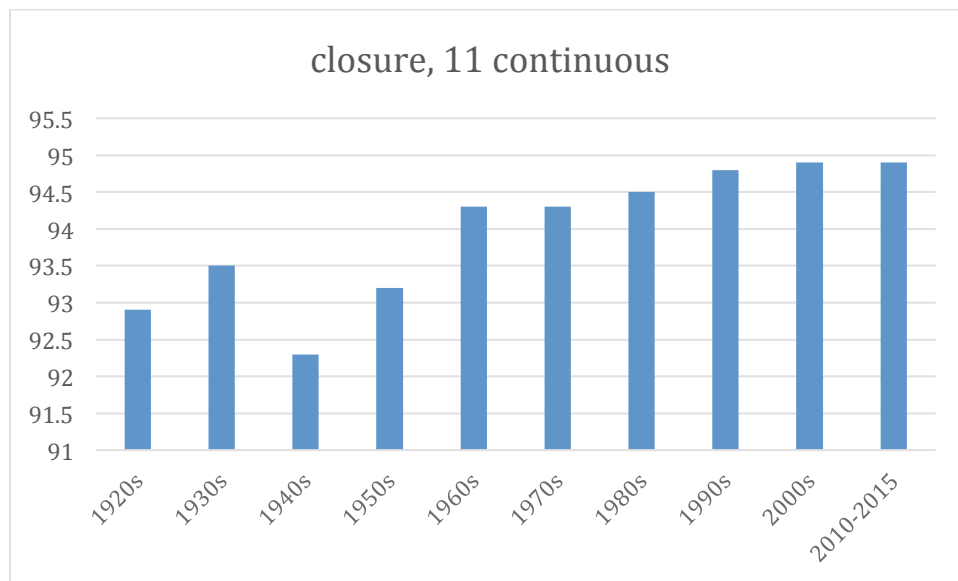


The 1950s and 1960s were stable according to the closure scores too, but the most stable decades (1970s and 1980s) arrived exactly when, according to the standard narrative, party systems de-froze in Europe. The 1990s indeed brought turbulence, but no collapse, and then the years of instability were followed by a - limited - return to 'normality'.

Disregarding the fluctuation caused by the changing pool of party systems, and considering only the countries that had continuous democratic record, the picture again changes somewhat (Figure 4).

Figure 4.

<sup>9</sup> The same pattern appears if one 'cleans' the data from micro states and short-lived systems.



Most importantly, the closure figures for the 1940s and 1950s drop substantially. (The figures for 1940s do not deserve much attention given the low number of party systems that had proper democratic party politics in those years.) But the main message of the previous graphs, that the post-WWII decades have been more closed than the pre-war decades is by-and-large reconfirmed. Moreover, it becomes apparent that the governmental arena of the most established party systems has not undergone any de-alignment recently.

Comparing the institutionalization of both electorates and party systems, there are some important parallels but also some noteworthy differences. Both show instable pre-war years, stable post-war decades (although according to the party system closure scores stability started rather in the 1960s than during the 1950s). The most clear difference between the two levels, however, concerns the last decades. Thus, according to electoral volatility one can indeed talk about de-alignment and, if one prefers a more dramatic language, even collapse, while in terms of party system closure stability prevails. It seems that the European electorates de-aligned after the end of the Cold War, while the party systems remained relatively structured at the governmental level.

### **Age-related differences in the institutionalization of current systems**

In the next step we contrast party systems from the point of view of their levels of institutionalization and their age. In order to make our findings directly comparable with the findings of other studies in the field, first we look exclusively at currently existing party systems. Closure, the indicator of the institutionalization of party relations in the governmental arena, and volatility, the indicator of institutionalization of electoral market, are related to each other in the dataset, but are also sufficiently distinct to justify their separate treatment. The correlation between average electoral volatility and average degree of closure for the 43 existing party systems is - 0.724 (sig. .000).

The clustering of European party systems (Table 3) shows the expected picture: while older party systems tend to be in more stable, newer systems appear in the less institutionalized categories, according to both measures.<sup>10</sup> Party systems established prior to the 1990s do not appear in the low-institutionalized category. At the same time, applying the criterion of closure ‘allows’ some new systems, such as Montenegro, Georgia, Hungary and Albania to end up in the relatively highly institutionalized segments of the spectrum. Even if the first two cases are discarded because of their too short existence, the difference between the two rankings indicates that it is easier for a new system to close its governmental arena than to stabilize its electorate.

Table 3

|   | <b>Low (&lt;80)</b>  | <b>Low-medium (≥80-&lt;85)</b>  | <b>Medium (≥85-&lt;90)</b>   | <b>High-medium (≥90-&lt;95)</b>  | <b>High (≥95)</b>  |
|---|----------------------|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Institutionalization of the party system</b> | Latvia II<br>Ukraine | Poland II<br>Bulgaria<br>Estonia II<br>Lithuania<br>Serbia<br><i>KSHS</i> | Macedonia<br>Turkey III<br>Italy<br>Andorra<br>Croatia<br>Romania<br>Slovakia<br>Finland II<br>Czech R.<br>Moldova<br>Cyprus<br>Slovenia<br>France II<br><i>Kosovo</i> | Portugal II<br>France IV<br>Germany II<br>Luxembourg<br>Iceland<br>San Marino II<br>Netherlands<br>Hungary<br>Belgium<br>Albania<br><i>Georgia</i> | Switzerland<br>Malta<br>UK<br>Ireland<br>Spain III<br>Liechtenstein<br>Norway<br>Denmark<br>Austria II<br>Greece IV<br>Sweden<br><i>Montenegro</i> |
|   | <b>Low</b>           | <b>Low-</b>   | <b>Medium</b>  | <b>High-medium</b>   | <b>High</b>  |

