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The Electoral Success of Communist-Successor Parties in the Czech Republic and Romania

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The Electoral Success of Communist-Successor Parties in the Czech Republic and Romania

How party reimaging, coalition building, corruption and scandal, party leadership, EU accession, and social indicators impact party support

By Harley Roe

11/23/2016

ABSTRACT: Communist-successor parties are impacted by six social and political factors: party reimaging, coalition building, corruption and scandal, party leadership, EU accession, and social indicators. This project explores how the descendants of the totalitarian communist parties in the Czech Republic and Romania are influenced by each factor by analyzing election result data against these indicators. Party reimaging and coalition building are the most influential in determining voter turnout, while the other four work in conjunction to influence election results. This project contributes to the literature on electoral volatility, post-communist countries, voter behavior, and seeks to offer a model that can predict party success under various conditions.

The Electoral Success of Communist-Successor Parties in the Czech Republic and Romania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

By Harley Roe

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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

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Advisor   Date

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Dean of Arts and Sciences   Date

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Introduction

The wave of democratization that swept across East and Central Europe in 1989 introduced multiparty politics to most states in the region. Multiparty systems allow for the representation of numerous political positions. Even after the collapse of communism in the region, communist parties and their successor parties still play essential roles in national politics. In Romania, the Social Democratic Party (PSD), dominates the political scene with a social democratic platform; meanwhile in the Czech Republic (CR), the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) is often excluded from national politics despite a significant voter base. Both countries have instituted parliamentary-style legislatures that are elected by proportional representation, which makes it easy to compare the two. The question that guides my research is: what drives electoral success of communist-successor parties in the Czech Republic and Romania? Put more plainly, what makes people vote for communist-successor parties after their original incarnations were discredited after the fall of the Berlin Wall?

This project explores the most influential social factors that impact the electoral success of the KSCM and PSD. These factors are reimaging strategies, party leadership, coalition building, corruption and scandal, EU accession, and social indicators (such as fluctuating GDP). I begin by analyzing election results in the Czech Republic and Romania using a theory known as "electoral volatility." This will make the data comparable across election cycles. From there, I will compare the election data to the six social and political factors that influence voter behavior.

"Communist-successor party" is a concept expanded by Andres Bozoki and John Ishiyama, referring to a party with historical roots in a previous communist regime (Bozoki &

Ishiyama 2002). This brings up an important concept: party lineage. Communist-successor

parties can be considered the "descendants" of the parties previously in control of the Czech

Republic and Romania. The PSD is the current incarnation of the *Frontul Salvarii Nationale*

(FSN), which was a breakaway faction of the Communist Party of Romania. Top leaders in the

Communist Party formed their own faction within the party to lead the 1989 revolution to

overthrow the dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu. Although it can be difficult to track the "lineage" of

communist-successor parties, it is important to follow how these parties change through the years

in order to see how they influence the new democracies in which they find themselves.

The important point to emphasize here is that the FSN was in fact a communist-successor

party because it originated from within the Romanian Communist Party. It splintered off only

when the whole party was threatened by the increasing political turmoil in Romania. The leader

of the FSN, Ion Iliescu, was a member of Ceausescu's inner circle for years; Iliescu's reasoning

for leading the opposition is almost irrelevant to this narrative. He took communist party leaders

and formed a faction of moderate communists that capitalized on the unrest quickly enveloping

the country in 1989. However, it is worth mentioning that in both the Czech Republic and

Romania, many of the parties comprising the leftist bloc can be considered communist-successor

parties because their leadership often consists of moderates from the original communist regime.

I chose the Czech Republic and Romania as the centers of my analysis because of both a

personal connection to both countries as well as how their histories are similar in their mutual

totalitarian pasts. Prior to 1989, both countries were dominated by a centralized

communist/totalitarian party. Yet at the point of collapse of communism, these countries'

histories diverged. The CR underwent a passive transition known as the Velvet Revolution,

which involved the implementation of democracy through roundtable talks. In Romania, the

transition was much more violent, and involved a splinter group of the communist party leading a revolt against Nicolae Ceausescu. The method of transition in both countries played a vital role in the electoral outcomes of the communist-successor parties that emerged after 1989.

This project is timely due to the fact that the Czech KSCM has been approached by the dominant left-wing party, the CSSD, to be in a legislative coalition after the 2016 elections. After almost 30 years in political isolation, the KSCM is once again coming to the fore of national politics. Not only have the communists failed to fade into political obscurity, they have emerged as potential coalition partners – which means that remnants of the previous totalitarian regime will once again have a voice in politics at both the legislative and executive levels. As for the Romanian PSD, the party has been gathering strength for the past three decades, and is seemingly impervious to scandalous events and economic crises. Being the leading leftwing party, the PSD is a model of success for post-communist transitional parties, and the factors producing that success are important units of analysis that can be applied to parties throughout the region, and across the globe. While the topic of communist-successor parties may not be new, it plays an important role in national politics, and the dominance of these parties cannot be overlooked.

Major findings in this project include the importance of the interdependencies of each of the six factors and the importance of party history in determining voter loyalty. When analyzed alone, some factors may appear to have little sway on electoral success. Yet some factors work together, such as reimaging and coalition building, ensure success during elections. On the other hand, some negative factors are mitigated by the presence of others; for example, corruption can be counterbalanced by party leadership. Political parties utilize strategies such as coalition building and party reimaging to attract votes and build the strength of the party while

simultaneously managing the detrimental effects of social indicators and scandal. Party history, in this case meaning the role that the party played in the country's transition to democracy, is a powerful influence that can mitigate the negative impacts of poor economic performance and the prevalence of corruption in these new democracies. Similarly, party history ensures a consistent voter base due to historical ties and social benefits associated with the previous regimes. These findings identify factors that political parties can use to predict their own success.

The most successful factors in determining electoral viability are reimaging and coalition building. If a party can identify strong coalition partners, or absorb smaller similarly-aligned parties through mergers, then they expand the party's influence within the country. In order to do so, the party must identify policies that will make it more attractive to not just voters, but to potential coalition partners. In the case of communist-successor parties, this means having to moderate their platforms from a strictly socialist to a social democratic program, while additionally distancing itself from its totalitarian origins. Realistically, parties cannot achieve strong electoral success without adjusting their platforms to market themselves to a broader audience.

Reimaging is the most important of the six factors because the PSD has undergone numerous restructurings and logo changes in attempt to distance itself from its communist roots. Coalition building is the second-most important factor, especially in the case of Romania. In multiparty systems it is essential for minority parties to band together in order to become viable in their respective systems. However, they become susceptible to spatial contagion when corruption and scandal harm coalition partners. EU accession and membership are linked with perceptions of corruption as well as socioeconomic factors because the adoption of liberalizing

policies and opening up to the global market was a shock to many citizens in both countries. A discussion of the other four factors will follow.

My findings contribute to the study of post-communist transitions and how parties function in these newly democratic systems. It can serve as a strategic model for communist-successor parties in neighboring countries. Also, a model of post-communist elections gives an insight into voter behavior in multiparty systems and how it can be influenced by a political party as well as external factors. The findings in this project can be expanded to other countries in the region to analyze other communist-successor parties as well as the impacts that democratization, privatization, and globalization have on voter behavior. This research offers the basis for a model that predicts the social and party conditions that are most conducive to communist party electoral success. By looking at election results, we can see how the population reacts to various social factors. My project will also help us understand the status of reconciliation in the Czech Republic and Romania. Both the KSCM and the PSD have managed to remain relevant in national politics despite their respective histories of totalitarianism.

Historical Background and Summary of Political Systems

In the CR, the entire public sphere was controlled by the communist party from 1948 until 1989. The Velvet Revolution was sparked by student protests in November 1989, which was followed by a series of roundtable talks between the previous communist regime and a conglomerate of activist groups known as Civic Forum. One of the last actions of the Czech communist party was to create a new party, the KSCM, which would be able to function within

the newly established democratic system. Romania was also under totalitarian control until 1989, but under a much more ruthless regime. During the Romanian revolution, a group of communists in Nicolae Ceausescu's inner circle, led by Ion Iliescu, broke away to lead the political battle associated with the transition. This group became known as the National Salvation Front (FSN), which would become wildly popular in national politics during the first free elections in 1990. Through the usage of reimaging strategies, the FSN eventually evolved into the PSD, the biggest political player in Romanian politics.

Since the transition, the KSCM and PSD have had varying degrees of success. The KSCM averages 13% of the share of votes each election, ranging from as low as 10% to as high as 18% (ECPR 2016). These figures place the KSCM within the top five parties every single election, even reaching as high as the second-most popular party in one election. So while 13% of the vote may seem minimal to someone from a dual party system, its significance in a multiparty system cannot be overlooked. The PSD, on the other hand, averages just over 41% of the vote each election, ranging from a low of 23% to a high of 67% just after the 1989 revolution (ECPR 2016). However it is important to note that even though the PSD averages 41%, this is due to two outlier elections in 1990 and 2012 that resulted in the PSD and its coalition, the USL, taking well over 60% of the vote share.

The transition to democracy in the CR happened in almost an instant. For the first few years, the CR and Slovakia remained together as the Czechoslovak Republic due to the fact that the two countries had been unified since the end of the First World War. Yet in 1993, the two parted ways and became independent countries; the KSCM stayed in the CR while a new party formed in Slovakia out of communist bureaucrats that were active there. The newly formed Czech Republic instituted the rule of law and basic freedoms such as the right to vote, freedom

of expression, and the freedom to choose one's occupation – all of which were denied or heavily restricted by the previous regime. The result was a vibrant political culture that sought closer relationships with Western Europe and the United States. Despite the rapidity of the transition, the political sphere was mired in corruption, especially when it came to the privatization process (Oreskovic 2012).
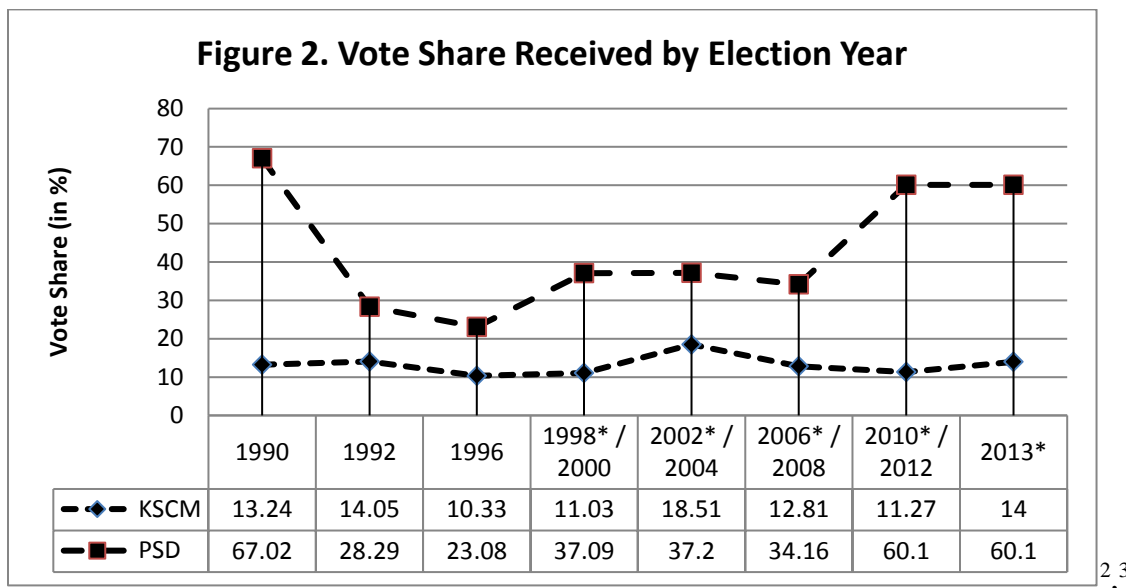
Electoral reform in Romania after the transition was a slow-moving process. The first election in 1990 did not have a minimum threshold for candidates in the national legislature. Thresholds prevent parties that have little support from getting candidates into national offices, and are a common tool among modern democracies. The 1990 election had eighty parties seek office, while eight of those actually won seats with less than one percent of the vote (Giugal et al. 2011). Thresholds were later instituted, standing at a minimum of 5% for single parties and 8% for coalitions. While Romania did implement the rule of law and other essential freedoms, the process was slower and heavily criticized due to the prevalence of cronyism, nepotism, and bribery.

In many multiparty systems, the president is elected by national vote, and then selects a prime minister to form a cabinet, which is subsequently approved by the national legislature. Occasionally, the prime minister is selected from the "opposition," the party with the second-most votes, in effort to balance the government. In the CR, this practice was used for most of Vaclav Havel's presidency – six of the last eleven prime ministers were selected from the opposition Czech Social Democrat Party (CSSD). This becomes more apparent when we consider that opposition movements tend to contrast the ruling parties in terms of political alignment. For example, Civic Forum in the Czech Republic leaned to the right, favoring free trade and fiscal conservatism, which contrasted the leftist policies of the communist party. The

FSN, however, was a leftwing party because it was simply a faction from within Romania's

communist party that broke away during the 1989 upheaval. While this project focuses primarily

on the legislature, the role the executive plays in party politics as well as influencing voter

behavior cannot be ignored.

