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Institutionalization of Nationalized Party System: The Czech Case

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Abstract:

The concept of party system institutionalization is usually applied as an explanatory framework for the process during which inter-party competition exhibits the recognisable pattern of stabilization over time. Party system institutionalization is measured with indicators based on the patterns of stability in government formation and alternation. The article presents an empirical test of the argument that a high degree of party system nationalization plays a significant role in the process of party system stabilization and routinization. In the cross-temporal comparison, the presented study explains to what extent the Czech party system's development exhibits patterns of institutionalization. The Czech case has been selected because recent party system changes are interpreted as unprecedented with regard to the electoral success of new political parties in 2010 and 2013. To better understand the complex party competition development over past 25 years, indicators of inflation and dispersion on the party system level are compared with the Gini-based party nationalization score.

Key words: Czech Republic; institutionalization; nationalization; party system

Introduction

The spatial dimension of electoral systems presents a widely discussed topic across different fields in social sciences, namely political geography, sociology and political marketing. In the context of political science, along with electoral volatility (Pedersen 1990; Šedo 2011; Linek 2014; Powell and Tucker 2014), fragmentation (Laakso, Taagepera 1979) and institutionalization (Meleshevich 2007; Casal Bértoa 2014, 2017), party system nationalization (Jones and Mainwaring 2003; Kasuya and Moenius 2008; Bochsler 2010; Golosov 2015) presents an important variable for understanding the dynamics of a party system's development and successful democratization. In the party system research, many dependencies among the dimensions have been hypothesized. Even though some are taken for granted in political science, empirical findings raise questions about their validity. The critiques point to the low ability of such factors to predict the stability of a democratic political system (see Agnew 1988; Tavits 2008).

Regarding the relationship between party system nationalization and democratic consolidation, which is perceived as a core argument in modern political science (see Jones and Mainwaring 2003: 144), serious counterarguments were posited from the field of political geography. Agnew (1988: 307), analysing the Italian case, argues that political science tends to overestimate the trend towards homogenization of politics around nationwide

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topics and shows that local and regional patterns are still relevant. A very similar thesis is usually assumed in the context of party system institutionalization, because party system institutionalization can be defined as a process of gaining stability and predictability. That said, a uniform distribution of electoral results is hypothesized to have a positive impact on the party system's stability.

In the first part of the study, the conceptualization and operationalization of dependent and independent variables will be presented. The dependent variable is party system institutionalization, which, as the theory puts it, should to a considerable extent be predictable by independent variables based on party or party system nationalization. Primarily it aims to discuss the concept of nationalization. It will argue that it is necessary to differentiate between indicators of party nationalization and party system nationalization. Party nationalization is usually measured by indices based on the Gini coefficient and the level of analysis of political parties. These measurements explain how homogeneously or differently the electoral support is distributed across the whole territory for a single political party, and whether it is possible to identify significant spatial clusters with an accumulated higher degree of electoral gains.

On the other hand, the term party system nationalization follows the definition of the party system and focuses on interactions and patterns of competition among the political parties. The stability of a party system across time is usually analysed by quantitative indicators, such as the Pedersen index of electoral volatility or the index of effective number of political parties (ENP). The concepts of party system nationalization adapt this approach and try to develop indicators comparing the variability between constituency-level and national-level party competition. Such a dimension is referred to as inflation.

The empirical part of the study will begin with the analysis of party system institutionalization through the quantitative measure of closure as firstly suggested in (Casal Bértoa, Mair 2012) and further developed in (Casal Bértoa, Enyedi 2016). In the following part, the development of the Czech party system from the democratic transition to the most recent parliamentary election, in 2013, will be classified by the degree of nationalization according to the two-fold typology based on a combination of inflation and dispersion measures (see below). To interpret the overall degree of party system nationalization, the observed development will be compared with indicators of party nationalization. This approach will help to better understand what the effect of different patterns of electoral support's spatial distribution is on the stability of a national-level party system. This is particularly important with regard to the unprecedented electoral success of new Czech political parties in 2010 and 2013.

