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# Party Systems in Transition

A Comparative Study of Party Systems in Eastern Europe

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# Abstract

The evolution of the party system in Eastern Europe is, according to some scientists like Jack Bielasiak and Gary Reich, very similar to each other. According to them, the system will first polarize into two competing factions, the communist party or its successor on the one hand and the pro-democratic opposition on the other. The party system will then fragment into a jungle of parties that fight for the places in parliament. This phase won't last long however and a new pluralized system will evolve, according to Bielasiak. This paper will first investigate whether Hungary and the Czech Republic serve as good representatives for this theory. I will then go on to analyze whether Bulgaria and the Ukraine also follow this pre-determined path. I will use election data to establish whether these relations are true. My conclusions are that the Czech Republic and Hungary has continued to follow the theory of Bielasiak and that his theory is applicable to some extent on Bulgaria and the Ukraine. Reich's theory is less so.

*Key words:* Party system, Eastern Europe, ECE, Election, Ukraine, Bulgaria, democratization, consolidation

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# 1 Preface

Orange and purple are both signs of political revolutions that have taken place in Eastern Europe in the last couple of years in the countries that were not democratized in the first wave of democracy in the early 1990's. The political life, especially party-life, was highly restricted before the revolutions and now, the intriguing question is which shape the party systems will take in these countries. New political leaders in these countries like Yushenko in the Ukraine, were "displayed" in West-European media as heroes of democracy, and still are to some extent. Taking into consideration that Yushenko's party in the most recent election lost seats to other parties, what does the party system actually look like?

According to some research, the party system has evolved after a certain fashion in East Central Europe, becoming closer to the western European style. Perhaps, the party system in the countries that have just started their democratization will evolve in the same fashion.

This paper is going to discuss the evolution of democracy in two countries, comparing them to the general evolution in Eastern Europe, by studying their party systems in a comparative manner. Have they developed in an original fashion or are all these countries travelling on the same road?

Essentially, I will be using two models, which in essence belong to the same group of ideas. One of the models I will discuss is *the party dispersion hypothesis* that can be found in for example Reich. It states that the party system will start out polarized, in the first election with the communists and the opposition, but will fragment in a following election (Reich 2004: 237-238).

The second model, by Jack Bialasiak (1997), encompasses the former model but has a wider focus by establishing a theory for the whole evolution of the party system. From the fragmented party system, the structure will change into a more pluralized system similar to that in Western European countries.

## 1.1 Aim

The aim of this essay is to study the development of party systems in former Communist Central- and East European (ECE) countries, in order to better understand the political environment in countries which are close to the EU and whose potential objective might be to join the European Union. I also intend to evaluate the theories in the area on empirical cases that previously not have been widely studied.

## 1.2 Research Question

The research questions are as follows:

- Do Hungary and the Czech Republic follow the theory presented by Bielasiaak, also in their more recent elections?
- Does the *party dispersion hypothesis* apply to Bulgaria and the Ukraine?
- Does Jack Bielasiaaks theory of party system development apply to Bulgaria and the Ukraine?

I will also categorize the countries in accordance with Sartori's classification of party systems.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Method

Beginning with the basics in methodology, this analysis is both a quantitative study and a qualitative, with the emphasis on the latter. It is a quantitative study because the main body is based on a numerical analysis on elections in the relevant countries, which I will discuss later on. However, the numerical material is only a base, as the paper as a whole is on a qualitative level, with its characteristics.

Why, then, have I chosen to perform this kind of study? The numerical foundation is a fruitful way to establish an easy to follow analysis. The availability of statistics makes this the ideal way to begin a discussion. The qualitative perspective is a consequence of my epistemological view on science. Read and Marsh propose that social science is “a distinct and differentiated discipline because it involves subjective objects – reflexive human beings” (Marsh & Stoker 2002: 232). This is a statement that I fully concur with, as I believe that politics is characterized by trial and error.

The analysis will be performed as a comparative study where I compare two cases, Bulgaria and the Ukraine, with earlier empirical works on other countries in the same region, namely Central and Eastern Europe. I will in my analysis of party system patterns in ECE focus on Hungary and the Czech Republic. Besides using available material, I will for these countries also investigate how the system has developed in the most recent elections. This comparative study will be similar to a “most similar design” study. I use cases that are as similar to one another as possible, so as to be able to distinguish factors that potentially differentiate the countries (Landman 2000: 27). According to Landman, this type of study is especially befitting area studies like this one, as there is something intrinsically akin between countries in a region (*ibid.*: 28). The reason for using “most similar design” instead of using “most different design” is that research has proposed that the post-communist countries in this region have developed in a certain manner (Reich 2004: 245-246).

Why have I chosen Hungary and Czechoslovakia as the two countries that will stand as examples for the rest of the ECE? In most of my literature, they usually serve as the main examples of a good development of democracy in Eastern Europe and are also usually the prime targets for these kinds of analysis. Therefore, I think it is important to follow up on these investigations.

Why then have I chosen Bulgaria and the Ukraine? One cause for studying these countries is that these two countries haven't been analyzed to the same degree as for example Hungary or the Czech Republic. The reason for this lack of study on the Ukraine is that it is a brand new case while Bulgaria perhaps seems to be of less immediate relevance than countries that are closer to the EU. Both countries also had close ties with Soviet Union during the cold war period and were known to have ruling communist parties that followed Soviet principles. Lastly, both countries have been trying to strengthen the ties with the European Union as they have become more democratized.

The major difference between Bulgaria and the Ukraine is the time and the number of fair elections that have been held. While Bulgaria has been looked upon as a fairly free democracy for around 15 years, the Ukraine only just started its democratization process ([www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)).

There are two main reasons for not comparing with countries outside of Europe. First of all, there are studies suggesting that Eastern Europe, especially the ECE, has evolved in a certain way (Reich 2004). The second reason is that it is hard to find similar cases outside of the region. There aren't many countries that are post-communist and have embraced democracy in the same way.

For the quantitative part of the study I have gathered recent data on election results in my cases. I then analyze the data too see whether they agree or not with the theories that I am studying. In doing so, I need to perform some basic calculations in order to transform election results into measures that can be compared to existing research.

To measure the change in the party systems of my cases, I have chosen to use the two different variables that Reich uses (2004:240-241).

1. the effective number of parties in popular vote, which is measured as  $1/\sum p^2i$ , where  $p$  is the share if the popular vote
2. the share of the total popular vote going to minor parties, defined as  $\sum m_i$ , where  $m$  refers to each party that received less than 10% of the national vote

The aim of the first calculation is to measure the number of parties that in reality rule in parliament. If the number is 2, then there are two effective parties but there might exist smaller and marginalized parties that have no real affect on the politics in parliament. This measurement is weighted towards bigger parties, because the number of votes is squared. A higher number of votes lead to a disproportionately higher number when calculating. That is why Reich and I use the second measurement to provide a way to visualize electoral support for minor parties (cf. *ibid*: 241).

I can then compare my results to the patterns found in existing empirically oriented studies to verify if my cases follow the same trend.

In the theories I will be studying, it is parliamentary elections that are in focus. However, presidential elections play a big role in politics in Eastern Europe. Further, because there have only been two democratic elections in Ukraine, one of them being a presidential one, I find it necessary to include the presidential election in my analysis of Ukraine.

Further, it is important to discuss which elections can be used. In the Ukraine, there have been several semi-democratic elections for parliament that one could use when measuring change. However, to get an interesting answer, only elections where parties could have been created without the involvement of the state and that the electoral results are not affected or changed by the government in some way, should be included as Reich has done his delimitations (Reich 2004: 239-240).