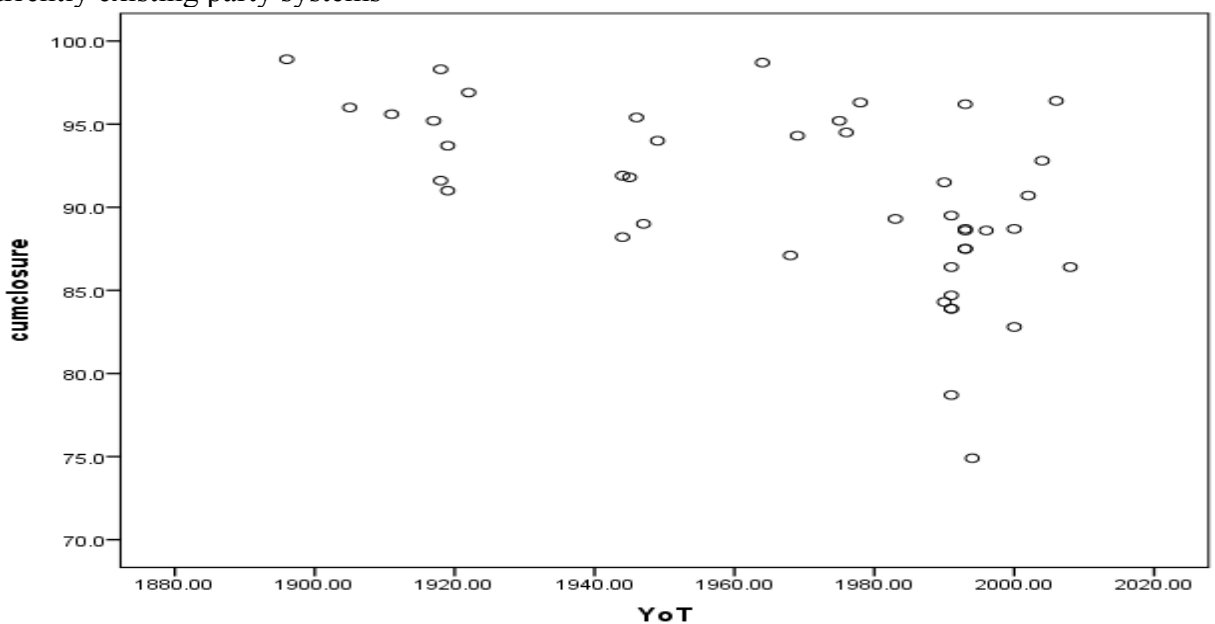
<sup>10</sup> In the most institutionalized group one finds mainly proportional systems, but the two most majoritarian European countries, UK and Malta, are also in that group, indicating that a strong direct relationship between closure and type of electoral system is unlikely.

|   | (>30)  | medium<br>(30-20)   | (20-10)  | (10-7)  | (<7)  |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Institutionalization<br/>of the electorate</b> | Lithuania<br>Albania<br>Ukraine<br>Latvia II<br>Slovenia | Bulgaria<br>Moldova<br>Poland II<br>Czech<br>Republic<br>Georgia<br>Turkey III<br>Romania<br>Hungary<br>Estonia II<br>Serbia<br>Macedonia | Slovakia<br>Croatia<br>Montenegro<br>Andorra<br>Kosovo<br>France IV<br>Spain III<br>Italy<br>Portugal II<br>Greece IV<br>Netherlands<br>Iceland<br>Ireland<br>Luxembourg<br>Norway | Belgium<br>Denmark<br>Germany II<br>Sweden<br>United<br>Kingdom<br>Finland II<br>Austria II<br>Cyprus | Switzerland<br>Liechtenstein<br>San Marino II |

The birth year (and the age) of the party systems strongly correlates with the analyzed indicators of stability: the correlation with volatility is .66 (sig .000), and with closure -.55 (sig. .000).<sup>11</sup>