The article argues that Czech party system development can be divided into three distinctive phases. The first phase includes the first two democratic elections after the democratic transition. The phase of party system crystallisation exhibits a relatively low level of inflation in the context of national aggregate, but it is evident that there is a significantly high variance in format of electoral competition on the level of constituencies. After this short period, the party system became more nationalized as the electoral competition centred around two main political parties representing two opposite ideological alternatives, namely the Social Democrats (ČSSD) and Civic Democrats (ODS). The observed development in the Czech Republic presented a rather deviant case from the argument presented in (Powell, Tucker 2014). Based on analysis of party systems in post-communist parties from 1989 to 2009, Powell and Tucker differentiated two distinct types of electoral



volatility. The first type refers to extra-system volatility, i.e. to the situation when the volatility is caused by the entrance of a new political party into electoral competition. On the other hand, within-system volatility operationalizes the electoral change among previously established parties in two consecutive elections. Even though the authors argue that the first type of electoral volatility dominated this period, the Czech party system experienced the lowest degree of overall volatility (27%) and the second-lowest degree of extra-system volatility (15%) (Powell, Tucker 2014: 131). Such findings support the thesis about relatively fast stabilization of the Czech party system after the democratic transition.

The third phase, beginning after 2010, shows that the electoral success of genuinely new political parties (Hug 2001; Sikk 2011) led to the substantial increase in the ENP. The initial success of new political actors without previous experience in democratic politics also means an increase of extra-system volatility which was not typical in previous phases of the party system's development (Hanley 2011: 117–120). The last parliamentary election, in 2013, led to an even higher degree of instability and to higher electoral gains for new political parties. From this perspective, the Czech Republic can be seen as following the more general trend towards destabilization of party systems in Central and East European countries. Haughton and Deegan-Krause (2015: 70) show that it is possible to find a strong relationship between electorates of the new political parties from 2010, TOP 09 and Public Affairs (VV), and the newer parties from 2013, the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens movement (ANO, which means 'YES' in English) and ÚSVIT (which translates as 'Dawn'). In general, the authors summarize the party system's dynamics in the CEE region in three steps: "1. Parties sometimes face the loss of significant numbers of supporters. 2. New parties are disproportionately likely to benefit from losses by more established parties. 3. The newer a party is, the more likely it is to suffer rapid, significant losses of support" (Haughton, Deegan-Krause 2015: 71).

In the conclusion, the article shows that concepts of party system institutionalization and party system nationalization are two theoretically distinct phenomena. The argument of supportive effect of even spatial distribution of electoral competition for the stabilization of a party system seems to be incorrect. Based on the empirical findings, it can be seen that even a high degree of regularity in spatial dimension of election could be accompanied by increasing volatility in patterns of inter-party competition. The analysis offers an alternative explanation concluding that a high degree of nationalization can be negatively correlated with party system institutionalization, as the uniformity of the electoral competition among regions brings a greater chance of the successful entrance of new political parties through the whole territory.

Conceptualization and Operationalization

The main point of the presented article is to investigate the theoretical claim that higher degree of nationalization supports the party system institutionalization (Kouba 2007: 1031). Based on empirical analysis of the Czech case, Kouba (2007: 1035) states in the conclusion that the indicators of a party system's spatial patterns point to its progressive institutionalization. The same theoretical argument can be found in other highly influential studies. Birch (2003) includes the concept of party system nationalization among indicators of party system institutionalization. She hypothesises that "[p]arty system institutionalization can thus be understood of being a combination of consolidation, regularization, and nationalization (as well as autonomy from the state)" (Birch 2003: 100). Meleshevich (2007: 78) further argues: "As a rule, the party system is likely to possess a high level of political autonomy and institutionalization if its main elements (i.e., individual parties) have a relatively uniform electoral support across the entire country and express the interests of most, if not all, geographical parts of a nation."

According to the theoretical argument, the substantial degree of regularity in geographical patterns of electoral competition should be positively associated with a high level of party system institutionalization. To test this hypothesis, the Czech case is selected as the most likely case (Gerring 2007; Kofroň 2012), because shortly after the transition to democracy the level of nationalization of both, party system and political parties, reached a high level even if the comparative perspective is taken into account (Kouba 2007; Lyons, Linek 2010; Bernard, Kostelecký, Šimon 2014). Considering this, the Czech party system should be expected to be highly institutionalized.

Attempting to test the abovementioned arguments, the study aims to solve two research questions:

Q1: How does territorial homogeneity influence the degree of party system stability?

Q2: Does the unprecedented electoral success of new political parties really lead to a lower level of party system nationalization?