## 2.2 Material

My basic empirical material is secondary literature on election data and the situation of the region I'm studying. I have been trying to find only the most recent texts because it is paramount to have up to date information, as the situation in these countries change relatively rapidly.

Because this is the case, scientists haven't had time to publish material that is fresh. Therefore, I will also gather information from different newspapers and other media that is up to date, to get the latest results in the elections. In this endeavor, I have been careful to verify all information by cross checking data from several sources. From earlier elections, however, it is possible to get the data from other sources that are more reliable. If this is the case, I will certainly use these sources. Mostly, these sources are either official government internet pages or internet databanks created by universities.



## 3 Theory

In this part of my essay, I will primarily highlight the theories I wish to analyze, namely the models proposed by Jack Bielasiak and by Reich, respectively, about the evolution of the party systems in Eastern Europe. I will also discuss other theories that complement or oppose these theories. I start, however, by highlighting some aspects of general theory in the area of party system development.

### 3.1 General party system theory

According to Sartori, there are four kinds of party systems, excluding authoritarian states with one party, as that is not a system and is irrelevant. Starting with the system with the highest number of parties, there is the “polarized pluralism system”. This system includes more than five to six parties, as the difference is made in between these two numbers, according to Sartori. To establish whether it is a polarized pluralism system, there are eight features that must be present (Sartori 1976: 131-140).

First of all there is a presence of “anti-system parties”, that is an anti-democratic opposition in the form of communists or fascists. A second feature is the existence of a bilateral opposition to government. A third characteristic is the center party or parties on the ideological scale that always exist in these systems. These systems are always ideologically polarized as well, this being the fourth feature. Fifthly, there are “centrifugal drives”, making the extreme ends the main contenders in an election. The sixth attribute is the “ideological patterning”, meaning an ideological mentality that shapes society. Point seven is that the opposition tends to be “irresponsible”. Lastly, “politics of outbidding” is occurring, meaning that the competition doesn’t follow the rules of competition. (ibid).

The second type of system discussed is “moderate pluralism”, consisting of 3-5 parties. Countries with this type of system include Denmark and the Netherlands during the years analyzed by Sartori. Here there are two predominant blocs which both contain several separate parties. This type of system is just in between the “polarized pluralism” and the “two-party” systems, sharing traits from both of them. There are at least three relevant parties, no party gains absolute majority and consequently, there are never single party governments (ibid: 173, 178).

The “two-party” system is, according to Sartori, a system where there are only two blocs. Examples of this system are Great Britain and the USA, although they are quite different. A two-party system has only two parties competing for the

absolute majority of seats, where one party can win all the necessary seats to be able to govern alone. Alternation of power must also be a viable expectation (ibid: 188).

Lastly, there is the “predominant party” system. In these systems, there is one party that continually is the biggest, and forms coalitions with different minor parties. This was at the time of Sartori the most common system and examples of are Japan and Sweden. A predominant party is a party that continuously is in government and is always the major party in the country. However, the party can cease to be predominant (ibid: 194-196).

Sartori (1976), later in his book, comes up with some explanations how a party system changes into another type. There can be a continuous development from within, with the example of Sweden and the Netherlands etc. Or, the change happens discontinuously, through system breakdown and revolution. For a revolution or a coup to be a system change, the type of government will have to change. This second way is, according to Sartori, the only way from a competitive to a non-competitive style of government (274-276).

Change from authoritarian to a democratic government is harder to analyze for Sartori, as there were not many cases of it. He identifies that there always is a border the development must cross, for example a loosening in the monocentric system. He concludes by saying that there must be two different continua, one where hegemony exists and one where the democracy exists. For a shift to appear there must be a break in the present continuum (ibid: 280-282). This discussion is very philosophical and therefore, it does not cast much light on my discussion.

Lipset and Rokkan (1967), in another early example of research on general party system development, propose four thresholds that movements have, representing cleavage structures that influence the system. The level of these thresholds together forms the party system. First of all, is the movement thought of as a legitimate opposition, that is, the legitimization threshold. Second is incorporation, that is if supporters of a movement are denied to participate in electing representatives. Third is representation, indicating the question whether the new movement must ally itself with other movements to be able to represent itself in a democratic contest or not. Lastly, the threshold of majority power is proposed, discussing the effect that the present government system has (ibid: 26-27).

According to Lipset and Rokkan, combinations of different levels of these thresholds yield different party systems (ibid: 27-29). However, as the book is written in 1967 and relies on historical material, their ideas do not seem relevant to the situation in contemporary Eastern Europe. Sartori’s research was path-breaking attempt to classify different kinds of party systems. The party systems of Eastern Europe can of course also be systematized in this way, as I will return to in the discussion. However, Sartori gives in this theory an essentially static picture; he does not delve deeply into the dynamics of party system change, especially not in changes from one- to multiparty systems. As this is the topic of this essay, I now turn to theories systematically devoted to this topic.

## 3.2 From hegemony to democracy

The first part of Bielasia's theory is trying to clarify the transition from communism to a multi-party democracy. The pre-requisite for this process is obviously a hegemonic party system. There are several factors such as ideology, structure and level of communist identity that continue to affect the party system after the fall of communism.

During the communist regime, other voices than those from the communist elite were unable to surface in the community. This created a political divide between the population and the political elite. Regional, class and ethnic connections were overshadowed by this common denominator (Bielasiak 1997: 32).

This led to a polarized political community where you have the communist party versus the rest of the population, collected in an umbrella movement that can be seen in all cases that Bielasia has studied<sup>1</sup>. This part of the development correlates with the "founding-election", as Bielasia calls it, or the election after that. By founding election, he means the first election where all political voices adhere to the democratic values that the umbrella opposition has come up with. Ergo, this phase is "primarily ratifications of a systemic transformation from communism towards democracy" (Bielasiak 1997: 33).

One of Reich's theories is very similar to Bielasia's theory. Reich calls this the "Party Dispersion Hypothesis" and begins his study of party systems with describing the situation in the founding elections (Reich 2002: 237).

According to Reich, the former communist party either disbanded or transformed into a leftist party, usually social democratic, who was committed to the new system. This new configuration relied on its organizational capabilities to attract voters, as it had inherited the basic party structure from its predecessor (Bielasiak 1997: 33).

As the opposition faced the founding election, it still had the ambition to be a party for the masses, using the unity that had been built before the elections. The aim was to build a new future through the solidarity gained in the struggle for democracy. This took similar shapes, like the different consensus forums in Poland and Czechoslovakia (Solidarity and civic forum/Public against violence respectively). In other countries, like Bulgaria, it took the shape of big coalition of forces, *the Union of democratic forces*. Even in Hungary where the polarization didn't get a sure footing, there was evidence of big "catch-all parties" (ibid).

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<sup>1</sup> The countries investigated were Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.

### 3.3 Fragmentation of the party structure

The second phase is characterized by a fragmentation of the party system or party dispersion as Reich labels this phenomenon in his theory. This phase is, according to Bielasiak, most likely to happen just before the second elections taking place after the transition. There were two chief factors that determined this outcome. First of all, the umbrella movements based on the opposition of communism, exploded into different parties and organizations competing for power (Ibid: 35). This also happened in the communist ranks, where different ideologies and differing opposition to the new ways, made it impossible to continue the cooperation. These trends also constitute a major part of Reich's theory. As Reich notes, "the antiauthoritarian forces must both unite to defeat an authoritarian regime and struggle to against each other to secure the best place under democracy. Likewise, for defenders of the outgoing regime, the incentive to unite in defense of the status quo may compete with the drive for post-transition electoral success." (Reich 2004: 237). Thus, the founding election will lead to an increase in fragmentation of political parties, party dispersion, due to the fact that broad parties cannot hold together with so many differing agendas. According to Reich, the fragmentation will be especially strong when the political transition occurs at the same time as an economic crisis (ibid: 237-238).

