

Party Organization and the Political Success of the Communist Successor Parties*

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Objective. Although there has been much recent work done on party systems in the postcommunist world, there has been very little systematic comparative work that examines the relationship between the organizational development of political parties and political performance. The objective of this article is to empirically examine the relationship between party organization and the political success of 17 communist successor parties from 1993 to 2000. *Methods.* I propose a way of measuring party organizations based upon the degree of personnel overlap between the organs of the extraparliamentary party and the party in public office and the organizational density of political parties and relate these characteristics to the political success enjoyed by the communist successor parties. *Results.* In general, I find that the more the successor party was dominated by officeholders and less reliant on a mass membership for political support in the years immediately following the transition, the more successful the party was later. *Conclusions.* The interaction of party organization with the party's competitive environment was a better predictor of success than declines in the socioeconomic condition of the population, rises in popular "nostalgia" for the past, or openings created by political institutions.

Democratization and the emergence of party politics in the countries of the postcommunist world have offered a unique opportunity to test some long-held propositions in comparative politics regarding the relationship between *party organization* and *political success*. Although a large amount of work has emerged on the evolution of party systems and on political attitudes in the postcommunist world, there has been very little systematic comparative work done on the relationship between the organizational development of political parties and political performance. To be sure, some works have appeared that investigate party organization in Eastern Europe, but these tend to focus on what *causes* particular party organizations to emerge in postcommunist politics rather than on party organization as a *predictor* of political success (Lewis, 1996; Kopecký, 1995; Kitschelt, 1995; Roper, 1995). Other works, which have examined the effects of party or-

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ganization on political success, tend to concentrate on individual cases rather than engage in cross-national comparisons (Agh, 1995; Zubek, 1994; Zudinov, 1994; Novopashin, 1994).

This article empirically examines the relationship between party organization and the political success of the communist successor parties from 1993 to 2000.¹ More specifically, using a sample of 17 communist successor parties, I test whether the organizational characteristics that developed shortly after the collapse of communism had an impact on the later electoral performance of the successor parties. The parties to be investigated include the Socialist Party of Albania (SPA), the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the Social Democratic Party of Croatia, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (CPBM) in the Czech Republic, the Estonian Social Democratic Labor Party (ESDLP), the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP), the Latvian Socialist Party (LSP), the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDLP), the Democratic Left Alliance (DLA, formerly the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland party, SdRP), the Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PSDR), the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), the Party of the Democratic Left (PDL) in Slovakia, the United List of Social Democrats (ULSD) in Slovenia, the Communist Party of the Ukraine (CPU), the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), and the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDUM).

An examination of the successor parties is justified for two reasons. First, the investigation of the evolution of these parties provides an opportunity for scholars to assess the utility of Western-based theories of political party development in assessing the unfolding events of Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, unlike other current "political parties" in Eastern and Central Europe, the postcommunist parties are not simply groups of notables or political clubs. They have a long political tradition and an organizational history, as well as an internal structure that sets them apart from most other political parties in the area. Second, as many observers of democratic transitions have noted, the ultimate success of democratization from authoritarian rule depends heavily on the promotion of political moderation within the principal political parties (Huntington, 1991). With their substantial organizational resources and political appeal in the face of current difficulties associated with rapid social and economic transformation, the former communist parties will play a vital role in conditioning the scope and development of politics in these new democracies (Ishiyama, 1999; Mahr and Nagle, 1995).

¹ By communist successor parties I mean those parties that were formerly the governing party in the communist regime and that inherited the preponderance of the former ruling parties' resources and personnel (Ishiyama, 1995; Mahr and Nagle, 1995).

These parties were selected for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, unlike “new parties,” these communist successor parties are not merely political clubs of notables, but rather distinct organizations, and by any definition “real” political parties. Second, these cases fit the following criteria, which make them roughly comparable: all 17 states in which these parties operate had at least one reasonably competitive election between 1993 and 2000 and have arguably progressed into the period of democratic consolidation; and in all 17 states the communist successor parties faced new competitive conditions and a party system in the earliest stages of development (thus excluding the Party of Democratic Socialism in Germany).

To analyze the relationship between organization and political success, I first very briefly review the existing explanations for the political success of the communist successor parties. Second, I propose one way of measuring different types of party organizations based upon the degree of personnel overlap between the organs of the extraparliamentary party and the party in public office and the organizational density of political parties and relate these characteristics to the political success enjoyed by the communist successor parties.

What Explains the Success of the Communist Successor Parties?