For the purposes of this analysis, Sartori's definition of the party system is utilized. Sartori (2009: 39) stated, that "[*p*]arties make for a 'system,' then, only when they are parts (in the plural); and a party system is precisely the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition". Such definition is necessary because it puts importance on the fact that systemic dimension cannot be characterized as a simple sum of its components, but the effect of interaction among parties must be taken into account. This being said, party system change means the overall transformation in from one type or class to another (Mair 1998: 52).

Although the high number of studies using electoral volatility, or electoral statistics in general, as an indicator of party system institutionalization, there is also a different branch in the literature. Basically, the approaches differ in the assessment of elite's role in the process of institutionalization. Especially in the context of new democracies in the Central-Eastern Europe, it has been argued that electoral volatility and party system stabilization should be considered conceptually distinct, because "[c]ausality tests suggested that rather than triggering change in the supply of parties and hence party system instability, electoral volatility merely reacts to it" (Tavits 2008: 549). Such explanation suggests that it is rather change on the supply side of the electoral process which leads to higher volatility. This being said, to operationalize the stabilization of party system the consistent patterns of interactions among the politicians should be taken into account. For the purpose of this analysis, party system institutionalization would be operationalized accordingly. Along with this kind of reasoning, the elite-based measure of party system institutionalization is applied.

Party System Institutionalization

The theoretical concept of institutionalization is particularly associated with the sociology of organisation, namely its subfield structural institutionalism (Parsons 1954; Selznick 1984).



In political science, Huntington (1968) used the concept of institutionalization for interpretation of the process of establishing political institutions in newly democratized polities.

Following the previous theoretical literature on party institutionalization, Mainwaring and Scully (1995: 5) conceptualized party system institutionalization with four criteria. The first is stability in the rules of inter-party competition where certain patterns of party competition must be regularized. Secondly, parties must be rooted in a society which helps to structure an electorate over time. The third criterion reflects the notion of democratization and emphasizes the necessity of legitimacy of party competition as the only acceptable way to determine who governs. Finally, the fourth is the stability of party organisations.

The other scholars addressing the issue proposed different sets of operational criteria. In the context of post-communist countries, Bielasiak (2002: 191) used two criteria for party system institutionalization. The first is reliability and acceptance of formal electoral rules, while the second refers to the patterns of interactions among the parties measured in the terms of aggregated volatility and number of political parties.

Party system can be defined as institutionalized "when the patterns of interaction among parties become predictable and stable over time" (Casal Bértoa, Mair 2012: 87). Even though the definition follows the previous applications of the theoretical concept, the selection of operational criteria presents an innovative approach. The authors select four criteria indicating fully institutionalized party system. 1) The frequency of change, which assumes that in strongly institutionalized party systems changes in the partisan composition of the government are relatively infrequent and concentrated to the period right after an election. 2) Alternation in government, stating that either wholesale or absence of alternation in government leads to a higher degree of institutionalization while partial alternation lowers the institutionalization. 3) The innovation or familiarity of government alternatives, following the logic that more institutionalized party systems are more predictable so they should perform a substantial degree of familiarity in governing formulae. 4) Access to government, measuring whether all political parties were incorporated into a government formation or some were systematically excluded (Casal Bértoa, Mair 2012: 87–88).

This concept was further developed in the study (Casal Bértoa, Enyedi 2016) where the authors suggest a new operationalization of party system institutionalization based on three criteria, namely alternation, government formula and access to government. Combining those three dimensions, they present a composite index of party institutionalization.

Party system institutionalization is measured using the composite indicator of closure (Casal Bértoa, Enyedi 2016: 271). The indicator is defined as the average of three sub-indices. The first sub-index measures alternation using Pedersen index of volatility applied to the change in the distribution of ministerial positions. The alternation ranges from 50 to 100 where 100 stands for wholesale or none alternation. After the calculation, the volatility measure is standardized according to the formula:

Alternation = (Ministerial Volatility - 50) * 2

The second sub-index operationalizes the degree to which the government formula is known or innovative. The more innovative formula indicates a higher degree of a party system's openness, where a complete change in the composition of governmental coalition defines 0 and the combination previously known represents the value of 100. The last sub-index reflects the proportion of ministers from parties being previously present in any

government. It subtracts the proportion of ministers belonging to political parties that were not members of any previous coalition. The resulting index of party system institutionalization for every year is reported as an average of the sub-indices' cumulative sums ranging from the first year after the founding government's investiture to the year of interest.