Figure 1. Total Number of Votes Received by the KSCM and PSD per Election Year

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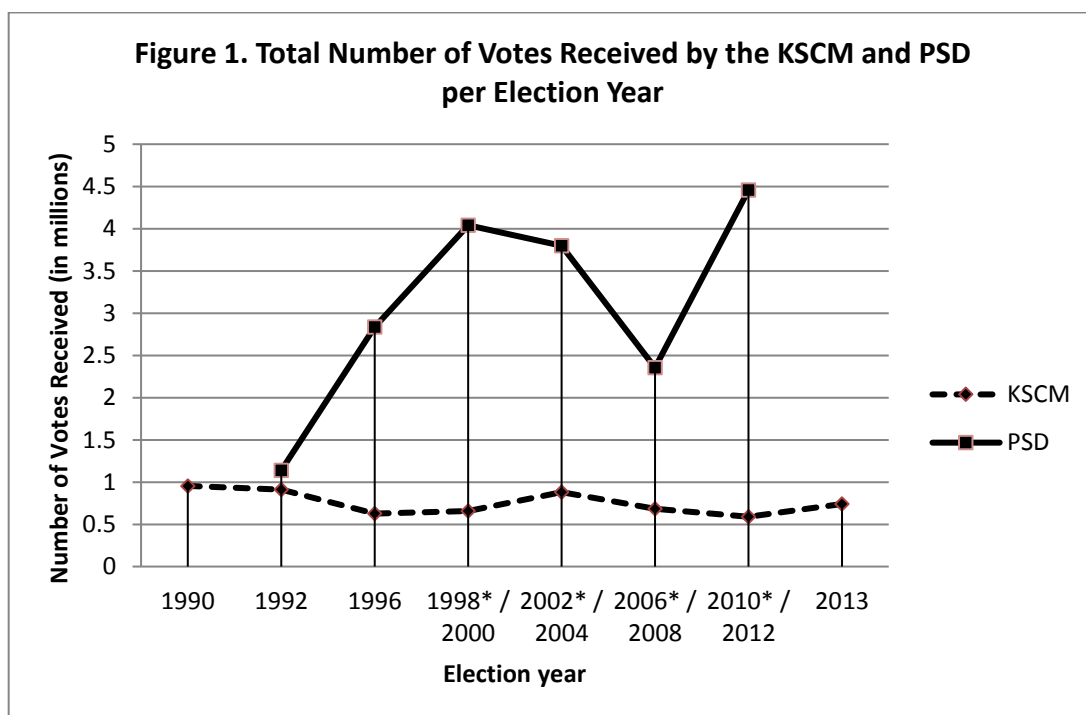
[1] Due to election years that diverge after 1996, Czech election years will be marked with an asterisk (*).Data compiled from the Political Data Yearbook 2016 and local election result reports. The 1990 Romanian election is left out of this dataset because it skews the graph results. That year, the FSN received over 9.5 million votes, an outlier that could not be compensated for within the graph.

Figure 2. Vote Share Received by Election Year

	1990	1992	1996	1998* / 2000	2002* / 2004	2006* / 2008	2010* / 2012	2013*
KSCM	13.24	14.05	10.33	11.03	18.51	12.81	11.27	14
PSD	67.02	28.29	23.08	37.09	37.2	34.16	60.1	60.1

[2,3]

The CR typically has higher voter turnout than Romania does, a large reason why looking at the vote share of each communist-successor party is so important. Figure 1 shows how voter participation varies in both countries over time. Voter participation is a precarious tool because it only reflects the aggregate number of votes received, not the percentage shared amongst all participating parties. If we looked at only number of votes received by a party, then the data would be skewed from year to year. Looking at vote share percentage is more useful because it shows how many seats a party would receive; since vote share is always based off of 100%, it is more reliable in years where voter turnout has dwindled. Figure 2 demonstrates the vote share of the two subject parties. Vote share paints a more accurate picture of electoral success because it shows how much of the voting population supports the party.

Literature Review

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[2] Data compiled from the Political Data Yearbook 2016 and local election result reports.
[3] At the time of writing, Romania has not held its 2016 election; the 2013 data reflects the results from the previous election.

This project sits at the heart of political science and comparative politics theory. Spatial competition is an important theory that seeks to explain the ways that parties function in multiparty systems. Two approaches to the theory exist. The first explains that parties are singular actors that can adjust and adapt their platforms to suit the values of their electorates (Budge & Robertson 1981, 211). This means that the party is completely autonomous and can adjust its platform without external influences. Policies promised to the electorate can be modified once the party is in office; the initial platform is only a starting point that gives the party initial direction (Budge & Robertson 1981, 150). Platforms are viewed as merely a preview of what the party seeks to accomplish. This approach perceives parties as lacking accountability to their electorates.

The second approach to spatial competition is developed by Alan Ware. While he acknowledges the ability of parties to adapt, he also argues that external pressures on a party limit its ability to make changes to its platform. Ware views parties as "prisoners of their own history as an institution" (Ware 1996, 18). Parties do have some autonomy, but are captive to their historical backgrounds. Spatial competition states that if parties were truly free to decide their own platforms and ideologies, then the left-right spectrum would be reduced to a narrow field dominated by centrist parties that only slightly lean to one side or another (Ware 1996). In order to compete effectively for votes, parties in multiparty systems must remain spread out along the spectrum to attract the maximum number of voters.

There is a middle ground between the two theories of spatial competition, covered by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1956). Downs explores rational voter behavior as well as the ways that parties and governments interact with their electoral bases, and provides much of the theoretical foundation for this study. According to Downs, the party is

aware of the relationship between its policies and the ways that people vote (Downs 1956, 31).

This challenges Ware's view that parties are trapped by their own ideology and must adopt

policies that are generally expected of them. Instead, the party-voter relationship can be looked at

in terms of a producer-consumer relationship (Downs 1956, 37). Using Harold Hotelling's law of

rational economic behavior, Downs develops a model to explain the processes a voter goes

through to make a rational political decision.

Hotelling found that businesses that were evenly spaced apart from each other on a street

would perform better because they attracted the same number of customers (Hottelling 1929).

This happened because the customers came from opposite directions on the street, and the

businesses had strategically placed themselves on the part of the street that maximized their

potential foot traffic. Downs took this theory and applied it to politics, turning the street into the

political spectrum, the customers into voters, and businesses into political parties. The resulting

Hotelling – Downs Model of Political/Spatial Competition looks like this:
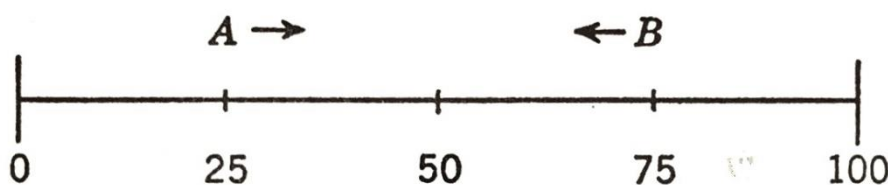
[4]

Figure 3. [Representation of Political Party Orientation on the Political Spectrum].

Parties that draw nearer to the center have the greatest chance of attracting voters from

their respective side of the political spectrum. However, the voters that sit at the fringes of the

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[4] Figure developed by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy,* 1956.

spectrum may be less likely to vote for a party that moves closer to the center because the likelihood that they share the same values is decreased (Downs 1956). A model of the US would show the two dominating parties near the center of the spectrum, but multiparty systems can look wildly different with a multitude of viable parties.

Downs' work contrasts that of Alan Ware in that Downs does not consider party ideology static or constant. To Downs, political parties can be viewed similarly to businesses in that their marketing strategies evolve and adapt to changes in consumer behavior. In this case, the consumer is the voter, and parties adjust themselves along the political spectrum in order to attract the most votes possible. In any system, two parties would not be able to occupy the same space on the spectrum, meaning they cannot share identical platforms, because those two parties would share the same pool of voters. It is easier for a party to find a different pool, so they adjust policies to attract different voters, which dispels Ware's belief that parties are entirely captive to their political histories.

The Hotelling-Downs (HD) Model has been used to describe the distribution of votes along the political spectrum in various cases. A recent study in September 2010 used the HD Model to suggest that candidates in run-off style executive elections will adapt their policies after each successful round in order to attract the voters loyal to failed candidates (Brusco et al. 2010). A Run-off style election consists of multiple rounds, allowing numerous candidates to compete, yet each round has minimum percentage threshold that each candidate must reach. If they fail to reach that threshold they are eliminated from the race; their voters are left then to pick between the remaining candidates. Brusco et al. discovered that candidates would adjust some of their policies to reflect popular policies of eliminated candidates in order to win their voters'

confidence (Brusco et al. 2010). This study is important not just as an example of the HD Model, but also as an example of a reimaging strategy.

Another modern interpretation of the HD Model comes from Claude Hillinger and his work on rational choice and democracy. While the HD Model is useful to visualize the distribution of parties, it does not do enough to predict voter behavior. If it did, elections could easily be predicted by simply counting party membership just before an election. Hilinger states that if voters were only guided by their preferences, then the distribution of votes would not reveal a dominant trend of one or two parties (Hillinger 2004). In other words, some voters may prefer one candidate, but vote for the one that has the higher chance of winning so that they do not feel as though their vote was thrown away. This behavior often results in trends that do not actually reflect voter preference. So if the HD Model is to be used, it must be coupled with an analysis of the factors that influence the distribution of votes along the political spectrum.

Spatial contagion is another useful theory that can be used to explain the ways that parties shift themselves along the political spectrum to maximize their viability. It can be best applied to multiparty systems where there are multiple parties sitting adjacent to one another on the political spectrum. If two or more parties are ideologically similar (or adjacent on a left-right political spectrum) and one of those parties fails in an election, then those similar parties suffer in future elections (Willams & Whitten 2015). Similarly, if a party has won seats and performs poorly in the public eye, then other parties associated with it suffer in subsequent elections. The theory also states that voter behavior does not "occur in an ideological vacuum; rather, voters make their decisions after observing signals from carefully thought-out platforms that reflect party strategy" (Williams & Whitten 2015, 311). This means that voter behavior is reactive to specific party strategies and other social factors. Voters may not simply give their support to one

party because it fits their particular political views, but instead the voters make observations about a party's performance and make influenced decisions.

Those decisions are observed by political parties, which then make adjustments to their policies to appear more attractive to their constituents. In another sense, parties make policies to win elections, rather than winning to make policies (Downs 1956). This implies that the goal of the political party as a structure is to win elections, not necessarily to make policies. The policies are just a mechanism to attract voters who agree with those policies. However, this line of thought is dangerous because it may oversimplify party motivations. If the parties' true goals were only to win elections, then minority parties would have little reason to exist because smaller parties have little chance in winning elections. Downs seeks to explain this by using Adam Smith's example of the Economic Man, "…it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from regard to their own interest" (Smith 1776 in Downs 1956, 28). Politicians will enact policies that they believe will win them votes, benefiting others while serving their own self-interests. Smaller parties thus find policy niches that are not covered by larger parties, meaning they seek to attract voters that want to vote for policies not promised by other parties. This theory will be useful in explaining why a party might choose to adopt a platform that is generally unpopular to the majority of the population.

The democratic systems present in the Czech Republic and Romania would be described by the political scientist Giovanni Sartori as pluralistic systems. These are systems with more than two parties that gain popular support during legislative elections (Sartori 1976). A version of this system is the polarized pluralistic system, where the distribution of votes moves away from the center of the political spectrum. When a system is polarized, the distribution of power sits with far-left and far-right receiving higher percentages of the vote (Sartori 1976). In the

immediate aftermath of democratization, Romania and the Czech Republic exemplified this

distribution, but the majority of those parties at opposing ends of the spectrum lost popular

support. The communist-successor parties in each country held on, but only as a result of several

factors including historic party membership and opposition to the liberalization of the country

and economy (Pink 2010). Looking at the social factors that keep the communist voter base

strong is a key aspect of this project. Political geography is a subfield of political science that is

particularly useful when studying the electoral success of any party. Colin Flint and Peter

Taylor's work, *Political Geography: World-economy, Nation-state and Locality,* provides

extensive research on this concept. Political geography seeks to explain the distribution of voters

during national elections (Flint & Taylor 2007). To see where a particular party's voter base is

centralized can give a lot of information about demographics and even reasons why people vote

the way they do. Some examples include labor movements that may be more popular in working-

class regions, fiscal conservativism in more affluent regions, and historical ties to certain parties

and ideologies.

Electoral volatility is "the degree of change in voting behavior between elections"

(Oxford Reference 2016). It refers to the fluctuation in votes received by a party from one

election to the next. No party in a legitimate democracy anywhere maintains a consistent voter

base; there are external and internal factors that attract and repel voters which need to be

examined. Volatility can be calculated by the Pedersen Volatility Index, developed by Mogens

Pedersen in 1979. Pedersen suggests that short-term changes in party format influence the

volatility of a party's electoral base (Pedersen 1979). Although Pedersen developed the theory of

electoral volatility based on Western European countries, the theory can be applied to any state

with free elections. The Volatility Index and the equation used to calculate it will be discussed later.

Theoretical concepts such as spatial competition and spatial contagion are useful to understand the ways in which political parties adjust themselves along the political spectrum in order to solicit votes. With these concepts in mind we can begin a discussion of more concrete ideas that pertain specifically to the Czech Republic and Romania. The three major theoretical concepts guiding this research are spatial competition, spatial contagion, and electoral volatility. These, coupled with the five factors that influence voter behavior (party reimaging, social factors like GDP, party leadership, EU accession, and coalition building) will allow me to examine election result data and deduce which influence people to vote for communist-successor parties. A brief look at the factors that can influence a voter's decision on a thematic level can help us understand the strategies used by the KSCM and the PSD.

Reimaging is a relatively new concept in the literature about communist-successor parties. Strategies that change the outward appearance of the party, such as changing the logo or leadership, can present a "reformed" party that people may not even associate with the previous totalitarian administration (Guigal et al. 2011). Other strategies include internal restructuring of the party itself, which include a shift in party platform that moderates its beliefs in order to cast a larger net to attract votes (Markovic 2013). Aurelian Guigal's work on the electoral makeup of Romania's post-communist parties provides an excellent example of these techniques in the form of the PSD.