The other factor was the upsurge of new parties and organizations that wanted a place in the political life. The reason for this was, according to Bielasiak, the changes in the economic and social environment which created uncertainty as to where society was going. This meant a weak political identity for the community. Also, an "organizational vacuum", as Bielasiak (ibid: 33, 36) calls it, had sprung into life. This was caused by the fact that all the functions that organizations have in a liberal democracy were created within the communist party. This meant that the connections between the parties and the public were severed and extended the weak political identity. The result was that there were many people who weren't aligned towards any party and were targets for these new parties that entered the scene. (ibid: 36).

Another factor catalyzing this effect was the fact that there were no specific costs in creating a party. There were no requirements for creating a party such as a minimum member base and the actual registration was no deterrence (ibid).

The new parties, however, had different backgrounds. The umbrella movements split up into different parties based on specific preferences of the leading individual. The communist or new social democratic party split up into sub-groups that had existed during the regime, for example peasant interest organizations etcetera. This trend of going back to parties that had existed before and during the regime was very much visible. These "nostalgia-parties" resembled the historic circumstances from before the Soviet takeover. These parties often had a Christian or Nationalist agenda, but were modernized with liberal undercurrents (ibid: 37).

A characteristic of most of these parties was that they had no real public support. In reality, they were hoping for success rather than knowing that there

was any support at all for their ideas. Most of these parties also lacked a good organizational structure, meaning that they were inadequate in leading a country if they got the chance. The exception was the former communist parties that had inherited a power structure that was favorable. On the other hand, they had to pull the load of a disadvantageous political legacy (ibid).

To sum it up in the words of Bielasiak:

“The result was a dysfunction between political supply and demand: an oversupply of political actors without roots in the social fabric, and an underdeveloped socio-economic structure that could form a pattern for collective political identities and establish links to party organizations.” (ibid.)

### 3.4 Replicating Europe?

The third stage is slightly overlapping that of the fragmenting phase. At this stage, the party system becomes more similar to Western party systems. The number of parties diminishes and the system tends to form along a left-right continuum. Beginning slightly before the second wave of elections, it has mostly come into action during the second election. But what is the source of this pluralization?

One part of the explanation is that the politicians gain knowledge about how the electoral process works, and therefore realize that efficiency is of the essence. The result is that voting thresholds and/or registration demands are established to filter out the too narrow parties clogging up democracy. It is also important to take notice of the fact that it is the parties that win the first election that dictates the terms for further democratization, and that the losing parties are forced to disband or to merge with similar parties. Therefore, it is important for a new party to be successful in the first election (Bielasiak 1997: 38).

Another part of the explanation is that the political thinking of the population changes with transformation in politics and economy. In pace with economic and social divides, collective identities emerge in the form of interest groups reflecting different things, such as class, ethnicity and nationalism. These organizations help to create more defined political parties (ibid: 38-39).

Also, the population can use the power of retrospective voting, that is punishing parties in government for their negative performance (Hague & Harrop 2001: 143). The parties that have not been up to the expectations of the electorate will receive far less votes than in the first election. Politics now circle round economic issues, according to Bielasiak. This new focus around economic questions has its source from privatization which usually generates economic cleavages. Hand in hand with this fact is the emergence of a left-right arena for discussion of politics. (Ibid: 39)

Realism also starts to characterize the ideologies, making the system more balanced. The former dreams of the perfect liberal state is shadowed by the economic and social cleavages emerging and the former suspicion of socialism connected with the fear of communism, recede due to the same reason. Instead, ideas of a welfare state emerge, as in the rest of Europe (ibid).

Still, the party systems in Eastern Europe were also characterized, as noted before, by other issues like ethnicity. These issues make the borders of the left-right axis of politics all the more dim, as an opposite to Western Europe. Also, an institutional underdevelopment makes the party structure unstable. Due to the elitist structure of the parties, the politics of a party is easily changed which opposes the consolidation of the parties and their structure (ibid).

### 3.5 Other Voices on the Issue

Although my main interest in this essay is to investigate the party systems of Eastern Europe according to the models of Bielasiak and Reich, I will also refer to a number of other theoretical ideas that can help us understand patterns and peculiarities in the studied political systems.

Attila Agh has in one of his books (1998) noted five general tendencies that affect East Central Europe (ECE) and Bulgaria. They coincide with the evolution that Bielasiak relates to, but Agh puts focus on other subjects. The first part is rather similar to that of Bielasiak and Reich. This first phase is where a bipolar system is created with big national movement parties oppose the communists. He also points to the change from movement to “real” party that the political organizations had to go through (Agh 1998: 103-104).

The second phase is in essence the same as the corresponding second phase in Bielasiaks theory, with the party fragmentation as the result. However, Agh is more direct in saying that it was the new legal system that favored parties over other organizations, which “forced” the movements into parties. This leads to the “overparticipation” that can be found in Bielasiaks texts as well, where political parties became the dominant form of political organization in the democratization process. He also emphasizes the problem of a loose membership base and irregular meetings, which makes consolidating the party very difficult (ibid: 104-105).

The third stage, right after the first election, is also similar but still different. Agh highlights the parliamentarization process and the very aggressive winner parties trying to exclude all other actors, such as interest groups and civil organizations, from national politics. This was done by increasing the entrance fees to participate in politics. All along, the “overparticipation” is raging and in no time, all these factors make politics into something unfamiliar and strange for the regular citizen (ibid: 105-106).

This was, according to Agh, inevitable and a necessary action, resulting in the isolation of the parliamentary parties. This made it possible for the smaller parties to gain voters and time to build up their organization, and created a pressure for the parliamentary parties to change for survival in the long run (ibid: 106-107). Another important factor in this stage is the media, which greatly affected the parties. The media coverage in some ways controlled the political agenda as the leading politicians were very sensitive to negative opinion. Also, the media in

some ways functioned as substitutes for the party meetings as they got the party message out to the man on the street (ibid: 108).

The fourth stage signaled the beginning of the pluralization of the party system. The parliamentary parties were forced to acknowledge other types of actors, making it possible for other more suitable types of actors to handle the political midsection, namely connecting the people to the parties. The parties' membership base is still low though, so the main source of income for parties in ECE is still government funding. This makes the system vulnerable as only so many parties can get this funding, and this might shut some parties, and accordingly some voices, out of the system. This is indeed dangerous for democratic consolidation according to Agh (ibid: 109).

Another theory which is related to the development of the party system is that made by János Simon (1997). Primarily, he distinguishes between the democratization of state institutions and the democratization of the regime, where the latter part highlights the formation of a competitive party system. These two processes do not necessarily go hand in hand as the parties that democratize the state institutions sooner or later will have to compete for representation (ibid: 362-363).

Three variations can be seen among the cases in Eastern Europe, according to Simon. The first variation occurs during the first election. Party formation has not yet begun or is just starting out. If the democratizing forces that are the civil society pluralize too late, "too early election, too late pluralization", there occur problems in exercising "democratizing pressure" on the state (ibid: 363). This makes it easier for the previous regime, remolded into a democratic party, to hold on to power and the democratization might stop or at least slow down. The state will consequently keep some of its undemocratic traits (ibid).

