Nationalisation of regional elections in Central and Eastern Europe

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Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Maastricht University, PO Box 616, Maastricht, The Netherlands

Territory is a salient issue in post-communist countries in Europe, yet subnational elections have received surprisingly little attention. This article analyses congruence between national and regional elections in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic held between 1993 and 2010. The findings suggest that election incongruence can be partly explained by approaches which work well in the West European context – territorial cleavages, regional authority and the second-order election model – but in order to fully grasp regional election outcomes in post-communist countries one also needs to take into account electoral alliance strategies and party supply change.

Keywords: nationalisation; regional election; congruence; Central and Eastern Europe

Introduction

Research on elections in Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) after the end of Communist rule in 1989–1990 has focused on the institutionalisation of parties and party systems. This interest arises for two reasons. First, the establishment of parties and the development of party systems are essential for democracies to function well. Second, the introduction of free and fair democratic elections provides for an opportunity to study processes of nationalisation. Nationalisation processes "represent a broad historical evolution toward the formation of national electorates and party systems" whereby "peripheral and regional specificities disappear" (Caramani 2004, 1). The development of state-wide parties and a national homogeneous electorate is thought to have a stabilising effect on the political system as a whole. As Bochsler notes (2010a, 807–808) "the former communist democracies in Europe appear to be a particularly relevant set of cases for this research field, especially since some of these countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Ukraine) have highly regionalised party systems" and in some of these countries territorial divisions "are linked to wars or to geopolitical struggles (such as in Ukraine)". Subnational elections have been linked to denationalisation and territorial differences in the vote, since a subnational political arena and increasing powers for a subnational government provide political entrepreneurs with a possibility to endogenously politicise local interests and establish regional parties (Chhibber and Kollman 2004; Deschouwer 2009; Thorlakson 2009). As a consequence, regional elections may foster and even invigorate territorial differences which may subsequently impede processes of nationalisation.

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*Email: a.schakel@maastrichtuniversity.nl

However, an important caveat in studies on elections and nationalisation processes in CEECs is the lack of attention to regional institutions and subnational elections. Tucker (2002) reviews studies on Eastern European elections published during the period 1990–2000, and one of his conclusions stands out. Out of 101 articles, only 8 analysed local elections, which were all focused on Russia, and only 2 articles analysed both local and national elections in Romania and Kyrgyzstan, respectively. Although the interest in subnational elections has increased over the past decade, there are still relatively few studies (written in English) which compare across parties, countries and type of election (i.e. local, regional or national) (Romanova 2013, 37). Scholars have focused on the electoral success of ethnic or nationalist parties in local (municipal) elections (e.g. Bochsler 2013; Konitzer 2008; Pugh and Cobble 2001), and when scholars include more than one type of election, they often compare them at one point in time (e.g. Cordell and Born 2002; Kubo 2007) or in selected localities (e.g. Stroschein 2011). These studies have produced good insights into the origins of ethnic conflict, which is important since the electoral success of nationalist parties has an impact on the stability of party systems. However, it is necessary to study election results across parties and countries, and across time, in order to obtain a full understanding of nationalisation of party systems in CEECs (e.g. Bochsler 2010b; Tiemann 2012).

In contrast to previous studies on nationalisation of election results in CEECs which focus on national elections (e.g. Bochsler 2010b; Tiemann 2012), I investigate territoriality of the *regional* vote in six CEECs: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic for regional elections held between 1990 and 2010. These countries are selected because these are unitary countries which established a regional tier of government – that is, an intermediate tier between local and national governments with at least on average 150,000 inhabitants (Hooghe, Marks, and Schakel 2010).[1] Furthermore, I approach processes of nationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe in a novel way, namely I adopt a multilevel party system perspective (Schakel 2013a). This entails, in addition to investigating nationalisation of parties, I also look at the extent to which *regions* or *regional party systems* exhibit similar electoral behaviour. A multilevel party system perspective reveals that previous studies may have overestimated the degree of nationalisation. In addition, and in line with nationalisation studies on national elections (Bochsler 2010b), I find that explanations for nationalisation of the vote for West European elections do not fare well in explaining nationalisation processes in post-communist countries. It appears that differences in party supply (volatility) and electoral alliances also contribute substantially to the differences in the vote between national and regional elections.

First, I will discuss the regional institutions in the six countries which are the subjects of this study, and I will explore the territorial heterogeneity in the national and regional vote. In the third section, I introduce five approaches which may account for territorial differences in the vote. Variables and methodology are discussed in the fourth section, which are deployed for the empirical tests in the fifth section. The final section concludes and discusses the implications of the results.

Regional institutions and territoriality of the vote in Central and Eastern Europe

Most post-communist countries established regional tiers of government while they democratised. Furthermore, in order to be eligible for European Union accession funds, the CEECs needed to establish an institutional framework to allocate the European Union funds across the territory (Keating and Hughes 2003). Many of these newly established regions remain statistical categories or deconcentrated state administrations (Hooghe, Marks, and Schakel 2010; see also footnote 1), but regional institutions which hold direct elections to a regional assembly or council were established in six countries (Table 1).

Croatia, Hungary and Romania established regional government and introduced regional elections shortly after the end of the communist period. The Czech Republic, Poland and the Slovak

Table 1.   Countries, regions, parties, and elections.

Country	Regional tier	N Regions	N Parties	Election period	N Elections
Croatia	Županije	21	35	1993–2009	5*21
Czech Republic	Kraje and Prague	14	21	2002–2010	3*14
Hungary	Megyék	20	50	1994–2010	5*20
Poland	Województwa	16	26	1998–2010	4*16
Romania	Județe	42	34	1996–2008	4*42
Slovak Republic	Samospravne kraje	8	16	2001–2009	3*8
	Total	121	182		503

Notes: The 1992 elections for Romanian *județe* are missing.

Republic waited for almost a decade before regional institutions were created.[2] In Croatia, Hungary and Poland, regional government performs broad functions in the domains of education, healthcare, education, culture, economic development and transport. In the Czech Republic, Romania and the Slovak Republic, regional tiers have more limited competencies in transport, tourism, secondary education and health, because they work within guidelines set by the central government. The difference in authority is also reflected by tax powers. Regional governments in Croatia, Hungary and Romania have some tax autonomy, and the regional tier is free to set the rate for some of the taxes, but regional government is mainly dependent on transfers from the central government in the Czech Republic, Poland and the Slovak Republic.