For example, the history of the PSD in Romania can be traced back to its first iteration, the National Salvation Front, the direct successor of the Communist Party of Romania. Guigal et

al. point out that the National Salvation Front underwent a transformation process over the course of a decade that included renaming the party, changing the logo, and even splitting up only to reform in later years (Guigal et al. 2011). These examples demonstrate the ways that a communist-successor party can restructure to become more viable during national elections, and might provide a model for other parties seeking to change their electoral fortunes.

What Guigal et al. fail to consider is party reimaging and the effects that rebranding a party can have on its electoral success. Considering that no party has technically won a majority of seats in a subsequent election in Romania, they prematurely assume that this is a signal of volatility during national elections. I believe that there is instead a pattern behind the apparent volatility that is caused by party reimaging. At first glance it may appear that there is a new leading leftist party in Romania each election cycle, but a closer examination may reveal that there is similar party leadership (potentially identical) between new and old parties. Examining election result data for each cycle must be coupled with an inspection of party dynamics as well as the underlying social factors that catalyze the "rebirth" of the Romanian leftist parties in new election cycles.

Downs also identifies several strategies that parties can use to win support. The first of these strategies is the usage of coalition-building among minority parties. Coalitions function to unite parties that take a contrary stand to a ruling party or government (Downs 1956, 55). More accurately, coalitions are partnerships between parties that share a common set of beliefs or at least sit adjacent to each other on the political spectrum. Political parties that have small, yet significant membership can unite with other parties that either contrast the majority ruling party or align similarly along the political spectrum in order to be successful in winning seats. This "coalition-of-minorities" comes with its own challenges, including in-fighting among member

parties and moderating its beliefs to attract more voters (Downs 1956, 59-60). This is an important strategy in multiparty systems; it allows for a diversity of parties while still pitting only a few groups against each other during election cycles.

Coalition building is further covered by Elizabeth Bakke and Nick Sitter, particularly in the Czech Republic in *Why do parties fail? Cleavages, government fatigue and electoral failure in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary 1992– 2012*. They believe that coalitions moderate more radical member parties, creating a balanced, moderated super-party that acts more or less as a singular unit (Bakke & Sitter 2013). The electoral success of coalition members contributes to the broader success of the coalition as a whole. Voters associate coalition members with one another, which can either be a boon or a detriment to the coalition. If one member party performs well in an election and is popular while in power, then voters may be more likely to vote for other coalition partners (Bakke & Sitter 2013). Coalitions allow fringe parties on the ends of the political spectrum to have a better chance in winning seats in the legislature because it can distribute voter confidence among members.

The difference between the utilization of certain strategies is an interesting point of analysis. There is tension between the values of coalition building and reimaging when comparing the KSCM and the PSD. On the one hand, the KSCM underwent minor structural change after it formed in 1989; the logo remained and the party even kept the word "communist" in its name; whereas the PSD restructured at least five times, altering the name and logo with each new iteration. Similarly, a key strategy of the PSD is coalition building, where it joins up with other left-wing parties to form the bulk of the leftist opposition in Romania. The KSCM has had little presence in the Czech Republic's coalitions in both the legislature and the executive.

Michal Pink looks at the general makeup of the electoral base of the Czech leftist parties. He demonstrates that support for the KSCM generally comes from low-income regions along the periphery of the country (Pink 2010). If there is an external factor not directly associated with party politics, such as income or national GDP, then individual party strategy might be limited in its impact on voter behavior. I will use this evidence to explore the impact that fluctuations in GDP, the Gini coefficient and HDI have on the voter base. If there is a rise in inequality, this may attract more voters to the KSCM. Conversely, a rise in per capita GDP may influence voters to make decisions based on more conservative fiscal policy.

EU accession is an interesting point of analysis: it differs from the other four points in that it impacts the Czech elections only until 2004, but impacts the Romanian elections until 2007, the countries' respective years of accession. High socioeconomic gains expected by the populations of both countries were met with little reward in the initial years of EU membership (Andreev 2009). While the governing parties pleaded for patience as economic reforms blanketed both countries, voters began to look elsewhere. This dissatisfaction shifted the distribution of votes in subsequent elections and allowed other populist and fringe parties to become more viable (Andreev 2009). This may explain sudden increases in the voter turnout of the KSCM and PSD-predecessor parties just after EU accession. While the Czech Republic was quickly able to adapt to EU membership and benefit economically from its undervalued currency, Romania struggled to adapt and experienced numerous economic setbacks in the initial years of membership (Andreev 2009). EU membership is a factor linked with the socioeconomic factors like GDP because membership forced various economic policies that may have been viewed unfavorably by some.

The nature of leadership and how it influences both party and voter behavior cannot be ignored. Leadership can best be described as "the ability to influence voters to adopt certain views as expressing their own will" (Downs 1956, 87). Charismatic leaders that are involved with popular social movements can be very influential, and can have a big impact on election results. Considering the popularity of Vaclav Havel and Ion Iliescu, the first presidents elected after the Czech Republic and Romania's respective revolutions, party leadership must be examined to demonstrate the roles it plays in legislative elections.

Closely tied to leadership is the issue of corruption and the perception thereof. Voters give their support to parties and leaders that they believe will best represent their interests in government. Parties involved in scandal can impact voter behavior on a national scale. Countries that report higher levels of perceived corruption also report less voter turnout (Sunderstom & Stockemer 2015). The actual level of corruption in government matters less than the public's *perception* of corruption. Sunderstom & Stockemer demonstrate that the perception of corruption "reduces the value of the civic duty of voting" (2015, 2). Conversely, less corruption equals increased voter participation. Corruption is an important aspect of the electoral process, and examining how it impacts voter behavior in the Czech Republic and Romania may reveal shifts in allegiances from one party to another.

Election result data is publically available, and the European Journal of Political Research compiles result data since 1989 in a database called the "Political Data Yearbook." The database collects election data from each EU member state (minus Croatia, plus the UK), and breaks down each general election by party and percentage of votes received. Most of the data for each country is up-to-date to the recent elections in 2013. To date, the 2016 elections in the Czech Republic and Romania have not taken place, but their data will be included if time is

allotted after October/November 2016. The Political Data Yearbook will be a useful source, as it takes the guesswork out of gathering election results.

Methodology

My research indicates that the factors that influence the electoral success of communist-successor parties are (ranked in order of most influential to least influential):

1. Party Reimaging

2. Coalition Building

3. Party Leadership

4. Corruption & Scandal

5. EU Accession

6. Social Indicators

The purpose of this study is to explore the overall impact of these factors on the electoral success of the communist-successor parties in the CR and Romania. I will compare events associated with each of these factors against election results for each year. For example, if a party entered into a coalition, I will see if that marked any fluctuation in vote share received. Each section will include a detailed explanation of the factor, followed by an analysis of the factor's impact, then a comparison of the CR and Romania's respective experience with that factor. The conclusion section will then discuss the overall importance of each factor as well as discuss their interdependencies.

The literature has pointed out that these six factors are very influential on overall party politics in Europe, yet little is known about how they impact communist-successor parties

individually. Therefore, this study will explore their impact not just on communist-successor parties, but on elections in transition countries. Throughout the process, other factors may be revealed, but my study will only focus on the aforementioned factors. In fact, it is my hope that other influential factors are discovered, establishing a foundation for future studies on post-communist elections.

When discussing election results, I look at two figures. The most important figure is "vote share" or the percentage of total votes that the party receives. For example, a vote share of 20% means that party received 20% of the total national vote. The second figure is voter turnout, or the total number of votes that a party receives. While closely related, the two figures can differ in correlation. Some election cycles might experience low voter turnout, so relying just on aggregate votes received may be misleading. Similarly, comparing the number of votes is difficult because Romania has a much larger population, and thus has a higher number of available votes per election. The percentage of vote share is a clearer way to show actual party success, and is a better tool to compare parties in countries of different sizes.

While both the Czech Republic and Romania were democratized in the same year, their respective election years do not match up after 1996. This is because the Czech Republic held emergency elections in 1998 that altered their subsequent election years. For the tables and figures throughout this project, Czech election years will be marked with an asterisk (*), meanwhile Romanian election years will not have a symbol. From here, it is important to explore the concept of electoral volatility in greater detail as it pertains to the CR and Romania individually.

The Volatility Index developed by Mogens Pedersen is a useful tool to analyze the degree of change in a party's electoral base. By adding the change in percentage of each party from one election to the next, then dividing by two, we can come up with a figure by which to compare PSD and KSCM electoral success each election. Scott Mainwaring provides an example of its usage, "if Party A wins 43% in Election 1 and 53% in Election 2, while Party B declines from 57% to 47%, volatility equals 10 + 10 divided by two, or ten" (Mainwaring 1998). The equation is as follows:

$$V = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \left| p_{it} - p_{i(t+1)} \right|}{2}$$

[5]

Where n is the number of parties in an election, p is the percentage of votes received by the party (i) in a period of time (t). This is then subtracted by the percentage received in time ($t+1$). (Concha 2014).

Or put much more simply:

$$(|A| + |B|) / 2 = X$$

Where A is the absolute value of Party A's change in percentage of votes gained or lost, B is the absolute value of Party B's change in percentage of votes gained or lost, and X is the outcome. By calculating this percentage, I can see to what extent each party is attracting or losing voters,

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[5] Formula cited from Eduardo Olivares Concha's report, *Institutionalization of party systems: a cross-regional approach using the Weighted Volatility Index.* 2014.

but more importantly, I can see where the new votes are coming from and where the lost votes are going.

A few election years warrant particular attention due to their unique outcomes for each communist-successor party. The 1996 election was a big year for both communist-successor parties. It technically marked the first true elections in the Czech Republic since the split with Slovakia three years prior. In the Czech Republic, the Social Democrats emerged as the bulk of the opposition to the Civic Democrats who had been in power through the transition period. With a viable leftwing opposition, the KSCM lost 30% of its voter base; the drop from 14% to 10% of the vote was not the most dramatic shift in vote shares in KSCM history, but it did result in the lowest turnout in the party's history. (see Figure 2). That year, the Czech Social Democrats (CSSD) had a strong year, tipping the scales from the right to the left. This was also the same year that the KSCM experienced its first decrease in vote share. While the KSCM lost 3.72% of the vote share, the CSSD increased by 19.91% of the national vote. This means that in a year where the leftwing had major support, the KSCM actually lost votes. Using the Volatility Index, the 1996 election for the KSCM looks like:

$$(|3.72| + |19.91|) / 2 = 11.82$$

With 11.82% volatility, the KSCM was likely deemed too radical by left-leaning voters. If voters had a more centrally-aligned party that had a better chance of opposing the rightwing ODS party, than that would draw some of the more moderate voters away from the KSCM. From 1996 onward, the CSSD has been the major opposition party to the ODS. The KSCM has experienced high electoral volatility in other years as well, such as the 2002 and 2004 elections.

The 2002 elections marked a high point for both the Christian Democrat Party (KDU) as well as the KSCM. That year, both parties received the highest percentage of vote share that either had ever experienced, and neither have been able to achieve a similar level of success since. The KSCM received 18.51% of the vote, making it the second-strongest party in the country, meanwhile the KDU received 14.27%, drawing votes away from both the ODS and CSSD parties.

2004, the year of Czech accession to the EU, reversed the outcome of the previous election. The KSCM and KDU lost significant amounts of the vote share (5.7% and 7.04% respectively). Meanwhile, the ODS and CSSD parties took back their vote shares, with ODS emerging with 35.38% of the vote. This was the ODS's strongest performance in an election since the Velvet Revolution. That year, since the ODS absorbed most of the fluctuation in votes, KSCM volatility looked like:

$$(|5.7| + |10.91|) / 2 = 8.305$$

Exploring the reasons why the KSCM experienced high amounts of electoral volatility in some years, but not others, is a core aspect of this project. Similarly, analyzing the electoral volatility of the PSD will allow me to draw connections between the various factors, as well as rank them by level of impact on election results.

The PSD has generally had more success than the KSCM during national legislative elections, but has also experienced degrees of volatility much higher than those of the KSCM. After the revolution, the FSN emerged with 67% of the vote, largely because it was seen as a beacon of democracy and voters associated it with the rebellion against Ceausescu. As electoral thresholds were implemented and smaller parties either faded away or were absorbed into larger

parties, the PSD experienced high levels of electoral volatility, especially in the early years. In

1992, the FSN had already split into two parties; Ion Iliescu took loyal members and founded the

FDSN, which temporarily split the vote. Additionally, the center-right party, the National Liberal

Party (PNL), consolidated support and formed the Democratic Convention of Romania coalition.

In other words, the predecessor to the PSD lost support to two major parties that year, and the

volatility looked like:

$$(|38.73|+|13.1|+|10.38| / 2 = 31.11$$

The high degree of electoral volatility in 1992 was just the beginning of a period of

fluctuation that lasted until the 2000 elections. The PDSR, successor of the FDSN and

predecessor to the PSD, had been merging with smaller parties for years. The rightwing parties

had additionally been losing ground to the dominant PDSR. While the PDSR took 37.2% of the

vote, the PNL and the Democratic Convention of Romania were left with roughly 7.5% of the

total vote share. That year, while volatility was very high, it was mostly to the benefit of the

PSD:

$$(|14.01|+|23.22|) / 2 = 18.62$$

Between 2000 and 2012, the PSD managed to maintain between 34% and 37% of the

vote share, meaning the party experienced relatively low levels of electoral volatility. However,

in 2012, the PSD formed a coalition with the PNL and a few other parties. The resulting USL

coalition took almost 61% of the vote share that year, the biggest success of the PSD since the

revolution. It is difficult to calculate volatility in this scenario because the PNL had historically

been opposed to the PSD; the two parties were in constant competition for seats, but after they

joined forces their respective voter bases contributed to the same goal. It is important to note that

this only applied to the Romanian legislature; in fact, a candidate from the PSD and one from the PNL competed against each other during the presidential election, resulting in the collapse of the coalition after 2012.

