



# PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES IN CEE

Are party-voter linkages in post-Communist democracies based on programmatism, clientelism, or charisma or are they essentially lacking? Does the last possibility explain high party and electoral volatility?

# CONTENTS OF THE PRESENTATION

- Theoretical literature on party-voter linkages.
- Presence of party-voter linkages in CEE:
  - Charisma
  - Clientelism
  - Programmatism
- Party-voter linkages and electoral volatility - A skeptical view.
- An alternative explanation for electoral volatility.
- Conclusions and implications

# THEORY (ALDRICH, 1995)

- Why do parties exist? Rational choice literature explains the existence of political parties as a solution to two challenges:
- A **collective action problem**: independent candidates would benefit by banding in 'parties' to (1) work out rules to allocate candidacies to different offices, (2) pool resources and co-ordinate mobilisation, (3) create a party brand.
- A **social choice problem**: the benefits of parties increase if there are effective ways to bind office-holders to a common set of policy preferences, as (1) it ensures stability in office, and (2) it strengthens the 'party brand' by making it easier for voters to infer candidates' stances on a range of issues.

# THEORY (KITSCHOLT, 2000)

- Parties solve the collective action problem by creating a **party organization**.
- They solve the social choice problem by developing a **policy programme**.
- Kitschelt (1995, 2000) develops a typology of party-voter linkages, which correspond to the extent to which a party devotes efforts to the resolution of these two challenges.

# PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES

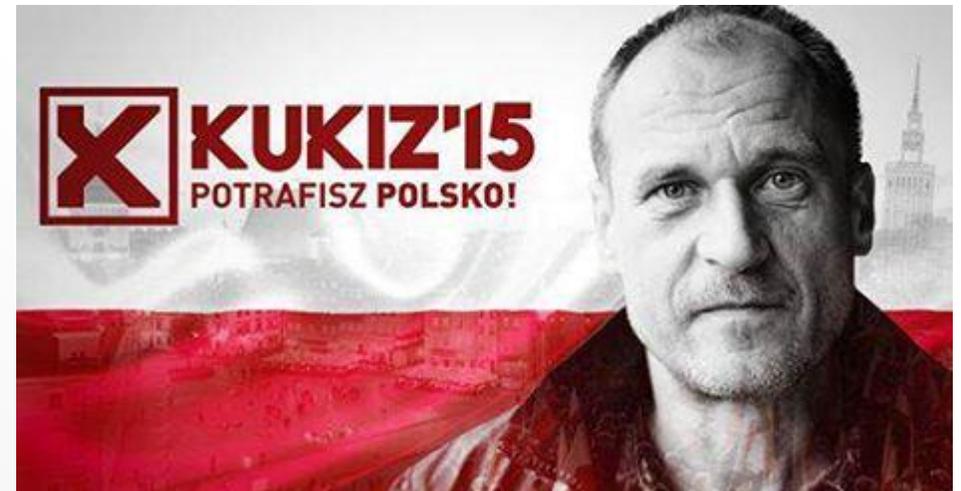
		Organisational effort	
		High	Low
Programmatic effort	High	<p>Programmatic parties</p>  	<p>(Factions/Caucuses)</p>  
	Low	<p>Clientelistic parties</p>  	<p>Charismatic parties</p>  

# PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES

- When politicians make neither investment, all that holds them together is the charisma of a few, or more commonly one, party leaders that maintain maximum personal discretion over strategy and the party vehicle. The connection with voters will thus be highly personalized **charismatic party voter-linkages**.
- When politicians invest in party infrastructure but not in the modes of interest aggregation, they create bonds with voters that often involve direct, personal material side-payments (employment, public work contracts, subsidies): **clientelistic party voter linkage**.
- **programmatically party-voter linkages** arise when parties address effectively both problems, and thus offer policy packages to the entire electorate, often bundling their issue positions on simple dimensional spaces, such as the Left-Right spectrum.
- More commonly, we find that parties use a **combination** of these strategies ('Do Everything' parties, Kitschelt and Singer, 2011).

