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POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN POST-COMMUNIST SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT

Political parties have a central role to play in democratic consolidation, yet we know comparatively little about how effectively they represent social cleavages in newly emerging democracies. Using the Lipset–Rokkan framework, this article examines the role of parties in articulating social cleavages in 14 established and 6 emerging democracies using the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems datasets. The results show that the social cleavages in the emerging democracies are similar to those of the established democracies, with religion and class predominating. Parties appear to be less effective in representing social cleavages in the emerging than in the established democracies.

KEY WORDS ■ democratic consolidation ■ party systems ■ post-communism ■ social cleavages

Introduction

Political parties are indispensable for democracy, yet we know little of how they identify and articulate social divisions in new democracies. Much of what we know about the role of parties in democratic consolidation comes from the relatively new democracies of Portugal, Spain and Greece in the years following the end of their dictatorships in the mid-1970s, and from a range of Latin American countries (see, for example, Dix, 1992; Gunther and Montero, 2001; Linz and Stepan, 1996). By contrast, with the partial exception of Russia,¹ comparatively little is known about the role of parties in representing social cleavages in the post-communist societies after 1990, despite the proliferation of surveys and studies examining the social bases of partisanship and politics.

The theory behind how and why parties come to represent social cleavages has been dominated by Lipset and Rokkan's 'freezing hypothesis'.

Writing in 1967, they argued that contemporary party systems had become ‘frozen’ around the social cleavages which were dominant when mass suffrage was introduced in the 1920s. Few concepts in political science have resonated so widely or for so long as Lipset and Rokkan’s ‘freezing hypothesis’. But at the time of the first wave of democratization, which ended in the 1920s,² mass surveys were not available, and subsequent studies have been restricted to the analysis of election results. Third-wave democratization, particularly since the collapse of communism around 1990, provides another opportunity to test the utility of the Lipset and Rokkan model (see also Karvonen et al., 2000).

This article examines the role of political parties in representing social cleavages in the established and emerging democracies. Focusing mainly on 20 countries, the questions we ask are threefold: (1) how do voters in the emerging democracies align themselves politically? (2) Do the direction and strength of the social cleavages in the emerging democracies correspond to those of the established democracies? (3) How effective are political parties in translating social cleavages into political divisions? The data come from the first and second modules of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project.

Social Cleavages and Party Systems

In their lengthy essay, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified four social cleavages – centre–periphery (region), state–church (religion), land–industry (urban–rural) and owner–worker (class) – which they argued had provided the basis for the emergence of European party systems at the turn of the twentieth century. For a cleavage to become politically salient, three conditions have to be met. First, the cleavage has to distinguish between people on at least one potentially important characteristic. Second, individuals have to know which group to identify with on any characteristic. And third, and most importantly, political parties have to organize support and competition around the cleavage, providing it with institutional expression. Lipset and Rokkan argued that once this third condition had been met, the ‘freezing’ of these party systems in the 1920s took place, resulting in an enduring relationship between the cleavages and the parties that has persisted ever since.

In the years since Lipset and Rokkan advanced their hypothesis, numerous studies have re-evaluated their argument, theoretically and empirically. One theme³ in these re-evaluations has been normative arguments about whether or not the authors were really referring to ‘parties’ or ‘party systems’, and whether the ‘freezing hypothesis’ relates to party systems or to the cleavage structures that underpin them (Mair, 2000). These distinctions are, of course, important in determining how the concepts are operationalized, since an emphasis on the former leads to a focus on the nature and direction of party

competition, while the latter has implications for the persistence of social cleavages.

Another theme in these reassessments has been to examine the strength of the various cleavages, cross-nationally and over time. In the first such study, Rose and Urwin (1969) examined the social bases of 76 parties in 17 established democracies and found that the parties were most cohesive on religion, followed by class. A contemporaneous study of the Anglo-American democracies by Alford (1964) and later, more wide-ranging studies by Lijphart (1979) and Dix (1989), among others, confirmed the general view that parties and their social bases had remained remarkably stable since the 1920s. Empirically, therefore, the evidence appears to provide considerable support for the Lipset and Rokkan hypothesis (see also Knutsen, 1988, 1989).

A further theme in the research re-evaluating Lipset and Rokkan has been the focus on testing the utility of the 'freezing hypothesis'. Both Mair (1983) and Pedersen (1979) found considerable electoral volatility in the years since Lipset and Rokkan conducted their study, while Shamir (1984) analysed electoral change over an extended period to argue that there has been considerable change both before and since the 'freezing' was supposed to have occurred. A major re-evaluation was conducted by Bartolini and Mair (1990), who analysed electoral volatility across 13 western European countries from 1885 to 1985. Their findings again essentially supported the freezing hypothesis. Writing in 2000, Mair concludes that the short-term fluctuations in the congruency between social cleavages and party systems are outweighed by the long-term stability in the relationship.

Finally, many studies conducted since the 1980s have identified the apparent decline in the correlation between social cleavages and party support and its implications for the Lipset and Rokkan theory. An early study by Rose (1974) found general support for the linkage between social divisions and party support, but that conclusion was questioned by Franklin et al. (1992), nearly two decades later, when they found evidence of a significant decline in the impact of social structure on party choice across a range of countries. Dalton et al. (1984) also identified a long-term decline in the relationship, which they interpreted as a consequence of the proliferation of minor and protest parties and interest groups across a range of societies; Dalton (2000) also provides evidence identifying a long-term, secular pattern of partisan dealignment across the established democracies.