Understanding that electoral volatility exists in both the CR and Romania is important to demonstrate the relevance of this research. If some years are more volatile than others, than it is essential to explore the factors that cause that volatility. Since vote share fluctuates from year to year, then this indicates a shift in support, however minute. Perhaps the party has direct influence over voter behavior through reimaging strategies or coalition building; maybe the parties' actions or leadership can influence behavior; or maybe external factors such as GDP fluctuations have a greater impact. From here, an in-depth analysis of each factor will rule out those least influential, highlight the most influential, and uncover new factors for future study.

Party Reimaging

Reimaging refers to a party's ability to restructure its outward appearance in order to accomplish two goals, revision and expansion. First, a party can distance itself from unpopular policies or scandalous events that could harm the party's performance in national elections. This is in effort to preserve its existing voter base; it demonstrates a "fresh start" to wary voters in the aftermath of events deemed unpopular in the public eye. Second, reimaging gives the party the opportunity to expand its voter base by attracting new voters. Often this is accomplished by moderating policies that may have been considered too extreme by citizens who sit more towards the center of the political spectrum (Markovic 2013). Reimaging consists of some or all of the following components: changing the party name; changing the party logo; changing party

leadership; shifting the party platform; reevaluating its own history; and to lesser extent, coalition building. The last component will be covered in further detail in the next section. An analysis of which strategies each party has used will be useful in deducing how voters react to particular stimuli controlled by the party.

The KSCM is slow to adapt to changing political climates; their usage of reimaging strategies is minimal in comparison to other communist-successor parties in the region. The way the ruling communist party handled the Velvet Revolution allowed the party to exist in some fashion after the transition. By conceding to the demands of Civic Forum, it was allowed to continue operating as a political party until the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993. In the first free elections in 1990, the original Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) made a strong showing, earning just over 13% of the vote, see Figure 2. Even before democratization, the trajectory of Czechoslovakia was clearly heading toward division, so one of the KSC's final acts as ruling party was to create a separate party that would operate within the soon-to-be-formed Czech Republic. The result was the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM), which would continue to play a major role in the country's politics.

Due to its oppressive history, the KSC was outlawed soon after the formation of the Czech Republic, leaving the KSCM as the sole representative of the former communist regime within the Czech Republic. The series of events leading up to the 1993 banishment of the KSC demonstrated several reimaging strategies. Introducing a new party in the wake of political unrest is an example of changing party leadership: the KSCM was originally a mere extension of the KSC, but with new leaders that were not directly associated with the KSC's central committee. Although the KSCM consisted of KSC party elite, it functioned within the new

democratic structure because it had a "new face" – a new name, logo, and party leadership that presented the KSCM as a different party.

Interestingly enough, the newly formed KSCM did little to distance itself from its totalitarian origins. It did not change its name, even deciding to keep the word "communist" within the name. There were attempts by moderates within the party to introduce a social democratic platform in 1990 and 1992, but there was always more support for maintaining a communist platform (Markovic 2013). This does not mean that the current KSCM actively supports the decisions made by its predecessor. While the party leadership may debate from time to time about how exactly to address the events of the past, there is a general trend to discredit some of the more extreme abuses. This dichotomy is interesting because it demonstrates a desire to continue toward a goal of communism, while basically stating that the first attempt from 1945-1989 was a good idea in theory, but was simply executed poorly.

Figure 4. Party Reimaging through Logo Change

1A. Romanian Communist Party, 1965 -1989

PCR Logo.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_PCR.svg
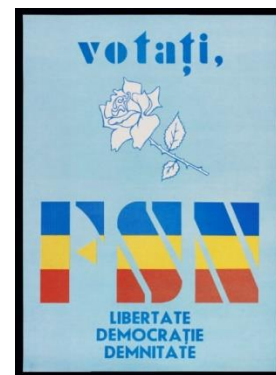
2A. National Salvation Front, 1989-1992

FSN Logo.
Http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O193069/vote-fsn-national-salvation-front-poster-unknown/

3A. Democratic National Salvation Front, 1992 - 1993

Http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O193069/vote-fsn-national-salvation-front-poster-unknown/

4A. Party of Social Democracy in Romania, 1993 – 2001

PDSR Logo.
Http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/ro%7Dpsd.html

5A. Social Democratic Party, 2001 – Present

PSD Logo. Http://www.psd.ro/, Bucharest

1B. Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 1948 – 1989

KSC Logo.
Https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Emblem_of_the_Communist_Party_of_Czechoslovakia.svg

2B. Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, 1989 – Present

KSCM Logo Http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/cz-politics-kscm.htm

Balancing the desire to create a new socialist republic with the need to function within the present democratic system is reflected in the party's symbol. Symbols are important to easily identify a party in media, and are often indicative of a party's ideology. The KSCM maintains the red star that was used by the KSC for a half century; see Figure 4, 1B and 2B. If the party leadership had wanted to completely distance itself from its roots, then it would have adopted a new logo that avoided recycling symbols from the previous logo. The KSCM intentionally reminds voters of its past by referencing the former logo and ideology. While at first glance this is counterintuitive, the KSCM's strongest support comes from former members of the previous communist party. While these voters may not agree with totalitarianism, they received social benefits from the previous regime, such as guaranteed employment. With this in mind, the KSCM highlights the aspects of its past that would be well-received by voters, without having to change its platform entirely.

Additionally, the youth division of the KSCM, the Communist Youth Union (KSM), was banned from 2006 to 2010 because it advocated for the public ownership of the means of production through revolutionary action (March 2011). The actions of the KSM were deemed illegal by the newly elected government in 2006 based on the 1993 law, the Act on Illegality of the Communist Regime and on the Resistance Against It. This is the same law that banned the KSC from participating in national politics. Despite being directly opposed by the executive and by the majority of the legislative branch for years, the KSCM did not moderate its platform to attract votes or to appease the rest of the government. It has actively resisted reimaging itself, but has been able to consistently garner support from at least 10% of the population every single election cycle; see Figure 2.

On the other hand, the PSD in Romania has utilized numerous reimaging strategies; changing its outward appearance almost every other election cycle. Namely, internal volatility has caused numerous fractures within the party, producing several iterations of the same party over the years. The National Salvation Front (FSN) was itself a splinter group formed within the Romanian Communist Party: Ion Iliescu, a prominent leader within the party who favored party reform, led a faction of other party members in the wake of the growing unrest in Romania in the latter half of 1989.

Whenever a new edition of the party emerged, the logo changed with it; see Figure 4, 2A through 5A. The one consistency the reader will note is that the rose is present in each logo. If the party had wanted to become a "new" party, abandoning the logo should have been the first step. Yet despite whatever internal conflicts persisted between moderates and radicals, the PSD always maintained some outward link to its past. One possibility is that each edition of the PSD has wanted to remind its voter base of its roots within the Romanian Revolution and the democratization process.

Another way to reimage a party is to change the name. The PSD has changed its name five times over the course of the last three decades, usually as a result of internal conflict between party factions. The National Salvation Front fractured in 1992 due to ideological differences between then-President Petre Roman and Ion Iliescu. A posterchild for the FSN movement, Iliescu took most of the party leadership with him to form a new party, the Democratic National Salvation Front (FDSN). Without Iliescu, the FSN shambled along until reforming itself into the Democratic Party (PD), which would become a major challenger in the leftist-bloc of the country in later years. The new FSN leadership would consist of a new group of individuals not as associated with the former communist regime as the FDSN leadership was.

The FDSN outperformed the outdated FSN during the 1992 elections, but still only managed to win a little over 28% of the vote, see Figure 2. This was because numerous minority left-wing parties competed in the 1992 elections, splitting the vote between the FDSN, FSN, and at least three other smaller parties.

Splitting the party is a dangerous maneuver because now both parties share a pool of voters. Yet in the case of the FDSN, reimaging drew attention away from the radicals who lingered in the FSN. In essence, the FDSN was able to remove members of the party elite who did not share the same vision as Iliescu. While reimaging may not have had much immediate impact on voter turnout, it allowed the party to shift its platform to a social democratic one that would be more attractive to voters. In that regard, reimaging had prolonged success that allowed the future versions of the FDSN to pursue a program that it could market effectively.

It is important to note that the early years of the Romanian communist-successors were marked not with the immediate adoption of Western democratic values, but instead focused on the reformation of the Communist party (Giugal et al. 2011). This means that there was a belief by many members that the FSN would continue along a path of socialism, eventually bringing about a more socially just form of communism. Lessons learned from the 1992 elections prompted quick response from the FDSN. In 1993, the FDSN joined forces with several smaller parties to create the Party for Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR) (Lovatt & Lovatt 2001). For the next eight years, the PDSR became a left-wing powerhouse in legislative elections, peaking at 37% of the vote in the 2000 elections.

Despite receiving the largest share of votes in the 2000 elections, the PDSR merged with the Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR[6]) in 2001. The result was the Social Democratic Party (PSD), and marked the final merger the PSD has undergone; for the last fifteen years, the PSD has utilized coalitions instead of mergers. While the PSD has brought in numerous partners over the years, it has stressed that its social democratic platform remain at the core of the party's values. The various policies implemented by the PSD have only varied slightly to adjust to public sentiment, but has rarely adopted the policies of its merger partners. Basically, the PSD absorbs other parties, regardless of their size or structure.

This is all the more interesting considering the party's leadership structure over the years. All of the iterations of the PSD maintained the same structure and even the same party leadership. With this in mind, it is simple to trace the lineage of the PSD back to the FSN, considering Iliescu's involvement. Further, the remnants of the communist party that were not prosecuted ended up following Iliescu over to the FSN. In other words, save for a few prominent members, the FSN was comprised of the exact same individuals that had been leading the totalitarian regime of Nicolai Ceausescu. The PSD has consistently managed to change its outward appearance while doing little to restructure itself internally. There is a dichotomy within the PSD that balances the desire for party reform while also reminding the public that this party had always been involved with the democratization process of Romania.

Reimaging allows the party to distance itself from scandalous events. Reimaging also compensates for the loss of support by absorbing the voter bases of smaller parties. By consolidating the left bloc, the PSD reduces the number of viable options that a voter has during

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[6] It is important to note the difference between the PDSR and the PSDR, although the names are strikingly similar, they operated as two separate parties until their merger in 2001. The PSDR stated that its ideology is a successor of the pre-communist era party of the same name (Bucharest Tribunal 2000).

an election. They can either vote for the PSD or one of the minority parties that do not receive much support, or completely shift their political alignment and vote right. The PSD ensures support by blocking viable alternatives through the use of mergers. For example, after 2004, voters no longer had the PSDR and PDSR to choose from, but instead had the new PSD to represent the Romanian left.

The KSCM and PSD are almost polar opposites on the subject of reimaging. The KSCM has resisted change, and has avoided major alterations in its platform for the entirety of the Czech Republic's transition to democracy and well after. The PSD's platform shifted from a revisionist stance on communism to a social democratic program that casts a much wider net. This explains why the KSCM and PSD have such polarized opinions on the usage of reimaging. The KSCM has a consistent and loyal voter base, minimizing the need to adjust its platform or outward appearance. The PSD on the other hand, while making up the majority of Romania's leftwing bloc, is more vulnerable to electoral volatility.

The PSD's vulnerability is important because the party makes consistently strong showings during elections, yet if national support ever swung to the right the PSD would be devastated. The PSD must constantly maintain a popular favorability with the public, which means it has to match its policies to public sentiment. A good example of this is the EU accession process. Romanian citizens generally favored accession, thus persuading the PSD to be more cooperative with the EU's reformative suggestions. For the KSCM, popular support has never been the goal. The party leadership understands that they will likely not see a majority of support, but instead cultivate a strong relationship with a small niche in the political spectrum. In other words, the KSCM has fewer people to disappoint, and has little actual governance, while actual policies and leadership positions in Romania can be undone by a shift in support.

Reimaging is an important component of determining voter turnout. However, the PSD has exemplified that reimaging is only used when there is internal conflict within the party (with little consideration given to voters), or when the party wants the strength of additional parties. Reimaging capitalizes on the successes of a party in one of two ways. First, if a party splits, the new party conveys the message of "rebirth" and that the present leadership is cohesive in its beliefs. Or, reimaging occurs as a result of two or more parties merging together to form a stronger party, with the message being that together these parties can achieve even greater success.

Parties reimage themselves not when they are fearful of losing votes, but instead when they feel that their strength can be found in a "new" party, casting aside members with whom they clashed and bringing in new partners with whom they either agree or can easily control. The results of party reimaging are closer to the root of rationalizing the electoral success of communist-successor parties. In other words, the reimaging process itself does little to influence voters in the case of the PSD; other technical processes such as coalition building are the engines that determine electoral success.

While at first glance one would assume that every party should undertake reimaging strategies in order to achieve success at the polls. However, we must also consider that the dynamics in multiparty systems allow for party specialization in a sense. The KSCM can maintain a rigidly communist platform and still win votes, and therefore is quite influential in parliamentary politics. The PSD's focus encompasses executive politics, and thus had to reimage in order to be successful in more than one branch. Niche platforms work well in systems that can host multiple viewpoints, and thus multiple parties. By staying loyal to a communist platform,

the KSCM may not have a chance at holding executive office, but can monopolize the votes on its specific end of the political spectrum.