# CHARISMATIC PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES IN CEE

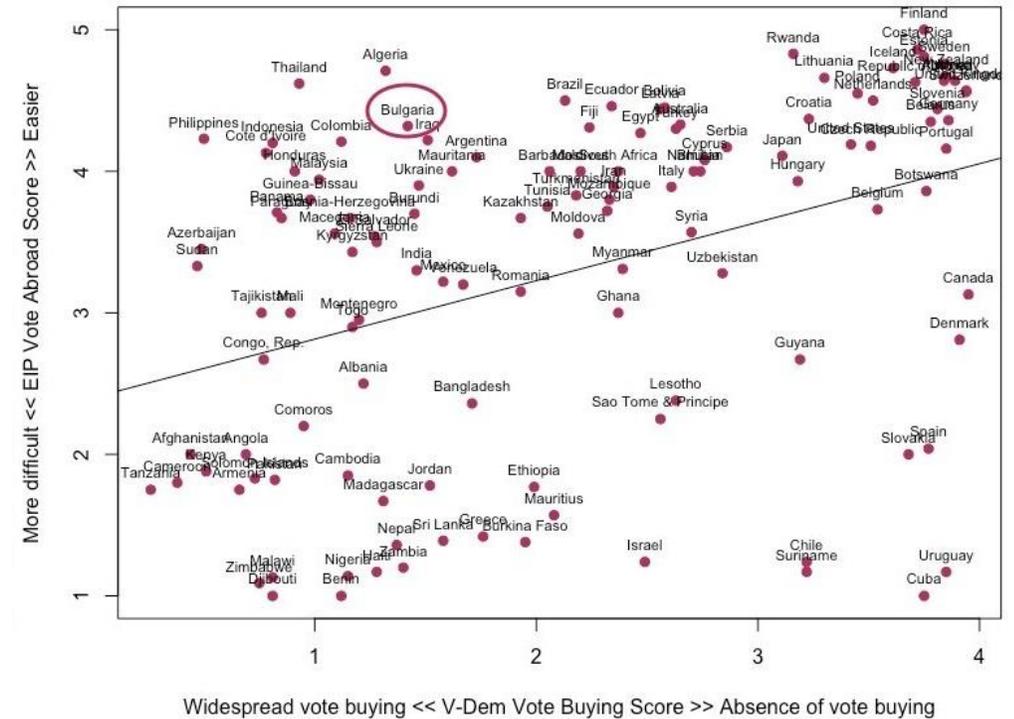
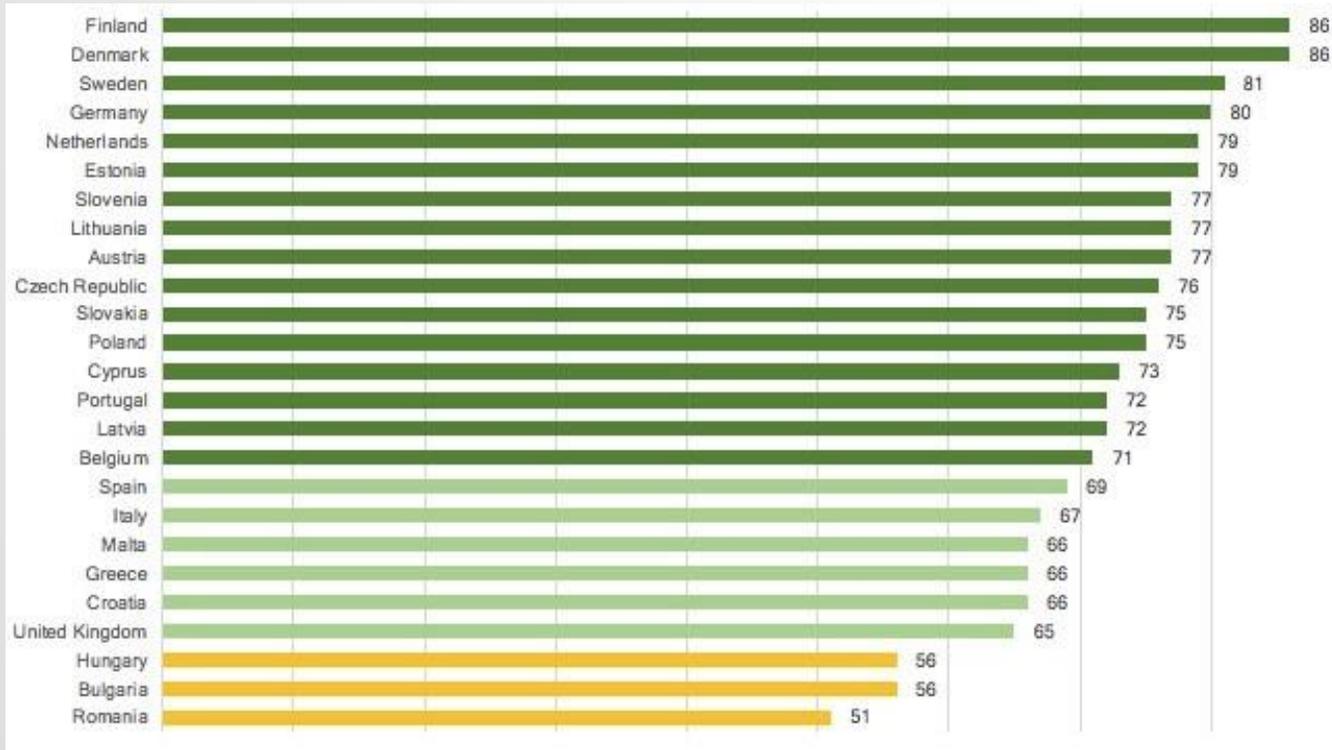
- Using 2008-2009 DALP data, Wineroither and Seeber (2018) find a **higher incidence of charismatic appeals** in post-Communist parties than in Western Europe.
- Moreover, in CEE these tend to be more evenly spread across party families than in WE, and are deployed more often in combination with both programmatic and clientelistic efforts.