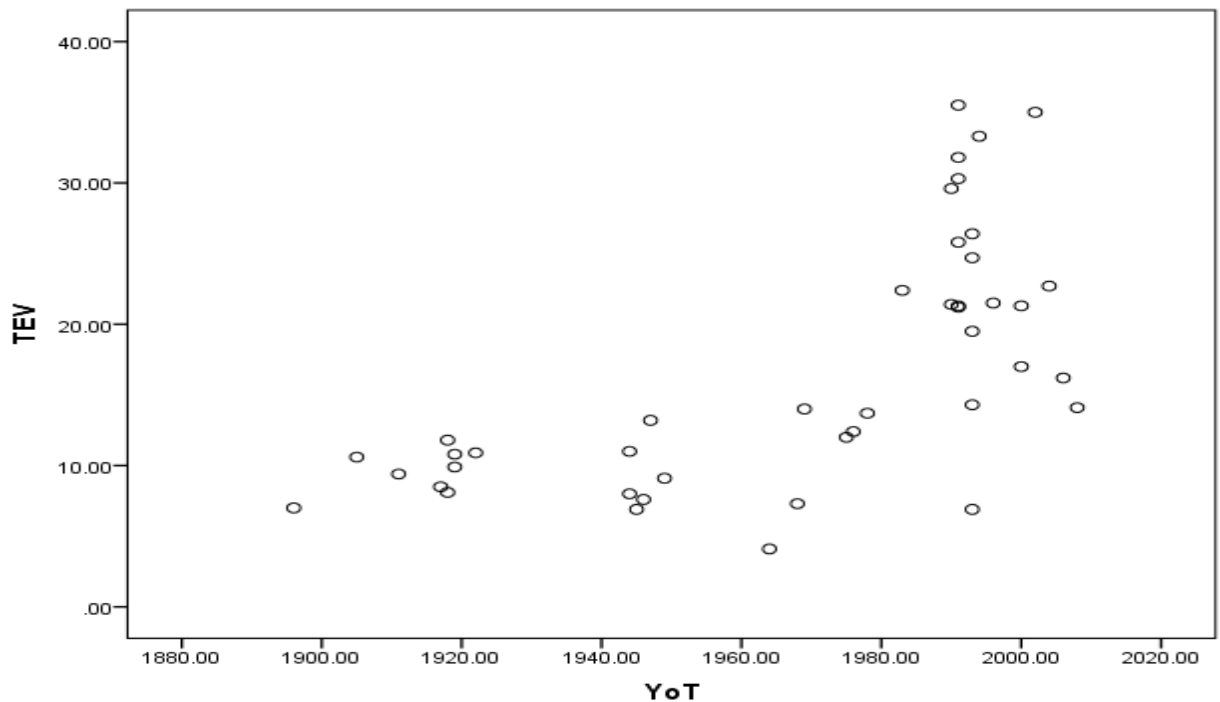
The scatterplots (figure 5 and 6) indicate, however, that there may be a curvilinear component in these relationships. The regimes dating back to the decades between 1960 and 2000 are somewhat more stable than expected from a simple linear relationship.

Figure 5. Scatterplot of closure index (all years) and birth year of party systems, currently existing party systems



<sup>11</sup> In case one restricts the analysis to the 1990-2015 subsample (in which the starting point for all cases is either 1990 or the year when democratic party politics began, whichever came later, the respective correlation is -.43, (sig. .004).

Figure 6. Scatterplot of volatility and birth year of party systems, currently existing party systems



Given the high degree of collinearity between the indices of stability and their quadratic forms, it is not possible to quantify the ratio of the two relationships on this sample, but this issue will be addressed below.

The division between old and new systems can have various, historically meaningful cut-off points. The most obvious are 1990 (meaning post-communist countries versus the rest), 1974 (meaning established Western democracies versus party systems that originated in the third and fourth waves of democratization)<sup>12</sup> and 1945 (meaning continuously democratic countries versus countries which democratized or re-democratized after World War II)<sup>13</sup>. In order to find out which of these cut-off points is the most relevant we ran anova analyses with volatility and closure as dependent variables. The latter variable was examined in two different forms, first taking all years into account, and second, considering only the 1990-2015 period. The second index largely controls for the age of party systems<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Spain, Greece, Portugal, Turkey, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Cyprus and the post-communist countries.

<sup>13</sup> Austria, Italy, Germany and the Eastern and Southern European cases

<sup>14</sup> Although not perfectly as some of the post-communist systems democratized later than 1990 (e.g. the Kosovo party system's year of origin is 2008, Montenegro's 2007), and therefore have less than 25 years of time-span.

Table 4. The impact of the time of the origin of the current party systems on their average volatility, all-year closure and 1990-2015 closure, N=43, ANOVA-analysis

|  |                                    |       |                                    |       |                                    |       |
|--|------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|-------|
| Birth year and volatility                | 1990                               |       | 1974                               |       | 1945                               |       |
|  | before                             | after | before                             | after | before                             | after |
|  | 10.41                              | 24.66 | 9.46                               | 21.44 | 9.67                               | 18.57 |
|  | F = 84.24, sig. = .000, eta = .820 |       | F = 35.1 sig. = .000, eta = .679   |       | F = 8.77, sig. = .005, eta = .420  |       |
| Birth year and closure (all years)       | 1990                               |       | 1974                               |       | 1945                               |       |
|  | before                             | after | before                             | after | before                             | after |
|  | 93.7                               | 86.7  | 94.1                               | 88.3  | 95.2                               | 89.4  |
|  | F = 29.54, sig. = .000, eta = .647 |       | F = 16.86, sig. = .000, eta = .540 |       | F = 10.39, sig. = .002, eta = .450 |       |
| Birth year and closure (1990-2015 years) | 1990                               |       | 1974                               |       | 1945                               |       |
|  | before                             | after | before                             | after | before                             | after |
|  | 92.2                               | 86.7  | 92.4                               | 88.1  | 93.6                               | 88.7  |
|  | F = 15.86, sig. = .000, eta = .528 |       | F = 8.20 sig. = .007, eta = .408   |       | F = 7.20, sig. = .010, eta = .387  |       |

Table 4 shows that whether the dependent variable is volatility or closure, and whether we measure closure across all years or only for the last 25 years, the most decisive watershed is 1990. But it is important to note that the other two divides are also statistically significant, and that by simply identifying 1990 as the most consequential divide we still do not know the substantive reasons of the difference: whether (1) the unique nature of communist legacy of the newly democratized states, (2) the changes in the environment of politics (new media, post-cold war climate, etc.), or (3) the fact that this grouping is the one that contrasts the youngest systems with the rest, is responsible for the divide.