Party System Nationalization

The concept of party system nationalization is connected with the question 'to what extent is the pattern of party competition across the subnational units homogeneous or differentiated?' According to Jones and Mainwaring (2003: 140), the party system is considered highly nationalized when "major parties' respective vote shares do not differ much from one province to the next". Although the definition of nationalization is agreed across the most recent studies on the topic (see Kasuya, Moenius 2008; Golosov 2015; Lago, Lago-Peñas 2016), much less agreement has been achieved in the terms of operationalization and measurement.

Kasuya and Moenius (2008) introduce the two-dimensional notion of party system nationalization (Figure 1). The first dimension points to the inflation in the party competition. In other words, the indicator measures to what extent the electoral competition in constituencies differs from the results aggregated on the national level. As the authors argue, the inflation measure in itself is not sufficient to a proper understanding of the nature of party system spatial stability. According to them: "[a] low rate of party system inflation at the national level can be the result of highly homogenous party competition. Alternatively, it can be the result of some districts contributing to the national-level inflation rate in a positive manner while others contribute in a negative manner, with the latter offsetting the effects of the former" (Kasuya, Moenius 2008: 128). Thus, in the second dimension, they introduce the term dispersion, operationalizing the degree of variation by which every electoral constituency contributes to the inflation of a party system on the national level.



Figure 1: Typology of Party System Nationalization

Source: Kasuya, Moenius (2008: 128).



Based on the combination of inflation and dispersion, the authors define a two-fold typology of party systems in the context of their nationalization or localization. The first type is called uniformly localized and describes the situation when the analysed party system is low in the term of dispersion, but highly inflated. Practically, the size of constituencies in a model case is homogeneous, but there is a substantial difference in labels of competing political parties among constituencies. After aggregation of votes to the national level, the number of parties represents a sum of local sub-systems. In this sense, such a party system is considered as inflated.

The second type refers to the combination of a high degree of inflation accompanied by high dispersion. Again, as in the first type, the high inflation is caused by aggregation of heterogeneous constituency-level competitions to the national level. Unlike the first type, a high level of dispersion occurs, because the format of every party sub-system is very different. Such a party system is characterized as strongly localized.

The third type presents the hypothetical case when the national-level party system is a result of nearly symmetrical competition on the level of constituencies. Thus, the fully nationalized party system mirrors the competition in every single lower unit. As the presented framework puts it, the nationalization requires not only low inflation but also low dispersion.

The combination of low inflation and high dispersion characterises the fourth possible type of party system which is weakly localized. Such a case can result when the mean effective number of political parties on the constituency-level is nearly equal to the nationlevel aggregate, but in fact, the size of the political parties in terms of their electoral gains reaches a high variation. The authors conclude that "[...] the relatively low inflation rate observed in this situation is the result of an offsetting effect of high dispersion. In other words, the positive and negative district-level contributions to the national-level inflation rate cancel each other out and consequently bring down the national-level inflation rate at the aggregate level" (Kasuya, Moenius 2008: 128).

Party system nationalization is operationalized according to the scheme suggested in (Kasuya, Moenius 2008). Their approach differentiates between two dimensions, namely inflation and dispersion. Both dimensions are computed using the ENP index adapted from the seminal article on party system research (Laakso, Taagepera 1979). The weighted inflation measure was for the first time used in (Moenius, Kasuya 2004: 550) and is defined as follows:

$$I_{w} = \left(\frac{ENP_{nat} - \sum_{i=1}^{n} ENP_{i}W_{i}}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} ENP_{i}W_{i}}\right) 100$$

Where ENP_{not} is the effective number of political parties at the national level, ENP_i equals the effective number of political parties at the constituency level, and W_i is weight constructed as follows:

$$W_i = \frac{number \ of \ votes \ in \ constituency}{number \ of \ votes \ at \ national \ level}$$

To operationalize dispersion, (Kasuya, Moenius 2008) suggest a combination of two different statistical measures. The first is a coefficient of variance (CV) defined as a ratio where

the inflation's standard deviation is divided by its mean. Regarding the fact that CV does not explain the compactness of distribution, the authors decided to apply kurtosis (k) as the second measure of dispersion. As the higher level of kurtosis is caused by the presence of a large number of outlying values in the local inflation's distribution, it therefore shows the lower degree of nationalization. Both indicators are weighted by factor γ set to constant 0.5 (Kasuya, Moenius 2008: 131) and combined as follows:

$$D = CV(I_i)^{\gamma}k(I_i)^{1-\gamma}$$

Using this operationalization, the analysis would show how the Czech party system is nationalized or localized in the context of a cross-national comparison. Based on cross-national and cross-temporal electoral data, countries will be divided into four categories suggested by the abovementioned typology. To identify cutting points for both dimensions, i.e. inflation and dispersion, the measures are transformed to logarithmic scales, and medians for all valid cases across the whole time period are counted.