The second variation occurs when the opposite happens, "too early pluralization, too late election", that is when the opposing forces pluralize before the first elections. This creates the possibility for the former communists to get the democratic forces to squabble amongst themselves, making it harder to shut undemocratic powers out of the government. This makes the civil society democratized but may preserve the authoritarian system (ibid).

The third variation, "harmonious pluralization", is when democratization of civil society occurs in relation to the democratization of state institutions, where none goes ahead of the other. This can be seen if the democratizing system is especially stable. This is of course the favorable way to democratize and undemocratic thinking is quickly abolished (ibid).

Jean Grugel (2002) points to four primary variables that affect the party system. The first point she makes is that countries close to Western Europe tend to democratize more easily, as if this part of the world had a democratizing aura surrounding it. This aura also provides opportunities for the politicians in the democratizing country to receive training and other such important resources (Grugel 2002: 73-74).

Another important point she makes, as do both Bielasiak and Agh, is that countries with an institutional memory have an easier task of establishing a party

system (ibid.). What she doesn't discuss is the way this institutional memory affects the system, if it is always positive or if there can be drawbacks.

Thirdly, she points to the fact that parliamentary regimes have an easier task ahead of them, as more force is put into the shaping of the party system. If the power is handled through parliament, and not through a president, more energy goes into getting an efficient power structure (ibid.).

Lastly, the effect of the economy is noted. A good economy with a healthy class structure usually leads to a stronger party structure (ibid.). This is also noted by Bielasiak (see previous sections).

A point made for Eastern Europe especially, is that the party structure there is far more unstable than is the general trend in Western Europe. Parties form and reform and vanish frequently and this is negative for the party system. Her example is primarily Russia, and the situation in Russia seems to be rather specific, even if there are similarities (ibid.).



## 4 Empirical Findings in the ECE

In this chapter I will first discuss the general evolution of the party systems in ECE, with Czechoslovakia and Hungary as the main examples, and Poland to a more limited extent. I will then analyze how the party systems Czech Republic and Hungary have evolved since the elections that formed the basis for the theories of Bielasiak and Reich. Then I will proceed by analyzing my two main cases, Bulgaria and Ukraine, in that order.

### 4.1 Early birds toward consolidation?

At first glance, the party systems of Poland, Hungary and The Czech Republic seem no different from the rest of the European structures, except for the few odd incidents like the 1991 election in Poland. In all these elections, the number of parties is quite low, with an average of just under 7 parties even with the anomaly of the 1991 election in Poland where 29 parties entered parliament.

However, the number of parties in parliament is not a good number when searching for fragmentation in the party system, due to the different thresholds for parliament and other obstacles. Also, different types of seat allocation give different proportions in parliament. Instead I will primarily look at the effective number of parties in parliament and also at the proportion of votes going to minor parties (below 10 %. For a more precise definition, see Methodology).

The evolution of the party system in Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic is rather typical of this region. During the Soviet times, the communist party led the country with a firm hand (although much more liberal than some countries), but in the safety of their homes, the population's resentment of the regime started to boil, slowly rising to the surface. The same thing was happening in Hungary. In both these countries, this opposition manifested itself in attempts to create a "parallel polis". This could also be seen in several other countries, but not as open and as loud. In the end, this led to the creation of an opposition front, as it did in most of these countries. In the case of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, vocal dissident groups sprang into life, and in Poland, Solidarity emerged as the main opposing force. The opposition usually organized itself into national movements as the struggle continued. In Czechoslovakia, this was the Civic Forum and Public against Violence. In Hungary, however, this never happened. Instead, a full party system appeared. It did however contain parties that tried to characterize themselves as catch-all parties, like the movements in the neighboring countries. In the end, this forced the communist regime to reform and hand over the power to the people (Bielasiak 1997: 32-34)

Following the handover of power, were of course the first elections. In the first elections, the outcome differed somewhat between the countries. Where the opposition was especially tight, as in Poland, they gained the most support and in countries like Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where the opposition wasn't as united, they managed to receive enough votes to establish an ample plurality. In Czechoslovakia, for example, the Civic forum and Public against Violence together got 58 % of the mandates in the lower house (Chamber of the People) (Gebethner 1997: 392).

These catch-all parties were unable to hold together, and a fragmentation followed, in some cases severe. This pattern is the same as Bielasiak and Reich has found. Hungary was affected by this fragmentation, in the way that the biggest coalitions and parties split and new parties were being created. Between the two first elections, the number of parties with parliamentary candidates grew from 28 to 36 parties (Simon 1997: 369-370). In Czechoslovakia, the number of different parties in the two houses went from six to eighteen parties and fifteen independent deputies, and this was only in between two elections. This resulted from the split-up of the civic movement, where several factions created their own parties. In the next election, 42 parties ran for a place in parliament and twelve of them got into the two houses. These divisions emerged partly due to the different preferences in the two regions, and later, the federation divided (Gebethner 1997: 392). In the Czech part of parliament, 6 parties were represented with 3.347 effective parties and in the Slovak part, there were 6 parties with 3.369 effective parties (my own calculations based on [www.binghamton.edu](http://www.binghamton.edu)).

In Poland also, there was fragmentation, even more severe here. It was also more visual as Poland had not put up entrance thresholds. The result was 29 different parties in the lower house. This is, however, a bit of an exaggeration as most of these parties in reality were individual deputies with no real party relations (Gebethner 1997: 391).

All these new parties, however, were not based on realistic foundations as they had low memberships and there simply was not enough public support for most of these quite narrow parties. This meant that many parties had to dissolve or merge with other parties. To get the unwanted parties out of the system, one or two elections passed so that only the stable parties remained. To help the process, the parties in government established electoral thresholds etc, as is the praxis when dealing with too many parties (Bielasiak 1997: 38). This coincides with the ideas of Agh that the parties in power might have acted in this way partly to secure their own interests (see earlier chapter).

Another distinguishing trait of the second or third election was the comeback of the old communist parties, reformed and groomed into new "social democratic parties" with democratic views. For example, in the Czech Republic in the 1996 election, the Social Democratic Party had almost as many votes as the Civic Democratic Party, with only three percentage units differing (Gebethner 1997: 394).

It is no surprise that the development of the party system in these countries mirror the development in Bielasiak's theory, and also Reich's. These countries were the main objects of their studies and therefore demonstrate the majority of

the elements proposed in the theories. However, these two studies only used elections up to the third election, leaving a gap to be filled describing the most recent changes. The question is: how have these systems developed after the time-period scrutinized by Bielasiak and Reich?

During the last ten years, the party systems in Hungary and the Czech Republic have matured. As Reich concluded, both countries fragmented before the third election, Czechoslovakia in relation to its second election and Hungary before its third. According to Bielasiak's theory, the amount of parties should drop to more manageable and effective levels. According to Gebethner, the trend in the Czech Republic seemed to point to three or four "viable" parties in parliament (Gebethner 1997: 393). This prediction was quite good as there were five parties in 1998 and four parties in 2002. The effective number of parties, however, was only 3.7 and 3.67 respectively with low levels of votes to minor parties (my calculations based on official data). This certainly points to a pluralized western-type party system, with two bigger parties and the total vote to minor parties (receiving less than 10 %) diminishing. In Sartori's (1967: 173-185) terms this points to a "moderate pluralism" system.

Hungary, was more stable in the beginning of the democratization but had quite a lot of small parties in parliament but low effective numbers of parties. Hungary did not fragment much, except for a slight instance in the 1998 elections with the number of parties in parliament actually decreasing to seven but with an effective number of 4.38 (my calculations based on official data), which is substantial compared to the earlier elections. Until this election, there were also quite a high number of votes going to minor parties.