Structuring the data in terms of cohorts of party systems Table 5 shows a linear relationship between institutionalization and the birth period of the cohorts: more recent the period of origin, less institutionalized the party systems are. Electoral volatility only marginally shows a different picture: the systems created in the inter-war period have slightly more stable electorates than expected, and the post-1989 cohort's instability is somewhat more pronounced.

Table 5. Closure and volatility of five cohorts of party systems

| Period    | Closure | Period    | Volatility |
|-----------|---------|-----------|------------|
| 1989-     | 87.3    | 1989-     | 23.3       |
| 1974-1989 | 92.5    | 1974-1989 | 13.6       |



|           |      |           |      |
|-----------|------|-----------|------|
| 1945-1974 | 92.9 | 1918-1940 | 10.0 |
| 1918-1940 | 94.5 | 1945-1974 | 9.2  |
| -1914     | 96.8 | -1914     | 9.0  |

As indicated above, the way how the closure index is calculated assumes that the memory of the participants goes back to the beginning of the party systems. This method places different demands on different cases: in some instances the memory is expected to cover a decade, while in others more than hundred years. Such an expectation can be particularly unrealistic in case of very old systems. In order to provide for more ‘realism’ and comparability, we have recalculated the closure indices in two ways. In the first case (first half of Table 6) history starts in 1990 for all systems. In the second case (second part of table 6) only the first 25 years of the party system were taken into consideration.<sup>15</sup> The second measure is relevant for both the life-cycle and the cohort approach, since it examines whether the level of institutionalization during the youth of the party systems are similar across the cohorts.

Table 6. Closure of current party systems produced by the five waves of democratization, ranked from least to most closed, considering different starting and ending points

| <b>Current systems (post-1990)</b> |      | <b>Current systems (during the first 25 years)</b> |      |
|------------------------------------|------|--|------|
| 1989-                              | 87.3 | 1989-  | 87.3 |
| 1945-1974                          | 90.9 | 1974-1989  | 91   |
| 1974-1989                          | 91.4 | 1918-1940  | 92.3 |
| 1918-1940                          | 92.8 | 1945-1974  | 92.4 |
| -1914                              | 95.2 | -1914  | 95.5 |

As shown by Table 6, whichever operationalization is used, the post 1989 systems are the least closed, and the pre-WWI systems are the most institutionalized, in line with the findings presented in Table 5. But there are also some noteworthy differences. If one considers only the 1990-2015 period then the systems born after WWII appear as relatively open, while if one considers the youth of the existing party systems, they show up as rather institutionalized. This particular cohort had a very tranquil, even rigid, governmental arena during its formative years, but has opened up recently.

<sup>15</sup> For the post-communist systems the two scores are identical, but for the others they can be very different.

The life-cycle approach implies that all systems are inchoate in the first years of their existence. The indicators generated from the first 25 years of existence of the systems disconfirm this expectation: the first decades of the oldest systems were more orderly than the first decades of the current systems.

### **Integrating existing and defunct party systems**

Given our dataset, we are in the position to go beyond this restricted pool of existing systems and to add to them the by-now-defunct systems. Twenty-one such cases exist: Austria I, Czechoslovakia, Estonia I, Finland I, France I, France II, France III, Germany I, Greece 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). Their inclusion gives us all the party systems that have ever existed in Europe.

So far we could not treat the temporal location of the origin (the year of birth of the party system) separately from the age of party systems (their duration in years). By including defunct systems we can disentangle age from year of birth.

Taking both defunct and existing party systems into account, volatility<sup>16</sup> correlates more strongly with age (-.59, sig. .000<sup>17</sup>, N=57) than with the birth of the party systems (0.42, sig. .001, N=57). There is an even larger gap between age and birth if one considers party system closure. Closure and age correlate more strongly ( $r=.62$ , sig. .000, N=64) than in the pool of current systems. The longer a party system survives, the more institutionalized its governmental arena becomes. The negative correlation between the year of democratization and the closure index, however, disappears (.19, sig. .142, N=64), underlining that, contrary to the findings of Mainwaring and Zoco, systems which originated in earlier periods used to be rather inchoate.

In order to double-check the robustness of the finding we re-examined the association between year of democratization and closure by excluding those systems that lasted no longer than a decade (i.e. Greece II, Montenegro, Kosovo, Poland I, Turkey I, Russia, Spain II, Greece III, France I, San Marino I, KSHS). The