In terms of electoral institutions, the regional tiers are quite comparable across the countries. Regional assemblies are directly elected for four-year terms and regional executives are elected by the assemblies (except in Romania since 2008, when the *județe* president became directly elected). Also, regional elections are held on the same dates within all six countries (except for Prague in the Czech Republic, which has the status of both a region and a municipality), and regional elections do not coincide with national elections. However, regional and municipal elections are held at the same date in Croatia, Poland, Hungary and Romania but not in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

In contrast to previous studies on nationalisation, I will focus on regions and regional elections instead of national elections and parties. This means that commonly used indicators of party and party-system indicators cannot be employed. Nationalisation in CEECs has been studied using party nationalisation measures which look at how equally distributed vote shares are across the territory (Bochsler 2010a, 2010b; Tiemann 2012). Parties and party systems are nationalised when, for example, party A obtains 90% and party B wins 10% of the vote across all constituencies. Denationalised party systems are indicated when parties participate in one or few constituencies only and/or when party vote share vary hugely across constituencies. When nationalisation is studied in a multilevel perspective, regional election results are included in addition to national election outcomes, and the unit of analysis changes from the party to the region. Regional election scholars have developed a dissimilarity index, which is a useful way to explore territorial heterogeneity in the regional vote. This index subtracts vote shares of the same party participating in different elections, takes absolute values, sums them over parties and then divides the sum by two. Dissimilarity is calculated as follows (Jeffery and Hough 2009; Pallares and Keating 2003):

$$\text{Dissimilarity} = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{n} |X_{iN} - X_{iR}|,$$

where X_{iR} is the percentage of the vote won by party i in the regional election, R, and X_{iN} is the percentage of the vote won by party i in the previous national election N. The absolute values are summed and divided by two to avoid double counting (one party's loss is another party's gain). Scores may vary from complete congruence or similarity (0%) to complete incongruence or dissimilarity (100%). One can compare the national to regional vote according to three different operationalisations, which differ according to election type (national or regional, first letter N or R) and level of aggregation (national or regional, second letter N or R):

- Dissimilarity between national and regional party systems (NN-RR).
- Dissimilarity between the national vote share at the national level and the national vote share in a particular region (NN-NR).
- Dissimilarity between national and regional vote shares in a particular region (NR-RR).

The different conceptualisations offer some important advantages in the exploration of congruence of the vote. NN-RR can be labelled *party system* congruence and evaluates the extent to which a particular regional party system is different from the national party system and has two sources of variation: the extent to which a regional electorate is different from the national electorate *combined* with the extent to which the regional electorate switch their vote between regional and national elections (dual voting). The regional election is compared with the national election and, *at the same time*, the national electorate is compared with the regional electorate. In order to tease out the two sources of variation, one needs to consider two other dissimilarity indices (Schakel 2013b). *Electorate* congruence (NN-NR) keeps the type of election constant and evaluates the extent to which regional electorates vote differently. *Election* congruence (NR-RR) keeps the (regional) electorate constant and evaluates the extent to which a regional electorate votes differently in national and regional elections. The added value of the three different congruence measures come to the fore once they are applied to national and regional elections in the six CEECs in Figure 1.

Two observations stand out in Figure 1. First, regarding the difference between party system and election congruence on the one hand and electorate congruence on the other hand we find higher dissimilarity scores for party system and election than for electorate congruence. This result implies that national elections are to a higher extent nationalised than regional elections. In other words, voters behave in more similar ways across the regions in national elections than in regional elections. Previous studies on elections in the CEECs and those studies that focused in particular on nationalisation analysed only national elections (see introduction). By including regional elections and by taking the region as a unit of analysis, it appears that the degree of nationalisation may have been overestimated by previous studies.

A second interesting observation is that electoral differences for national elections remain stable or become more homogeneous over time, whereas regional electoral behaviour is much more volatile. In Croatia (since 2000), the Czech Republic and, to a lesser extent Hungary, differences in party systems and regional elections declines, but dissimilarity in the vote remains relatively stable in Poland and the Slovak Republic and actually increases in Romania. In the next section, I will discuss hypotheses which may explain the observed differences in the regional vote within and across post-communist countries.

Five approaches to study the territoriality of the regional vote

Studies on nationalisation of regional electoral behaviour in Western Europe is often approached from three theoretical perspectives (Jeffery and Hough 2009; Schakel 2013b). The first approach concerns the second-order election model which emphasises the subordination of regional
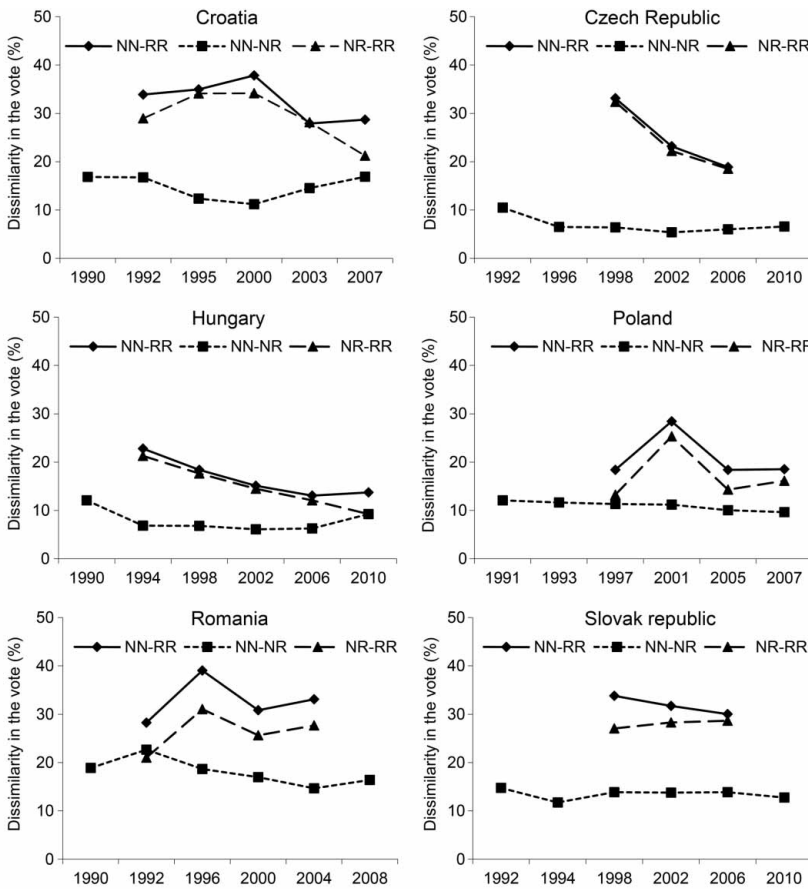
Figure 1. Dissimilarity in the vote per country.
Notes: Average dissimilarity in the vote for elections since 1990 is shown by country. Regional elections are compared to the previously held national election (the *x*-axis displays national election years). NN-RR = *party system* congruence, that is, dissimilarity between the national vote at the national level and the regional vote in the region. NN-NR = *electorate* congruence, that is, dissimilarity between the national vote at the national level and the national vote in the region. NR-RR = *election* congruence, that is, dissimilarity between the national vote at the regional level and the regional vote in the region.