Party Nationalization

Further understanding to the mechanism of interrelation between nationalization and institutionalization can be achieved moving to the level of political parties. The usual solution for operationalizing the extent to which political parties gain their electoral support evenly from the whole territory is to adopt a quantitative indicator based on the Gini index. The index was originally developed to measure income inequality. It is an extension of the Lorenz curve method developed previously (Lorenz 1905). The Lorenz curve is visualised as a cumulative percentage of the population on the axis x and the cumulative percentage of the component of interest held by this part of population on the axis y.

The application of the Gini index as a measure of party nationalization is suggested by Jones and Mainwaring (2003), where the regional gains for a political party are sorted ascendingly on the axis x and the cumulative function of votes for the party in respective regions is plotted on the axis y. In a case when the party would receive the exact same amount of electoral support in every electoral district or different sub-regional unit, the party nationalization score would be 1. The other extreme occurs in a hypothetical situation when the political party would be completely dependent on votes from one territorial unit and no votes would come from any other region.

For the needs of cross-national research designs, the approach proposed by Jones and Mainwaring (2003) was further developed by Bochsler (2010). Bochsler argues that the Gini coefficient is not robust in certain cases, namely when there is substantial variation in population size in territorial units. As the population size of electoral districts in the Czech Republic is distributed very unevenly, the weighted party nationalization score is calculated as an indicator of nationalization on the level of single organisations (see Bochsler 2010: 162).

Czech Party System

The first part of the presented analysis aims to explain to what extent the Czech party system could be considered as institutionalized in different stages of its development. The party system institutionalization in the Czech Republic is presented in Figure 2 below.



The first stage of the development refers to the crystallization of the party system after the democratic transition. As the founding government, the first coalition of ODS, KDS, KDU-ČSL and ODA, which lasted from 1992 to 1996, is selected for the analysis. The index begins with the value 100 as there were no rearrangements in the coalition until 1996. The index partially decreases after the parliamentary election in 1996 where the coalition formula remained unchanged and no new political party accessed the coalition. Thus, the index is lowered due to the changes adopted in the composition of ministries among ODS, KDU-ČSL and ODA. In comparison to the previous government, the two smaller parties received a higher percentage of ministers at the expense of ODS.

The substantial decrease of the institutionalization index is caused by the first wholesale alternation. Even though the wholesale alternation itself does not negatively affect the degree of measured party system institutionalization, the first such alternation practically leads to the value of 0 in the other two sub-indices, because of a completely innovative governmental formula accompanied with the access of new parties to the government formation. In the Czech case, such a first alternation is presented by Zeman's government where ČSSD, while not being part of any government in the past, gained 100% of the ministerial posts in 1998. Being supported by a written agreement with the ČSSD's main opposition party, ODS, the single-party government persisted for the whole 4-year electoral term. Despite the fact the agreement was meant to continue to the next electoral period, after the change in the presidency of ČSSD, the new chairmen terminated the agreement with ODS. After winning the election, ČSSD formed a coalition government with KDU-ČSL and US, which had split from ODS. The visible decrease of institutionalization in 2002 results not only from a higher degree of ministerial volatility but also from an innovative government formula and access to the new political party to the government for the first time.

After the initial stage when the index fluctuated as a consequence of the first wholesale alternation from the main party on the centre-right, ODS, to the main leftist party, ČSSD, the party system seemed to be stabilized and predictable in the terms of bipolar competition on the left-right dimension. The results of the general election in 2006 supported this kind of reasoning, as the level of fragmentation and volatility decreased. The centripetal role of the two main parties was more or less taken for granted (see Chytilek, Šedo 2007; Hloušek 2010). Regarding the level of party system institutionalization, the government coalition formed by ODS, KDU-ČSL and SZ after the 2006 election brought a pattern of regularity in electoral competition. As the cooperation of ODS and KDU-ČSL were previously known, the only component lowering the overall value of the index was the participation of a new party, SZ, in the government.