# CLIENTELISTIC PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES IN CEE

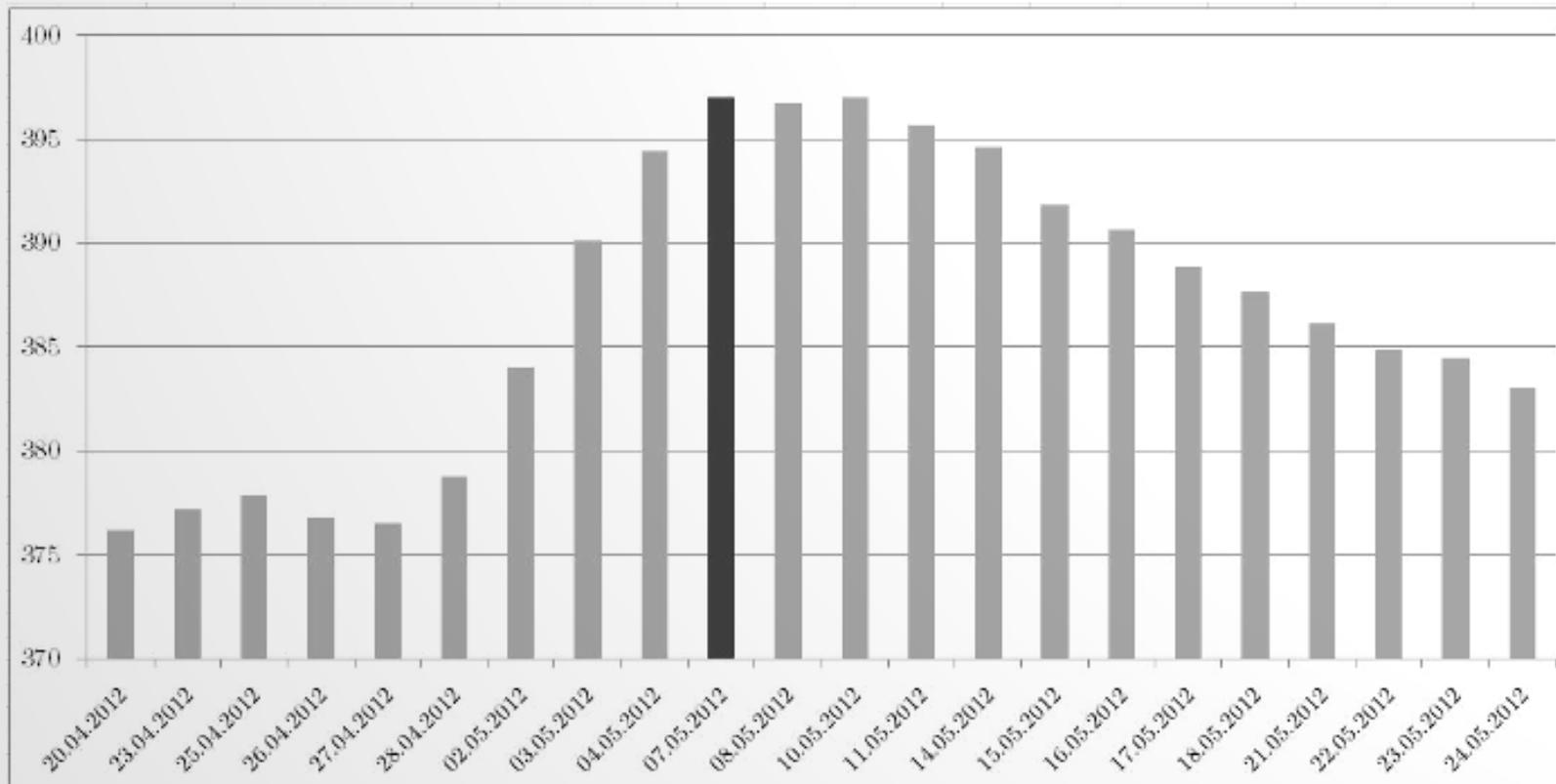
- Similarly, **clientelistic party appeals appear more pronounced** and evenly spread across party families in CEE than in Western Europe (Wineroither and Seeber, 2018).
- Kopecký and Spirova (2011) show that, consistently with Kitschelt's predictions, clientelist practices are more common in countries that emerged from 'patrimonial' communism (Bulgaria, Romania, FY and FSU), although **rural** clientelism is widespread in the region.
- Two dimension of clientelism: a 'horizontal' dimension, where parties allocate public contracts to private donors in exchange for funds, and a 'vertical' one, where parties use that money to engage in vote-buying (Gherghina, 2014).