elections to first-order, national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980). A territorial cleavage approach starts from a sociological standpoint and predicts that areas with distinct territorial identities will display dissimilar election results (Caramani 2004). A third approach focuses on decision-making powers and states that party systems become more differentiated or "provincialized" to the extent that subnational governments control resources that voters care about (Chhibber and Kollman 2004).

Research on elections – predominantly national ones – in Central and Eastern Europe have drawn the attention to two additional factors which differentiate election outcomes in Central and Eastern Europe from those in Western Europe.[3] The party systems of post-communist countries have often been described as extremely fluid, weak and unstable with voters changing their electoral choices from election to election, and parties entering and exiting the electoral arena. Therefore, I introduce party supply change as a factor which may explain differences in territoriality of the vote.

Finally, Marek and Bingham Powell (2011) note that pre-election coalitions are more prevalent in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe. The partners within electoral alliances change across the regions and may thereby contribute directly to differences in the regional vote. Each approach is discussed in more detail in the remainder of this section.

Second-order election model

The core claim of the second-order election model is that there is a hierarchy in the perceived importance of different types of elections. National elections are of a first-order nature and all other elections, such as European, subnational and by-elections are subordinate to first-order elections. Because there is "less at stake" in second-order elections, voters turnout is less, and those who show up at the ballot box are prompted to use their vote to express their dissatisfaction with national-level politics (Reif and Schmitt 1980). National parties in executive government tend to lose votes in second-order elections and opposition, small, and new parties tend to gain votes.

The stakes of elections may decrease to the extent that regional elections are disconnected from other elections (van der Eijk, Franklin, and Marsh 1996; Matilla 2003). With less at stake, regional elections gain a status of "barometer" (Anderson and Ward 1996) or "referendum" elections (Carsey and Wright 1998), which disproportionally attract opposition party supporters. As a result, the "anti-government swing" should be higher (Palazzolo 2007), because opposition party voters are more likely to turn out "to make a point" than are government supporters to express their satisfaction (Jeffery and Hough 2009). Some authors argue that the extent of government party loss can be predicted from the placement of the second-order election in the first-order election cycle. The longer the time between a regional and a national election, the worse the government party will perform. Shortly after a national election government, parties may enjoy the benefits of a "honeymoon" period but losses soon start to be incurred. At mid-term, the losses for government parties will reach their maximum and losses decline when a regional election approaches the next national election (Jeffery and Hough 2001, 76).

Within all six countries, regional elections are held on the same dates (horizontal simultaneity) which may increase the "barometer" status of these elections. The "anti-government" and "pro-opposition" swings directly result in differences between regional and national vote shares and, according to the second-order election model, vote share swings should be larger the longer the time between regional and national elections. The timing of regional elections in the national election cycle spans almost the full range of four years: regional elections take place after the preceding national election at about half a year (Hungary: 173 days on average), just after one year (Poland: 393 days except in 2010: 1154 days), around one year and a half (Croatia: 477 days), after two and a half years (Czech Republic: 860 days), at about three years (Slovakia: 1062 days) and half a year before the next national election (Romania: 1251 days). In the models presented below, I introduce electoral timing variables which indicate the placement of the regional election in the national election cycle. Analyses on regional elections in Western Europe have shown that the extent of second-order effects also depends on electoral timing of the regional election vis-à-vis local elections (Schakel and Dandoy 2013). In the Czech and Slovak Republics, regional elections do not coincide with local elections and, therefore, I also include a variable which accounts for the extent to which regional elections are held simultaneously with local elections.

Territorial cleavages

The basis of territorial cleavage theory lies in sociological approaches which explain dissimilarity of party systems by the extent to which territorial cleavages are "translated" into votes (Lijphart

1977; Livingston 1956). Several scholars analysing regional elections have observed that if sub-state elections are held in areas with distinctive territorial identities, voters are more likely to dis-connect themselves from the first-order arena and make different vote choices in the sub-state context (Jeffery and Hough 2009). Territorial heterogeneity can be found with respect to an infi-nite number of dimensions but most authors relate voting patterns to territorial cleavages with respect to ethnicity, language or history (van Houten 2007; Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

Just as in Western European countries, there are several territorial cleavages among the regions in the six CEECs in this study. There are Italian- and Venetian-speaking minorities in Croatia, German-speaking minorities in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania, and Hungarian-speaking minorities in Romania and Slovakia. In addition, the borders of the CEECs were by and large drawn after the First World War with the Treaty of Trianon (1920) and before that several regions were part of other countries and/or were part of Prussia, the Austria-Hungarian or Ottoman empires. Territorially based social cleavages may lead voters to vote differentially across regions but may also induce voters to change their vote between elec-tions. For example, voters may opt for an ethnoregional party present in one region but not in another, or voters may vote for a state-wide party in national elections but cast a vote for an eth-noregional party in regional elections.