The collapse of communism has led to an examination of how cleavages come to be politicized in newly emerging democracies. While the task may seem easier than in the 1920s – because of the availability of modern techniques to survey mass electorates – in many ways it is more complex. The parties and party systems in the post-communist states have been highly unstable – or, as Brader and Tucker (2001: 69) describe it in Russia, 'chaotic, shapeless and lacking in mass partisanship'. Even identifying appropriate parties to analyse can often be problematic. Similarly, the political institutions

within which the parties operate (and not least the electoral systems) have themselves been lacking in popular support and legitimacy, and this in turn has undermined party development. In many cases, the political institutions have been changed several times, further fostering popular suspicion about parties and disrupting political socialization.

Another consideration in analysing cleavages in newly emerging democracies is the character of the old regime, which frequently has a major impact on the nature of the new party system (Kitschelt, 2001; Linz and Stepan, 1996).⁴ The complexity of civil society in the old regime, the type of political leadership and their commitment to change, as well as the cultural homogeneity of the society, will all impact on democratic consolidation. Transition experiences – primarily economic rather than political – may also serve to shape distinctive outlooks that will have political consequences. In a study of democratic commitment among Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians, Whitefield and Evans (1999) found that individual economic circumstances during the transition were more important predictors of a positive view of democracy than the inherited values of political culture. These transitional factors will also cast into doubt the process by which the cleavages become ‘frozen’, using the Lipset and Rokkan terminology.

Disaggregating the various effects that may impact on the role of parties in the democratic consolidation in the post-communist societies is beyond the scope of this article, but serves to emphasize the complex forces at work. Nevertheless, it is clear that parties remain a critical – and perhaps *the* critical – element in the translation of social cleavages into political divisions, and evaluating their role will tell us much about the trajectory of these newly emerging democracies. We begin by describing the dataset and then outline the main political divisions in the established and emerging democracies that are examined here.

Data

The countries included in the analysis come from modules 1 and 2 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project. In order to gain as accurate a comparison between the established democracies and the newly emerging post-communist societies as possible, the established democracies are defined as countries with a continuous history of democracy since at least 1950. This produces a total of 17 countries that were included in the CSES.⁵ However, France was excluded because the survey was conducted during a presidential election, and Denmark and Norway lacked several of the religion measures; this further restricts the established democracies that are used in the multivariate analyses to 14 countries.

A total of 10 post-communist societies were surveyed in modules 1 and 2 of the CSES, but three – Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia – had to be excluded from the multivariate analyses because several measures were not

included in the survey. A fourth country, Belarus, was excluded because the questions concerning voter choice pertained to a presidential election.⁶ The universe of post-communist societies for the multivariate analyses is therefore six countries. This comparatively small number of countries obviously limits the conclusions we can draw, but we considered it imperative to have strictly rigorous measures across all the countries included in the analyses.

Since the sample sizes vary considerably between the country surveys, the surveys are weighted to ensure that no country unduly influences the overall results. Each country is weighted so that it makes exactly the same contribution to the overall results, with the weighted number of respondents being adjusted to equal the true number of respondents ($N = 33,596$) so as to leave significance tests unaffected. The estimates are restricted to voters, and to those who provided a valid response to the question about left–right self-placement; this further restricts the number of cases ($N = 23,482$).

Measuring Political Cleavages

Ideally, the strength of a political cleavage is measured by the relationship between various social attributes and the parties that voters choose at elections. That relationship obviously becomes more difficult to measure as the number of parties in a system increases. It is, however, especially problematic in the emerging democracies where there is a proliferation of parties, many of which exist in name only, and where party labels change from election to election in line with shifting allegiances and factional struggles. Indeed, in Russia and some other post-communist states, voters have had the option of voting ‘against all’ the candidates, and increasing numbers have taken up that opportunity.⁷ To avoid the cross-national methodological problems in measuring party support across our 20 countries we use, instead, left–right self-placement as a surrogate measure of party support.⁸

The concept of a left–right political cleavage has been integral to political conflict in most of the established democracies. It has been subjected to considerable criticism, most notably in the ‘end of ideology’ and the ‘end of history’ debates, as well as in debates about the emergence of the ‘new left’, the ‘new right’ and different value orientations (see, for example, Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Inglehart, 1990; Knutsen, 1995). Nevertheless, it has remained a relevant and succinct summary of the direction and strength of political divisions, particularly in cross-national research, and there is evidence that its impact may even have increased in recent years (Franklin et al., 1992; Knutsen, 1998).

The concept of left–right is popularly understood in the established democracies, but do voters in the emerging countries understand and identify with it? One measure of testing its utility is to examine the proportions who fail to provide a valid answer to the question. The results suggest that the concept is more familiar to the public in the established than in the emerging

democracies – as we would expect. In the 16 established democracies examined in this section, a total of 13 percent failed to provide a valid response, compared to more than twice that figure – 31 percent – in the emerging democracies. The highest level of non-response is found in the Ukraine, where 39 percent of those interviewed did not answer the question, the lowest in Sweden, with 4 percent.⁹ Nevertheless, it is clear that as democracy has progressed in these post-communist societies, voters have become more comfortable with the idea (Evans and Whitefield, 1998; see also Colton, 1998, 2000).