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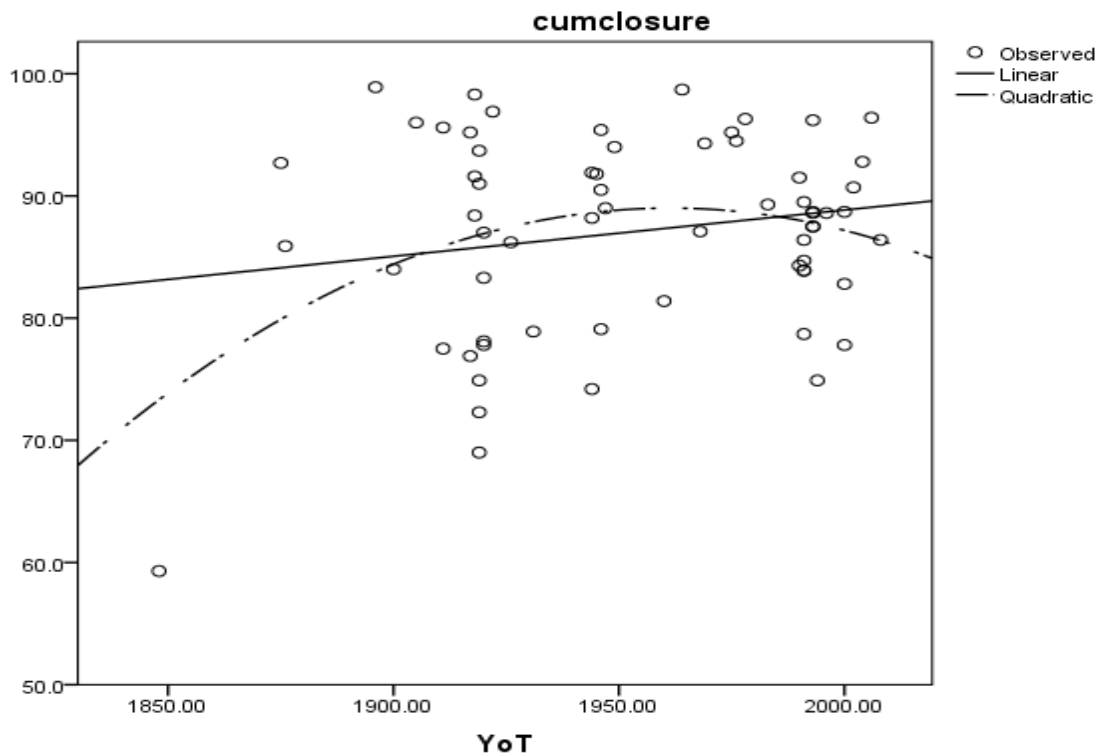
<sup>16</sup> The correlation between volatility and closer is smaller in the entire dataset than among the currently existing cases: - 0.467 (sig. .000).

<sup>17</sup> The party systems in the dataset are not a sample but cover all relevant cases. Therefore, the levels of significance are noted simply as indicators of the strength of the relationship, together with the coefficients.

fundamental pattern remained unaltered: the correlation figure (-.05, sig. .73, N=49) reconfirms that the robust negative relationship found above was due to the fact that defunct systems were not taken into account. Age, on the other hand, remained highly correlated with closure (.64, sig. .000) in the ‘cleaned’ data-set.

Using all cases it becomes possible to contrast linear and curvilinear patterns as far as the relationship between year of democratization and party system closure is concerned. While the linear relationship, as already indicated by the correlation figure above, is not significant (F sig. = .142), the curvilinear pattern reaches statistical significance (F sig. = .05). Regressing closure on both year of birth and on its squared form (i.e. adding a curvilinear model to the linear one) increases the R square from .034 to .092 (R square change: .058, F-change = 3.87). These coefficients, and Figure 7 below, show that the later created systems are, on average, somewhat more institutionalized, but there is also a downward trend affecting systems which originated at the end of the century.

Figure 7. Scatterplot of all years closure and year of democratization, with regression lines, all party systems



Using this comprehensive dataset one arrives to a somewhat different ranking of party system cohorts (Table 7) than found among the currently existing systems.

Table 7. Party system cohorts according to closure and volatility, existing and defunct systems

| Closure (all years) |      | Volatility (all years) |      |
|---------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| 1918-1940           | 84.7 | 1989-                  | 23.5 |
| -1914               | 86.2 | 1974-1989              | 13.6 |
| 1989-               | 86.8 | 1918-1940              | 13.2 |
| 1945-1974           | 89   | 1945-1974              | 13.1 |
| 1974-1989           | 92.5 | -1914                  | 5.4  |

*Note:* Pre-1918 (N=8), inter-war (N=17), post-1945 (N=12), post-1974 (N=5), and post-1989 (N=22).

The change at the level of the institutionalization of the electorates is minimal, the cohorts are placed in the same order. In terms of closure, however, the rank of the cohorts appears differently. The inter-war systems appear as the most inchoate ones. The most recently established party systems have actually a medium-level closure and the most stable systems are the ones that originated in the decades after 1974.

Leaving short-lived systems out (Table 8) show post-1989 systems as most open, followed by systems which originated in the inter-war period. The post-1974 systems appear again as the most structured group.

Table 8. Party system cohorts according to closure, existing and defunct systems, excluding short-lived party systems