Coalition Building

Coalitions are legislative partnerships that occur in multiparty systems. Coalitions seek to pass legislation by joining their electoral strength. It is important to note that although coalition partners work together, the parties involved remain their own entities with separate organizational structures and leaderships. As a result, parties involved may not agree on every piece of legislation, but are committed to a common set of values. Some partnerships result in mergers, where two or more parties joined forces permanently - committing to a single leadership structure and continued mutual support. I will discuss both coalitions and mergers where applicable.

The KSCM has both resisted involvement with other parties, and been excluded from partnerships, for most of its existence. There is little room for compromise within its national platform, so partnering with other parties has been a challenge for years. Often considered a radical party, the KSCM has also been actively excluded from coalitions, particularly those which focus on the executive branch. Some parties, such as the CSSD, have even implemented an official ban on partnering with the KSCM, making it almost impossible for the communists to establish coalitions. In fact, the KSCM has been unable to establish formal coalition ties with any party since the transition (Pehe 2002). This may change as relations thaw between parties, or when parties become more desperate for support. As time goes by, political parties may dissociate the KSCM with the oppressive nature of the KSC, which is a factor in a current

proposition from the CSSD – one that might end the coalition ban on the KSCM and bring them into a legislative partnership during the 2016 elections. This tentative proposal will undo almost thirty years of political isolation.

There was an instance in 1992 when the KSCM banded together with a few smaller left-wing parties to form the Left Bloc (LB) coalition, however this alliance did not survive the split from Slovakia. The LB was a group of communists that had did not necessarily agree with the KSC or KSCM, but still had a strong leftist ideology. The other parties involved could not maintain a loyal voter base, and have since ceased to participate in elections. The short-lived alliance was less a result of active coalition building, and more a result of historical, personal connections that KSCM members had with the members of the other parties. In fact, most of the LB consisted of former KSC and KSCM members who split away after the transition to democracy (Pike 2016). So if the KSCM could not partner with other communists, it could not partner with anyone.

Gradually, the leading Czech parties have adopted a policy of tolerance and even cooperation with the communists. Particularly the leading leftwing party, the CSSD, has counted on the KSCM ministers to support legislation that it pushed through the legislature. Particular pieces of legislation were backed by both parties, leading to an unwilling partnership between the two. Legislation including denying property restitution, expanding public services, and maintaining a public agricultural sector was supported by both parties (Rizova 2012). After the emergence of the TOP 09 and ANO parties as major contenders in Czech politics, the ODS and CSSD have had to begin looking in other places to establish relationships that could lead to a strong government. The CSSD relationship with the KSCM, however, has not translated into a

governing coalition that would involve the KSCM in the Prime Minister's cabinet formation, at least not yet.

Coalitions are an inevitable phenomenon in multiparty systems. With so many parties vying for office, the vote share will undoubtedly be divided such that no party receives a majority of the vote. Typically the partnerships that a party makes with other closely-aligned parties are essential to electoral success. For the KSCM this seems to be less of the case. There were ten parties that competed in the 1990 elections, four of which actually won seats (Civic Forum, the KSCM, the Movement for Autonomus Democracy, and the Christian Democratic Union). The Christian Democratic Union and the KSCM were the only two parties in that election to utilize coalitions; however, Civic Forum was such a large social movement that it too can be considered a coalition party.

The years that the KSCM used coalitions, 1990 and 1992, were very successful, yielding 13% and 14% of the vote respectively, see Figure 2. The KSCM's Left Bloc partners eventually lost popular support; they were too small or ineffective in marketing themselves to the broader public. As a result, the 1996 elections showed a decrease in support for the KSCM. However we must also consider the fact that these results occurred prior to the split from Slovakia. The split from Slovakia simply meant fewer aggregate voters available to each party. Perhaps the drop in support was less a result of failed coalition partnerships as it was a decrease in the voter pool. The impact of coalitions on the KSCM would be easier to analyze if there had been a year prior to the division that the KSCM was not involved in a coalition. The present coalition potential that the 2016 elections bring is an exciting opportunity for the KSCM. If the CSSD brings the communists into its coalition and cabinet, we will be able to compare it with precoalition years

that occurred after the split. The usage of coalitions and mergers is much easier to analyze in the case of Romania, where there was no great national divide or shift in population.

There are big changes on the horizon for the KSCM if they continue their partnership with the CSSD. In October 2016, the CSSD announced that it would invite the KSCM to the government after the upcoming 2017 elections (Czech News Agency 2016). This would mean that the KSCM will be allowed to participate in the executive management of the country for the first time since 1989. Since the Prime Minister and his party decide on which coalition partners to form a government with, this marks a major milestone for the legitimacy of the KSCM. Czech communists do not sit on the fringe of national politics any longer. A party with a voter base as strong and loyal as the KSCM cannot be excluded forever; 15% of the votes cannot be ignored. In fact, Czech political analyst David Klimes wrote that the solid votes for the KSCM could be enough to stabilize a government, particularly if there is a close race between the CSSD and the conservative ODS party (Klimes 2016). While nothing is presently set in stone, the upcoming Czech elections could set a new precedent on involving the communist-successor party in the government. It appears as though no party actually wants the KSCM involved in national politics, but now some are willing to cooperate with them out of sheer necessity. The rise of the third party competitors such as TOP09 and ANO in recent years challenges the dominance of the ODS and CSSD in the Czech Republic. It is no coincidence that the KSCM was approached to be in coalition with the CSSD after 2013, when ANO took over 18% of vote. ANO managed to secure second place in the legislative elections, supplanting the ODS party as the main challenger to the current CSSD dominance.

For the PSD in Romania, coalitions have been vital to its success since the early 1990's. After Ion Iliescu left the FSN and founded the FDSN, he and his partners continuously sought

out and partnered with other left-aligned parties, and even a few center-right parties. Ranging

from the absorption of small parties that could not meet the electoral threshold to partnering with

the second-most powerful center-right party in Romania (the National Liberal Party), coalitions

and mergers have been an asset to PSD success. Without using these tools, it is unlikely that the

party would ever achieve over 30% of the vote; coalition years appear to be the only instances

when the PSD was able to push past the 30% mark other than the 1990 election when it won a

landslide victory in both the legislative and executive branches.

Mergers were a common theme in the early years of the FSN and its successors. The

FDSN merged with several minority parties from the 1992 election, including the Social

Democratic Party of Romania, the Republican Party, and the Cooperative Party. This partnership

created the PDSR, ready to compete in the 1996 election. The electoral volatility in 1992

demonstrates a shift in voter behavior from a unanimous support of the FSN to a more

individualistic support for a multitude of parties. Thus, the FSN had to implement a strategy to

consolidate its power through the use of mergers and coalitions. The PSD itself is the result of a

coalition between the PDSR and the Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR), who merged

together in 2001 in order to maximize their voter turnout and form an adequate opposition to a

growing center-right movement (Guigal et al. 2011). Though the success rate of mergers is

questionable, the PSD managed to consolidate a large portion of the leftist parties in Romania,

paving the way for future success.

While mergers do not instantly translate into increased vote share, when looked at

through a lens of reimaging, their impact is much greater. Mergers essentially create a new party,

and while the stronger party will dominate policy decisions, the incoming party can influence

direction and platform. When a new logo or name is produced, the party has undergone

reimaging, like in the case of the PDSR and PSDR becoming the PSD. Mergers allow the party

to consolidate their particular end of the political spectrum; they eliminate other viable parties

while simultaneously absorbing their voter pool. The success of coalition building relies on the

reimaging techniques that make a party attractive to potential partners.

The PSD favors coalition building as a strategy to bolster its success rate in national

elections. In the 2000, 2004, and 2008 elections, the PSD aligned with smaller parties that could

not reach the 5% minimum threshold to win seats in the national legislature (Giugal et al. 2011).

This strategy worked very well because the PSD always remained the dominant party in these

micro-coalitions. The PSD could count on the votes of the minor parties in exchange for shared

influence; the PSD still holds the majority of the influence because they could easily cut the

minor parties from the coalition for insubordination. It simply cashed in on votes that would

otherwise be wasted and yield no parliamentary seats. The PSD has not always sought out just

smaller parties; in fact, the PSD lead the creation of the largest coalition in Romania's history

(Guigal et al. 2011).

Until 2014, the PSD was a member of the Social Liberal Union (USL), a coalition of

parties dominated largely by the PSD. The coalition consisted mostly of centrist parties that

leaned to both sides of the political spectrum. The PSD had moderated its platform so much that

it could cooperate with fiscal conservatives in the legislature. Arguably, the PSD has shifted

further and further away from the left bloc that it is difficult to even consider them a social

democratic party at this point. Difficulties emerged during the 2014 elections when two members

of the leading left- and right-wing parties (PSD and the National Liberal Party) ended up

competing against each other for president (Freedom House 2015). Infighting among member

parties about which candidate to support, and which cabinet members should be appointed, ultimately lead to the coalition disbanding.

There is a price to pay for the success that coalitions bring. If member parties disagree on legislation or candidate nominees, the coalition becomes destabilized and can tear itself apart, as was the case for the USL. To reconcile the differences between member parties, the PSD has had to adjust its platform over the years to cast a broader net to maintain positive legislative relationships. Early policies of the FSN were to reform the former communist party, not introduce capitalism. However, over time, the PSD has shifted closer to the center of the political spectrum in order to appease as many people as possible; socialists, centrists, and even moderate conservatives all can agree on a number of the PSD's economic and political polices.

Coalitions have brought much electoral success for the PSD. The coalitions utilized since the 2000 election have guaranteed a minimum of 34% of the national vote in every subsequent election. In 2012, the USL coalition achieved a landslide victory with an overwhelming 58% of the vote, see Figure 2. Mergers on the other hand, have had little effect on the electoral success of the party. After the PDSR and PSDR merged to create the PSD, there was only a marginal increase of 0.1% vote share for the PDSR in the next election. The combination of the two parties seemingly did not merge their voter bases. This is because voter support for the PSDR had been dwindling, and the two parties' platforms were strikingly similar. With this in mind, it is clear that coalition building is more relevant to party success than mergers.

If the KSCM were able to establish similar legislative relationships, it would arguably achieve much more success at the polls. The ability of a party to forge these ties is entirely dependent on their respective histories. The KSCM is denied access to coalitions because of the

role it played in the previous regime, and has little to do with the party's actual platform. The PSD receives overwhelming support for a similar reason. Capitalizing on its early success, the PSD has been able to attract coalition and merger partners that it simply absorbs to make a stronger version of itself. The KSCM will be unlikely to escape its totalitarian past, and likely does not wish to do so. The coalition potential of the former communist party would be even stronger if other Czech parties did not seek it out of desperation for a stabilizing partner. In order for the KSCM to be taken seriously, it must reconcile its platform with the broader public's desires, meaning that it could benefit from some of the reimaging techniques mentioned earlier.

EU Accession

Acceding to the European Union is a lengthy process that involves the implementation of numerous policies and governmental structures. A country wishing to join the EU must satisfy several criteria, namely establishing democracy and the rule of law, a market economy, and ensuring it can meet financial and political obligations that accompany membership (EU 2016). After the collapse of communism, it was clear that most former-communist countries would seek to join the EU. The 2004 enlargement of the EU included the Czech Republic and nine other countries[7]. Romania joined in the 2007 enlargement, which also included Bulgaria. The Czech Republic acceded through a national referendum that was passed with 77% of voters choosing to join (Muller 2010). Romania did not leave the decision to voters, but instead submitted a declaration signed by all major political parties serving in parliament at that time (Snagov Declaration 1995). The differences leading up to the accession are important in order to assess

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[7] The other nine countries were Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

the political and economic climates of the country, and determining whether or not these differences impacted the electoral success of the communist-successor parties.

The Czech strategy to join the EU involved massive economic reforms that prioritized privatization of the bloated public sector. The government's strategy was to hit the economy with rapid changes in order to liberalize the system, a process called "Shock Therapy." While state assets were sold off, a wave of entrepreneurship swept the country and by 2003 over 33% of Czech workers considered themselves to be entrepreneurs (Oreskovic 2012). Although the KSCM had a significant portion of the vote, there was little it could do to stem the tide of reforms that introduced the market economy in an effort to join the EU. Without a functioning economy that emphasized free trade, the Czech accession process would have not have gotten off the ground. Yet the country was not alone in its efforts; the EU offered much assistance in the process.

The Czech government received a lot of international support from EU members during the accession process. For example, the German government partnered with the Czech Ministry of Agriculture in order to align the Czech system with the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) (Verheugen 2001). Under the previous regime, the state had absolute control over agricultural production, distribution, and even pricing. In order to adopt an open-market system, the Czech government had to sell off state assets, and with the help of the German government, create the State Agricultural Intervention Fund, which funded and implemented the CAP-friendly policies (Verheugen 2001). International intervention in Czech policies was contentious for the KSCM and other Euro-skeptics. State-ownership of the means of production, especially agriculture, is a core value of the KSCM and the "shock therapy" policies were unpopular within the party.

The KSCM has been vocal about its unwillingness to participate in International

Government Organizations (IGO's), such as the European Union and NATO. Party members of

the KSCM actively opposed the Czech accession process; in fact, 79% of its members were

shown to be opposed in polls leading up to the referendum (Markovic 2013). Despite their

seemingly unwillingness to participate in international politics, the KSCM has had several

ministers elected to office. Those ministers have typically aligned with the European United Left

– Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) group within the European Parliament. GUE/NGL is mostly

comprised of democratic socialists with a few communists sprinkled in. The group is concerned

with reforming the current EU political structure as well as disbanding NATO, which actually

closely aligns with the KSCM's platform. Presently, the KSCM has three members in the EU

Parliament, all of whom are members of the GUE/NGL group.