Regional authority

Another assertion is that regional power is a key institutional variable capable of influencing party strategy and political behaviour. Voters respond to the location of power by directing their politi-cal demands to the most effective arena (Thorlakson 2007). When regional elections are more important contests, regional branches of state-wide parties will have little incentive to maintain similar policies to party as a whole if this risks electoral disadvantage in the regional arena (Hough and Jeffery 2006). In addition, under decentralisation, regional candidates have fewer pressures to join national parties, because voters will know that regional governments make the important decisions (Chhibber and Kollman 2004). Furthermore, the transfer of powers to regional government increases opportunities for regional parties to thrive since regional electoral arenas may be used for developing regional specific policies and to "build" distinctive identities (Thorlakson 2000).

The six countries under study score on the low end of the regional authority index introduced by Hooghe, Marks, and Schakel (2010). This index measures regional authority along two dimen-sions: self-rule (authority exercised over those people living in the region) and shared rule (auth-ority exercised in the country as a whole via, for example, an upper chamber appointed or elected by regions). None of the regions in the six countries exercise shared rule, except for the Croatian *županije* between 1993 and 1997. The index scores on self-rule run from 0 to 15, and the scores for our six countries range from a minimum of 6 in the Slovak Republic, 7 in the Czech Republic and Romania, 8 in Poland, 9 in Hungary, to the maximum of 10 in Croatia. Given the small range in scores across countries, I do not expect that regional authority has a large impact on regional election results.

Party supply change

Various studies on national elections in CEECs have found that volatility is comparatively high when compared with Western European countries (Rose, Munro, and Mackie 1998). However, it appears that the character of volatility is different for post-communist countries. Powell and Tucker (2014) distinguish between Type A volatility and Type B volatility. The first refers to vola-tility caused by "*A* new party" and the second refers to volatility "*B*etween existing parties". It

appears that the high volatility scores can be related to Type A volatility or new parties (Sikk 2005; Tavits 2008). Tavits (2007) studies elections that took place between 1990 and 2004 in fifteen CEECs and finds that the average share of votes won by a new party was 19%. The high dissimilarity scores for party system and especially election congruence may therefore be ascribed to party supply changes. I distinguish between two forms of party supply change, that is, new and ethnoregional parties. The former are parties which participate in regional elections but did not participate in the previous national election. Ethnoregional parties are defined according to their electoral participation;[4] they tend to participate in one or a couple of regions.[5] Table 2 reports the incidence and electoral strength of ethnoregional and new parties.

From Table 2, we can observe that ethnoregional and new parties participate in regional elections in all of the six CEECs, and that they obtain significant vote shares. Ethnoregional parties are particularly strong in some of the regions in Romania and the Slovak Republic, and, to a lesser extent in Croatia and Hungary. Electorally strong new parties may be found in the Czech and Slovak Republics where they obtain on average more than 5% of the vote in each regional election.

Electoral alliances

The large number of pre-electoral alliances is a distinctive feature of post-communist elections when compared with elections taking place in Western Europe (Marek and Bingham Powell 2011). Kostadinova (2006) links the occurrence of pre-election coalitions to the incentives mixed electoral systems may produce. Mixed electoral systems combine the use of plurality or majority run-off procedures in single member constituencies for election of some representatives, and proportional rule for elections of the remaining representative in the same chamber of parliament. The choice of party coalition strategies is determined by how parties assess their chances for success. Kostadinova (2006) shows that the decision over cooperation between parties in mixed electoral systems is shaped by assessments of both the magnitude and the spatial distribution on party electoral support. Indeed, electoral alliances may pay off. For example, the *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* (HDZ), as a senior partner in electoral coalitions, won absolute or relative majorities in 20 out of 21 regions in the 1997 county assembly elections in Croatia (Ivanišević et al. 2001). Electoral alliances vary to a great extent in the number and quality of parties involved. In the Slovak Republic, for example, we may find electoral coalitions which mix governing coalition parties with opposition and non-parliamentary parties (Buček 2002).

Table 2.   Incidence and electoral strength of ethnoregional and new parties.

| | Ethnoregional parties | | | | New parties | | | |
| | | Vote share (%) | | | | Vote share (%) | | |
	N	Average	Min	Max	N	Average	Min	Max
Croatia	12	6.19	0.51	74.28	6	2.28	0.68	25.12
Czech Republic	8	2.86	0.58	30.26	5	5.11	0.08	18.60
Hungary	33	4.01	3.57	25.87	3	0.37	0.48	5.62
Poland	9	2.76	6.13	22.20	5	2.15	0.10	9.87
Romania	7	10.66	0.06	72.60	6	3.89	0.15	29.58
Slovak Republic	3	10.99	0.03	35.76	4	5.66	0.36	12.60

Notes: The number of ethnoregional and new parties are shown, as well as their average, minimum, and maximum vote shares obtained in regional elections. Average vote share is calculated by dividing the total sum of ethnoregional/new party vote share by the total number of regional elections held.

The range of possible electoral coalitions increases when regional elections are concerned. A party can decide *per region* whether it wants to enter into an electoral alliance or not and the party may vary the number of partners across the regions. This poses problems when regional elections are compared to national elections especially considering that in case of CEECs, it is unfortunately not possible to allocate a vote share won by an electoral alliance to the members of that alliance. For example, the seat distribution cannot be used, because the seat distributions across parties are not reported in official election data. My approach is to document electoral alliance strategies across regions and elections, and in Table 3 I present four alliance strategies which may have a different implications for the comparison between regional and national vote shares.

Some examples may illustrate the various alliance strategies. The HDZ participated on its own in the 2000 elections for the Croatian parliament (*Hrvatski Sabor*) but formed various electoral alliances for the 2001 regional elections. For example, HDZ formed an alliance with *Hrvatska Kršćanska Demokratska Unija* (HKDU) and *Hrvatska Stranka Prava* (HSP) in *Istarska županija*. Since the HDZ participates in an alliance in regional elections we may expect a positive vote share swing (*in alliance* regional). The HSP and HDKU participated in an electoral alliance with the HDZ in the 2001 elections in *Istarska županija* but they receive a regional vote share of zero, because the vote share for the alliance is ascribed to the HDZ since the election data do not allow us to disaggregate vote shares across the alliance partners. The HSP and HDKU were not in an alliance with the HDZ in the previously held national election of 2000 (*out alliance* national) and a zero regional vote share is compared to a positive national vote share generating a negative vote share swing.

Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka (HSS) and *Istarski Demokratski Sabor* (IDS) participated on their own in the 2001 regional election in *Istarska županija* but were in an alliance in the previously held national election of 2000. The national vote share is ascribed to the HSS and we may expect a negative vote share swing since it was in an electoral coalition in the national but not in the regional election (*in alliance national*). The IDS decided to leave the electoral alliance with HSS and to contest the regional elections in *Istarska županija* in 2001 on its own (out alliance regional). Now we compare a positive regional vote share with a zero national vote share which leads to a positive vote share swing.

Table 4 reports on the percentage of vote shares which involve a particular electoral alliance strategy. Clearly, electoral alliances are abundant in the six CEECs and involve more than a third of the total number of vote shares. The incidence of electoral alliances varies over countries and involves more than half of the vote shares in Croatia and the Slovak Republic and about a third of the vote shares in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. Electoral alliances are least common in Poland, but still they affect close to one-fifth of the vote shares. Table 5 presents average vote share swings between regional and national elections per type of electoral alliance.

Table 3. Effects of electoral alliance strategy on vote share change between the regional and the previous national election.

Electoral alliance Strategy	Croatia 2000 (NR)	Istarska 2001 (RR)	Effect on vote swing		
			NR	RR	change
In-alliance regional	HDZ	HDZ-HKDU-HSP	>0	+	Positive
Out-alliance national	HSP-HDKU	–	>0	0	Negative
In-alliance national	HSS-IDS	HSS	+	>0	Negative
Out-alliance regional	–	IDS	0	>0	Positive

Notes: + = the vote share of the electoral alliance is ascribed to the party; >0 = obtains a vote share above 0%; 0 = obtains a vote share of 0%.

Table 4. Incidence of electoral alliance strategies.

	Croatia		Czech Republic		Hungary		Poland		Romania		Slovak Republic	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
In-alliance regional	19.47	190	33.55	104	15.38	104	10.88	48	0.10	2	26.00	58
Out-alliance national	11.48	112	–	–	5.03	34	3.63	16	0.10	2	30.94	69
In-alliance national	12.30	120	4.52	14	11.83	80	3.63	16	16.51	336	–	–
Out-alliance regional	14.34	140	–	–	1.18	8	–	–	15.87	323	1.79	4
Total	57.59	562	38.07	118	33.42	226	18.14	80	32.58	663	58.73	123

Notes: The number (N) of vote shares and the percentage (%) out of total number of vote shares are shown.

Table 5. Effect of electoral alliance strategies on vote share swings.

	Croatia		Czech Republic		Hungary		Poland		Romania		Slovak Republic	
	Swing	SD	Swing	SD	Swing	SD	Swing	SD	Swing	SD	Swing	SD
In-alliance regional	2.06*	13.88	2.57*	5.75	1.14	6.14	2.02*	3.61	29.33	15.75	2.78*	8.34
Out-alliance national	−5.64*	4.74	–	–	−6.00*	3.8	−4.81*	1.09	−6.72	2.67	−6.29*	6.39
In-alliance national	−3.86*	16.21	−2.14	6.44	−0.29	8.37	−5.26*	1.92	−5.34*	8.71	–	–
Out-alliance regional	5.79*	12.19	–	–	6.05*	3.34	–	–	5.92*	6.51	10.59*	5.17

Notes: The average vote share swing and its standard deviation (SD) per type of electoral alliance (see Table 3) are shown. An asterisk (*) indicates whether a vote share swing is statistically significant different from zero ($p < 0.05$; one-sample t-test).

As hypothesised in Table 3, we find negative vote share swings for the in- and out-alliance national strategies but positive vote share swings for the in- and out-alliance regional strategies. Most vote share swings are statistically significant from zero ($p < 0.05$; one sample *t*-test) which suggests that electoral alliances contribute to differences between regional and national vote shares.

Cases, variables and method

The five theoretical approaches will be evaluated against dissimilarity scores which tap into the territorial difference between the national and regional votes in six post-communist countries. The countries, regions and election period are listed in Table 1. In total, I will analyse vote share of 182 parties participating in 503 regional elections taking place in 121 regions and 6 countries. Since my main interest is in explaining nationalisation of the regional vote, I will focus on party system (NN-RR) and election (NR-RR) congruence. Each time a regional election is compared to the national election held before and only parties which obtain at least 5% of the vote in at least one particular region in at least one particular election year are included.

Clearly, the various theoretical approaches are not mutually exclusive. For example, territorial cleavages and the extent of regional authority may impact on the establishment and survival of ethnoregional and new parties. In addition, there are clear linkages between party supply change and the second-order election model since ethnoregional and new parties may be the beneficiaries of the "anti-government swing". What differentiates the approaches, though, is that they imply different units of analysis. The territorial cleavages and regional authority approaches expect electoral behaviour to (primarily) differ at the regional level, whereas we expect to (primarily) observe differences in electoral behaviour regarding parties with the second-order election model and party supply change and electoral alliances approaches. It is therefore important to analyse congruence scores for parties and regions separately.

Party nationalisation scores are often based on a Gini-coefficient which indicates the extent to which party vote shares vary across the districts and it leads to one party-election score (Bochsler 2010a). The Gini-measurement requires that the researcher classifies different electoral alliances under one label, although the parties involved in an electoral alliance may differ substantially across the districts. Especially in the case of regional elections, where electoral alliances are omnipresent and territorially heterogeneous, this would lead to a significant underestimation of territorial heterogeneity of the vote. Therefore, I measure the extent to which a party vote share differs in the region by calculating specific 'party-region-scores' according to the congruence measures described above. A major benefit of the party congruence measure is that deviations in the vote share for a particular party in a particular region is sensitive to differing party characteristics across the regions and can be directly related to region- or party-specific variables.