In general, two explanations have been put forward as to why the successors to the formerly dominant communist parties have returned to the political scene (Agh, 1995; Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Waller, 1995; Racz, 1993). The first, which might be labeled the “internalist” perspective, contends that the communist successor parties have succeeded because of organizational adaptations that they have made that allow them to compete successfully in the newly competitive environment. From this perspective it is argued that the nature of the previous regime affected the ability of the communist successor party to adapt to new political circumstances (Ishiyama, 1997; Agh, 1995; Welsh, 1994). A second approach, which might be labeled the “externalist” perspective, holds that the relative political success of the communist successor parties has been due to the features of the political environment, particularly the “nostalgia factor” and the structure of competition facing the successor parties (Waller, 1995; Kitschelt, 1995).²

In particular, the “internalist” perspective holds that the more liberal and internally pluralist the previous communist regime, the more likely that a

²It is important to note here that I do not suggest that this is a hard and fast distinction. Indeed, it is likely that internal factors interact with external factors to affect the performance of the successor parties (see Ishiyama, 1997). Many works on postcommunist party politics, however, have a priori assumed that parties primarily react to their environments, that is, that the externalist perspective is correct. This assumption has largely been accepted as true without comparative, empirical assessment. By conceptually separating the internal and external perspectives, we are able to test the proposition that external factors drive party electoral success and hence investigate the accuracy of the externalist perspective.

reform leadership ultimately took control of the party. Consequently, this reformist party leadership assimilated the finer points of democratic competition and recruited talented mid-level leaders and candidates who organized a party that could win a competitive election. In sum, this would suggest that successor parties that grew out of regimes that had a tradition of internal contestation, interest articulation, and bureaucratic institutionalization would be better equipped to adapt to the new competitive conditions of the postcommunist era and more successful than those that grew out of less liberal regimes (Agh, 1995; Ishiyama, 1997).

Further, some have argued that previous regimes that tolerated a degree of internal competition and interest articulation and promoted bureaucratic institutionalization were likely to produce parties with distinctive organizational characteristics. Lewis (1996), for instance, notes that the persistence of the appeal of the "traditional mass party" model explained the success of the parties like the DLA and the Hungarian Socialist Party: They display some of the main strengths of the "traditional mass party: a high membership in terms of the post-communist context, good finances and material resources and a high degree of organizational development," virtues of a model that still seem of "considerable importance in post-communist . . . Europe" (Lewis, 1996:16–17). On the other hand, other scholars have noted that parties that emerged from previous regimes that were characterized by less contestation and less open interest articulation produced parties with a greater role played by notable political personalities. For instance, Padgett (1996) suggests yet another model in Eastern Europe: parties as associations of sympathizers run by a political elite and a professional party apparatus as subordinate but important organizations providing political services to a loosely constituted electoral clientele. A similar development has been observed by Roper (1995) in Romania.

The externalist perspective holds that the success of the former communist parties has more to do with the conditions of the political environment than with the internal features of the parties themselves. Thus, scholars tend to concentrate on the nostalgia factor to explain the success of the former communist parties, or the argument that declining standards of living during the transition phase made many in society yearn for a return to the more secure communist past, hence increasing the degree of voter support for the communist successor parties (Mahr and Nagle, 1995; McAllister and White, 1995; Waller, 1995). Others have pointed to the importance of the electoral system in explaining the return of the successor parties (Moraski and Lowenberg, 1999; Ishiyama, 1997).

Still others point to the features of the competitive environment facing the successor parties. From this line of reasoning the key to the political success of the communist successor parties has been the lack of real competition facing them. Indeed, from this perspective, the success of the communist successor parties (or lack thereof) is due less to the organizational characteristics of these parties than to the lack of effective competi-

tion posed by parties that occupy the same ideological space. Waller (1995) has suggested that this squeezing effect is precisely the reason why the CPBM has enjoyed far less political success than comparable communist successor parties elsewhere (see also Kopecký, 1995).

Kitschelt (1995:455) suggests that the legacy of the previous regimes of these countries not only had consequences internally on the postcommunist parties but also affected the political space in which the postcommunist parties competed. From this perspective, the more repressive and less open the communist systems, the more successful were the communist successor parties, because repressive communist regimes were "able to entrench" themselves and thus effectively preclude the emergence of the challenge of an independent structure of intellectuals or middle-class professionals. This implies that a communist successor party emerging from such a regime would be more successful in "adapting" to new competitive conditions, not because of the party's organizational characteristics, but because its opponents are initially only weak and disorganized (Innes, 1997).

Variables

Political Success

Before turning to the identification of the independent variables employed in this study, I first operationalize the principal dependent variable, *political success*. For the purposes of this study, political success is defined as being comprised of two dimensions: the percentage of seats on average won in the lower house of the legislature by the communist successor party from 1993 to 2000 and the degree of turnover in seat shares during the same period.