The KSCM's aversion to international institutions was similar to their distrust in

domestic policies for accession that were implemented by every cabinet since 1990. In the

KSCM's eyes, the EU represents a bastion of capitalism; it is a system in place purposed to

preserve and expand open-markets, with little regard to the class struggles associated with these

policies (Grebenicek 2005). Yet at the same time, modernizers within the party recognize the

potential of the EU as a provider of social benefits. Former party Chairman Grebenicek has

expressed his skepticism of the current EU model, but has also acknowledged the EU Social

Charter and encouraged other leftist parties to base their EU policies with welfare in mind

(Grebenicek 2005; Handl 2005). While there may be a version of the EU that the communists

support, the current goals of the European Project do not necessarily align with those of the

KSCM.

Another factor in the KSCM's distaste for the EU is the fact that 2004 was a year of high electoral volatility for the communists. After accession, the KSCM lost a significant portion of the vote share; see Figure 2. This is likely a result of the broader public's desire to join the EU; with the KSCM being so vehemently against membership, it lost the support of individuals who might have supported a communist agenda but also supported EU membership. Multiparty politics ensures that many viewpoints are represented in national politics, yet when 77% of the population favors one specific policy, parties that do not conform to that ideology naturally lose support.

During the initial years of transition, despite fluctuating inflation as a result of Shock Therapy, voter turnout for the KSCM declined for the first three elections after democratization. While its share of votes bumped up in 1992, it did so with almost 50,000 fewer aggregate votes, while losing another 275,000 in the 1996 election, see Figure 1. While support peaked at 18.5% in 2002, support dwindled again in the years after EU accession in 2004. The KSCM's staunch opposition to EU membership was not an attractive opinion for voters; hardline Euro-skeptics only made up about 13% of the voter base, basically consisting of the totality of the KSCM's voters. Maintaining a niche opinion such as anti-EU membership may appeal to a specific demographic, but will not yield overwhelming support.

In a stark contrast to the KSCM's position on the EU, PSD support for membership in the EU has always been very strong. In fact, Romania was the first post-communist country to establish a relationship with the EU, signing the European Agreement in 1993 (Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016). The expression of eagerness to join the EU was met by skepticism among EU parliamentarians who viewed Romania's political structures to be corrupt, with minimal state capacity to confront this issue (EU Report 1999; Stan 2006). In fact, Romania

was considered to be the single most corrupt country hoping to accede to the EU, and most

recommendations consisted of reforms to make the judiciary more independent, curbing

nepotism and cronyism, and ensuring the legitimacy of elections (EU Report 1999; Stan 2006).

Despite this, the EU was willing to work with Romania to establish the rule of law and an open-

market economy.

Throughout the democratization period, the PSD implemented numerous pro-western

policies aimed at establishing a positive relationship with the EU, US, and other western

institutions like NATO and the UN. These policies included participating in six UN

peacekeeping operations in the Balkans during the nineties, participating in the National Agency

for the Control of Strategic Exports and the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (ANCESIAC),

and even joining the US "Coalition of the Willing" in 2003 to invade Iraq (Stivatchis 2009).

Economically, Romania established positive relations with Ukraine concerning access to sea for

trade. This was due to the European Commission's request that Romania improve its

relationships with its neighbors.

The transition to a market-oriented economy was a more difficult process in Romania

than it was in the Czech Republic. Privatization was slow, with state-owned enterprises often

becoming bargaining chips for corrupt officials to use to receive bribes or other preferential

treatments. Initial policies in the early 1990's caused inflation to rise over 150%, and the market

only stabilized after 2000 (Incaltarau & Maha 2010). An influx of foreign direct investment

(FDI) also made it difficult for larger Romanian businesses to compete in their own market.

While it did take some time for the market to correct itself, by 2007 the country was achieving

positive GDP growth and had privatized most of its larger public companies.

Unfortunately for the Romanian government, both the EU and its own citizenry were skeptical of the progress it had made toward accession. It took until October 2004 for the EU to acknowledge that Romania had adopted a market economy (Incaltarau & Maha 2010). Even most Romanian citizens felt as though their country was not ready to become a member of the EU. Roughly 75% of the population felt that Romania was unprepared to join the EU in 2006, only one year before accession (Incaltarau & Maha 2010). Lukewarm support for membership was likely the reason why the PSD chose not to put the decision up to a referendum. All of the work it had done to accede could easily have been undermined by the population's distrust of the government's capabilities. Instead, the decision was left to the political elite, a questionable move that drew heavy international criticism.

For the PSD, membership in the EU presented itself as an opportunity to bolster its strength domestically. Upon EU Accession in 2007, the PSD joined the Party of European Socialists (PES), a larger confederation of social democratic parties within the EU political structure. The PES constitutes a major center-left party within the EU, which includes among its ranks the British Labour Party. With fourteen parliamentary seats, the PSD is able to partner with other strong left-leaning parties to influence EU decisions. For example, a major campaign by the PES is for the creation of Euro Bonds, government bonds backed by the EU that would give member states access to another form of capital (Party of European Socialists 2016). EU membership is an opportunity for the PSD to strengthen the Romanian economy and continue to strengthen their support.

EU accession was a very popular policy option for the PSD and its predecessors. By 1998, 71% of Romanian citizens supported accession, and even had the most positive opinion of the EU in Europe (EU Parliamentary Report 1998). By maintaining a pro-EU stance throughout

all of its iterations, the PSD was able to capitalize on that public sentiment in media, debates, and

most importantly, its justification for various reforms. Support for the PSD was strongest in the

election just prior to accession; the 2004 results yielded a 37.2% vote share. Similarly, the two

subsequent elections after accession demonstrated strong support for the PSD, see Figure 2. Even

though the general public felt as though Romania was not ready to join the EU when the time

came, it supported the party that headed up the accession effort.

Figure 5. Comparison of EU Parliamentary Elections in the CR and Romania

[8,9]
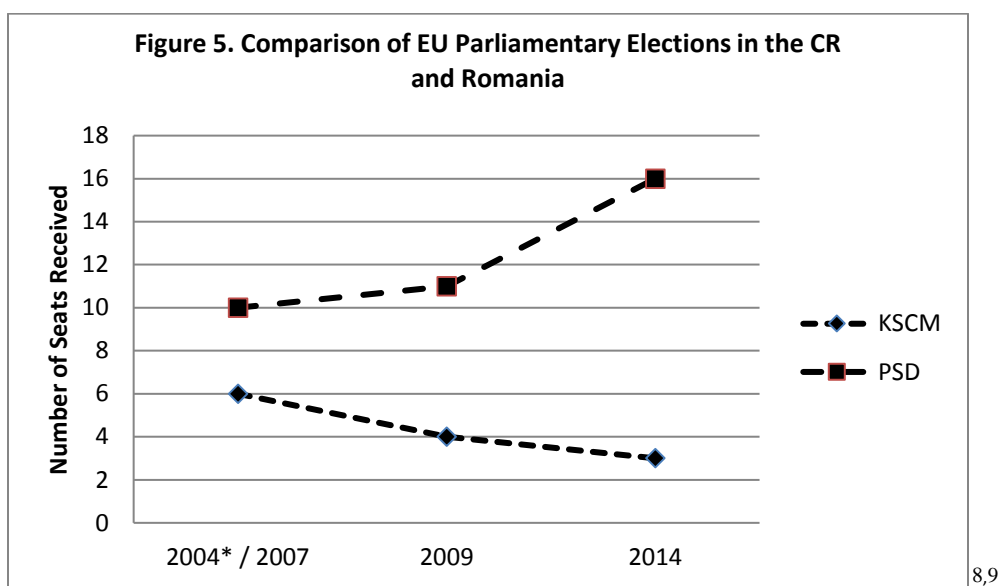
After accession, there are political benefits to membership in the form of the EU

Parliament. Parliamentary membership is based off of the population of each member state.

During the most recent EU elections in 2014, the Czech Republic had twenty-one seats, three of

which were claimed by the KSCM, equaling about 14% of the total. This accurately reflects the

national election results during the year prior, where the KSCM received roughly 14% of the

national vote. In Romania, the PSD has a much larger presence in national politics, and this is

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[8] Result data comes from EU parliamentary publications.

[9] The first data point is combination point of two years, 2004 and 2007, which are the years that the CR and Romania entered the EU respectively. After their entry year, they followed the same five year election scheduling as the rest of the EU.

represented in EU elections. Romania has thirty-two EU Parliamentary seats, fourteen of which were claimed by the PSD during the 2014 elections, see Figure 5.

The differences between the Czech Republic and Romania's accession strategies come mostly in the form of governmental capability. The Czech Republic received more international support than Romania did, and its institutions were stronger to begin with. The KSCM suffered from maintaining an unpopular position on the EU, whereas the PSD benefited from its platform. Now that both countries have acceded, the KSCM and PSD have begun adjusting to their roles in the EU parliament; the PSD has joined other leftwing mainstream parties to establish itself as a legitimate coalition partner, while the KSCM still sits on the fringe of the political spectrum with niche policies. In the coming years, it will be interesting to see if the PSD can maintain its support after the economic reforms, and perhaps we will see a more cooperative KSCM.

Corruption and Scandal

The Corruption Perceptions Index from Transparency International is a useful tool in analyzing the public perceptions of national governments around the world. The Index operates on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being highly corrupt, and 100 being completely honest and transparent. It is important to note that the Index is only indicative of perceived corruption, not necessarily of actual wrongdoing. Nevertheless, public perception is probably the single most important factor for a party to consider when developing its election strategy. East and Central Europe are plagued by high perceptions of corruption, with member states rarely reaching anywhere above the rank of 60 (Transparency International 2015). With that being said, the

Czech Republic and Romania are not perceived to be as corrupt as some of their neighbors,

namely Slovakia and Ukraine.

Figure 6. Comparison of Czech and Romanian Perceptions of Transparency
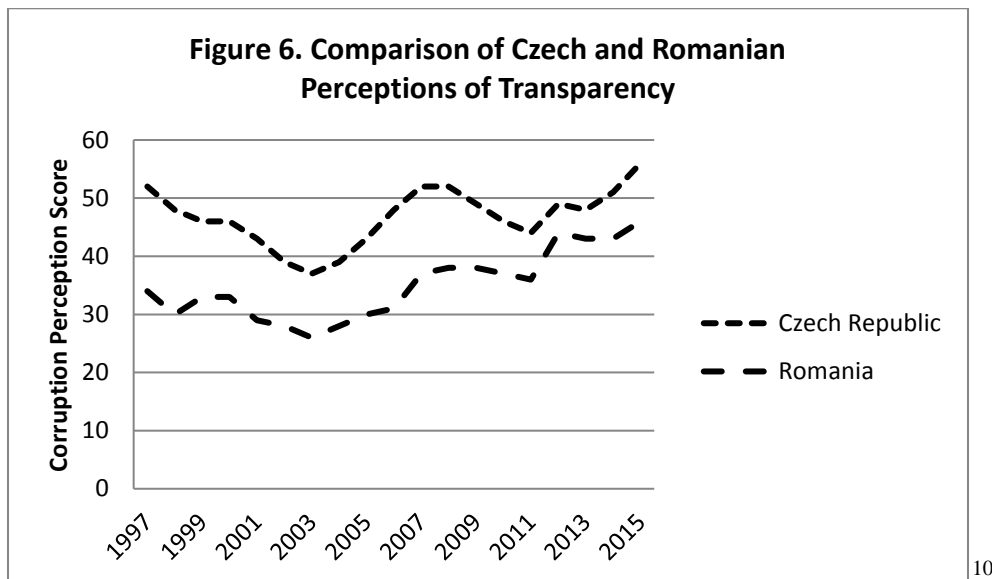
Early iterations of the corruption index based the scale on a range of one to ten, so scaling

the numbers to match is a simple matter of multiplying the score by ten. Figure 6 shows the

Corruption Perception score of the Czech Republic and Romania during their respective election

years. Romania has had a consistent upward trend in public confidence since 2002, meanwhile

the Czech Republic has wavered over the years. With that being said, the Czech scores have

always been higher than those in Romania, meaning that while public confidence in Romania is

growing, Czech citizens still trust their government more. Now, it is important to look at a few

specific years to see why these scores fluctuate, and to see if they have any impact on

communist-successor parties.

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[10] Based off of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index scores; higher scores mean the public perceives less corruption in their government.

Even though Czech citizens generally have more faith in their government than their Romanian counterparts, scandals within the Czech Republic have brought down administrations. These events are worth looking into to see if they have an impact on voter data. In addition to the Corruption Perceptions Index, the Corruption Barometer measures pubic satisfaction with their political parties. A staggering 73% of the Czech population views their parties to be corrupt, meaning the majority of citizens trust neither their government nor their options for representation (Transparency International 2013). Major issues with Czech corruption stem from the processes involved in privatization at local and national levels.

The 1996 results placed the center-left CSSD party headed by Vaclav Klaus in opposition to the conservative ODS. With Klaus as prime minister, the newly formed Czech Republic set out to sell off major state assets and introduce a conservative fiscal policy that brought public backlash (Market Line 2014). While the CSSD struggled to maintain public support, they were also hit by numerous scandals involving officials accepting bribes from companies that wanted to buy state assets. Corruption at the highest levels of government actually forced Klaus to step down and the government had to be reformed with emergency elections in 1998.

The KSCM has surprisingly had a historic arms-length approach when it comes to corruption. Even though their party originated the corruption that led to the Velvet Revolution, one can assume that the KSCM would target corrupt capitalist officials to exemplify the flaws in the system. It provides no tacit policies within its platform that target corruption. In fact, it only vaguely mentions in promotional material that, "[the] KSCM promotes the fight against organized crime and corruption and its links to the state, public and political structures" (Pinkova 2016). No mention of corruption is within the actual KSCM platform, but does state that incompetence from public officials involved in the privatization process is a crime (KSCM

2016). Generally, the KSCM is more concerned with transparency about privatization, but less concerned with abuses of power, like the type involved in a massive 2013 scandal involving the prime minister.