For each theoretical approach, I introduce several independent variables. The second-order election model is assessed by introducing variables which tap into the extent to which a regional election is held simultaneously with national and local elections (i.e. vertical simultaneity). Local simultaneity is assessed with a dummy variable which is positive when a regional election is held at the same date as local elections. Timing of the regional election vis-à-vis the national election is assessed with two dummy variables. One dummy indicates whether a regional election has been held within one year *after* the national election, and the other dummy indicates whether a regional election has been held one year *before* the next national election.

The territorial cleavage hypothesis is assessed with two region dummies. Regions with a distinct language and/or history are measured by a regional language and history dummy (Fitjar 2010). The language dummy scores positive when there is an indigenous regional language that is different from the dominant (plurality) language in the state (at least 10,000 people need to speak the minority language). The history dummy captures the extent to which the region

itself or other states than the current sovereign have governed the territory. The index scores positive when the region has not been part of the current state since its formation. Data come from the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010) and Lewis (2009). Regional authority is indicated by the regional authority index proposed by Hooghe, Marks, and Schakel (2010). The regional authority index provides regional-level scores on an annual basis.

Party supply change is measured by a dummy variable labelled "new party" which is positive when a party is established in between the regional and previous national election or when a party participates in regional elections only (but across the whole territory). In addition, an ethnoregional party dummy is introduced in order to assess whether the differences between national and regional election vote shares are due to territorially concentrated parties (see footnote 5). For the region data-set, I have summed the regional vote shares (RR) for new and ethnoregional parties which allows me to directly assess the contribution of these parties to the dissimilarity in the vote.

A number of authors have proposed strategies in order to account for electoral alliances. Bochsler (2010b) assigns vote shares to the first party on the list, and Koepke and Ringe (2006) distribute vote shares equally among the number of participants in the electoral alliance. These strategies are not preferred because the parties involved in an electoral alliance may differ substantially across the regions, but often one ("senior") party participates in all electoral alliances across the regions. It is worth repeating the example mentioned earlier: in the 1997 county assembly elections in Croatia, the HDZ, as a senior partner in electoral alliances, won absolute or relative majorities in 20 out of 21 regions. Therefore, my approach is to assign the vote share for the electoral alliance to the senior party (i.e. the party that obtained the largest vote share in the preceding national (or regional) election).

Electoral alliances strategy is operationalised according to four strategies presented in Table 3, and each is measured by a dummy variable. The dummy variables are subsequently multiplied with the vote shares involved. The out- and in-alliance national variables are multiplied with the regional vote share for national elections (NR) and the out- and in-alliance regional variables are multiplied with the regional vote share for regional elections (RR). The alliance variables tap directly into the vote share involved in a particular alliance strategy and allow me to observe the effect of an alliance strategy on dissimilarity between regional and national vote shares. The scores for the region data-set are derived by summing the party vote shares involved in an alliance strategy for each regional election. Due to operationalisation of the congruence measures, larger regions will have lower dissimilarity scores because their share into the overall national election result is larger (Schakel 2013b). Similarly, larger parties tend to lose more vote share which leads to higher dissimilarity (Caramani 2004). Furthermore, the number of regions may inflate differences between regional and national vote shares. The models incorporate the size of the region by taking the natural logarithm of the number of valid votes cast in a regional election. The election vote share for a party obtained in national elections at the state-wide level (NN) is included to control for party size. The models also include a variable indicating the number of regions in a country (see Table 1). Descriptive statistics are provided in the appendix.

The method for the models is ordinary least square regression with cluster-corrected standard errors. Dissimilarity scores are clustered by region when region dissimilarity scores are analysed and by region-election year when party-region dissimilarity scores are analysed (i.e. one party's gain is another party's loss). The results have been subjected to various robustness checks. To control for autocorrelation over time, I have estimated models which introduce a rho coefficient. It appears that the rho coefficient remains below 0.1, which indicates that regional election results are quite volatile in the six CEECs. Another way to control for autocorrelation over time is to include a lagged dependent variable. The beta coefficient for this variable is statistically significant but relatively low and remains below 0.4. Finally, I have also applied multilevel mixed-effects linear regression models to analyse the robustness of the results on party-region scores. In these models,

elections were clustered into parties which were subsequently clustered into regions. The results appeared to be robust. More detailed results on the robustness tests are available upon request.

Results

Table 6 reports the results for the models analysing differences between regional and national vote shares which include all independent variables. The models analyse dissimilarity scores, and

Table 6. Determinants of congruence between regional and national elections.

	Regions		Parties	
	NN-RR	NR-RR	NN-RR	NR-RR
Regional language	−2.36***	−1.43*	0.31**	−0.17**
	(0.86)	(0.75)	(0.12)	(0.07)
Regional history	−0.24	2.42*	0.22	0.56***
	(1.32)	(1.44)	(0.34)	(0.19)
Regional authority	2.51***	4.73***	0.39***	0.52***
	(0.65)	(0.68)	(0.10)	(0.07)
Regional election held one year *after*	−3.53***	−1.46	−0.41***	−0.40***
national election	(1.18)	(1.27)	(0.14)	(0.11)
Regional election held one year *before*	1.57	2.58*	0.56**	0.70***
national election	(1.33)	(1.34)	(0.27)	(0.22)
Local simultaneity	−7.39***	−14.91***	−1.16***	−1.74***
	(1.89)	(1.84)	(0.34)	(0.25)
New party	0.41***	0.48***	0.47***	0.67***
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.19)	(0.12)
Ethnoregional party	0.46***	0.02	1.44***	0.07
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.19)	(0.13)
Out-alliance national	0.23***	0.44***	0.14***	0.24***
	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.04)
In-alliance national	−0.09***	−0.01	−0.01	0.05***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Out-alliance regional	0.45***	0.55***	0.40***	0.42***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.10)	(0.01)
In-alliance regional	−0.03	−0.08***	0.01	−0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Size region/party	−0.34	0.79	0.13***	0.09***
	(0.53)	(0.50)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Number of regions	0.30***	0.33***	0.01	0.01
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	6.12	−24.01**	−1.31*	−1.70***
	(17.49)	(9.72)	(0.73)	(0.52)
Root MSE	6.87	6.44	2.74	2.35
R^2	0.65	0.56	0.30	0.36
N observations	503	503	4661	4661
N elections	−	−	503	503
N regions	121	121	−	−

Notes: The results of the ordinary least square regression models (with standard errors in brackets). Standard errors are corrected for clusters: elections clustered within 121 regions in the region models; and party-vote shares clustered within 503 regional elections in the party models. NN-RR, *party system* congruence, that is, dissimilarity between the national vote at the national level and the regional vote in the region. NR-RR, *election* congruence, that is, dissimilarity between the national vote at the regional level and the regional vote in the region.
*$p < 0.10$ (two-tailed).
**$p < 0.05$ (two-tailed).
***$p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

higher scores indicate lower congruence between regional and national elections. Overall, the models produce quite similar results, and the signs of the statistically significant beta coefficients are in the hypothesised direction. However, there are some interesting differences between the results for the region and party models, and between the models analysing party system congruence and election congruence.