Focusing on only lower house elections for this time period is justified for two reasons. First, not all of the emerging constitutional orders of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are identical: some are unicameral, as is the case in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Baltic States; others, such as the Czech and Slovak Republics, Russia, Poland, and Romania have bicameral legislatures. Yet in all of the latter the more powerful house is the lower house. Therefore, for the sake of comparability, I concentrate only on the lower houses of the legislatures. Second, I focus on legislatures instead of presidencies because, although in many of these postcommunist political systems, a relatively powerful and directly elected executive exists (such as in Russia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Ukraine), the executive throughout postcommunist Eastern Europe has sought some accommodation with the lower house of parliament. Focusing on only seat shares as a measure of success rather than the percentage of the vote received by the party is also justified, because control of seats is what counts in terms of government formation and political influence. Finally, the time period is selected such that at least the two latest legislative elections are included in

the analysis, so that the proposition that early organizational developments affected later political performance can be tested.

To focus exclusively on the average of seat shares, however, does not take into account the degree to which seat shares have declined. Indeed, good electoral performance early on (as in the cases of Socialist Party Albania and the Bulgarian Socialist Parties) would tend to inflate the weight of average seat shares, even when the party suffers significant setbacks later (as is the case with the Bulgarian Socialist Party). In addition, average seat shares also do not take into account extreme fluctuations in electoral performance (such as what happened to the LDLP, PSDR, and SPA), a situation that illustrates far less political success than parties that have maintained fairly large seat shares consistently across elections (such as with the HSP, DLA, and CPRF). Thus to take these characteristics into account, I employ a measure of *average party seat turnover* (Toole, 2000). This measure is based on the following formula:

$$\text{Party Seat Turnover} = \frac{\text{Seats}_t - \text{Seats}_{t-1}}{(\text{Seats}_t + \text{Seats}_{t-1}) \div 2}$$

where Seats_t represents the proportion of seats in the lower house of the legislature held by successor party at time t , and Seats_{t-1} is the proportion of seats in the lower house of the legislature held by successor party at time $(t - 1)$. The resulting values are averaged across all legislative elections. The average score for each party is then added to the average proportion of seats held by the successor party from 1993 to 2000 and then divided by two to yield the composite political success score. The resulting score thus weights the average electoral success of the former communist parties by the degree of decline and fluctuation in seat shares across elections.

Conceptualizing and Measuring Party Organization

To assess the different types of party organizations in postcommunist politics, it is useful to begin with the three “faces” of the party: the party in public office, the party central office, and the party on the ground. According to earlier cross-national research on party organization in Western Europe (Katz and Mair, 1993), the party in public office is understood as the representatives of the party in parliament and/or government and the party central office is “the national leadership of the party organization which, at least in theory, is organizationally distinct from the party in public office, and which, at the same time, organizes and is usually the representative of the party on the ground” (Katz and Mair, 1993: 94).

A useful starting point in classifying parties in postcommunist politics is the distinction made by Kitschelt (1995) between “programmatic” and “cli-

entelistic” parties.³ The programmatic party shares some of the features of the historic mass party, particularly the continued influence of the party organization and party activists. The role of the party in office is important in the programmatic party, however, and the relations between the party organization and the political elite are mutually supportive, as opposed to the historic mass organizational form, in which the party in office merely acted as delegates for the party organization. Although the role of the membership as the primary source of electoral support is less than in the historic mass party, the membership continues to play an important role.

The clientelistic party, on the other hand, may have features that resemble mass parties in form but that in practice emphasize the independence of the party in office. These parties, like the historic cadre parties, are run by political elites, and the party organization is subordinate to the party in office. In these parties, however, the role of the membership is very much deemphasized. Further, the role of the membership, particularly as the primary source of electoral support, is much less important in the clientelistic party than in the programmatic party. Although some clientelistic parties have fairly large memberships, what binds the members to these organizations is the existence of patron-client ties and an interest in electoral victory, as opposed to an ideological program (Koole, 1994).