Czech Prime Minister, Petr Necas, stepped down in 2013 as a result of a corruption investigation into the Director of the Office of the Government, Lubomir Poul. While little is still known about the specifics of the event, we do know that Poul and several other high ranking officials were arrested under suspicion of embezzlement, bribery, abuse of power, and corruption (Trecek 2013). This corruption case was arguably the most high-profile in the Czech Republic's history. Police raided thirty-one homes of members of government, and even raided the Straka Academy (the Czech equivalent of the Capitol Building), confiscating over $150 million worth of evidence as well as several kilograms of pure gold bars (Trecek 2013). Under intense suspicion and scrutiny, Necas stepped down, which prompted legislative ministers to dissolve parliament and trigger emergency elections a year early.

Interestingly enough, the KSCM performed better in the 2013 emergency elections than it had in the past eleven years. That year, the KSCM saw a three percent bump in vote share, bringing in almost 750,000 voters, see Figure 1. This suggests that corruption and scandal had a significant impact on the KSCM's election results, especially considering their poor performance during the previous elections. The KSCM received about 150,000 more votes in 2013 than it had in 2010. The ODS plummeted from being the second most powerful party to coming in fifth in terms of vote share. 2013 also introduced the Action for Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO) party to Czech politics, which took the place of ODS as the opposition party to the CSSD. This means that 2013 marked a shift of power from the right to the left, with the KSCM noticeably benefitting from that shift.

Romania has begun closing the gap between it and the Czech Republic's corruption scores, but that does not mean it still does not have its fair share of scandal. Mayor of the southern city of Craiova, and a vice president of the PSD, Lia Olguta Vasilescu, is a recent target for Romania's anti-corruption efforts. During her 2012 run for office, she allegedly accepted bribes and laundered money to support her political campaign, totaling roughly 160,000 Euros (Lupu 2016). Vasilescu has denied these claims, and even won her 2016 run for office. Similarly, the former mayor of Bucharest, Marian Vanghelie, served for 15 years as a member of the PSD. Yet in 2015, he was arrested for money laundering, accepting bribes, and possible election fraud (Paun 2016). These are just two high-profile examples of several local level officials scrutinized for corruption.

On the national level, several member high-ranking officials and even heads of state have not been immune to public scrutiny. Former president Traian Basescu, who served from 2004 to 2014 and oversaw the Romanian accession to the EU, was brought before an impeachment court during both of his terms in office. Basescu was a member of the National Salvation Front for many years before running independently for president. Both efforts to remove Basescu from office failed due to low voter turnout; the 2007 and 2012 impeachment referenda each failed to collect at least 50% of the national vote needed to secure impeachment (Marinescu 2012). Without enough of the population taking part in the referenda, the legislature and judiciary were limited in their available options. The constitutional court ruled the vote to be inconclusive as a result, despite roughly 87% of the votes being in favor for impeachment (Marinescu 2012). These statistics are interesting because it shows that those who cared enough to turn up for the referenda overwhelmingly supported the impeachment of Basescu.

2016 will be an interesting election year for Romania. Prime Minister Victor Ponta, a member of the PSD, has guaranteed a tough stance on corruption within Romania (Ionescu 2015). Although he has been vocal about his administration's stance on corruption, Ponta's finance minister, Darius Vacloz, resigned in March 2015 after he was placed under investigation for corruption (Reuters 2015). Allegedly, he accepted bribes to favor a construction company for a public works project in 2010. Ponta's best efforts to combat corruption in Romania have yielded little success, with members of his own cabinet coming under investigation.

Earlier this year, Liviu Dragnea, current leader of the PSD, was convicted of electoral fraud and suspended from holding public office for two years (Ilie 2016). He was convicted for scheming a way to rig an impeachment vote against former president Traian Basescu; Dragnea utilized bribes to create forged ballots that tipped the scales in favor of impeachment. To further exemplify the presence of cronyism, he was only given a suspended jail sentence, meaning he will not serve jail time for committing fraud on a national scale to decide who would be the most powerful person in the country. Despite the evidence presented against him, and the conviction, the PSD remained fully supportive of Dragnea and he still serves as the head of the party. His ban from holding public office does not apply to party leadership, so he is still very much involved in national politics, heading up the strongest left-wing party within Romania.

With these events in mind, the impact on PSD electoral success in legislative elections has varied. High-profile scandals and corruption investigations have occurred consistently since democratization, beginning with the round-up of the former Communist Party and culminating in the most recent investigations against Ponta's cabinet. However, even with corruption investigations targeting the most upper-echelon of government, the PSD has consistently made a strong showing in national elections. Even local elections have apparently barely been impacted

by corruption allegations, as evidenced by the consistent reelection of Lia Olguta Vasilescu and Marian Vanghelie to mayoral office.

The question then, is why have these events had no negative impact on party success? In some cases, the PSD has banished members who bring negative attention to the party, like in the case of Marian Vanghelie, who now runs with the Social Justice Party (PDS). It is possible that the culture of corruption is pervasive enough in Romania that it has little impact on voters' decisions. For example, there is no law that prohibits individuals under investigation for corruption from running for office (Paun 2016). If voters considered corruption in their vote on an individual basis, rather than on a party basis, then we might see fluctuations in PSD support. Yet the numbers in Figures 1 and 2 clearly show that national support for the PSD has always been strong, only experiencing a minor decrease in support in 2008, a year with little high-profile corruption investigations or scandal.

Additionally, if one factor seems to have little impact, then another factor must be mitigating the negative effects of corruption. For example, reimaging allows the party to distance itself from scandalous events; it says to voters that "we are not like those corrupt officials; we are a new and clean party." Reimaging also compensates for the loss of support by absorbing the voter bases of smaller parties. By consolidating the left bloc, the PSD reduces the amount of viable options that a voter has during an election. They can either vote for the PSD or one of the minority parties that do not receive much support, or completely shift their political alignment and vote right. The PSD ensures support by blocking viable alternatives through the use of mergers. After 2004, voters no longer had the PSDR and PDSR to choose from, but instead had the new PSD to represent the Romanian left.

The Czech Republic and Romania have experienced similar misfortune when it comes to corruption and scandal. However, the impacts on their respective elections have varied; when looking at the results of corruption in government, it is important to differentiate between ruling parties and minor parties, as well as looking at the flow of votes to other parties. The KSCM benefits from scandal because its party members are not involved in the criminal investigations. Therefore, the communists can only benefit from political strife. If this were the case, than it should follow that major parties suffer from scandal and lose votes. Yet the PSD has remained consistently strong, even experiencing a small bump in vote share each election, despite the numerous high-profile scandals at the local and national levels. Perhaps this is because of the varying left/right divide in both countries. In Romania, most of the support falls on the left, and in the Czech Republic there is a narrower gap between the right and left, with the ruling party shifting every few years.

While Romania's PSD seems only slighted impacted by corruption, ruling parties in the CR can be devastated by blemishes on their public image. These events can influence the creation of whole new parties that run on opposite platforms because of growing public skepticism. The ANO party in the Czech Republic challenged the rightwing ODS for opposition status, with that translating into broader public support for center-left and left-wing policies. The PSD may have an outwardly negative stance on corruption, yet it does little to combat it when the party is not directly affected. Naturally, until its electoral success is negatively impacted by these events, there is little incentive to target corruption on a national level. While examining the impact of corruption and scandal, it is equally important to examine the progenitors of corruption: the party leadership.

Party Leadership

After looking at corruption, we must ask what role leadership plays in determining party success. The PSD has naturally benefitted from the consistent guidance of Ion Iliescu, while the leaders of the KSCM have had fewer prominent figures in the spotlight. Party leadership refers to both the actual heads of the party as well as officials who are elected to the highest executive offices in the state (often times these are the same individuals). While leadership may not directly impact electoral success in the legislature, it can influence voter behavior as a result of media attention. Leaders direct the platform of the party, so their involvement cannot be overlooked.

The KSCM has had three leaders since its inception, all of whom were members of the previous Communist Party (yet it is important to note that most Czech officials were also members[11]). The first, Jiri Svoboda, served as head of the KSCM prior to the 1993 split from Slovakia. A filmmaker by trade, Svoboda proposed a transition to a social democratic platform for which he was heavily criticized for from within the KSCM. He retired from politics soon after the split and was formally uninvolved with party affairs from then on. Svoboda's work to transition the party was consistently blocked by the established party elites who favored a strong communist model (Bozoki & Ishiyama 2002). In fact, he attempted to banish various members who supported the communist model, and attempted to rename the party, but was unsuccessful in convincing his fellow party members.

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[11] The totalitarian regime of the Czech Communist Party forced any person who had an interest in politics to register with the party. It is difficult to discern actual political beliefs of any individual prior to democratization. The same applies to the PSD in Romania.

The second chairman of the KSCM was Miroslav Grebenicek, who was instrumental in the maintenance of the party's communist program. However, Grebenicek's vision condemned the actions of the previous communist regime, and worked toward implementing a new program that focused more on economic development rather than a social movement of communism (Grebenicek 1996). His tenure dealt with diminished party support as the KSCM struggled to convince the public that it believed in the democratic transition and that it could function within a congress dominated by rightwing parties. Grebenicek was attempting to reconcile communist ideology with the transition, but the public merely perceived the party as dogmatic and radical (Bozoki & Ishiyama 2002). Serving as party chairman from 1993 to 2005, Grebenicek was also elected to the national legislature every single election since 1993, proving to be a prominent post-communist leader. Additionally, while the first two elections of his tenure were plagued by low voter turnout, his final election as head of the party in 2002 was the party's most successful election ever. Yet this is likely a result of external factors that Grebenicek's leadership had little to do with.

In 2005 the KSCM elected Vojtech Filip as chairman. Filip governed the KSCM through the accession to the EU and NATO, as well as the global economic crisis in 2008 and the most recent political collapse in 2013. His tenure has been largely characterized by a strong anti-EU/NATO stance (KSCM 2016). These views are not widely held by the majority of Czech citizens, which restricted the party's potential pool of voters. Prior to the 2004 EU accession, socialist members of the CSSD could cast "protest votes" in favor of the KSCM (Pehe 2002). However, with the unwavering stance on unpopular programs such as anti-EU accession, voters are less likely to cast a protest vote for them.

The leadership of other parties can also contribute to electoral success. Petr Necas, the Prime Minister who stepped down in 2013, also resigned from his post at the head of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS). The ODS has been the major rightwing contender in Czech Politics since 1989, and is often called upon by the dominant leftwing Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) to form the opposition government. Necas stepping down can be perceived as an admission of guilt, which negatively impacted the ODS party (and the rest of the country, for that matter). When Romania had similar corruption issues at the upper echelon of government, Prime Minister Victor Ponta was quick to condemn the actions of his cabinet but did not step down. While risky, this maneuver separated Ponta from the actions of his own cabinet.

The election results show an interesting correlation with party leadership in the Czech Republic. Svoboda lead the party through two elections, in 1990 and 1992, both of which exhibited some of the party's strongest numbers; see Figures 1, 2. In each of those elections, the KSCM received over 900,000 votes, a number that has not been achieved in any election since. As soon as Svoboda left the leadership, the KSCM lost roughly one third of its supporters. It seems as though the KSCM is only ever negatively impacted by their party leadership, as further exhibited by the restrictive policies of Vojtech Filip and the anti-EU/NATO sentiment within the KSCM.

Leadership has played a much different role in Romania than in the Czech Republic. The PSD has been led by Ion Iliescu, a vocal member of the FSN who had been involved with the December 1989 revolution, for the entirety of its existence. Iliescu served in the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and served directly under totalitarian leader Nicolae Ceausescu. However, Ceausescu disapproved of Iliescu's revisionist ideology; Iliescu sought to reform the harshness of the Ceausescu regime and was ostracized from the inner circle

(Sebestyen 2009). During the later portion of 1989, Iliescu was involved in the formation of the

FSN, a group of Communist Party members who disagreed with Ceausescu's rule and wanted to

overthrow the regime.

It is important to note that similarly to the KSCM, the FSN was more interested in

revising the communist platform, not actually introducing capitalism. Interviews with FSN

officials in the early transition period suggest that democratization was the first priority and that

Romania could potentially remain a socialist country (Novaceanu 1990). Despite this, Iliescu and

the FSN won landslide victories during the first democratic elections, with Iliescu taking home

almost 85% of the vote. This is particularly impressive considering the fact that over eighty

political parties vied for power during that election (Giugal et al. 2011). Although the FSN did

not survive for long, its successors benefitted from the supervision of Iliescu. It is not

coincidental that any successor of the FSN that was headed by Iliescu succeeded at the polls.

Due to infighting between Iliescu and Petre Roman, Iliescu and his supporters left the

FSN to create their own party in 1992, the FDSN. The original FSN shriveled up in subsequent

elections and even abandoned the name to become the Democratic Party (PD). Iliescu oversaw

the creation of the FDSN as well as the PDSR in 1993. He was even involved with the merger of

the PDSR and the PSDR, but eventually lost internal support to Mircea Geoana. While serving as

the first and third president of Romania, Iliescu maintained a pro-EU stance and actively

implemented policies through the executive and legislative branches that would speed up the

accession process.

Aside from Iliescu, Victor Ponta has been a positive influence on the party for several

years despite his young age. Although his cabinet has had difficulties concerning corruption,

Ponta has followed in Iliescu's footsteps and has been a strong proponent of the EU-accession and democratization process. Ponta served as head of the PSD from 2010 to 2015, and was instrumental in the creation of the coalition partnership USL. During the 2012 elections, USL received 60% of the vote share, the first time a party or coalition has ever achieved a majority in Romania.