# CLIENTELISTIC PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES IN CEE (FUMAROLA AND MARINOV)



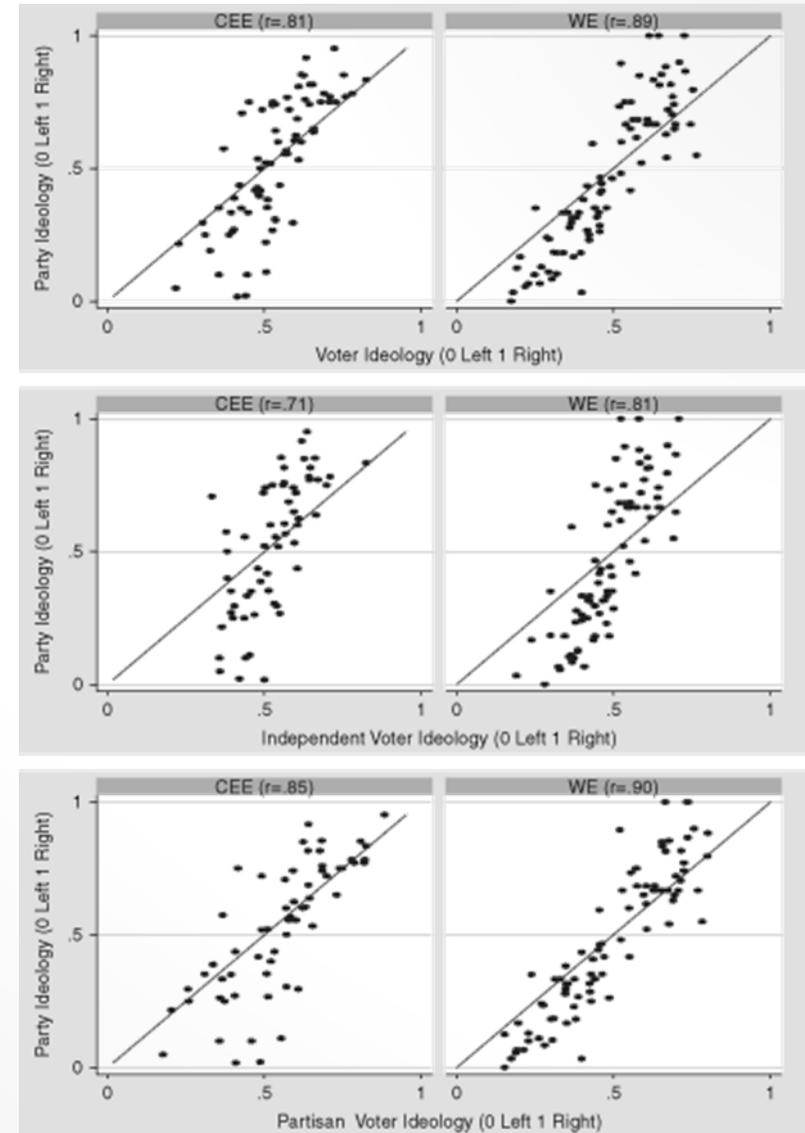
# CLIENTELISTIC PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES IN CEE (AIDT ET AL, 2015)

- Money (M1) circulation boosts around election time in Armenia (2012).