The pattern of left–right self-placement between the emerging and the established democracies is similar (Figure 1). In each case, the largest proportion of voters place themselves in the political centre with a score of 5 on the zero to 10 scale; around one in four voters in the emerging democracies characterize their politics in this way, as do a similar proportion in the established democracies. The main difference between the two groups

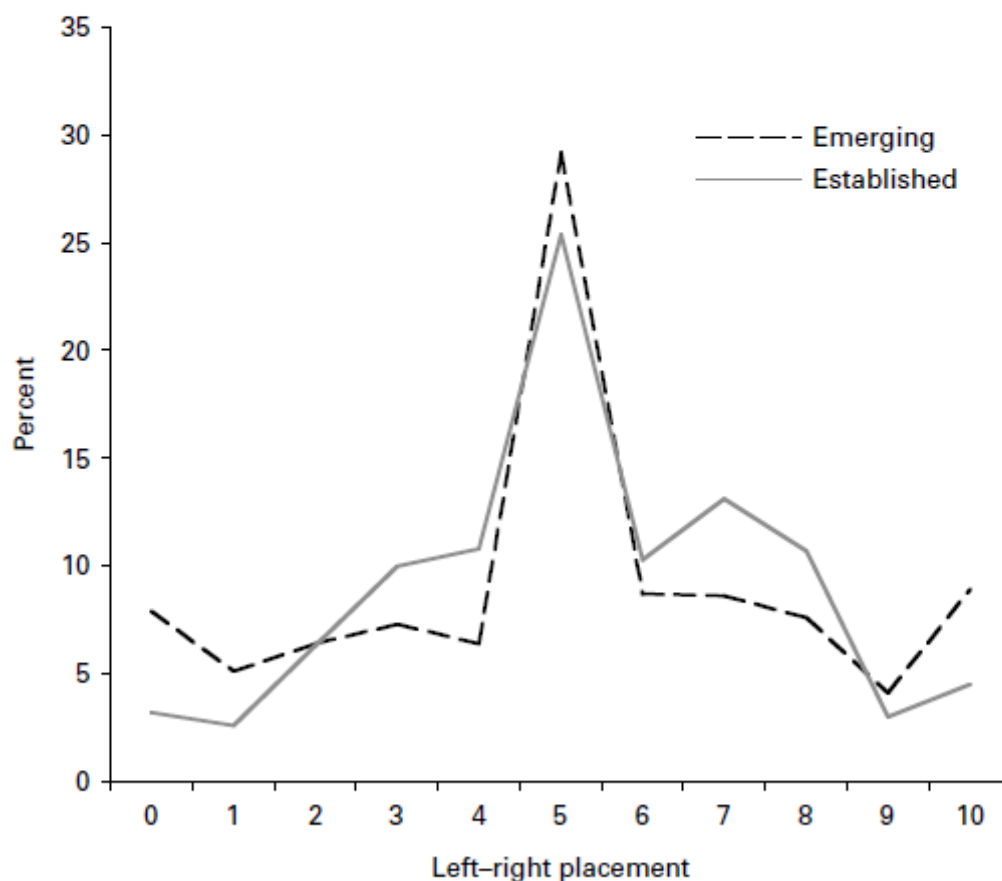


Figure 1. Left–right self-placement, emerging and established democracies

'In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?' Estimates are for voters only. Sources: CSES, modules 1 and 2.

is the lower proportions in the emerging democracies who see themselves as occupying either the centre-right or the centre-left, and the consequently large numbers who place themselves at the two extremes. Thus, 13 percent of voters in the emerging democracies place themselves on the left (scoring zero or one on the scale), compared to 6 percent of their counterparts in the established democracies; on the right, the estimates are 13 and 7 percent, respectively.

The detailed results in Table 1 show considerable variations between the countries within each of the two groups. Among the 16 countries that are representative of the established democracies, there is a bias of 9 percentage points towards the right, but the inter-country variation is significant, ranging from a 32 percentage point advantage to the left in Germany to a 27 percentage point advantage to the right in Ireland. The centre is notably weak in The Netherlands and Israel (15 and 17 percent, respectively), and strongest in Australia, Ireland and Britain. Among the emerging democracies, too, there are considerable variations. The right is strongest in Romania and Bulgaria (by 34 and 31 percent, respectively), while the left is strongest in Poland and the Czech Republic (by 14 and 12 percent, respectively).

What do these results tell us about patterns of political competition in the 20 countries? First, there appears to be no clear pattern based on whether the country is a new or an established democracy. Across both groups of

Table 1. Left-right self-placement by country

	<i>Established democracies</i>				<i>Emerging democracies</i>				
	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>(R-L)</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>(R-L)</i>	
Australia	27	38	36	(+9)	Bulgaria	19	31	50	(+31)
Belgium	34	33	33	(-1)	Czech Rep.	46	21	34	(-12)
Britain	33	34	33	(0)	Hungary	41	22	37	(-4)
Canada	27	33	40	(+13)	Lithuania	40	26	34	(-6)
Denmark	28	23	49	(+21)	Poland	42	30	28	(-14)
Finland	27	25	48	(+21)	Romania	17	32	51	(+34)
Germany	56	20	24	(-32)	Russia	29	34	37	(+8)
Iceland	29	29	42	(+13)	Slovenia	31	45	25	(-6)
Ireland	18	37	45	(+27)	Ukraine	38	32	30	(-8)
Israel	30	18	52	(+22)	Total	33	29	38	(+5)
Netherlands	35	16	49	(+14)					
New Zealand	32	32	36	(+4)					
Norway	35	24	41	(+6)					
Sweden	42	20	38	(-4)					
Switzerland	32	32	36	(+4)					
USA	23	28	49	(+26)					
Total	33	25	42	(+9)					

Estimates are for voters only. Denmark, Norway, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia are not included in the multivariate analyses.