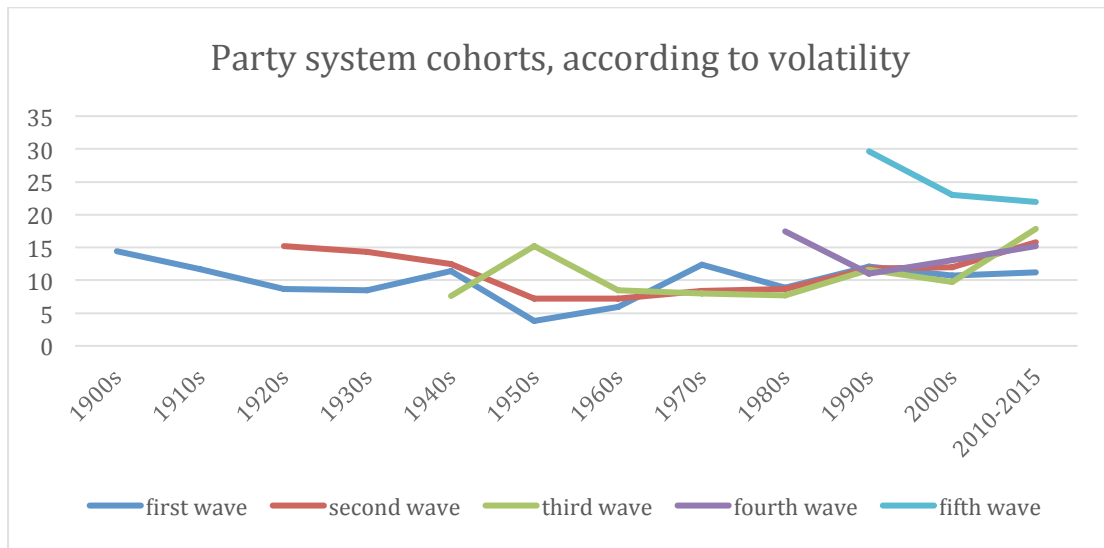
|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| 1989-     | 86,8 |
| 1918-1940 | 87   |
| -1914     | 90,1 |
| 1945-1974 | 90,4 |
| 1974-1989 | 92,5 |

The fundamental conclusion to be drawn from these tables is that being born in the pre-war era ceases to be a guarantee for ultimate stability if one does not limit the analysis to the currently existing systems. The other way around, historical origin, particularly origin in the inter-war period, is associated rather with party system openness.

The comparison of the columns in tables 5, 6, 7 and 8, shows that the pre-WWII party systems are particularly sensitive to the changes in the composition of the dataset. If defunct regimes are excluded from the analyses, then the pre-WWII-born systems appear as highly institutionalized. If, however, all cases are considered, the advantage of the first waves of democratization largely disappears. It becomes apparent, that the period that gave rise to the most consolidated, predictable systems

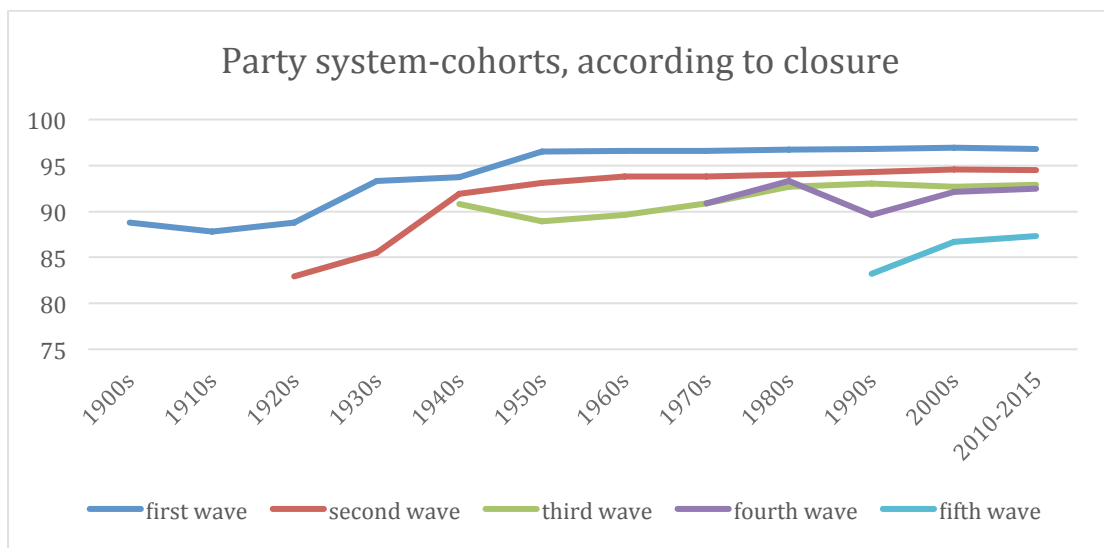
was not the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the decades following WWII. Party competition in the South-European party systems (Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Spain, Turkey), created during the seventies and eighties, the time of rapid economic growth, Cold War, and the development of welfare state, proved to be particularly closed.

Figure 8.



If one presents the indices of institutionalization across time and according to party system cohorts, the temporal dynamics appears in a different perspective. Consider first volatility (Figure 8). The youngest cohort, in spite of its general tendency towards stabilization, differs sharply from the others cohorts, being far more instable. But the four oldest cohorts, for most of the time, are hardly distinguishable from each other.

Figure 9.



There is a more clear separation between cohorts as far as cumulative party system closure is concerned. The older a cohort, the higher its closure index.

But for interpreting these graphs two caveats are in order. First, there is a large amount of inertia built into the closure index. Its purpose is to express how much a particular society has been exposed to regular and closed forms of governmental competition. And therefore older systems have a mechanical tendency towards having somewhat higher closure figures. Second, when a democracy collapses the country drops out of the cohort, and therefore the presented graphs also suffer from a survival bias. Figure 9 shows that the second wave democracies used to be as open between the two World Wars as the fifth wave democracies are today. The former cohort achieved respectable degree of party system closure only after its problematic cases have ‘dropped out’. The specificity of the last wave of democratization is not simply that it has produced open systems, but that the most open cases do not collapse but continue as competitive democracies.

#### **A contrast of age and birth-year**

Given that one of the most relevant study in the field, Mainwaring and Zoco (2007), has focused on the relative impact of age of party systems and their year of origin, in the last section we also contrast the influence of these two criteria on institutionalization. Regressing the degree of average volatility on both age and year of birth shows that age is inconsequential, while year of birth has a very small positive impact: the more recent the system is, the larger its degree of electoral volatility (Table 9).