After this fragmentation, however, the system quickly diminished in the next election, going down to 2.21 effective parties which is a very low number. Also the number of votes going to minor parties decreased to around 11 %. One should also notice the slight rebound in the most recent election 2006, when the number of parties increased to 6 with 2.4 effective parties (my calculations based on official data). The amount of votes going to small parties remained low however. Hungary also seems to be a "moderate pluralism" system but it is much more dual in its political set-up (Sartori 1967: 173-185).

Both countries seem to have evolved rather like the manner that Bielasiak anticipated. Whether the party system is consolidated or not and remains in its current shape is another question. Also, Hungary might not have been so different in the second phase, the development of the system was only delayed. Perhaps the 1998 election was some kind of reaction against the parties that had been in power since 1990 and had just raised the electoral threshold to five percent. It was also the breakthrough for Fidesz, a conservative party at this point, going from about five to 29 % of the mandates. Fidesz also managed to form government in coalition with a couple of other parties in 1998. Could it be that the Hungary in fact had a too early election and too late a pluralization, even though Simon (1997) has placed it in the "Harmonious Pluralization" group (cf. Methodology: 10)? Probably not as Hungary did share the other characteristics that these countries had, like a comparatively weak civil society and that the former communist party

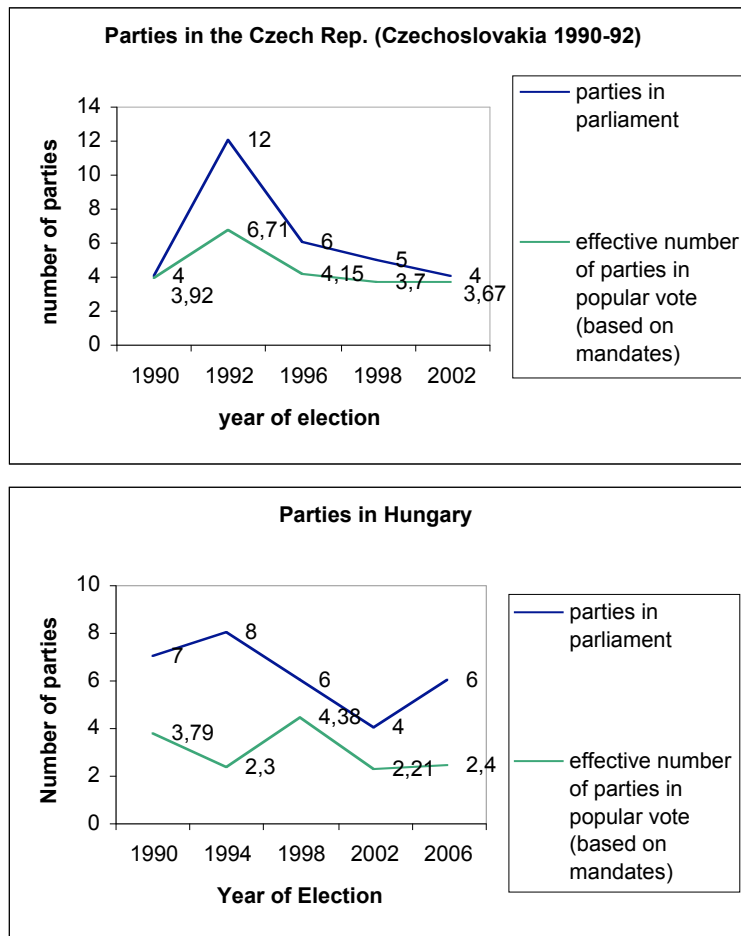


Figure 1: Party System development

First two numbers on effective parties in Cz. is based on number of votes, not mandates. My calculations based on statistics from primarily official sources (see reference list).

did not stay in power. Maybe it was just public opinion that changed and they turned to “retrospective voting”, punishing the ruling parties by voting for a change in government.

Either way, the effective number of parties in both countries is below the median values of the three first elections in the corresponding cluster of countries that Reich analyzed. This seems to indicate that the countries have left the most decisive period for a new democracy, and that they have come through as fully functioning democracies.

## 4.2 Bulgaria – following the trend?

In Bulgaria, the Communist regime was very firm in its way of wielding power, leading to a very strict control of expressed views by the government. This meant that a democratic opposition did not emerge in Bulgaria until 1988, in contrast to for example Hungary which had had an outspoken opposition for around ten

years. The majority of the new opposition was organized so poorly that parts of it couldn't put forward candidates for the upcoming election (Gebethner 1997: 384, 386). According to Bielasiak (1997: 32), this meant that the regime in Bulgaria wasn't in crisis, and this is probably true as there evidently was no real opposition.

When the communist regime handed over power to the people, they did so through a "palace revolution", as they remade the party into the Bulgarian Socialist party (BSP), throwing out the authoritarian advocates, and entered into the electoral game fairly certain that they would win. This conviction emanated from the fact that they had decided to place the election early so as to take advantage of the unorganized state of the opposition (Gebethner 1997: 386, Simon 1997: 365).

However, the party system had managed to become polarized. The "anti-communist" party United Democratic Forces (SDS) managed to get 36 % of the seats in parliament, while the BSP received 47 %. This meant that in effective numbers, there were only 2.74 parties and only 16 % of the vote went to minor parties (see figure 2).

Also in this first election, the democratization of institutions had not come as far as other parts of the democratization process. Parties could not share power with each other, leading to weaker coalitions and more difficulties for the opposition to take power.

So long, the chain of events partly coincides with the theory of Reich and Bielasiak. There had been a polarization of the political forces, only that it was the former communists that kept power. This was due to the political stability emanating from the historically formed state situation in Bulgaria. The problem, if regarded as such, was that the parties hadn't begun to fractionalize (Bielasiak 1997: 32-33, Reich 2004: 237-238).

After the first election, the ruling party noticed that they were losing support. To secure their place in parliament, they once again changed the electoral law, changing the system into a proportional variant from the previous mixed (Simon 1997: 365). Nevertheless, the opposition won, with 34 % against 33 % for the socialists, perhaps due to a better organization than in the previous election, but the socialists got quite a few seats in parliament.

This election was even more polarized than the first. There were only three parties in parliament and the effective number of parties was only 2.4. However, the vote to smaller parties below 10 % was as much as 32.5 %, indicating that the polarization was not complete (see figure 2).

In the third election, in 1994, the number of parties in parliament increased again to five and the effective number went up to 2.72, with a large amount of votes going to minor parties, 32.27 % (see figure 2). In the eyes of Bielasiak, one could interpret this election as the first fragmented election, as there were a lot of parties running for election. It was only the electoral system that stopped "excessive fragmentation" (Gebethner 1997: 394).

The party system after 1997 election was quite similar to the system from 1994, only a bit more pluralized but with bigger coalitions in parliament. This trend towards a more pluralized party system continues in on through the 2001 election. Here however, several new parties have taken the place of some

traditional parties. Among these the party surrounding Simeon II, the former tsar of Bulgaria, and a Roma party can be found. These parties are quite different but signal a shift in how people vote, from questions concerning right or wrong to subjects more highlighting individual or group profit. Since the beginning of democratization in Bulgaria, the turnout of voters has decreased until 2001 when it again increased, only to decrease again 2005 (<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database>, Savkova 2005: 7). Voting for Simeon may have been the first glimpse of a party system that is more nationalist and the voting for Euroroma is a counter action.