As Van Biezen (2000) notes, postcommunist parties in general have resembled the clientelistic party model more than the programmatic model.⁴ In particular, she argues, in the new democracies parties are likely to be dominated by their officeholders. One of the principal reasons she offers is that since in the early period of new democracies parties focus on organizing parliamentary and governmental institutions, this tends to compel parties to

³These types are different from the historic cadre or elite parties. The “cadre” or “elite” parties of the 19th century were basically “committees of people who jointly constituted state and civil society” (Katz and Mair, 1995:9; Duverger, 1954). Parties then were merely “groups of men” pursuing the public interest, with little need for formal or highly structured organizations or large formal membership. The parliamentary component or the party in office dominated, and the resources required for election often involved local connections and personal political notability. The “mass” party, unlike the cadre party, was characterized by a large, active membership. This is because the mass party arose “primarily among the newly activated and often disenfranchised elements of civil society” (Katz and Mair, 1995:10). Whereas the old cadre party had relied on the quality of supporters (personal attributes), the mass party relied on the quantity of supporters, attempting to make up in membership what it lacked in terms of individual patronage. As the political instrument of the disenfranchised, the mass parties were naturally dominated by those whose political base was in the party rather than in government; moreover, given their activist political agenda and the life experiences of their supporters, these parties were more amenable to enforced party cohesion and discipline than were the cadre parties (Duverger, 1954). Thus, mass parties were characterized by large memberships, internal hierarchy and elite homogeneity, and the dominance of the party organization. Representatives of the party were merely delegates representing the view of the party as organization (Neumann, 1956:403).

⁴It is important to note here that Van Biezen (2000) examined only the parties of East Central Europe (i.e., Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic), not parties throughout the postcommunist world.

“concentrate their activities around the party in public office,” thus significantly strengthening that face of the party in the organization as a whole (Van Biezen, 2000: 397). Moreover, parties in new democracies are likely to concentrate on a relatively less time-consuming and labor-intensive strategy of electoral mobilization rather than channeling societal demands through the extraparliamentary organization. Thus, concentrating on the party in public office is a more cost-effective strategy in party organization building, particularly in the early stages. The dominance of this component of the party is likely to continue, however, since it is expected that the party in public office will control subsequent organizational development.

To measure the degree of party organization, I first measure the relationship between the central organization and the party in public office, using the degree of personnel overlap between the organs of the extraparliamentary party and the party in public office. Using Van Biezen’s (2000) measure, I gauge the actual extent of the personnel overlap between the “narrow executive” (the smallest statutory extraparliamentary organ) and the party in public office in the first half of the 1990s. Indeed, as Van Biezen argues, the crucial period in a party’s development is the initial period following democratic transition:

Especially given the parliamentary origins of most parties and their relatively early acquisition of government responsibility, a significant representation of public office holders on the extra-parliamentary organs is most likely to be interpreted as a sign of predominance of the party in public office, enabling this face to preserve its leading position with the party and to maintain control over the extra-parliamentary structures as the organization develops. (Van Biezen, 2000:398)

To measure the degree of personnel overlap, I calculate the proportion of the members of the smallest statutory party executive body who were also members of parliament or the government for the period 1990–1995.

Second, I measure the extent to which the party membership is important to the party’s political support. The first indicator employed is *organizational density*, which is defined as the proportion of estimated official party members *over* the number of votes a party receives. This indicator was first developed by Duverger (1954) and then employed elsewhere as well and measures the relative importance of the party’s membership as proportion of its electoral support (Duverger, 1954; Kopecký, 1995). Generally, it has been held that parties that are more clientelistic are less likely to rely on membership for their support than are parties that are more programmatic. For the 17 parties in this study, the average estimated membership figures are used and divided by the average vote received by the party for the legislative elections from 1990 to 1995. This, in turn, is subtracted from one to yield an organizational density score, where higher values indicate less reliance on the party membership for political support.

To construct a measure of party organization, a principal-components factor analysis was conducted using the items *degree of personnel overlap* between the organs of the extraparliamentary party and the party in public office and the organizational density score for each party. The two items illustrated a unidimensional scale and were highly correlated with a principal-components score of .79. The derived factor scores were taken as measures of the variable *party organization score*, where a high score indicates a party in which officeholders dominate the party executive and there is less reliance on the party membership for political support.

Alternative Explanatory Variables

Electoral System

Other alternative explanations for the success of the former communist parties have included the structure of the electoral system and declines in the standard of living that have promoted a nostalgic reaction that has benefited the successor parties, as well as the structure of partisan competition facing the former communist parties.

Electoral rules have long been cited as exerting an important influence on political parties and party systems (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989; Lijphart and Grofman, 1984). In particular, many scholars have noted the political effects of electoral laws. These approaches include analyses that focus on the differential impact of electoral laws, especially those that govern national legislative elections. The most noteworthy distinction in this body of literature is the impact of proportional representation systems versus plurality/majority formulas (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989; Rae, 1967). In general, the more proportional an electoral system, the more openings are available to political parties, even those that have been discredited by the past. To measure the degree to which openings are made available to political parties by the electoral system, I employ an often-used measure, the natural log of average district magnitude, which is calculated by dividing the total number of seats in the lower house of the legislature by the number of electoral districts (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989).