Table 9. The impact of age and year of democratization on electoral volatility, controlled for fragmentation and per capita GDP, hierarchical multiple regression analysis, N=52, R square= .69

|  | <b>B</b>  | <b>Std. error</b> | <b>Beta</b> | <b>significance</b> |
|--|-----------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| <i>Constant</i>                              | -113.005  | 72.411            |             |                     |
| <i>Age</i>                                   | -.094     | .072              | -.343       | .197                |
| <i>year of democratization</i>               | .068      | .037              | .266        | .071                |
| <i>effective number of electoral parties</i> | .794      | .430              | .199        | .071                |
| <i>lagged GDP per capita</i>                 | -7.930E-5 | .000              | -.124       | .586                |

A very different picture emerges once one uses party system closure as dependent variable (Table 10). Both age and year of birth have a robust positive impact. While in the case of age the positive coefficient implies that old age goes together with higher degree of institutionalization, as expected, in case of year of birth it implies that systems that appeared later in time are, in fact, more predictable, once one controls for the other three variables. In other words, systems that originated after WWII or later have in fact a “bias towards stability” (Bartolini and Mair, 1990), 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 10. The impact of age and year of democratization on the all-years closure index of all party systems, controlled for fragmentation and per capita GDP, hierarchical multiple regression analysis, N=59, R square= .71

|  | <b>B</b>  | <b>Std. error</b> | <b>Beta</b> | <b>significance</b> |
|--|-----------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| <i>Constant</i>                              | -155.402  | 38.336            |             | .000                |
| <i>Age</i>                                   | .239      | .043              | .960        | .000                |
| <i>year of democratization</i>               | .123      | .020              | .590        | .000                |
| <i>effective number of electoral parties</i> | -1.135    | .248              | -.350       | .000                |
| <i>lagged GDP per capita</i>                 | -9.574E-5 | .000              | -.168       | .306                |

The relative superiority of age versus year of birth can be demonstrated in other ways, too. The cross-tabulation of birth-based cohorts and age-groups (Table 11) shows the age-based variation that exists within that party system cohorts. The older systems always appear as more institutionalized than the younger ones, with the exception of the last cohort.

Table 11.

| <b>First wave</b> |      | <b>Second wave</b> |      | <b>Third wave</b> |      | <b>Fourth wave<sup>18</sup></b> |  | <b>Fifth wave</b> |      |
|-------------------|------|--------------------|------|-------------------|------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|------|
| >100              | 96.8 | >20                | 94.5 | >40               | 92.9 |                                 |  | >20               | 86.2 |
| >20               | 87.5 | <20                | 79.3 | <40               | 81.3 |                                 |  | <20               | 88   |
| <20               | 68.4 |                    |      |                   |      |                                 |  |                   |      |

Turning the table, and examining the cohort-variation within the age-based clusters (Table 12), based on the literature one would expect that earlier cohorts would be in

<sup>18</sup> There are not enough cases/differences to distinguish between clusters.

all instances more institutionalized than the younger cohorts. In fact, this is true only concerning the group of the oldest systems (Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland). In all other clusters: the more recently established a cohort is, the higher its degree of closure contrary to the expectations of the literature.

Table 12

| <b>Older than 90 years</b> |      | <b>Between 60 and 90</b> |      | <b>Between 30 and 60</b> |      | <b>Between 20 and 30</b> |      | <b>Between 10 and 20</b> |      | <b>Below 10 years</b> |      |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| <i>First Wave</i>          | 96.8 | <i>First Wave</i>        | 85.9 | <i>First Wave</i>        | 92.7 | <i>First Wave</i>        | 84.0 | <i>First Wave</i>        | 77.5 | <i>First Wave</i>     | 59.3 |
| <i>Second Wave</i>         | 94.5 | <i>Third Wave</i>        | 91.7 | <i>Second Wave</i>       | 93.3 | <i>Fifth Wave</i>        | 86.2 | <i>Second Wave</i>       | 79.6 | <i>Second Wave</i>    | 79   |
|                            |      |                          |      | <i>Fourth Wave</i>       | 93.8 |                          |      | <i>Third Wave</i>        | 80.3 | <i>Third Wave</i>     | 82.3 |
|                            |      |                          |      |                          |      |                          |      | <i>Fifth Wave</i>        | 88.7 | <i>Fifth Wave</i>     | 86.9 |

A final way to gauge the impact of the year of democratization and the age of party systems on closure is to compare consecutive party systems for those countries that had more than one. In Table 13 we report the closure scores of the final year of the system. In those cases when the system lasted more than 25 years we present the index for the 25<sup>th</sup> year, in order to minimize the differences in age (but in brackets we report in these instances the all-year scores too).