# PROGRAMMATIC PARTY LINKAGES IN CEE

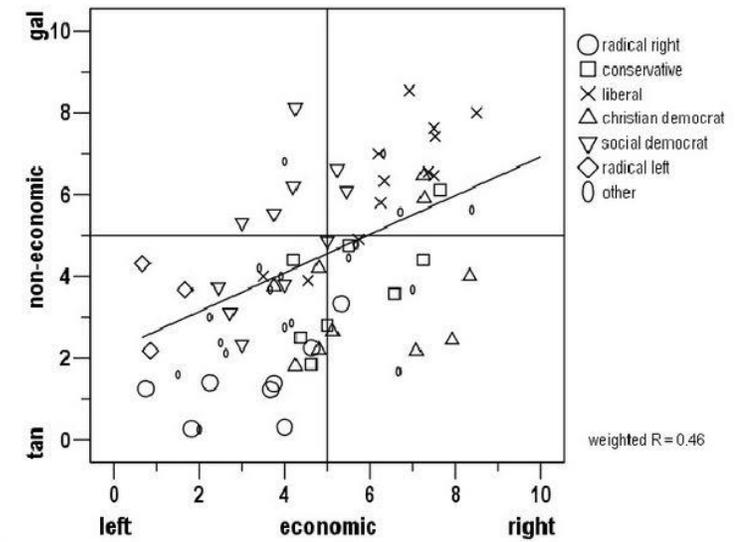
- Mixed evidence:
- Singer and Kitschelt (2011) and Wineroither and Seeber (2018) observe lower levels of programmatic efforts by post-Communist parties than their Western equivalents.
- Tavits (2008), Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2012) and Rovny and Polk (2017) find that political competition in the East and in the West is policy-based to a similar degree and the level of congruence between parties' and voters' preferences is broadly comparable.



# PROGRAMMATIC PARTY LINKAGES IN CEE

- More marked difference in *nature* than in the *extent* of programmatisation: in the West, socio-cultural and redistributive axes tend to be cross-cutting; in the East, competition is more often flattened onto a single dimension defined by a socially liberal/economically right pole and a socially conservative/economically left pole (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2012).

DIMENSIONS OF PARTY COMPETITION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE



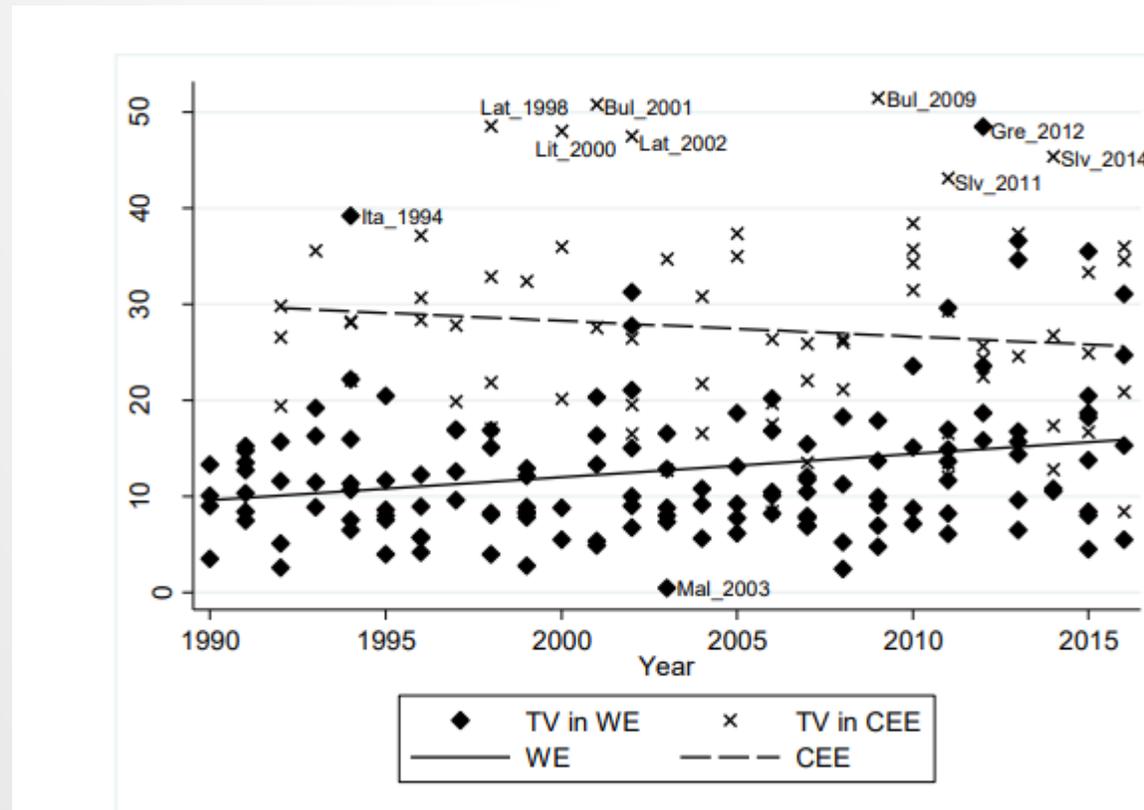
# PROGRAMMATIC PARTY LINKAGES IN CEE

- We can reasonably conclude that, *on the supply side*, parties in the East tend to dilute programmatic appeals more heavily with charismatic and clientelistic strategies, but *on the demand side* voters are broadly able to sort themselves into the party that best reflects their preferences.
- One reason may be because the unidimensional nature of political conflict reduces the complexity of this choice.
- In this sense, programmatic linkages are only weaker in post-Communist democracies than in the West *relative to* other linkages, but not so much in absolute terms.

# PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES AND ELECTORAL VOLATILITY

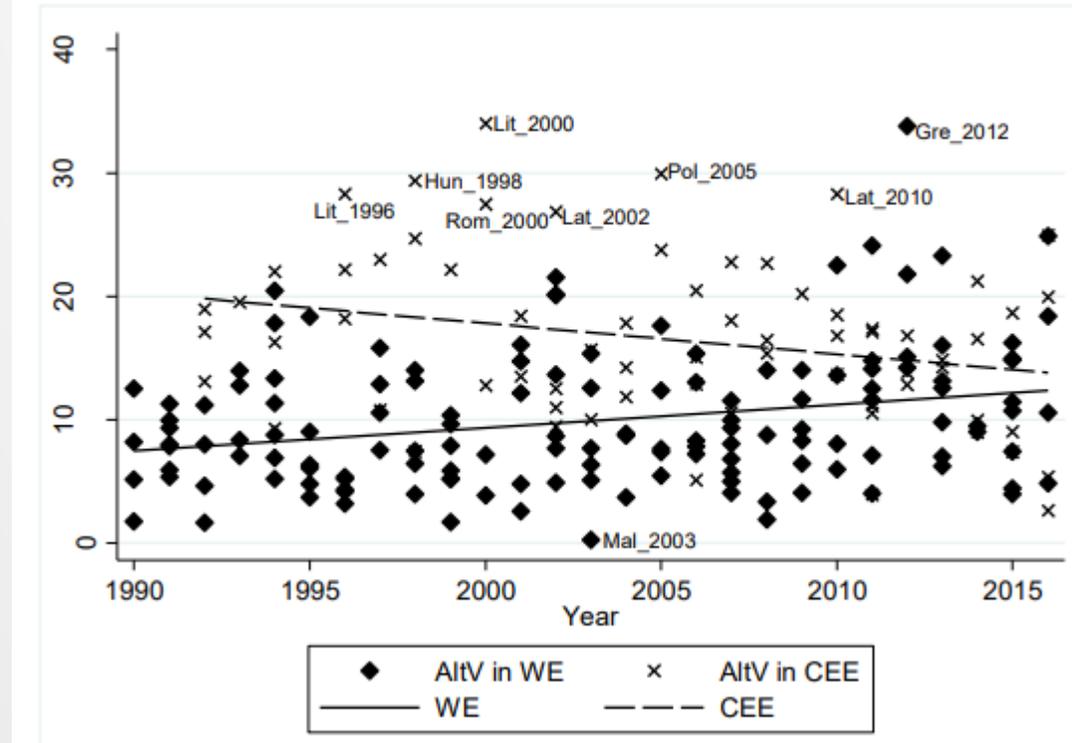
- We have seen that party-voter linkages exist in CEE, and – at least in the cases of charismatic and clientelistic linkages – they are actually more prominent than in WE.
- Therefore we can exclude that party-voter linkages and electoral volatility are correlated because of a particular weakness or even absence of the former.
- It may however be the case that the particular ‘mix’ of linkages we find in CEE may help us explain volatility.