Sources: CSES, modules 1 and 2.

countries, the proportions falling into the left, centre and right categories are similar, although the right has a larger advantage in the established democracies. Second, voters in the emerging democracies appear to understand the concept and to align themselves on it. This supports the findings of Evans and Whitefield (1998), who examined left–right self-placement in Russia between 1993 and 1996, and found a dramatic crystallization in public opinion as voters began to understand and identify with the concept.

Measuring Social Cleavages

Lipset and Rokkan identified four social cleavages which they regarded as forming the basis for the political divisions that emerged in European party systems at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first social cleavage, centre–periphery, reflects the antagonism of those living in peripheral regions towards the political authority of the centre, and their desire for political decentralization and cultural defence. It is measured here by the distance between the country’s capital city and the respondent’s region of residence, standardized from zero to 10. For example, in Britain a person living in London receives a score of zero, and a Scottish resident a score of 10, while someone living in the English Midlands receives a score of 5.

There are three caveats to this approach to the measurement of centre–periphery, which should be taken into account in interpreting the results. First, three countries – Iceland, Ireland and Israel – did not include a region variable and they are scored 5 on the scale. Fortunately, in only one of these three countries – Ireland – is centre–periphery politics a potentially important element in electoral choice (Sinnott, 1995). A second caveat is that the scale does not take into account absolute distances, so that a resident of Scotland (some 500 miles from London) is treated in the same way as a resident of Siberia (some 3,000 miles from Moscow). Finally, in federal systems particularly, distances from the national capital are of less relevance than distances within a state. In Australia, for example, distance from the state capital is often more politically relevant than distance from the federal capital in Canberra.

State–church divisions are based on religion, the main component of political conflict and state-building in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Religion is usually viewed as consisting of three separate dimensions: affiliation, measured by church membership; behaviour, measured by church attendance; and belief, measured by commitment to religious values. The CSES includes all three measures but they are not asked across all of the countries and when they are asked they are occasionally asked in an inconsistent way. Religious belief is the most problematic, since it was not asked in all of the countries, and for that reason it is excluded here. In any event, religious belief is the least likely of the three to have political implications and its exclusion is unlikely unduly to bias our results.

Table 2. Variables, definitions and means

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Definitions</i>	<i>Means</i>	
		<i>Established</i>	<i>Emerging</i>
<i>Left-right</i>	From zero (left) to 10 (right)	5.25	4.94
<i>Centre-periphery</i>	Distance from area of residence to national capital, from zero to 10	4.72	4.81
<i>Religion</i>			
Secular	1 = no religious affiliation, 0 = religious affiliation	0.20	0.28
Church attendance	From 1 (never attends) to 6 (attends weekly)	2.89	2.70
<i>Urban-rural</i>	From 1 (rural) to 4 (city)	2.77	2.36
<i>Owner-worker</i>			
Non-manual worker	1 = non-manual worker, 0 = other	0.52	0.25
Manual worker	1 = manual worker, 0 = other	0.28	0.38
Farmer	1 = farmer, 0 = other	0.02	0.05
Unemployed	1 = unemployed, 0 = other	0.04	0.07
SES	From a low of 0 to a high of 10	4.87	4.43
Trade union member	1 = member, 0 = non-member	0.41	0.26
<i>Controls</i>			
Gender	1 = male, 0 = female	0.51	0.46
Age	Years	46.84	46.40
(N)		(20,202)	(7,569)

Occupation and trade union member are for head of household where available. Estimates exclude respondents who did not have a left-right self-placement.

Sources: CSES, modules 1 and 2.

Religious affiliation varies considerably across all of the countries: for example, in Israel, 88 percent of the respondents are Jewish; in Romania, 91 percent are Orthodox; and in most of the Scandinavian countries, around 9 out of 10 are Lutheran. It is difficult, therefore, to measure affiliation consistently across all of the countries. In practice, potential political divisions based on religion are increasingly focused on those who have a religious affiliation and those who disavow a formal religious membership altogether.¹⁰ This is a trend that is particularly apparent in the United States, where political divisions between religious and secular voters first became important in the 1980s (Hout and Fischer, 2002; Layman, 1997). Church attendance is based on a standard question asked across all of the countries.

Social divisions over industrialization in the nineteenth century gave rise to the urban-rural cleavage. Although it ceased to have political saliency in many countries after the consolidation of industrialization (and in any event was often absorbed by religion), the urban-rural cleavage has remained electorally important in some countries. Urban-rural differences are measured

here using a four-point scale derived from the area of residence measure included in the various surveys.¹¹ The most rural countries in the sample are Ireland, where half of the respondents report living in a rural area, followed by Romania, at 49 percent.

The fourth cleavage is the division between owners and workers, reflected in occupation. Few aspects of society have generated as much discussion as the measurement of class. In the 1960s and 1970s, the traditional tripartite division between non-manual workers, manual workers and farmers was augmented by divisions based on the exercise of authority in the work place and Weberian measures based on social stratification and occupational mobility (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Wright, 1985). Since our interest here is in the extent to which parties may have coalesced around occupational groups, the main tripartite measure is used, together with unemployment and a measure of socio-economic status which combines education and income.