The regional language and history tap into territorial cleavages, and both should increase dissimilarity in the vote. However, the beta coefficient for regional language is negative and statistically significant in three out of four models, whereas regional history is positive and statistically significant in the models analysing election congruence. Moreover, the presence of ethnoregional parties decreases party system but not election congruence (indicated by higher dissimilarity scores).[6]

The results may seem contradictory at first sight, but one should keep in mind that party system and election congruence measure two different phenomena. Party system dissimilarity scores gauge the extent to which a particular regional party system is different from the national party system. Election congruence measures the extent to which a particular regional electorate switches votes between national and regional elections. In other words, regional party systems are more dissimilar from the national party system when ethnoregional parties participate in regional elections, but vote switching is less likely in regions where a group of people speak a language which is different from the language spoken by the majority of people in the country. This finding is in line with the argument put forward by Birnir (2007) that ethnic parties may decrease volatility. Regional history may have an impact beyond ethnoregional parties and may affect state-wide parties as well. In other words, vote switching between national and regional elections is higher in regions with a history of independent statehood.

Despite the relative small range in the regional authority index scores, regional power does matter for regional election outcomes. Party system and election congruence tend to be lower (indicated by higher dissimilarity scores) in more authoritative regions. The lowest regional authority index score is 6 and the highest 10 which means a difference of four points. This translates into a maximum dissimilarity score of more than 18% for regions and more than 2% for parties.

Interestingly, the timing of the regional election in the national election cycle does not seem to matter much for region dissimilarity scores, but it does have an impact on parties. Second-order election effects can be traced at the party level but not at the region level and this result can be explained by the limited effect of electoral timing on party vote shares. When a regional election is held within one year after a national election party dissimilarity scores diminish by about 0.4%, and dissimilarity may increase by 0.7% when a regional election is held one year before a national election. There seems to be no cyclical pattern, but rather, second-order election effects may increase the later in time the regional election is held after a national election. In contrast to timing into the national election cycle, vertical simultaneity with local elections has a huge impact on dissimilarity scores. In countries where regional elections are *not* held at the same date as for local elections, that is, in the Czech and Slovak Republics, dissimilarity increases by 7–15% at the region level and by 1.2–1.7% at the party level. One should be careful in interpreting these results as an indication of "regionalisation" of regional elections. Second-order election effects can be conceived as "nationalisation" because the regional voter takes her cues for her vote choice from the national electoral arena rather than from the regional electoral arena.[7]

Both the new and ethnoregional party variables contribute to higher dissimilarity scores. This result is not surprising, but the magnitude of the impact of new and ethnoregional parties on congruence between national and regional elections can be considerable. The two variables are measured by dummy variables at the party level, and their vote shares are aggregated to the regional level. Party system and election dissimilarity scores increase by 0.4–0.5% for every vote share won in the region. A new and ethnoregional party may increase its dissimilarity score from 0.5 up to 1.4% at the party level.

All four variables which measure various electoral alliance strategies reach statistical significance but the "out of alliance" variables do so most consistently across the models. It is important to note that the dissimilarity scores are derived by taking absolute values of the differences in regional and national vote shares, and that we have no a priori assumptions whether one particular alliance strategy should lead to more or less nationalisation (lower or higher dissimilarity scores). Rather, the electoral alliance strategy variables are included because the alliance strategy may contribute directly to the difference between regional and national vote shares. The "out of alliance" variables contribute to higher dissimilarity scores and this is not surprising because, in these instances, we compare a zero vote share for one election (national or regional) with a positive vote share in another election (regional or national, respectively). Region dissimilarity scores increases by 0.23–0.55% for every 1% of vote share involved in an "out alliance" strategy. Parties which decide to step out of an alliance increase dissimilarity by 0.14–0.42% for every 1% vote share they win. The "in alliance" variables indicate a situation whereby a party participates on its own in a national or regional election but enters into an electoral alliance for, respectively, a regional or national election. Interestingly, the beta coefficient is negative and statistically significant for the *region* models which indicates that party system and election congruence are higher (indicated by lower dissimilarity scores). But the effect is small: every 1% of vote share involved in an "in alliance" strategy translates to a reduction of 0.08–0.09% in dissimilarity score.

Discussion

This article set out to explain the difference in the vote between national and regional elections, and analysed the extent to which particular regional party systems are different from the national party system (party system congruence) and in how far the regional electorate switches their vote between national and regional elections (election congruence). The results indicate that explanations which fare well in explaining nationalisation of elections in Western European countries (territorial cleavages, regional authority and second-order election effects) also help to clarify territorial heterogeneity in the regional vote in CEECs. However, for a better understanding of differences between regional and national vote shares in CEECs, one needs to account for the high volatility in party supply and the preponderance of electoral alliances whereby the participants differ across the regions.

The results are broadly in line with the results by Bochsler (2010a), who analyses national elections and concludes that party nationalisation in post-communist democracies is related to the territorial structure of social divisions, except for cases where the electoral system provides for a high degree of nationalisation. The research in this article broadens the study of nationalisation to regions and regional elections and shows that changes in party supply and electoral alliances contribute significantly to low congruence between national and regional elections. Party supply and electoral alliances may, in turn, be moderated by electoral system characteristics (Kostadinova 2006; Marek and Bingham Powell 2011). An interesting avenue for further research would be to observe how the various types of alliances vary across electoral systems and to explore how alliance strategies are moderated by the incentives produced by various electoral rules (see for example Ibenskas 2014).