The most recent election, 2005, is quite interesting. A total of seven parties entered parliament and once again, the vote percentage going to minor parties was over 30 %, giving smaller parties an advantage as the “big” parties need them as coalition partners, giving them something to bargain with (Savkova 2005). The effective number of parties was 4.8, which was higher than Hungary’s most fragmented election, even though the number of candidates was at an all time low. Further complicating matters, there was no obvious coalition that could be created as there could be no one or two-party government, given the ideological positions of the biggest parties. Also, this election had the lowest voter turnout since the first election at only 55.7 %. Was this the “real” pinnacle of fragmentation?

The reasons for the fragmentations in Bulgaria seem to be somewhat different from those Bielasiak proposes. He states that one of the reasons was the end of an internal debate among the opposition based on the communism-question. I believe that there existed a debate around socialism but not about undemocratic communism. This can be seen in the fact that the SDS did not split into a million pieces. Instead, it became the second largest party in parliament in the 1994 election, and continuing to be quite successful.

The other factor Bielasiak mentions is “a wave of new political actors”. There was a “wave” of new parties as early as the 1992 election but most of them received only a minimal number of votes. Even more parties emerged in the 1994 election and they received even less votes. This trend continued until 1997 and then receded somewhat to the 2001 election (<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database>). But as these new actors hardly played any significant role in Bulgarian politics, it would be wrong to say that this made the difference in whether this was the beginning of fragmentation. In the 2005 election, the number of candidates decreased drastically, though (Savkova 2005: 7).

Another factor that should influence the fragmentation of the party system is, according to Bialasiak and Reich, when economic crisis overlaps with the democratic transition. This seems not to apply to Bulgaria as the government of 1994 sunk the country into an economic crisis. This seems not to have affected the Bulgarian party system as there were exactly as many parties in government the next election and the fragmentation had almost looked as it had declined. The Socialist government causing the economic crisis off course received poor ratings the following election but still became the second largest party (c.f. Bielasiak 1997: 36, Reich 2004: 238).

As I mentioned earlier, there was an emergence of new parties in the 2001 election, where nationalist and ethnic parties emerged as major players in Bulgarian politics. This trend continued in the 2005 when the ultra-nationalist party Attack entered parliament. These electoral tendencies belong to Bielasiak's pluralizing phase, when the electorate starts to develop and the political questions move away from value-laden questions, where the normative point of view was important, to more particular issues concerning group benefits (Bielasiak 1997: 38-39). This was also the case in Bulgaria where the question of whether or not to enter the European Union became a major bone of contention in 2001, with all its initial economic drawbacks in the form of restraints. Also, questions of economic and judicial reform were on the agenda (Savkova 2005).

The notion that the parliamentary parties alienate themselves from the electorate, through trying to exclude other political players from the political race with electoral thresholds etc, might be partly applicable in this circumstance (cf. Agh 1998: 106). In the 2005 election, there were new rules concerning registration costs, increasing them significantly. As stated before, this led to a significant decrease in the number of candidates.

Maybe, the fragmenting phase in Bulgaria just kept on going with an easy start in the 1992 election and then slowly building up itself until it in 2005, exploded with the 2001 election being the calm before the storm. Whether the Bulgarian party system will keep on being this fragmented only time and the next elections can tell.

To sum up the Bulgarian experience, it seems rather ambiguous, with some factors indicating that the party system hasn't stopped fragmenting, like the most recent election where the number of parties in parliament was quite high compared to earlier elections. On the other hand, other factors indicate that the party system is starting to become less fragmented, like the fact that the number of registered candidates for the 2005 election was significantly lower than all the other elections.

Reich's theory that "party fragmentation is likely to increase following the founding election" (Reich 2004: 237) is not applicable in the Bulgarian case. Bielasiak's theory that the party system will evolve in a certain manner is somewhat correct, due to the fact that Bulgaria did fragment. The problem is that the fragmentation hasn't stopped yet. If the next elections yield a more pluralized parliament, that is, with fewer parties, then Bielasiak might be on the "right" track. If Bielasiak's theory is put together with Simon's theory of a too early election and a too late pluralization (cf. Simon 1997: 363, 365), the picture is quite similar to the Bulgarian case. The main factor for change in the party system seems to be party preference changes, as Simon also concludes (ibid: 365)

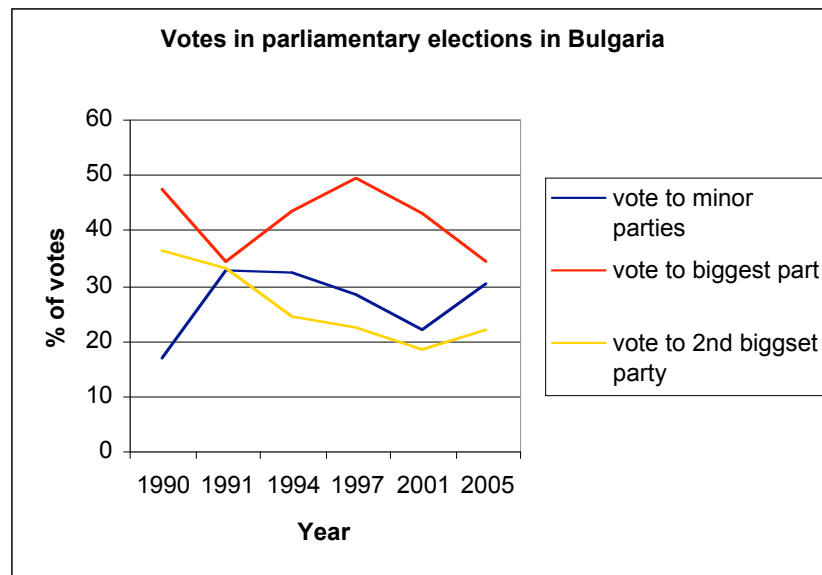
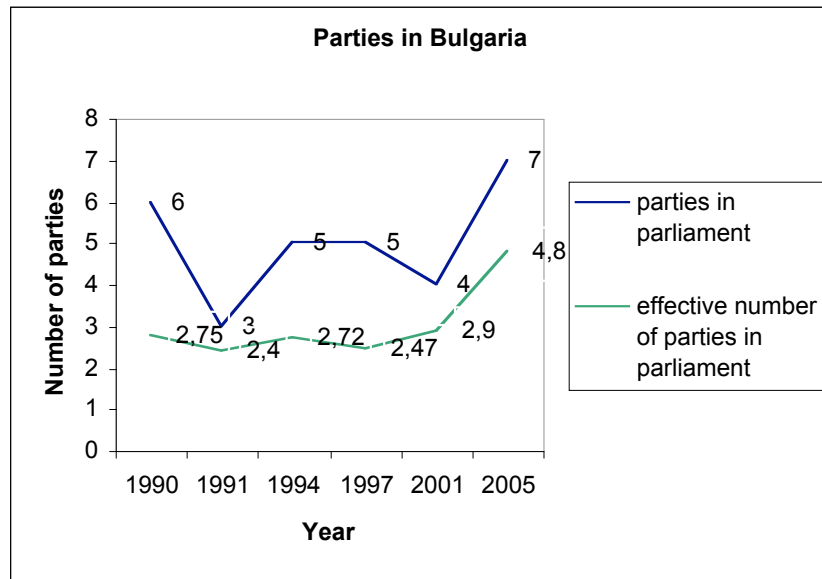


Figure 2: The party system in Bulgaria and percentage of votes to parties in Bulgaria.

My calculations based primarily on the University of Essex election database.

### 4.3 The Ukraine: a New European Democracy?

The two most recent elections, in 2004 and 2006, that have taken place in the Ukraine have been declared the beginning of democratization. However, the first elections in the Ukraine in 1994 were also considered relatively fair (Christensen et. al. 2005: 208). In this chapter, I will analyze the party systems in the two election rounds and see if they are in accordance with Reich's and Bielasiak's theories. I will also discuss the presidential elections in this part due to the fact that the number of parliamentary elections is still limited at the same time as the



president in the Ukraine had a much bigger role than in for example the ECE countries.