One further aspect of occupation which is of political importance is trade union membership. Through the link between the unions and parties of the left, union membership has traditionally been a major predictor of party support. However, the decline in union membership since the 1980s across most industrialized societies has served to diminish their political importance (Wallerstein and Western, 2000), while the proliferation of professional and business associations has further served to blur the political salience of union membership. Union membership across the countries covered here varies from 79 percent in Iceland and 52 percent in Finland, to 11 percent in the United States. There are also significant variations among the post-communist societies: the Ukraine has 54 percent union membership, while Hungary and Poland have just 9 percent (Crowley, 2004; Pollert, 1999).

These four cleavages form the basis for the measurement of social divisions and how they relate to political conflict. While they are not exhaustive, they measure the four main dimensions covered in the Lipset–Rokkan paradigm. In addition, two controls are used, for age and gender, respectively.¹²

Sources of Political Cleavages

The first stage in the analysis is to examine the political importance of the four social cleavages, together with controls for age and gender, for the 14 established and the 6 emerging democracies. The estimates in Table 3 are from ordinary least squares regression equations, predicting left–right self-placement. Several important patterns are apparent from the results. Religion and the owner–worker cleavage are similar in magnitude in determining political divisions. In terms of religion, both affiliation (measured by whether or not the person is secular) and church attendance are about equal in importance, with secular respondents being more likely to place themselves on the political left, and frequent church attenders on the political right, net of other things. The owner–worker cleavage is reflected in occupation, whether or not

the person is unemployed, and being a trade union member; being a farmer and socio-economic status are unimportant.¹³ Both centre–periphery and urban–rural divisions are unimportant.¹⁴

The most striking result for the emerging democracies in Table 3 is the relative weakness of the owner–worker cleavage and the corresponding strength of religion in shaping political divisions. By contrast, there is one significant effect for manual workers being more left-wing, and for socio-economic status, but the overall impact of class is negligible. As in the established democracies, centre–periphery is unimportant, though there is a significant effect for urban–rural residence. Notably, age is the most important single variable in shaping left–right self-placement. In contrast to the established democracies, where there is little or no effect, older voters in the emerging democracies are on the political left, presumably a legacy of their socialization in communist times and their greater dependence on pensions and government-provided social support.

The importance of age – or, more properly, generations – is worthy of further investigation, since it has a potentially important impact on political

Table 3. Social cleavages in the established and emerging democracies (regression estimates)

	<i>Established</i>		<i>Emerging</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>beta</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>beta</i>
<i>Centre–periphery</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03
<i>Religion</i>				
Secular	–0.70*	–0.12*	–0.56*	–0.09*
Church attendance	0.17*	0.13*	0.22*	0.13*
<i>Urban–rural</i>	–0.01*	–0.03*	–0.01*	–0.04*
<i>Owner–worker</i>				
Non-manual worker	–0.22*	–0.05*	–0.25	–0.04
Manual worker	–0.35*	–0.07*	–0.28*	–0.04*
Farmer	0.27	0.02	–0.16	–0.01
Unemployed	–0.36*	–0.03*	–0.27	–0.02
SES	0.00	0.00	0.01*	0.05*
Trade union member	–0.36*	–0.08*	0.00	0.00
<i>Controls</i>				
Gender	0.27*	0.06*	0.10	0.02
Age	0.00	0.02	–0.03	–0.16*
Constant	5.09		5.45	
Adj R ²	0.06		0.05	
(N)	(17,540)		(5,942)	

*statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, two-tailed.

Ordinary least squares regression estimates show partial (*b*) and standardized (*beta*) coefficients predicting left–right self-placement. See Table 2 for details of variables and scoring. Estimates are for voters only.

Sources: CSES, modules 1 and 2.

divisions, and clearly has different effects between the two groups of societies. In a study of 11 post-communist societies, Rose and Carnaghan (1995) observed a consistent pattern whereby the youngest were least supportive of the old regime and the oldest most nostalgic about the communist past. Evans and Whitefield (1998), in the only longitudinal study of left and right self-placement, show that by 1996 age had become closely associated with left–right in Russia, with younger voters identifying with the right, older voters with the left. Clearly, then, there is a strong element of nostalgia for the *ancien régime* among older voters, a consequence of their socialization during the long period of communist rule.

The pattern of younger generations supporting the right, older generations the left, is shown in Figure 2 for three post-communist societies – the Czech Republic, Hungary and Russia – and, for comparative purposes, for two established democracies, Australia and Switzerland. In the latter countries, we observe the pattern familiar across the established democracies, with strong support for the right coming from older voters, support for the left coming from the young. This pattern is reversed in the post-communist societies, and there is a strong trend towards the left among the older generations, who grew up and were socialized in periods of communist rule. These patterns of political socialization also resonate across the generations in Hungary, where the oldest have a memory of democracy; among those aged 76 or more, there is a sharp increase in support for the right, against the trend.

What is the weight of the four social cleavages, either individually or combined, in shaping political divisions in the 20 countries? Figure 3 addresses this question by showing the proportion of the variance explained in left–right self-placement, in total and for each of the four cleavages separately, plus the control variables.¹⁵ The results for the established democracies show that the total variance explained lies between 5 and 10 percent for 10 of the 14 countries; the outliers are Finland and Sweden at the top of the scale (12.4 and 14.3 percent, respectively), and, at the other end, New Zealand and Iceland (2.9 and 2.3 percent, respectively). In the majority of the established countries, the owner–worker cleavage is consistently important, notably in Sweden and Finland. Religion is also important, especially in Finland (5.0 percent), Israel (4.0 percent) and Belgium (3.7 percent). Centre–periphery and urban–rural differences are generally unimportant.