Changes in Social and Economic Conditions of the Population

Another set of commonly cited factors that have an impact on the success of the former communist parties is the existence of issues that they can exploit, especially economic declines experienced by the population (Roskin, 1993). In particular, a worsening economic situation (or so the argument goes) supports the former communist parties, because they represent the stability and predictability of the past. Thus, the extent to which a country has experienced steep declines in standards of living is an additional variable

cited in the literature as shaping the political environment in postcommunist politics.

To measure this variable, I employ two measures of change in the socioeconomic condition of the population. First, to measure changes in the *quality of life*, change recorded in the Human Development Index (HDI) from 1992 to 1999 was employed. HDI values range from zero to one, with the values closer to the latter indicating high levels of quality of life. Although previous studies have employed measures such as gross national product per capita, the HDI, as a composite measure of quality of life, is a superior measure, because it includes multiple aspects of the standard of living and quality of life. In addition, I examined the period 1992–1998 because this was the period in which the most precipitous economic declines occurred in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Further, since the Soviet Union did not collapse until the end of 1991 (and the great downturns in economic performance did not occur in the former Soviet Union until after 1992), I use the period 1992–1998 because it makes the former Soviet and Eastern European cases more comparable.⁵

Second, as a more direct measure of the standard of living, I employ the widely used *miseria index*. This index is a simple composite of unemployment and inflation rates and indicates the degree of economic difficulty faced by a population. The index has often been used in party responsiveness studies in Western Europe (see, for instance, Pennings, 1998). To construct this index, I added the average unemployment rates and poverty rates from 1992 to 1998 for each of the 17 countries.⁶

Nostalgia for the Past

In the literature on party development in postcommunist politics, much has been made of the nostalgia factor in explaining the return of the successor parties (Flikke, 1999; Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Mahr and Nagle, 1995; Waller, 1995; Zubek, 1994; Racz, 1993). Essentially, this argument holds that the political return of the successor parties is due to a popular longing for a return to the security represented by the communist past, particularly in the face of the uncertainties generated by rapid political and economic changes. Further, it is argued that greater frustration with the

⁵Although it might be argued that the more precipitous declines in Eastern Europe occurred earlier than 1992, the fact that the Eastern European declines were not as steep during this period should mean that we should see differences between Eastern European and former Soviet Union successor party performance (if the externalist perspective is true). Thus, using data from the period 1992–1998 allows me to further test the proposition that the external factors account for differences in the political success of the successor parties.

⁶Data on unemployment and consumer inflation rates from 1992 to 1998 were taken from the World Bank's *World Development Indicators* (2000) and the IMF's *World Economic and Social Survey* (2000).

“failures” of the market reform efforts has led to increasing popular nostalgia and hence greater political support for the communist successor parties.

To measure the degree of nostalgia, I use two indicators derived from the *New Democracies Barometers*, the *New Baltic Barometers*, and the *New Russia Barometers* series produced by the Centre for the Study of Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde (see Rose and Haerpfer, 1993, 1994, 1996; Rose, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Rose, Boeva, and Shironin, 1993; Rose and Maley, 1994).⁷ In particular, I use the average percent of respondents who viewed the past communist regime favorably from 1992 to 1998 as a general indicator of the degree of popular nostalgia. Further, I also measure the degree of change over time from 1992 to 1998 to assess whether growing popular nostalgia is associated with the political success of the former communist parties.

Structure of Competition

The organizational features of a party alone, however, do not determine the political success of the communist successor party. Another factor is related to the characteristics of the “structure of competition.” Essentially, this involves the competitive environment that parties face, especially whether the communist successor parties face left-wing competition. As many scholars have noted, the presence of viable left-wing competitors draws voters away from the successor parties. Michael Waller has suggested that this is precisely the reason why the CPBM has enjoyed far less political success than comparable communist successor parties in Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria (Waller, 1995; see also Kopecký, 1995).

Although the strength of left-wing competition has been cited as an important variable affecting the performance of the successor parties, the concept “left wing” is very difficult to measure (Waller, 1995; Kopecký, 1995; Ishiyama, 1995). However, for the purposes of this article, it would suffice to identify those parties that might compete with the communist successor parties for the same constituencies on the ideological spectrum. To address the measurement of the strength of the left-wing competition facing the successor parties, two criteria were used. First, a left-wing competitor must have won, on average, at least 5 percent of the seats in the legislative elections from 1993 to 2000. Second, the party must compete for the same constituencies as the successor parties. Whether the party competes for the same niche on the ideological spectrum was discerned in two ways: the largest parties that won seats and labeled themselves as either socialist or social

⁷ These data are also available at the CSPP web site at <http://www.cspp.strath.ac.uk/catalog4_0.html> and <<http://russiavotes.org>>.