The 1994 elections were the first elections after the fall of communism. There was both an election for president and parliament that was held that year. In the presidential election, It primarily was a race between the Communists and the independent Leonid Kuchma. The oppositional front, including Kuchma, was not very solid, but including several independent contestants, and a Socialist party. In this election, Kuchma won with 52 to 42 % for communist Kravchuk.

In the legislative elections, the result was very fragmented. The communists got the biggest vote, but only received 12.7 percent of the votes. This was the only party receiving more than ten percent, leaving 87.28 % of the vote to minor parties. In total, 14 parties were represented in parliament. The reason for this high number was the electoral system which was a mixed system where half of the seats were contested in majoritarian elections on a district level, and the other half where contested in a proportional manner with a 4 % threshold. This also proved to be an opportunity for independent candidates, as 66.48 % of the vote went to independent actors. Many parties had less than one percent of the vote but still got into parliament ([www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database](http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database)) Also, many deputies changed membership continually, making it hard for the voter to see what consequences his or her voting generated (Christensen et. al. 2005: 224).

However, the fragmentation in parliament ended up not being a problem as Kuchma managed to pass a new constitution, giving a lot more power to the president. Kuchma also had control over media, which made it possible for him to control the electorate. This was the end of democracy in the Ukraine this time (Hesli 2004: 168).

In 2004, new presidential elections were to be held, and Kuchma was not allowed to candidate for the election. Instead, he vouched for Yanukovich, his prime minister (the president chose who got prime ministerial post). Opposing him was primarily Victor Yushchenko, for the coalition Our Ukraine. As none of the contesters received a majority of the votes in the first round, a second round of elections were held only including Yanukovich and Yushchenko. As Yushchenko had received the most votes in the first round and all other candidates spoke on his behalf in the run-up for the second round, it seemed very strange that Yanukovich won the election. And rightly so, as the Central Election Commission decided that there was going to be a new election due to the fact that there had occurred cheating during the election. In the rerun, Yushchenko finally won, receiving 52 % against 44 % (Hesli 2005: 162-173).

The political situation surrounding the 2004 election can be seen as rather polarized. Many potential presidential candidates, as Yulia Tymoshenko, and actual contenders like Oleksander Moroz backed Yushchenko from the beginning or, in Moroz case, in the second round. The reason for this was that Yushchenko agreed to transfer power to parliament, if he won the election. This was also done, so for the parliamentary election in 2006, more was at stake for the parliamentary candidates. Another change was that the electoral system was changed into a strictly proportional system, more similar to those of Western Europe, plus the electoral threshold was lowered to 3 %.

In the parliamentary election, five parties managed to clear the electoral threshold. The effective number of parties turned out to be 3.4 and minor parties received 31.62 % of the votes, according to my calculations based on official numbers. In comparison to the rest of Eastern Europe, this was a quite pluralized number of political parties. In this election Yanukovich got revenge for his results in the previous election, as his party received the most votes. On the 12 of May, it was still not clear who would form government, but Yulia Tymoshenko stated that an Orange coalition, that is Yushchenko's Our Ukraine, Moroz's Socialist party and Tymoshenko's bloc, seemed likely to be formed and could begin the 24 May, 2006 (Kulikov 5 May, 2006).

How then should the development of the party system in the Ukraine be analyzed? The first election in the Ukraine did not develop as Bielasiak's and Reich's theories would predict. On the contrary, it seemed as if the party system was fragmented from the start. If including the presidential election, then a polarization can be noticed. Including this presidential election is problematic however, due to the fact that the opposition, Kuchma, was an independent contender and could not be said to represent an organized opposition. An explanation might be that an opposition had not had time or had not been able to form when the election came up. Instead, ad hoc contenders had to. That theory, similar to Simons theory of "too early election, too late pluralization" (Cf. s 10), seems unlikely, however, because of the many parties that took part in the parliamentary election, especially since the parliamentary elections took place before the presidential.

It is possible, and arguably more appropriate, to look at the latest elections as the Ukraine beginning on a new slate after an authoritarian period. If that is the case, then Bielasiak's and Reich's theories fit better. The polarization occurring around the presidential election is quite clear. In between the two elections, a minor fragmentation occurs between the different parties when the Tymoshenko bloc clashed with Yushchenkos "Our Ukraine". This fragmentation isn't that visible in the parliamentary elections and the results seem quite pluralized, in a European fashion. However, contradictory to what Bielasiak claimed (cf.: 8), the parties haven't become more well defined. This should indicate that the Ukraine is in a fragmented stage. Whether or not this chain of events is what happened is too early to say. We will have to wait until the next election to see if a similar result will occur. Maybe the final destination for Ukrainian politics is a two party system, similar to that of the USA.

Another way to describe the situation is that before the latest elections, the party system in the Ukraine was very fragmented, even the most fragmented in Eastern Europe (Bielasiak 2002: 205). The reason for this fragmentation was that candidates often changed party affiliation. Parties often had no clear ideology either, making it very difficult for voters to judge the effect of their voting. But as the 2004 elections came and went, and the Ukrainian people formed an opinion, the political climate changed. This made the politicians more aware of their surrounding, making them more rigid in their political position. Also, the new electoral system of proportional representation favored larger parties before individual candidates. This in turn had the effect that the party system diminished

into a pluralized system, instead of a fragmented, as politicians took positions where they thought they could win seats, i.e. the bigger parties. A notion that partly contradicts this is the fact that the Tymoshenko bloc has no apparent ideology. A party with no clear line of thinking should not win seats. But that is one of the mysteries of Ukraine.

Overall, Ukraine seems quite different from Western Europe. However, if the country continues to head in that direction, to assimilate with Europe as is Yushchenko's objective, then maybe these differences will recede. The fact is that Ukraine is a border country to the European Union and as such, it will be in contact with Europe in another manner than before the Polish membership in the EU. If Grugel's hypothesis is correct, then the closer to the EU (Western Europe) you are, the more democratized you will become (cf.: 10).

## 5 Discussion

To sum up this study, I will have to present answers to my research questions. First of all, have Hungary and the Czech Republic followed the trend, also in their most recent elections, that was observed by Bielasiak, among others? After that I will discuss the development in first Bulgaria and then in the Ukraine, discussing both the second and third question.

The Czech Republic seems to be the archetype for the theory, at least at first glance. There is a distinct polarization in the beginning which in the second election fragments and there are as many as 12 parties in the lower house of parliament. The effective number of parties is hard to calculate in this instance as there were one Czech and one Slovak part of the parliament. In both, there were about 3.35 effective parties, and it was not the same parties in both (<http://www.binghamton.edu/>). As there also was a high vote to smaller parties, this election must be classified as fragmented. After the second election, the system has settled down and the system has pluralized into about 4 parties, quite equal in size. In Sartori's terms, this would have been classified as a "moderate pluralism". It has all the prerequisites that such a system must have. In the latest elections, the number of parties in effective terms seem have settled on a constant level of just under four parties. Also, the vote to smaller parties has declined indicating that the party system in the Czech Republic is consolidated. In Bielasiaks terms, this is a pluralized party system.