The patterns for the emerging democracies in Figure 3 are in contrast to the established democracies, with wide variations in both the strength and relative importance of the social cleavages. In the Ukraine, the model explains a substantial 18.7 percent of the variance in left–right self-placement, but at the other end of the scale just 3.1 percent of the variance is explained in Romania. When estimated separately for each country, the owner–worker cleavage emerges as more important than is the case with the combined analysis. In five of the seven countries it is the strongest cleavage, while in Poland and Hungary, religion is the strongest. The reasons for this apparent

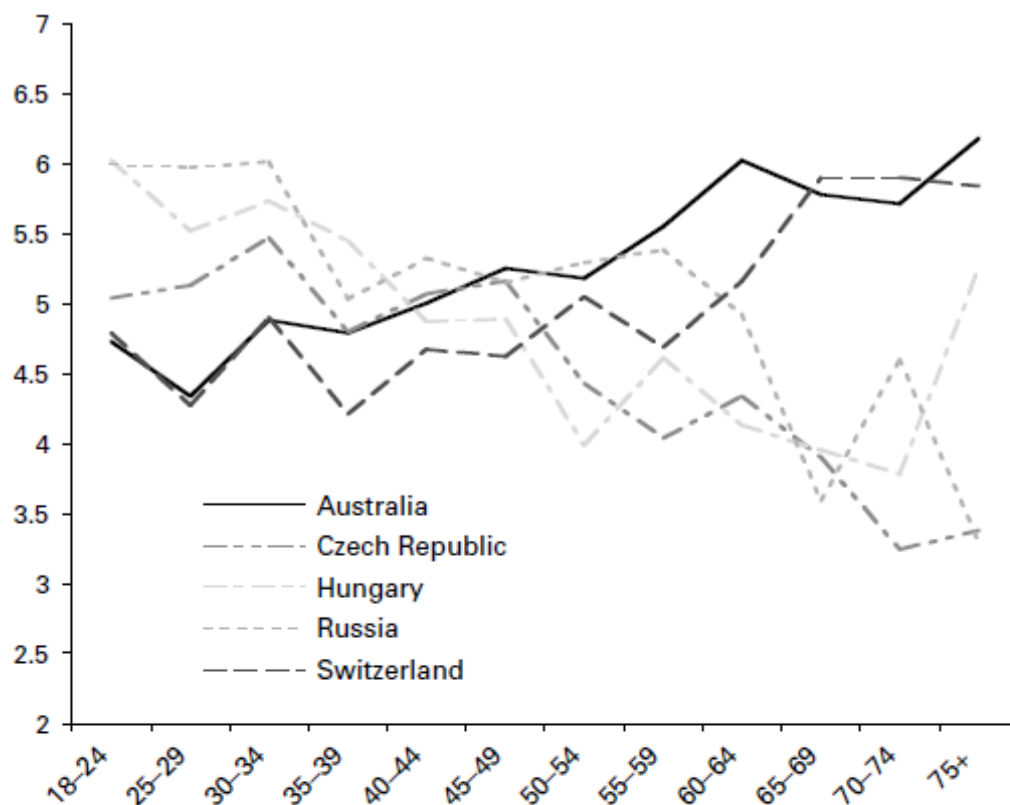


Figure 2. Age and left-right self-placement

Estimates are for voters only.

Sources: CSES, modules 1 and 2.

anomaly rest in the relative lack of consistency in how owner-worker differences operate in the seven countries. Socio-economic status is important in several countries, as is unemployment in several others. In general, trade union membership is unimportant. This suggests differences in how the various aspects of the owner-worker cleavage have become politicized by parties and groups.

Parties and Social Cleavages

To evaluate the role of parties in translating the four social cleavages into political divisions would involve a complex analysis, not least because of the unstable and factionalized nature of the party systems in many of the post-communist societies. However, we can go some way towards answering this question by comparing the voters' positions on the left-right scale with that of the party. The closer the proximity of the two scores, the more effective parties would appear to be in representing social cleavages on behalf of their supporters, the more distant the scores, the less effective the parties would appear to be.