# AN ASIDE: VOLATILITY IN CEE



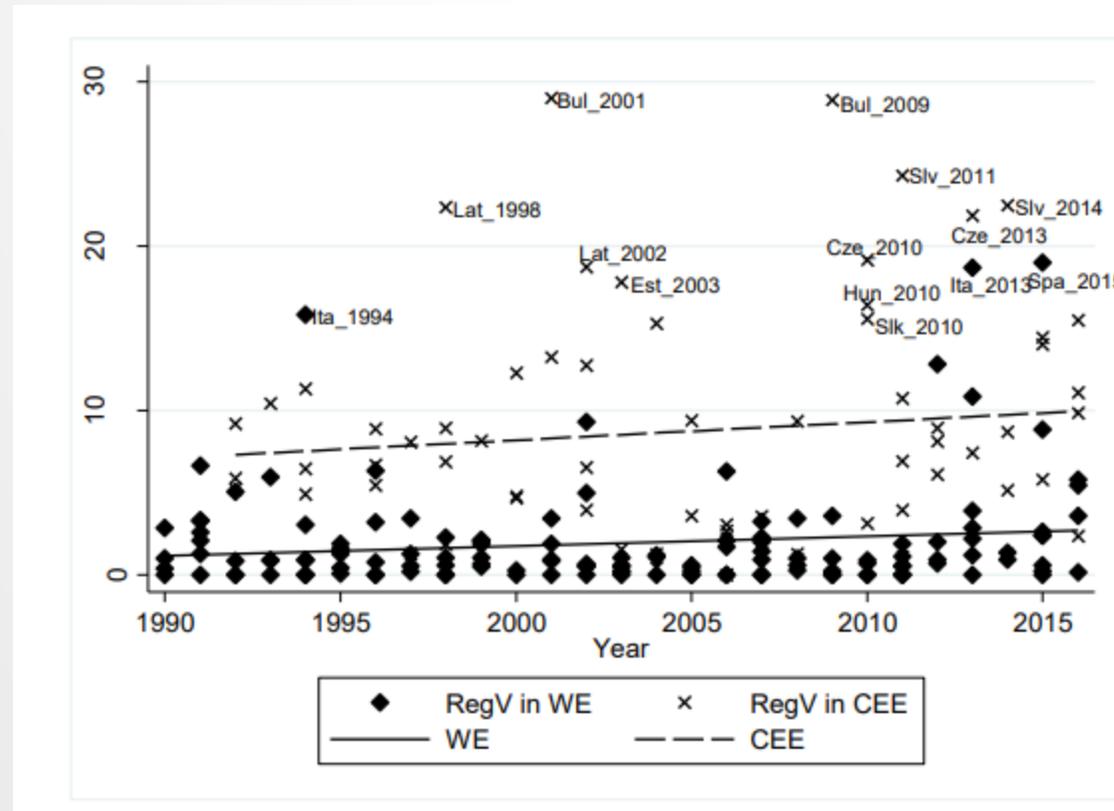
- Total Volatility (Emanuele, Chiaramonte and Soare, 2018)

# AN ASIDE: VOLATILITY IN CEE



- 'Alteration' Volatility (Emanuele, Chiaramonte and Soare, 2018)

# AN ASIDE: VOLATILITY IN CEE



- 'Regeneration' Volatility (Emanuele, Chiaromonte and Soare, 2018)

# PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES AND ELECTORAL VOLATILITY

- The overreliance of parties on **charismatic linkages** certainly suggests that the specific types of linkages we find in CEE is a possible cause of volatility.
- Intuitively, voters' loyalty to leader-focussed parties is contingent on the leader's continued popularity (Diaconescu's *Romanian People's Party*) or – more trivially – their biological survival (Lepper's *Samoobrona*).
- Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2018) find that, indeed, post-Communist parties' ability to change leadership is a key determinant of their endurance.
- However, there may be problems with establishing the direction of causality: it is possible that charismatic, flash-in-the-pan parties emerge *because* of a volatile environment just as much as they are a cause of instability.

# PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES AND ELECTORAL VOLATILITY

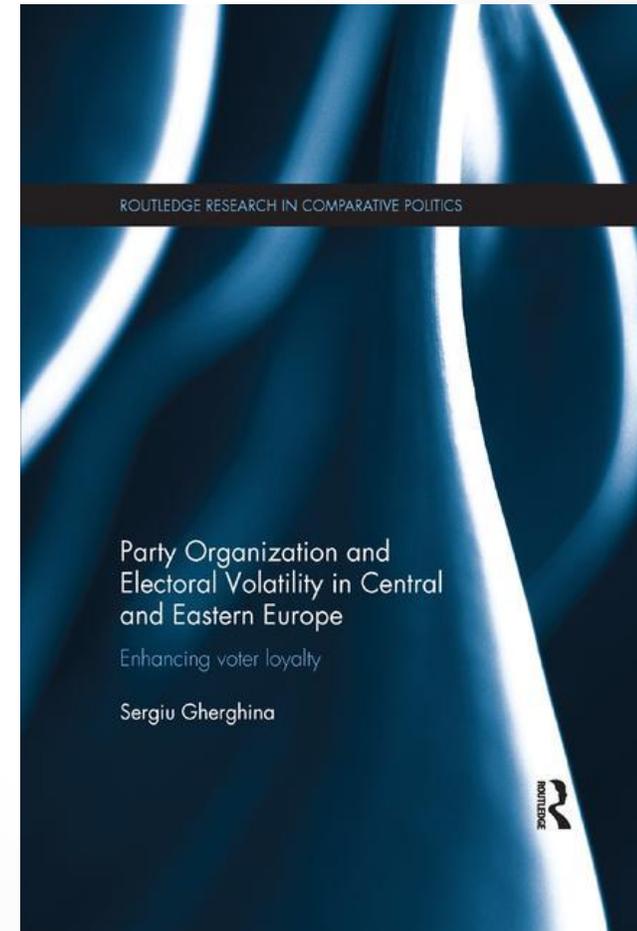
- It is however unclear why widespread **clientelistic linkages** – which ensured the stability of party systems in Italy, Belgium, Austria and Japan – should generate volatility (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007).
- On the one hand, clientelism may have a stabilising influence, as it **forecloses competition by new parties** with little access to state resources; on the other hand, it has destabilising potential, as **the corruption it generates opens up political opportunities for anti-establishment entrants**.
- Engler (2016) shows that clientelism's effect on volatility is ambiguous and highly contextual, leading to stability in Montenegro, Romania and Macedonia and instability in Bulgaria and Ukraine.

# PARTY-VOTER LINKAGES AND ELECTORAL VOLATILITY

- The relationship between programmatisation and volatility is also puzzling:
- If relatively lower programmatic efforts are counterbalanced by a simpler structure of competition, there is little about the 'representativeness' of post-Communist parties that explains their high rate of turnover.
- Moreover, if the main source of instability were fickle party positions, we should expect voters to switch freely between blocs, while the evidence points at a much higher incidence of **'regeneration' volatility** than 'alteration' volatility, which has virtually converged with Western European levels.

# AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION

- A recent strand in this literature (Ibenskas, 2011; Tavits, 2012; Ghergina, 2014; Deegan-Krause and Haughton, 2018) provides compelling evidence that suggests an alternative explanation:
- While post-Communist parties may build strong linkages with voters in the short term, they are less able to maintain them due to the **weakness of their party structures** – or, as Poguntke (2000) put it, of their *organisational* linkages.



# AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION

- Voters' ideological or instrumental attachments to parties need to be rekindled over time – *particularly when their fortunes dwindle* – through direct and place-based elite-voters interactions. This is however hindered by underdeveloped party structures common in CEE (Van Biezen, 2003):
  - **Low rates of membership** fail to provide a 'buffer' of core voters and localised mobilisation strategies (Tavits, 2012: 84).
  - The **shallow penetration of civil society** actors – churches, trade unions etc. – reduces the durability of clientelistic arrangements and prevents parties from engaging with wider social networks (Gherghina, 2014: 45-6).
  - The **underdevelopment of local branches** inhibits parties' ability to recruit and train personnel, and opens up gaps for electoral upsets at local level that may then spill over onto national politics (Tavits, 2012: 86).
  - The **centralisation of candidate selection** weakens personal bonds with constituencies, as well as aggravating issues of membership recruitment (Gherghina, 2014: 95-122).

# CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Parties in CEE can rely on a **variety of party-voter linkages**, and their specific nature cannot *fully* explain high levels of volatility in the region.
- While an overreliance on charismatic appeals probably does contribute to instability, clientelism has a more ambiguous effect, and there is not convincing evidence that parties' programmes in CEE are particularly unrepresentative of their voters' political attitudes.
- A fuller account of volatility must include an analysis of **organisational linkages** and highlight the role of underdeveloped party structures.
- This is interesting in a comparative perspective, as 'weak' party structures are not only due to CEE-specific factors, but are also linked to **sociological trends that extend beyond the region** (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000).
- The implication is that convergence in patterns of instability between East and West is not emerging so much as a result of the stabilisation of programmatic competition in the former, but rather because of the **'hollowing out' of mass parties** in the latter.



# THANK YOU

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