TABLE 1

Successor Parties' Average Reported Memberships, Average Narrow Executive Sizes, and Principal Left Competitors for 17 Postcommunist Countries

Country	Successor Party	Average Membership, 1990–95	Average Size of Narrow Executive, 1990–95	Largest Left Competitor that Averaged 5% of Seats
Albania	Socialist Party of Albania (SPA)	110,000	15	None
Bosnia	Social Democratic Party (SDP)	40,000	12	None
Bulgaria	Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)	330,000	16	None
Croatia	Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP)	20,000	20	None
Czech Republic	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (CPBM)	211,000	8	Czech Social Democratic Party
Estonia	Estonian Social Democratic Labor Party (ESDLP)	300	3	Estonian Social Democratic Party–Moderates
Hungary	Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP)	40,000	15	Alliance of Free Democrats
Latvia	Latvian Socialist Party (LSP)	360	7	Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party
Lithuania	Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDLP)	9,000	20	Lithuanian Social Democratic Party
Macedonia	Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDUM)	40,000	21	None
Poland	Democratic Left Alliance (DLA)	62,000	40	Union of Labor
Romania	Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PDSR)	309,000	8	Socialist Labor Party
Russian Federation	Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)	554,000	15	None
Slovakia	Party of Democratic Left (PDL)	48,000	7	None
Slovenia	United List of Social Democrats (ULSD)	27,000	5	Social Democratic Party of Slovenia
Ukraine	Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU)	142,000	20	Socialist Party of Ukraine

TABLE 1—continued

Yugoslavia	Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)	70,000	37	None
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SOURCES: *Vocea Romaniei*, November 24, 1995, pp. 1–2; Huber and Inglehart (1995); Day, German, and Campbell (1996); *Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States 1997* (1996); Glubotskii (1993); also various political party web sites.

democratic were automatically included in this category; and in the case of ambiguity implied by the party's label, the categorization scheme provided by Huber and Inglehart, which relies on expert interpretations of party space and rank-orders parties in 42 countries from 1 (most left) to 10 (most right), was employed to select the relevant left-wing competitors (Huber and Inglehart, 1995).⁸ The list of left-wing competitors, along with the reported memberships and sizes of narrow executives of the successor parties, is reported in Table 1. In sum, Table 2 reports the raw data for each variable to be included in the analysis, as well as the scores for the individual items that comprise the party organization score and political success.

Results

Figure 1 and Table 3 illustrate the relationships between party organization, external factors (change in HDI, misery index, average nostalgia, change in nostalgia, and the log of average district magnitude) and political success. Figure 1 presents a graphic summary of the relationship between the party organization score and the political success measure. The relationship appears to be fairly strong, with Pearson's $R = .72$. This initial result appears to support the contention that the organizational characteristics of the successor parties are related to the degree of political success the former communist parties have enjoyed. Indeed, the parties that tended to be dominated by officeholders and relied less on mass memberships for political support in the first few years after the collapse of communism also tended to be more successful later on. Although to some extent this is to be expected and can be misconstrued as a trivial result (because parties that are dominated by officeholders are the ones that are more successful—and hence have more officeholders), two facts work against this interpretation. First, since the party organization score is based on the *average* personnel overlap in the narrow executives in the early years after the transition, this

⁸Thus, in Hungary, for instance, the Alliance of Free Democrats is scored at 3.71 and is closest to the Hungarian Socialist Party's 2.14. Further, the Alliance of Free Democrats is ranked as more left than most of the socialist and social democratic parties throughout Eastern Europe, whose scores are for the most part above 4 (with the singular exception of the Czech Social Democratic Party at 2.83).