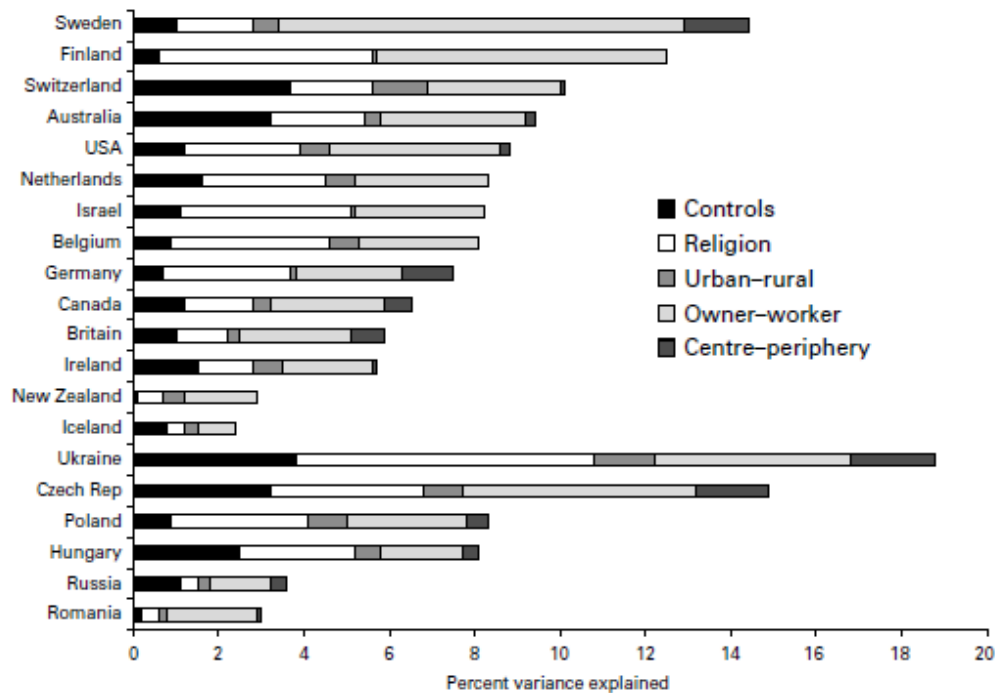


Figure 3. Importance of social cleavages, established and emerging democracies

Figures are the percentage variance explained for each of the five sets of variables entered into a regression equation together, predicting left–right self-placement. The variables are defined in Table 2. Estimates are for voters only.

Sources: CSES, modules 1 and 2.

To measure the position of the parties, we use the expert evaluation of where the parties stand on the left–right dimension, a measure that is included in the CSES dataset.¹⁶ Comparing the voter’s score on the left–right scale with the objective position of the party that they voted for shows that the two are remarkably close.¹⁷ Across all of the countries, the mean difference between the objective party position and the voters’ position is 0.09 of one point on the 10-point scale, which suggests an almost exact match between the two. However, while the match is almost exact in the established democracies (–0.01), it is much less precise (0.39) in the emerging democracies. To that extent, parties would appear to be operating more effectively in these countries to represent social cleavages.

Figure 4 casts further light on the role of parties in representing mass electorates. Since we are subtracting the person’s own position from the objective position of the party they voted for, on a scale of zero (left) to 10 (right), a positive score means that the voter’s party is more to the right than the person, and a negative score means that the party is more to the left than the person. The graph in Figure 3 shows that around one in five of the voters in the two sets of democracies has an exact match between their own position and that of their party choice. The most notable pattern

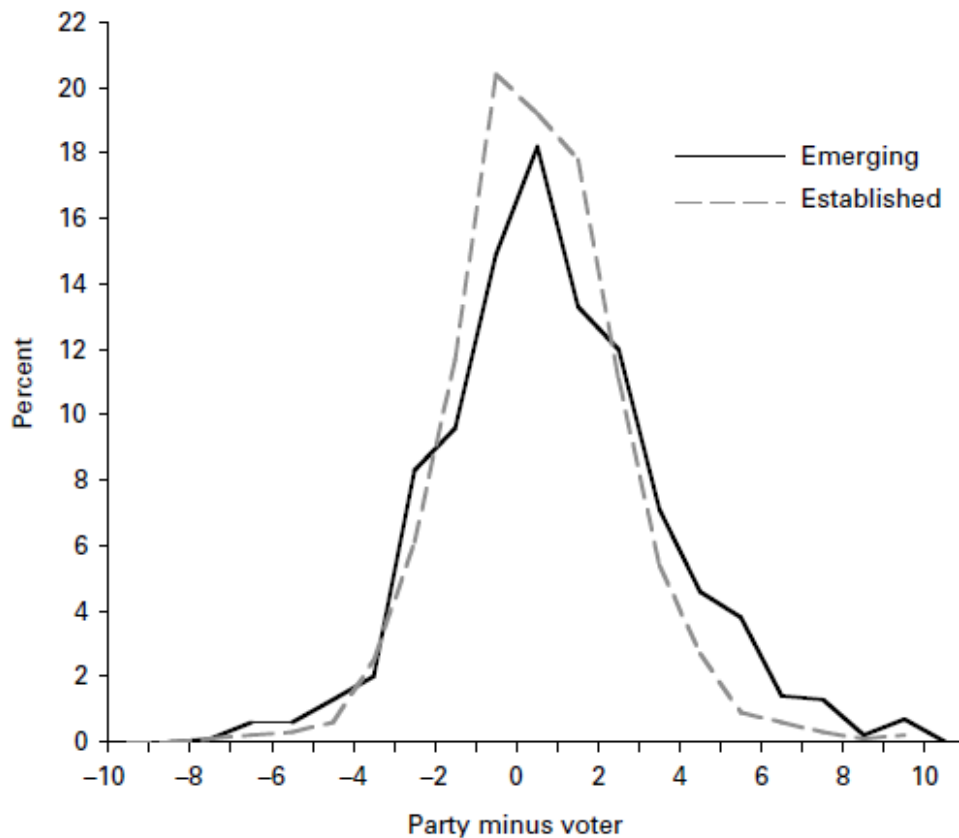


Figure 4. Party and voter left–right position, emerging and established democracies

Figures are the difference between the left–right position of the party that the voter supported, and the person’s own left–right self-placement. Estimates are for voters only.
Sources: CSES, modules 1 and 2.

is the larger proportions of voters in the emerging than in the established democracies who support a party that lies to the right of their own position.