Hungary is somewhat trickier to analyze. The parliament never really fragmented as for example the party system in Czechoslovakia did, but was a bit fractured until the 2002 election when the number of parties decreased drastically, both in real and effective numbers. Since then, it had a slight rebound but seems to have settled down. In essence, Hungary has followed Bielasiak's theory, but not quite the party dispersion theory, as it did not fragment directly following the founding election. Hungary has developed into what could be called a two-party state, with the two biggest parties continuously fighting for most seats in parliament. A couple of smaller parties and independent deputies always, however, manage to get seats in parliament which means that it the two big parties need them to form a coalition government. This means that Hungary, if analyzed by Sartori's requisites is not a two-party system but something in between that and moderate pluralism.

Turning to the two countries that have previously not been the foci of researchers interests, Bulgaria had quite a different development than the general trend in Eastern Europe, especially if compared to my results. First of all, the anti-communist opposition did not take power following the hand-over of power to the people, contradicting the development predicted by both Reich and Bielasiak. Secondly, the system did not fragment following the founding election. As a

matter of fact, nothing that could be compared to a real fragmentation happened until the most recent election when the number of parties increased to seven with almost five effective parties. It could be that the development was delayed here, as the party system was quite polarized until the third election when the system fragmented somewhat, but seemed to stop at a “pluralized” stage.

The party dispersion model is not well suited for Bulgaria also because not even an economic crisis catalyzed into a fragmentation. However, if combining Bielasiak’s theory with that of Simon (1997), you get a clearer picture. Due to a “too early” election, the whole fragmentation process was delayed. Perhaps the continuing development will follow Bielasiak’s theory and a pluralization will take place in the coming elections. Some signs of this can already be seen as the political agenda is shifting towards subjects that usually emerge in the pluralized polity. However, since the most recent election, the development points in the direction of polarized pluralism, with the new extremist parties et cetera (cf. Sartori 1967: 131-145, 173-185).

The Ukrainian experience is also unusual compared with the ECE. There are two potential ways of describing the development of the party system in the Ukraine. Either the democratizing process began with the 1994 election, with a fully fragmented system. The system kept on being fragmented and then changed into an authoritarian system that ended in 2004. The outcome was a pluralized system. If this is the case, then the party system was preserved and possibly developing during the authoritarian regime, in the semi-democratic elections that took place. Or, the democratization began with the 2004 presidential election. This election served as the founding election and the system fragmented mildly until the parliamentary election when the system seemed to have become quite pluralized.

If the development is interpreted in the first way, then Reich’s theory doesn’t apply and Bielasiak’s is not entirely applicable. If you instead choose to look at it from the other perspective, then Reich’s theory does apply to some extent. It is too early to say anything about Bielasiak’s theory except that it is correct to the same extent as Reich’s is. According to Bielasiak (2002: 189-191), research has not been able to identify which evolution, the “tabula rasa” or the “structure” perspective, fits best to the post-communist states. Both ways of system evolution seem plausible to me and with deeper research on the Ukraine, another researcher may be able to establish which way is correct.

Generally, it can be concluded that Reich’s “Party Dispersion Hypothesis” isn’t that applicable to the more peripheral countries, Bulgaria and the Ukraine. Why that is so is a question for further research. Bielasiak’s theory, on the other hand, is more versatile and seems to be able to, at least partially, to describe the situation in these countries. There seems to have occurred also in Bulgaria and the Ukraine an evolution from a fragmented to a system with fewer political parties, somewhat similar to the Western European systems. Also, countries close to Western Europe and the EU seem to democratize sooner than countries further away, as claimed by Jean Grugel (2002: 73-73). Maybe it is the direct pressure from the EU and its promises of EU-membership or maybe it is the physical closeness with main Europe that makes countries more obliged to democratize, by

way of economic and social benefit. If that is the case then Belarus should be on its way to democratize. Why this hasn't happened yet is a question for further research, as is, as stated before, more research on the Ukraine, preferably by someone speaking the language as that would help when getting information.

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<http://www.binghamton.edu/cdp/era/searchera.html> accessed 2006-05-10

Hungary:

[http://www.valasztas.hu/index\\_en.html](http://www.valasztas.hu/index_en.html) accessed 2006-05-10 Hungarian National Elections Office

The Ukraine:

<http://www.cvk.gov.ua/vnd2006/w6p001e.html> accessed 2006-05-10

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexCountry.asp?country=UKRAINE&opt=elc> accessed 2006-05-10, University of Essex Database Created by Marina Popescu and Martin Hannavy, Last Updated December 12, 2002

General:

<http://www.binghamton.edu/cdp/era/searchera.html> (used to double check elections results and for early results in Czechoslovakia) accessed 2006-05-10  
Binghamton University, Department of Political Science

<http://en.wikipedia.org/> (used to double check elections results from all countries, search for “country name” + election) accessed 2006-05-10

<http://www.electionguide.org/> (used to double check elections results for all countries) accessed 2006-05-10

Appendix:

| Hungary                                                         | 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| parties in parliament                                           | 7    | 8    | 6    | 4    | 6    |
| effective number of parties in popular vote (based on mandates) | 3,79 | 2,3  | 4,38 | 2,21 | 2,4  |
| vote to minor parties                                           | 31,2 | 35,9 | 28,4 | 11,3 | 11,7 |
| biggest party (vote)                                            |      |      | 38   | 45   | 44,5 |
| 2nd biggest party                                               |      |      | 33,6 | 43,7 | 43,8 |

Information primarily gathered from <http://www.valasztas.hu>, Hungarian National Elections Office



| The Czech Republic                                              | 1990 | 1992                 | 1996  | 1998  | 2002  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| parties in parliament                                           | 4    | 12                   | 6     | 5     | 4     |
| effective number of parties in popular vote (based on mandates) | 3,92 | 6,71                 | 4,15  | 3,7   | 3,67  |
| vote to minor parties                                           | 27,8 | cz: 52,8<br>sl: 52,1 | 33,61 | 28,92 | 12,55 |
| biggest party (vote)                                            | 46,6 | 33,9                 | 29,62 | 32,31 | 30,2  |
| 2nd biggest party                                               | 13,6 | 33,5                 | 26,44 | 27,74 | 24,47 |

Information primarily gathered from <http://www.volby.cz/index.htm>, the Czech Statistical Office and <http://www.binghamton.edu>, election database

| Bulgaria                                  | 1990  | 1991  | 1994  | 1997  | 2001  | 2005  |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| parties in parliament                     | 6     | 3     | 5     | 5     | 4     | 7     |
| effective number of parties in parliament | 2,75  | 2,4   | 2,72  | 2,47  | 2,9   | 4,8   |
| vote to minor parties                     | 16,64 | 32,5  | 32,27 | 28,4  | 21,93 | 30,12 |
| vote to biggest party                     | 47,15 | 34,36 | 43,5  | 49,15 | 42,74 | 33,98 |
| vote to 2nd biggest party                 | 36,21 | 33,14 | 24,23 | 22,44 | 18,18 | 21,83 |

Information primarily gathered from <http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/>, University of Essex election database and <http://www.parliament.bg>, Bulgarian National Assembly Official Homepage

The 1990 election was a Grand National Assembly election and the number of seats was higher than the other elections.

| Elections in the Ukraine                    | president 2004-05 | parliament 1994        | 2006  |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------|
| parties in parliament                       |                   | 14 +227<br>independent | 5     |
| parties for president 3%<                   | 4                 |                        |       |
| effective number of parties in popular vote |                   |                        | 3,4   |
| vote to minor parties                       | 20,1              |                        | 31,62 |
| biggest party                               | 39,9 --> 51,99    |                        | 32,14 |
| 2nd biggest party                           | 39,26 --> 44,20   |                        | 22,29 |

Information primarily gathered from <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/vnd2006/w6p001e.html> and <http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database>, elections database