In the context of the past two elections to the lower chamber in 2010 and 2013, it became evident that the previous trend towards stabilization of party system changed, and the competition is more fragmented, volatile and unpredictable. Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2010: 237) point to the fact that previous stability resulted from a low degree of the dimensionality of political competition in the Czech Republic concentrated around the socio-economic cleavage. On the other hand, as Deegan-Krause and Haughton emphasize, the potential future survival and stability of ČSSD and ODS are not inevitable, and their position can be undermined due to internal conflicts or success of new political parties. Reflecting the observed changes, Balík and Hloušek (2016: 114) concluded: "[1]t seems that in the Czech party system, after more than two decades of spiralling back to the days of its formation, the playing field is filled with fragmented parliamentary parties, and the opposition

is multiple and rather vulnerable. Party competition is strongly polarized, but not bipolar. This leads to controversy over the nature of the regime and interpretations of the past."

Similarly, comparing with 2006, the institutionalization exhibits lower values from 2010 onwards. This is primarily caused by the success of new political parties, which became part of governmental coalitions immediately after they gained the parliamentary representation for the first time (Šárovec 2016). In 2010, two new political parties, TOP 09 and VV, joined ODS in a coalition, which means the coalition formula is considered innovative and the level of acceptance is lowered as well. Even after that, the index does not show a more stabilizing trend, because VV underwent an organisational split during the electoral term and a new political party called LIDEM was established by part of VV's leadership. The new party formally joined the coalition and replaced VV. Following the election in 2013 came wholesale alternation. Another new political party, ANO (see Kubánek 2016), coalesced with ČSSD and KDU-ČSL, so the partially innovative formula and access of an even newer political party with a substantial proportion of ministers hold the value of the index of party system institutionalization rather low.

Beside the fact that the applied composite indicator does not show a stabilizing trend, it should be also noted that the Czech party system exhibits rather low degree of institutionalization in the comparative perspective (Casal Bértoa 2017: 415). Clearly, the abovementioned thesis about party system stabilization not only seems invalid, as indicated both by measures based on analysis of electoral data and by the composite index, which takes the resulting composition of governments into account.



Figure 2: Party System Institutionalization in the Czech Republic (1993–2016).

Source: Author based on Casal Bértoa, Enyedi (2016); Data: Linek (2013).

Moving to the Czech party system nationalization, the development will be analysed using PSNS introduced by (Kasuya, Moenius 2008). The summary can be seen in Figure 3. Similar to the party system institutionalization, the trend in the first years after the democratic transition shows a higher degree of localization. Nevertheless, the score in following years







Source: Kollman et al. (2016), adapted by the author. Note: Lower value on the axis y presents higher level of nationalization.

The presented trend line alone does not contextualize the relative importance of these changes, which is needed for classification of the Czech party system according to the degree of party system nationalization. The first step for a better understanding of the context would be unpacking the indicator into inflation and dispersion measures. The figures below show to what extent the Czech party system would be classified as nationalized or localized over time in a cross-national comparative perspective. The lines plotted in the charts show the median value of inflation and dispersion for every country in the dataset. The lines divide all cases in the selected time period according to the twofold typology presented earlier in the theoretical chapter (see Figure 4).

As it can be seen, during the 1990s the Czech party system exhibited a rather low degree of inflation, but the system remained more dispersed. This being said, the Czech case belonged to the category of weakly localized party systems. Weak localization is associated with uniformity between the number of political parties on the sub-national level and its national aggregate. On the other hand, a high level of dispersion refers to the high degree of heterogeneity in party size across the electoral constituencies. After the parliamentary election in 2002, the classification of the Czech party system changed from a weakly localized system to a nationalized one, as dispersion radically decreased. More interestingly, considering the two general elections in 2010 and 2013, when new political parties succeeded, the level of party system nationalization in the terms of applied classification did not decrease, and the Czech case was even classified as one of the most nationalized party systems in the analysed time ranges of 2010 to 2012 and 2013 to 2016, respectively. This being said, from the comparative perspective, the Czech Republic constitutes the most likely case for the theory testing because of the exceptional values defining the level of the independent variable.