Conclusion

Political parties have an instrumental central role to play in emerging democracies, by identifying, politicizing and representing social divisions. Perhaps more than any other factor, the success of democratic consolidation in a country is contingent on the effectiveness of political parties in structuring political conflict (Dix, 1992; Mainwaring, 1988). The results presented here have produced a variety of findings about political parties and social cleavages in the emerging democracies of post-communist Europe. Most importantly, the pattern of social cleavages and their political consequences is similar between the established and emerging democracies, with religion

and the owner–worker cleavage dominating political conflict. To that extent, the social cleavages of the emerging democracies appear to have avoided the territorial conflicts based on urban–rural and centre–periphery divisions which were common in the established democracies in the early part of the twentieth century.

It is perhaps surprising that the parties in the emerging democracies appear to have been so effective in a relatively short period of time, and that the results do not show sharper contrasts with the established democracies. What explains this finding? One possible explanation is that the democratic consolidation that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century did so in a pre-modern era; the electronic media did not exist and there was only limited political coverage in the print media. As a result, voters took more time to become acculturated to the new form of political conflict. Another possible explanation is the fact that political leaders had not assumed the pre-eminent role they have attained today, so again progress was slower. Finally, political parties had not become the highly professional organizations that we see today.

By contrast, the post-1990 democratic consolidation occurred with all of these advances well entrenched, so that the process of consolidation and integration has been much swifter. As a result, the early conflict over communism versus anti-communism was quickly replaced by the more familiar economic conflicts over the role of the market versus the state (see, for example, Evans and Whitefield, 1998). While the parties and party systems that exist in some of the post-communist societies are highly unstable – Russia being the best example – other societies, notably Hungary and the Czech Republic, have relatively stable party systems. As consolidation continues, we would expect much greater stability in these party systems in the future.

Notes

- 1 There has been intensive analysis of Russian voting and elections since the early 1990s; see, for example, Brader and Tucker (2001), White et al. (1997) and Whitefield and Evans (1999).
- 2 Huntington (1991) defines the first ‘long’ wave of democratization as occurring between 1826 and 1926; see Doorenspleet (2000) for an empirical evaluation.
- 3 An additional theme tests the utility of the ‘freezing hypothesis’. It is not examined in this article, so we do not discuss it here, but it is dealt with by Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) in this issue and in an extended analysis by Bartolini and Mair (1990).
- 4 Peter Mair (2000: 124) puts it slightly differently: ‘if the range of alternatives has been limited in the past, then this is likely to encourage both observers and participants to believe that they may also be limited in the present’.
- 5 France is excluded because the survey was conducted during a presidential election. The countries excluded because they did not have a continuous democracy since 1950 are: Spain, Portugal, Korea, Taiwan, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Thailand. Hong Kong is excluded because it is not a sovereign country.

- 6 The survey was conducted after the March 2001 legislative elections and September 2001 presidential election, and although many of the questions related to both elections, vote choice was asked only in relation to the presidential election.
- 7 In the Duma election of December 2003, nearly three million voters put 'against all' ahead of all but 4 of the 23 party lists with almost enough votes to claim representation in its own right. In the parallel series of contests in the single-member constituencies, more than 7 million, or nearly 13 percent, voted 'against all' the candidates, which put it ahead of all but one of the parties that had contested these seats; indeed, it 'won' three of them, by taking the largest share of the vote.
- 8 This, too, brings methodological problems, not least the assumption that left-right acts as an effective surrogate for party support. See, for example, the discussion in Franklin et al. (1992).
- 9 In both groups of countries, the main correlates of not having a left-right position are being female and having lower socio-economic status. However, age is also important, but in different directions. In the established democracies, younger voters are more likely not to identify with the concept, while in the emerging democracies it is older voters who find the concept unfamiliar. This is undoubtedly a legacy of their political socialization in the communist era.
- 10 The religious affiliation question was not asked in Iceland and Finland; however, the church attendance and belief questions were asked. In these countries, those with no religion are estimated as respondents who said that they never attended church and had no religious belief.
- 11 In the case of Belgium and Britain, no urban-rural measure was included. An estimate was derived from the proportion employed in agriculture in the administrative regions which were coded for each country.
- 12 Other potential controls include ethnicity and language, but the difficulties in reliably measuring them across the diverse range of countries included here mitigated the potential benefits.
- 13 Being a non-manual worker is associated with being on the political left. The reason for this is, first, that the excluded category comprises those not in the labour force, who are mainly retired and engaged in home duties. Second, a significant proportion of those classified as non-manual are 'knowledge workers', such as teachers and public servants, who are disproportionately on the political left.
- 14 Analyses taking the countries into account show that even after a range of factors have been taken into account, significant differences between the countries remained. In general, controlling for social cleavages accounts for about one-third of the differences between the countries in left-right self-placement. Clearly, then, much else remains unexplained in determining political divisions.
- 15 The estimates are made by calculating separate regression equations for each of the 20 countries, controlling for all of the factors in the first equation in Tables 3 and 4. The variance explained is then assigned to the various factors in proportion to the size of the standardized regression coefficients.
- 16 The placement of the parties on the left-right dimension was conducted by the national investigators and coded into the CSES datasets for modules 1 and 2. No codes were available for Belgium on module 1 and they were estimated from the codes in module 2. Several significant parties across the countries were not coded and in these cases estimates were taken from Huber and Inglehart (1995).
- 17 The correlations between the items also show a strong match, ranging from 0.80 in the Czech Republic to 0.29 in Ireland.

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