TABLE 2
Values of Variables

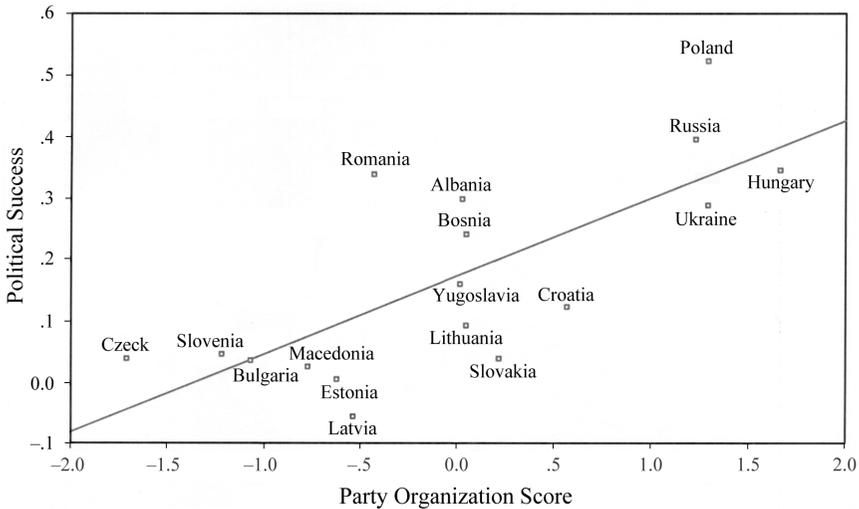
Country	Average Degree of Personal Overlap in Narrow Executive, 1990-95	Average Organizational Density Score (1-mem- bers/ votes), 1990-95	Party Organi- zation Score	Change in HDI 1992-98	Average District Magni- tude	Average Suc- cessor Party, 1993-2000	Average Seat over Turn- over Rate, 1993-2000	Misery Index (Aver- age Unem- ploy- ment Rate + Average Inflation 1992-98)	Nos- talgia Score (1992-98)	Change in Nos- talgia Score (1992-98)	Political Suc- cess Score
Albania	.73	.83	.03	.00	1.22	.32	.28	.59			.30
Bosnia	.66	.89	.05			.18	.30				.24
Bulgaria	.38	.82	-1.07	-.04	7.74	.36	-.29	2.22	.43	.01	.04
Croatia	.55	.98	.57	.04	3.72	.14	.11	2.51	.27	.28	.13
Czech Republic	.50	.68	-1.7	-.03	25.00	.14	-.06	.15	.30	.02	.04
Estonia	.33	.90	-.62	-.07	9.18	.01	.00	.35	.27	-.10	.01
Hungary	.93	.98	1.66	-.05	1.95	.42	.27	.30	.63	-.10	.35
Latvia	.14	.99	-.53	-.09	20.00	.06	-.17	.36	.39	.06	-.06
Lithuania	.50	.93	.05	-.08	1.96	.32	-.13	.87	.45	-.03	.10
Macedonia	.38	.86	-.77	.01	1.00	.39	-.34	1.08			.02
Poland	.80	.98	1.28	.00	8.68	.29	.76	.35	.38	-.03	.53
Romania	.34	.92	-.43	.04	8.17	.44	.24	1.14	.34	-.02	.34
Russian Federation	.80	.97	1.22	-.09	1.99	.25	.54	2.33	.61	.22	.40
Slovakia	.43	.98	.22	-.05	37.5	.16	-.08	.25	.47	-.02	.04
Slovenia	.40	.79	-1.2	-.02	9.00	.15	-.06	.29	.42	.01	.05
Ukraine	.80	.98	1.3	-.08	1.95	.23	.35	8.84	.69	.27	.29
Yugoslavia	.41	.96	.01		3.83	.37	-.05	.79	.62		.01

means that a high score indicates parties that were dominated by officeholders early on. Second, the political success score reflects the degree to which parties were successful in the latter part of the 1990s. Thus, parties like the SDUM and BSP, which were successful in the earlier part of the 1990s but suffered significant declines later, were also parties that had not been dominated by officeholders earlier in the 1990s, even when they were politically successful. In sum, parties that were earlier dominated by officeholders and that were earlier less reliant on membership for political support tended to be generally more successful than parties that were not.

To test this result in the face of alternative “externalist” explanations, Table 3 reports bivariate Pearson’s correlation coefficients relating the party organization, HDI, the misery index, the two measures of nostalgia, and the

FIGURE 1

Degree of Successor Party Political Success by Party Organization Score
(Reported by Country)



natural log of average district magnitude.⁹ Again the results indicate that the internal characteristics of the successor parties (coefficient = .72) contributed more to their political success in the decade following the collapse of communism than either the degree to which the standard of living declined (measured by declines in HDI and the misery index for 1992–1998) and the degree of nostalgia (both in terms of average nostalgia and changes in the level of nostalgia from 1992 to 1998). Further, average district magnitude also appeared to have little effect on the success of the former communist parties. Taken together, these results question both the nostalgia explanation for the success of the former communist parties and the extent to which institutional openings created political opportunities for the successor parties. These results suggest support for the internalist argument predicts, to a large extent, the degree of political success enjoyed by the successor party.

The political success of the former communist parties may also, however, be due to the characteristics of the competitive environment; that is, the strength of the left-wing competitors to the communist successor parties affects the degree to which the former communist parties are successful.

⁹I employ a simple bivariate procedure here as opposed to a multivariate technique, because of the relatively small sample size. By employing a bivariate procedure, I avoid the potential degrees-of-freedom problems associated with a relatively small number of cases.