The results presented in this article raise the question whether electoral alliances can be interpreted as "nationalising" or "regionalising" strategies. A political party with a regional support base may be inclined to enter into an electoral alliance with a state-wide party in order to increase its chances for being able to nominate a candidate for national parliament or to increase the chance that state-level resources or policies are directed to the region. Likewise, a state-wide party may be induced to enter into an electoral alliance with a region-specific party because it expects to incur an electoral loss in a particular region when the party would participate in the election on its own.

The results indicate that when parties enter into electoral alliances in regional elections, we find lower party system and election dissimilarity scores at the regional level, and this electoral alliance strategy thus contributes to a nationalisation of regional election results. However, it is more difficult to determine whether this type of election alliance also contributes to party system integration, because it gives ethnoregional parties or parties with particular regional strongholds access to the centre of power and decision-making.

Another main finding of this article is that party supply change (new and ethnoregional parties) can considerably lower party system and election congruence which may have subsequently a huge impact on party system instability. New parties may use regional elections as a "springboard" for entry into national elections and thereby the subordinate status of regional elections may contribute to volatility observed in the national electoral arena. It would, therefore, be interesting to further explore how second-order elections effects, that is the "anti-government" swing and new party success, play out in regional elections in CEECs. This study on regional elections and the studies of Bochsler (2010a) and Tiemann (2012) on national elections show the need for different approaches to illuminate nationalisation processes in post-communist countries.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

Notes

1. Estonia, Latvia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia have no regional government according to this definition. Albania (since 2000), Bulgaria and Serbia have regional government which consist of deconcentrated offices of the central state administration. Lithuania (between 1995 and 2010) has regional assemblies which consist of indirectly elected politicians. The federal and regionalised countries in Central and Eastern Europe have been excluded because of international interference in domestic politics (Bosnia and Herzegovina), because of particular confederal institutions (Serbia and Montenegro until 2006), and because of lack of democratically free and fair elections (Russia and Ukraine).
2. Before the introduction of regional elections, there were 77 *okres* in the Czech Republic, 49 *województwa* in Poland and 38 *okresy* in the Slovak Republic which functioned as deconcentrated central state administrations with no directly elected assemblies, but the *województwa* in Poland had an advisory council composed of delegates from municipalities from 1990 to 1998.
3. Bochsler (2010b) finds stronger nationalisation for CEECs with majoritarian electoral systems. None of the six countries included in this study employ a majoritarian or plurality rule except for regional elections in the Slovak Republic. In addition, I am mainly interested in the dissimilarity between regional and national vote shares, and electoral systems may contribute to this dissimilarity especially when electoral rules are different between the national and regional levels. This is the case for Hungary (mixed electoral system in national elections but proportional rule in regional elections) and the Slovak Republic (proportional electoral system in national elections but majoritarian rule in regional elections). I do not "control" for the difference in electoral systems in the models presented below, because this variable would only vary at the country level and thereby "absorb" large parts of the variation between countries

and regions. In addition, the two CEEC-specific approaches discussed below (party supply change and electoral alliances) may be (and probably are) closely related to the electoral system (this issue is addressed in the discussion).

4. In the six CEECs, many ethnoregional parties which participate in national elections do so in an electoral alliance with a larger state-wide party but often compete in regional elections on their own. This is also the reason why this variable is considered under party supply change rather than under territorial cleavages.

5. With the category ethnoregional parties, I aim to include three kinds of parties. First, it includes parties which obtain their vote share in one (institutional) region only. Second, it may include parties which obtain their vote share in more than one (institutional) region but whose ideology advocates decentralization to a "region" which includes multiple (institutional) regions. Third, the label may include parties which claim to represent ethnic minorities and which obtain (significant) vote shares in a restricted number of (institutional) regions, because the ethnic minority is territorially concentrated.

6. The results are not driven by multi-collinearity between these variables. The Pearson correlations are below 0.5 in the region data-set and below 0.35 in the party data-set. In addition, the variance inflation factors for these variables are smaller than 2.

7. A proper analysis on "anti-government" and "pro-opposition" swings requires an analysis in which parties are coded according to their governmental status and vote share swings are not analysed according to their absolute values. In addition, next to a "pro-opposition" swing, the analysis should also explore vote share differences for new and ethnoregional parties which may benefit from the "anti-government" swing instead of opposition parties.

Notes on contributor

Arjan H. Schakel is Assistant Professor in Research Methods at Maastricht University. His research interests include federalism, multilevel governance, regional elections and regional parties and his work has appeared in journals such as *Comparative Political Studies, European Journal of Political Research, Party Politics, Regional Studies,* and *West European Politics*. He is co-author of the book *The Rise of Regional Authority* (Routledge, 2010) and co-editor of the book *Regional and National Elections in Western Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

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Appendix. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Regions				Parties			
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Party system congruence	27.35	11.52	3.09	83.86	2.94	3.27	0.00	35.81
Election congruence	23.46	9.61	3.33	71.10	2.55	2.94	0.01	32.80
Regional language	0.27	0.45	0	1	0.30	0.46	0	1
Regional history	0.07	0.25	0	1	0.05	0.22	0	1
Regional authority	7.89	1.23	6	10	7.75	1.21	6	10
Regional election held one year after national election	0.24	0.43	0	1	0.19	0.39	0	1
Regional election held one year before national election	0.39	0.49	0	1	0.47	0.50	0	1
Local simultaneity	0.87	0.34	0	1	0.89	0.32	0	1
New party	2.81	4.43	0	29.58	0.08	0.27	0	1
Ethnoregional party	6.74	13.37	0	82.33	0.13	0.33	0	1
Out-alliance national	2.99	7.99	0	54.63	0.32	1.80	0	38.11
In-alliance national	25.67	23.22	0	80.16	2.76	9.48	0	74.89
Out-alliance regional	6.30	9.95	0	64.19	0.68	3.15	0	51.79
In-alliance regional	19.69	24.21	0	95.61	2.12	8.18	0	69.87
Size	12.13	0.84	10.16	17.09	9.81	12.16	0.00	52.73
Number of regions	25.97	11.76	8	42	28.46	12.28	8	42

Note: The number of observations is 503 for the region data set and 4661 for the parties data set.