Summarising the analysis, after the transitive period the Czech party system should be considered localized in the context of both dimensions. This result does not correlate with the evolution of the party system institutionalization where the instability of party system became apparent after 2010. If the causal effect proposed in the theoretical claim was valid, the institutionalization would increase or the substantial stability of party system would be observable.

Figure 4: Party System Nationalization in the Comparative Perspective







1996 - 2001



2002 - 2009





2010 - 2012

2013 - 2016



Source: Author based on his own calculation; data: Kollman et al. (2016).

Note: Both dimensions are plotted on the logarithmic scale. In a case of more than one election per one country, the median value is presented. Lines dividing the plot represent the median values for the whole dataset.

Even though the empirical evidence against the theory could be considered relatively strong, the causal mechanism is still not sufficiently understood and needs to be further



examined. Thus, the next step in the analysis aims to explain the role of party nationalization, which is conceptually distinct from party system nationalization and requires a different operationalization.

Overall, the Czech political parties are characterized by a rather high level of party nationalization when the median value for every democratic election to the lower chamber calculated from electoral results of every party participating in the respective election varies at around 0.8 (see Figure 5). From the electoral data, it is evident that the variance in the level of nationalization among parties increased from 2002 onwards. To a large extent, this is caused by the general increase of a number of parties competing in elections. A closer look at political parties with parliamentary representation reveals that nationalization of these political parties reaches higher values (see Table 1).

It is noteworthy that the total proportion of votes on the national level does not correlate directly with the degree of party nationalization. Even a political party with a really small amount of electoral support is able to gain substantially homogeneous coverage across the whole territory. To demonstrate this, the political party ODA received 0.5% of votes nationally in 2002, but the nationalization score of 0.88 indicates relatively high nationalization.

Moving to the main point, i.e. the relation between party nationalization and party system institutionalization, the general pattern in the party nationalization scores shows rather consistent values. Practically, the only party with a higher degree of localization is KDU-ČSL, the Christian Democrats, which gains most of its electoral support from regions with a higher proportion of the religious population. On the other hand, in contradiction to the theoretical claim, the effect of such localized organization on the party system institutionalization seems to be even supportive under certain conditions, as the KDU-ČSL repeatedly achieved the access to government in different coalition arrangements.

Furthermore, the factor of new political parties plays an important role. According to the theoretical assumption, the more nationalized electoral support that parties gain, the more institutionalized, i.e. stable and predictable, the party system would be. This statement implicitly incorporates the presumption of party nationalization as an evolutionary process when new political parties begin with a lower degree of nationalization and steadily widen their electoral appeal across the territory. Nevertheless, the empirical data show that it does not have to be so. On the contrary, in the Czech case, the genuinely new political parties without established organizational structures or experience with national level politics could address voters at least as evenly as a traditional party. To provide clear examples of this trend, the new political party VV succeeded in 2010 in scoring 0.95 on the scale of nationalization and along with an organizational split from KDU-ČSL, the new political party TOP 09 immediately became part of the governmental coalition. Based on the high level of nationalization of established political parties in the previous election, this variable failed to predict the future destabilization. In other words, the predictability of party system substantially decreased as the new competitor joined the election with parameters more than comparable with its counterparts. The fact that it is not just anecdotal evidence is the result of another new political party, ANO, in the 2013 election when the same situation repeated. Again, ANO achieved almost complete homogeneity in terms of support among the electoral districts, although it nominated candidates for the first time in the context of the first order elections, and won a substantially high proportion of votes and became part of the ruling government coalition. Thus, the change between 2010 and 2013 is not interpretable as a swing from a higher to a lower level on nationalization, neither regarding the position of parties with parliamentary representation nor the overall degree of nationalization among all parties which placed candidates in the election.

	ANO	ČSSD	KDU-ČSL	KSČM	ODA	ODS	SZ	TOP 09	US	Úsvit	VV
1990	-	-	-	0.95	-	-	0.81	-	-	-	-
1992	-	0.88	0.71	0.95	0.73	0.92	-	-	-	-	-
1996	-	0.91	0.77	0.94	0.86	0.91	-	-	-	-	-
1998	-	0.93	0.81	0.93	-	0.89	0.9	-	0.89	-	-
2002	-	0.95	0.87	0.9	0.88	0.9	0.94	-	-	-	-
2006	-	0.92	0.76	0.91	-	0.91	0.88	-	0.89	-	-
2010	-	0.91	0.66	0.91	-	0.93	0.83	0.85	-	-	0.95
2013	0.95	0.91	0.76	0.9	-	0.86	0.82	0.79	-	0.87	-

Table 1: Weighted Party Nationalization Scores for the main political parties.