Table 13. Closure scores in countries with more than one party system, first 25 years (in parentheses scores based on all years)

| <b>France</b>  |                | <b>Greece</b>  |                | <b>Spain</b>   |                | <b>Turkey</b>  |                | <b>San Marino</b> |                | <b>Portugal</b> |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| I              | 59.3           | I              | 83.3<br>(92.7) | I              | 84             | I              | 90.5           | I                 | 77.8           | I               | 77.5           |
| II             | 85<br>(85.9)   | II             | 86.2           | II             | 78.9           | II             | 81.4           | II                | 97.3<br>(91.8) | II              | 91.3<br>(94.5) |
| III            | 79.1           | III            | 74.2           | III            | 94.7<br>(96.3) | III            | 86.3<br>(89.3) |                   |                |                 |                |
| IV             | 92.2<br>(94.3) | IV             | 95.6<br>(95.2) |                |                |                |                |                   |                |                 |                |
| <b>Austria</b> |                | <b>Estonia</b> |                | <b>Finland</b> |                | <b>Germany</b> |                | <b>Latvia</b>     |                | <b>Poland</b>   |                |
| I              | 87             | I              | 72.3           | I              | 76.9           | I              | 74.9           | I                 | 78.1           | I               | 69             |
| II             | 97<br>(95.4)   | II             | 83.9           | II             | 86.7<br>(88.2) | II             | 90             | II                | 78.7           | II              | 84.7           |



As Table 13 shows, there was some volatility in closure scores in Turkey, Greece, France and Spain, but otherwise the later-established systems proved to be more closed.

To conclude: high closure tends to characterize systems that survived for long, and not necessarily systems that were established earlier. Those currently existing regimes that democratized early are more institutionalized, but early democratization often produced inchoate systems.

The link between early democratization and institutionalization appears in many existing studies stronger than it is in reality because defunct systems are not part of the standard datasets.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis presented in this paper has demonstrated that in Europe the age of party systems had a positive impact on the level of institutionalization of both electorates and the party systems. 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 the further in time a system was created, the more institutionalized it is. Only those inter-war party systems achieved high level of institutionalization which survived the period of their birth. The post-WWII systems, particularly the ones created at the beginning of the third wave of democratization (i.e. 1945-1974), are rather stable and predictable.

The difference between our results and findings of others<sup>19</sup> is likely to be due to the differences in the 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.<sup>20</sup>

As far as the institutionalization of the electoral arena is concerned, our findings contradict the claim that the pre-WWII decades were characterized by stability and that the 1970s brought an end to a long period of inertia. The 1970's and the 1980's can be considered unstable only compared to the previous two decades. On the other hand, our data confirmed that European electorates exhibit signs of

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<sup>19</sup> Our findings run directly against Mainwaring and Zoco's (2007:165): "Against theoretical expectations, the number of years since the inauguration of democracy did not influence volatility."

<sup>20</sup> Their study only includes post-WWII democracies.

progressive de-alignment since the 1970's. This tendency was, however, very modest until recently, and became pronounced only after the turn of the millennium.

The scores of party system closure also show instable pre-WWII and stable post-WWII decades. But as far as the relations among parties in the governmental arena is concerned, the most stable decades (i.e. 1970s and 1980s) arrived exactly when, according to the standard narrative, party systems in Europe de-froze. The 1990s indeed brought turbulence due to the extension of party politics to Eastern Europe, but the next decades showed a return to institutionalized patterns. While in terms of electoral volatility one can talk about de-alignment and even collapse, in terms of party system closure stability According to our results party systems have remained relatively structured at the governmental level even after the Cold War structures were demolished.

While volatility and closure are related, they 'behave' somewhat differently: according to the first criterion all of the post-communist democracies are inchoate, while according to the second some of them achieve respectable levels of institutionalization.

Among the currently existing systems the earlier formed systems are more institutionalized, although the party systems dating back to the decades between 1960 and 2000 are somewhat more stable than expected from a simple linear relationship. 1990 appears to be a particularly consequential watershed: the systems born after that are systematically less stable. The post-1989 systems are without any doubt the least closed, and the pre-WWI systems are the most institutionalized. This is not only due to the life-cycle effect: the first decades of the oldest systems were also more orderly than the first decades of the current systems.

Taking both defunct and existing party systems into account, age does not seem to influence the degree of volatility, while earlier birth year implies more stability. The picture changes once one considers party system closure: of the party system appears more closely related to institutionalization, both in the electoral and the governmental arena. The difference is particularly spectacular concerning party system closure: the significant relationship between closure and birth year disappears, or at least radically weakens, once one considers all systems that ever existed. The lack of strong linear relationship in the comprehensive data-set is partly due to the existence of a curvilinear pattern: while the later created systems are, on average,

somewhat more institutionalized, there is also downward trend affecting systems which originated at the end of the century.

The differences between the cohorts do not depend on whether both defunct and currently existing systems are considered or only the latter ones. Using these larger lens, origin in the distant past, particularly in the inter-war period, implies openness and instability. It becomes apparent that the period that gave rise to the most consolidated, predictable systems was not the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the decades following the Second World War.

Regressing the closure index on both age and year of birth shows not only that old age goes together with higher degree of institutionalization, but also that later established systems have in fact a bias towards stability, a phenomenon that is partly masked by the fact that they do not possess yet a long enough past. The surprising relationship between year of birth and closure is particularly sharply demonstrated by the cross-tabulations. With the exception of the oldest systems, the overall pattern is the opposite of what the literature expects: the more recently established is a cohort, the higher its degree of party closure.

Finally, the contrast of age groups and cohorts also demonstrated that there is only one case when older systems do not appear as more institutionalized than the younger ones, and this is the group of the most recently established systems. This finding indicates that within the post-communist wave of transition the general convergence of age and closure does not apply. Another regularity also appears to be breaking down: inchoate systems do not cease to survive as competitive democracies. In this regard we may have indeed entered a new era of party politics.

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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        | 1922-1926 |
| 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          | 1875-1915 | 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, 2016b).