TABLE 3

Pearson Correlation Coefficient Estimates for Party Electoral Success

Variable	Pearson's <i>R</i>
Party organization score	.72*
ln (average district magnitude)	-.37
HDI change	.19
Misery index	.22
Average nostalgia score, 1992–98	.30
Change in nostalgia score, 1992–98	.06

* $p < .01$.

Tables 4 and 5 examine the relationship between organizational type and political success, controlling for the strength of left-wing competitors. The variable party organization was recoded into dichotomous categories, whether or not the party organization score was zero or below (indicating parties that were less dominated by officeholders and were dependent on a mass membership for political support) and above zero (parties that were relatively more dominated by officeholders and less dependent on a mass membership for political support). The political success variable was reconfigured to take into account whether or not the successor party participated in government (defined as the party's controlling at least one cabinet portfolio in the 1990s).

From Table 4 it is clear that when left-wing competitors are weak, there is no real difference between different party organizations. Parties that are dominated by officeholders and less dependent on mass memberships are as likely to be politically successful as parties that are less dominated by officeholders and more dependent on mass memberships. In other words, when there are no strong left-wing competitors, successor parties are likely to be politically successful regardless of organization. Where party organization appears really to make a difference is in cases where the successor parties face stiff competition from other left-wing alternatives. In Table 5, of the seven cases in which communist successor parties faced left-wing competitors that averaged at least 5 percent of the seats in the lower house of the national legislature, the three that were most clientelistic (the HSP, LDLP, and DLA) were also the most politically successful in having participated in government. The four parties that were less clientelistic had not participated in government in the 1990s. These results suggest that when successor parties face stiff competition from other left-wing parties, those dominated by officeholders and less reliant on mass memberships early on were more likely to be politically successful later.

TABLE 4

Party Organizational Type and Political Success When Largest Left Competitor Has Averaged Less than 5 Percent of Seats, 1990–1999

Political Status	Party Organization Score Less than or Equal to 0	Party Organization Score Greater than 0
Opposition party		SDP (Bosnia) CPRF (Russia)
Party has participated in government	BSP (Bulgaria) SDUM (Macedonia) PDST (Romania) SPS (Yugoslavia)	SPA (Albania) SDP (Croatia) PDL (Slovakia) CPU (Ukraine)

Discussion and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this article was to investigate the relationship between party organization and the degree of political success of the former communist parties. The results reported above indicate that the more the successor party was dominated by officeholders and less reliant on a mass membership for political support in the years immediately following the transition, the more successful the party was later. Further, the results support the argument that the internal characteristics of the successor parties have contributed significantly to the degree to which these parties were politically successful in the 1990s and are at least as important in accounting for party success as are external factors.

Indeed, the results also suggest an interaction between party organization and the structure of the competitive environment. In general, two patterns can be identified. The first is illustrated by the cases of the BSP, SDUM, and PDL, but also for the SPA and PSDR. The success of these parties is due (to a large extent) to the organizational weakness and greater incoherence of the competitors that the communist successor parties face, rather than the transformation of these parties into competitive organizations. The existence of only weak competitors is the primary reason why these successor parties have been successful in postcommunist politics (and not nostalgia or other external socioeconomic or institutional factors).

On the other hand, in competitive environments internal organization is the key determinant of the success of the former communist parties. This pattern was illustrated by the examples of the HSP and the DLA. Although strong organizational resources inherited from the past undoubtedly contributed to the success of the HSP and the DLA, the success of these parties is also due to the fact that the officeholders dominated early on and pushed these parties to develop into effective electoral organizations. Indeed, parties that were less clientelistic tended to be far less successful in the face of strong left-wing competition. This was clearly illustrated by the cases of the CPBM and the ESDLR, which have been far less politically successful in

TABLE 5

Party Organization Type and Political Success When Largest Left Competitor Has Averaged Equal to or Greater than 5 Percent of Seats, 1990–1999

Political Status	Party Organization Score Less than or Equal to 0	Party Organization Score Greater than 0
Opposition party	ULSD (Slovenia) CPBM (Czech Republic) ESDLP (Estonia) LSP (Latvia)	
Party has participated in government		HSP (Hungary) LDLP (Lithuania) DLA (Poland)

postcommunist politics than other successor parties. Thus, unlike that of the successor parties that face little in the way of structured competition, the success of parties like the HSP and the DLA has been due to these parties' ability to adapt organizationally to the new competitive circumstances of postcommunist politics, rather than to weak competitors.

Events in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have provided enormous opportunities for students of party organizations to test the effects of organization on political success. Such an opportunity is provided by the fate of the communist successor parties. Future investigations of these parties not only will shed a considerable amount of new light on the reasons why parties develop in the way they do but will also provide insight into the future shape of politics and democracy in the postcommunist world.

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