Source: Kollman et al. (2016).

Note: Data are aggregated on the level of electoral districts. It should be noted that moving to a lower level of aggregation does not affect the general argument, as the calculations do not exhibit significantly different results. Compare Bochsler (2010: 165); Lyons, Linek (2010); Stauber (2015: 148).





Source: Author, based on his own calculation; data: Kollman et al. (2016). Note: Descriptive statistics are calculated from every party with at least one vote in the election.



Conclusion

The article analysed the theoretical relation between two concepts frequently used in the literature on party systems, namely the effect of party system nationalization on its degree of institutionalization. From the literature review, it can be seen that the more regularity in the electoral behaviour across regional units, the more institutionalized, i.e. stable and predictable, the party system would be.

The theoretical argument is tested on two levels of analysis, the nationalization of political parties and the nationalization of the party system. Based on the quantitative indicators of party system nationalization, the Czech party system is identified as the most likely case, because it combines a low degree of inflation with a low degree of dispersion. From the comparative perspective, the Czech case can be, with the exception of the relatively short transitional period, classified as one of the most nationalized party systems in the context of democratic countries.

On the other hand, taking the level of party system institutionalization into consideration, the development of inter-party relations does not seem to be more stable or predictable over time. On the contrary, the party system institutionalization not only shows persisting fluctuation caused primarily by the repeating necessity for acceptance and incorporation of the new political parties, such as VV in 2010 and ANO or ÚSVIT in 2013, it also exhibits a low degree of institutionalization in the European comparison. Thus, very few patterns are identifiable over time.

Comparing such performance in the party system nationalization (independent variable) with the observed level of party system nationalization (dependent variable), it is argued that even if the most likely case is analysed, there is practically no visible effect on the party system institutionalization. For testing the theory, the development after 2010 is crucial. Although the regional variance of electoral competition remains relatively homogeneous and new political parties did not bring a substantial degree of additional variability, party system institutionalization was negatively influenced by this new trend. Also, the high level of party system nationalization before the 2010 election by no means predicted or indicated further development to a more volatile and fragmented party system with the composition of coalition governments characterized by the presence of new political parties and movements.

To interpret why the causal link between both concepts is missing, it is necessary to change the level of analysis and understand the dynamics of party nationalization. It can be argued that the theoretical assumption of a positive effect of nationalization to party system stability relies on the idea of progressive development. In other words, that new political parties or party systems are firstly localized and gradually become ever more nationalized. Nevertheless, theories of party development (Panebianco 1988) and the presented empirical evidence show that even genuinely new political parties without previous organisational inertia or roots in society can gain very homogeneous electoral support across national sub-units from the first time they decide to nominate their candidates in a nationwide election. From this standpoint, it could be concluded that a high level of party system nationalization is supportive for the occurrence of the same model of electoral change; so, in a case when a new political party emerges and succeeds, it is more probable it will win regionally uniform electoral gains. As a consequence, the party system would be paradoxically less institution-alized. This finding is also consistent with conclusions of recent research on the relation

between aggregated volatility and party system stabilisation, where the reversal causal link has been observed as it rather was the entrance of new political parties on the supply side which resulted in higher volatility (Tavits 2008).

This is again visible in the two last Czech elections. The genuinely new political parties gained an even higher degree of party nationalization than established political parties such as ODS and ČSSD. From the opposite side, a political party with a regionally defined electoral base can potentially have a positive impact on the party system institutionalization. In the Czech Republic, KDU-ČSL gains its electoral support mainly from regions with a higher proportion of Catholics, and at the same time is frequently part of governmental coalitions, which has a rather supportive effect for party system stabilisation.

The presented single case study showed a strong argument against the causal relation between party system nationalization and institutionalization. On the other hand, future research would concentrate on developing research design comparing more cases to better understand the institutionalization in other geographical settings, especially in strongly localized party systems. The article analysed only one possible range of independent variables; higher attention should be given to hypothesize and test the effects of other possible predictors of party system institutionalization because of its important role in the survival of democratic political systems (Casal Bértoa 2017).

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