However, other figures within the PSD have brought negative attention to the party. Former president Traian Basescu once questioned his 2004 opponent from the PSD, Adrian Nastase, "You know what Romania's greatest curse is right now? It's that Romanians have to choose between two former Communist Party members" (Basescu 2004 in Martins 2008, 203). Even the current head of the PSD, Liviu Dragnea, has had run-ins with the law and has not lost party support as a result; this is just one example of the level of impunity for corruption within the PSD and Romania in general.

Comparing the Czech leadership to the Romania reveals a few striking details. First, each party has had three leaders, all of whom were influential in their own ways. Mircea Geoana of the PSD was the first leader of either party who had not been previously involved with the communist regime (Victor Ponta was the second, but only because he was too young to be officially involved in politics during the Ceausescu regime). The Romanian leadership has been very expansionistic, capitalizing on coalitions, partnerships, and popular reforms and policies. Meanwhile the KSCM has avoided all of those things, relying solely on a historic voter base and protest votes from other parties.

Individual party leadership is only positively influential when the leaders are involved in popular social movements. Ion Iliescu was basically Romania's version of Nelson Mandela,

while Vaclav Havel was the Czech Republic's. The PSD benefitted from Iliescu's charisma and anchor in the history of Romanian democracy. The KSCM had no such figure because it was created by the original Communist Party to function within the confines of the new democratic system. No one from the KSCM fought for democracy on such a grand scale as Iliescu, therefore party leadership did little to impact their electoral success. Leadership can be negatively influential when a leader is involved in corruption and scandal, which can be a detriment to their own party and a boon to others, as in the case of Necas. Similarly, when a leader chooses a platform that is "too radical" in the public's eye, the party suffers at the polls.

Social Indicators

The impact that the other five factors (reimaging, EU accession, corruption & scandal, leadership, and coalition building) have had on election results varies from party to party, and from factor to factor. The sixth, social indicators, is the one factor that each party does not have explicit control over. Indicators may be the results of specific policies implemented by the stronger parties, but no government or party has absolute control over GDP growth, GINI, or HDI. These external factors may influence voter behavior based on a party's performance in government, or as a result of protest voting.

Figure 7. Comparison of Czech and Romanian GDP Growth
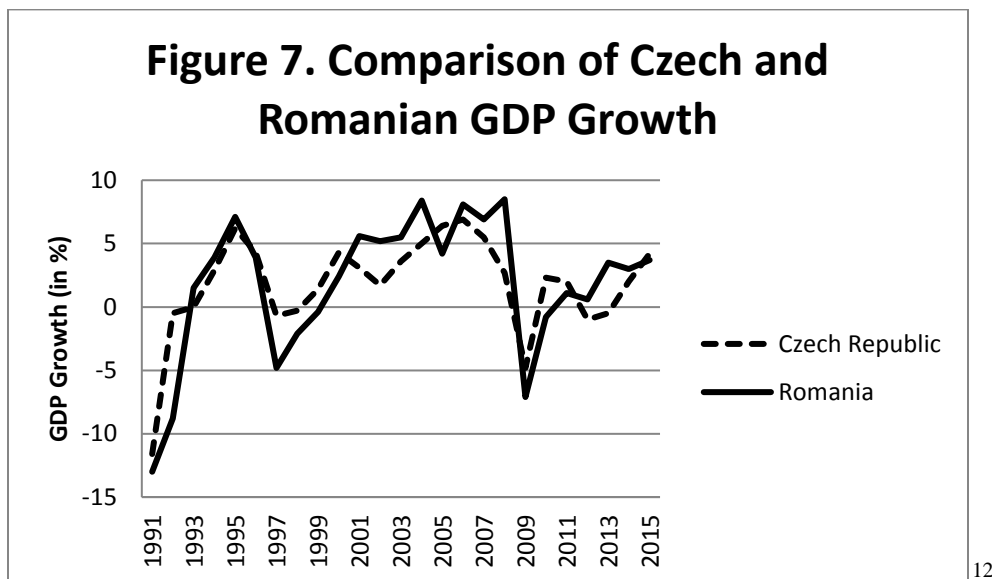
GDP growth in the Czech Republic has typically been strong, but only after the split from

Slovakia. The country experienced negative GDP growth right up to the split, but had been

steadily increasing in the initial years following 1992, see Figure 7. 1997 and 1998 also marked

years of negative GDP growth, but only a slight boost to vote share for the KCSM (0.7%). The

strongest year for the KSCM, 2002, yielded 18.5% of the vote, and did mark a year where GDP

growth had been halved (from 3.2% to 1.6%), but had remained at positive growth. During the

first two years of transition, inflation in the Czech Republic rose over 50% while currency and

price controls were stripped away, leaving a market in flux (Oreskovic 2012). Yet the KSCM did

not receive a noticeable bump in vote share during that period despite being an opposition party.

While the Czech Republic experienced some fluctuations in GDP growth, it is often considered

to be a success story of post-communist transition. A growing economy was still no match forthe

global recession that occurred in 2008.

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[12] Source data comes from the World Bank Development Research Group

The global economic meltdown is an important event that had a tremendous impact on election results. The Czech Republic was hit hard during the initial years of the meltdown, plummeting from 5.5% growth in 2007 to -4.8% growth in 2009, a drop of over 9%. However, the 2010 elections - the most immediate after the crisis - revealed that voters did not consider a radical socialist platform to be the solution despite the fact that the government was controlled by the right wing. In fact, the KSCM received the lowest share of votes since 1996; just shy of 600,000 votes, the lowest turnout in the party's history. Even though the KSCM did not receive many votes, the economic crisis sparked the creation of new parties that drew power away from the leading CSSD and ODS parties. Namely, the TOP 09 party emerged in the 2010 elections to sweep 16.7% of the vote, running on a platform of fiscal conservatism.

While the crisis shook up the political scene in the Czech Republic, we must also consider HDI and GINI. Since 1990, the HDI figure for the Czech Republic has steadily increased over time; not once has the HDI decreased, though it has stagnated around .861 for several years. This indicates an improved quality of life and a consistent respect for human rights. Since the steady trend points upward, there is little evidence to suggest that HDI in the Czech Republic influenced voter behavior in any way. Power has shifted between the left and right numerous times over the course of the last few decades, but at no point did a power shift impact the HDI rating for the country.

Figure 8. Increasing Inequality in the CR and Romania
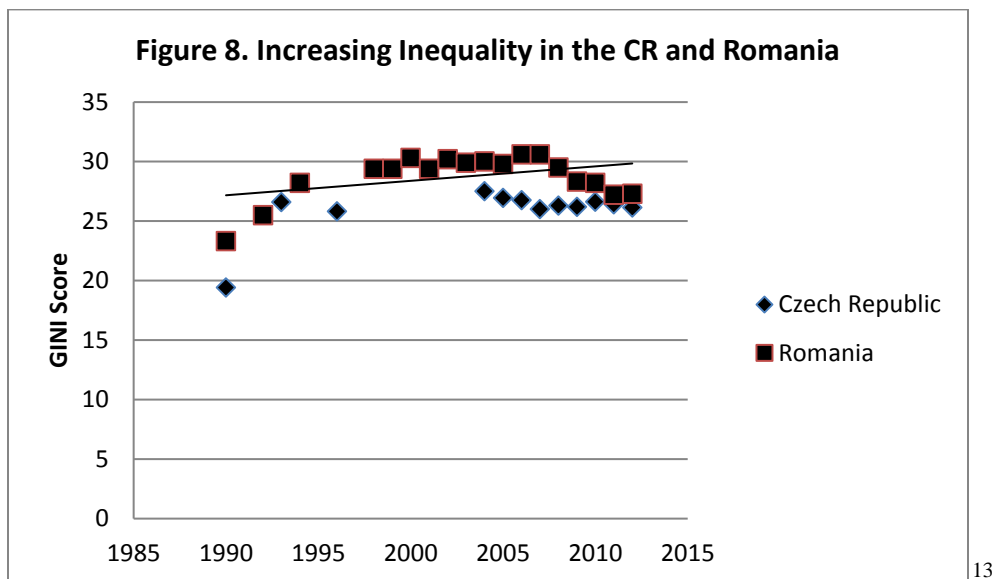
Similarly, the Czech Republic has a relatively low level of inequality, as shown by the

GINI coefficient in Figure 8. However, there has been a growing trend in inequality since the

mid 1990's. In 2002, when the KSCM received its highest vote share of 18.5%, it was also a year

marked with increasing inequality. This could indicate a protest vote, where some of the

population (200,000 people in the case of the 2002 election) voted for a minority party to express

their qualms with the current administration. Since the KSCM is built on the communist

ideology, it follows that it would receive more votes in an atmosphere of increasing inequality.

Inequality peaked in the Czech Republic in 2005, and reached its lowest point in 2009, just after

the crisis. However, neither of these figures correlates with a bump in voter turnout for the

KSCM. In fact, the lower the GINI score fell during the crisis, the fewer votes the KSCM

received. This may be because the KSCM is a minority party, despite having a significant voter

base; a smaller party may not be impacted the same way a larger party is. Small parties not

currently in coalition are less likely to be blamed for the ineffective policies of an administration.

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[13] Data comes from World Bank Development Research Group

For the PSD, being a major ruling party means that it is more vulnerable to social indicators than a smaller party. The PSD is more accountable to the general public than the KSCM is. GDP growth in Romania was a difficult challenge for the PSD; prior to the revolution, Romania had experienced negative growth for about a year and a half (a large catalyst for revolution in the first place). Being left with an economic crisis, the FSN pushed for reforms that initially stagnated the economy even further, reaching -12.9% growth in 1991. Despite this, all iterations of the PSD have received over 20% of the vote share every year. Even with a dip in growth in 1997 that lasted until 2000, the PSD emerged with a significant portion of the vote. Their success was challenged by the global economic meltdown, however.

The economic crisis in 2008 hit Romania particularly hard, slicing its GDP growth from 7.9% in early 2008 to -6.8% by 2009, a drop of nearly 15%. For the PSD, 2008 marked one of the only points in the party's history where there was a decrease in national support, see Figure 2. That year, the PSD received around 1.4 million fewer votes than it had in the 2004 election. Romania did not see positive GDP growth again until 2011. Yet with the USL coalition, the PSD managed to sweep 60% of the vote in the 2012 elections, a number not seen since the first free elections in 1990. Perhaps the coalition itself was created in effort to bolster PSD parliamentary strength in the wake of the crisis, a preemptive measure to ensure that the left wing remained strong in Romania.

Romania has experienced a positive trend in HDI growth over time, but its scores have been consistently lower than the Czech Republic's. While the trend has typically been positive, Romania's HDI score did drop in 2010, decreasing from .781 to .779, a brief drop likely caused by the global recession in 2008. Yet the drop in HDI did not occur until after the 2008 elections, and the 2012 elections saw a huge bump in vote share for the PSD. With this in mind, it is

difficult to say that HDI has any impact on election results. This may be because HDI itself is an aggregate of numerous factors; it is difficult to single out one specific factor that could influence the vote. It is too broad of a category to rely on in terms of voter turnout. It cannot be used to predict or measure voter turnout because it evaluates a wide range of different factors.

Romanian GINI coefficients have fluctuated, but have demonstrated a general increase in inequality commonly associated with the transition to a market economy. However, in 2008, there was a large drop in inequality, hitting its lowest point in 2011 with a score of 27.21. This low level of inequality had not been seen in Romania since 1993, see Figure 8. Inequality peaked in 2006-2007, just before the elections in 2008, which could have had a major impact on voter behavior. Since 2008 was the first time the PSD had experienced negative voter growth in ten years, the GINI score becomes all the more relevant. The question is, which had the most impact – GINI or GDP growth? Since the negative GDP growth caused by the 2008 crisis was more dramatic than the higher level of inequality, GDP probably had the larger impact on the 2008 elections.

Inevitably, the 2008 global economic crisis damaged the GDP growth of both countries. The impact it had on each communist-successor party differed, however. The KSCM was barely impacted, although it could be argued that GDP fluctuations convinced some voters to cast a protest vote in favor of minority parties. The PSD was more exposed to scrutiny over its policies than the KSCM, but it managed to keep its voter base strong through the use of coalition building. The economic stability of both countries is largely reflected by the GDP growth rates, yet comparing the growth rate with election results demonstrates only a minor impact on voter behavior. I believe that without the efforts made to join other parties, the PSD would have been more vulnerable to changes in GDP.

HDI yielded surprisingly limited results for both countries. Neither the KSCM nor the PSD were at all impacted by any fluctuation in HDI, positive or negative. Perhaps separating the components of HDI, such as life expectancy or education index, would allow us to see which social indicators are most influential on voter behavior. As for GINI, the PSD was surprisingly resilient to the rising inequality associated with the transition to a market economy. Additionally, since the similar GINI trend in the Czech Republic actually came to the detriment of the KSCM, it is likely that GDP growth is the most important social indicator of the three. GINI coefficients for both countries started off very low, largely because of the equality measures implemented by the previous communist regimes. Inequality just does not seem to be a major factor in voters' decision-making, or perhaps the levels of inequality or not extreme enough to warrant a shift in voting trends.

Conclusion

In the end, party reimaging has the greatest impact on voter behavior, with coalition building coming in a close second. The other four factors – corruption and scandal, party leadership, EU accession, and social indicators – have intermittent influence on electoral success that is heavily affected by party reimaging and coalition building. Changing the logo or adjusting the platform is useful for a party to gauge its popularity and attempt to shift more votes in its favor. The PSD masterfully reimaged itself numerous times, becoming almost an entirely new party every other election cycle through merging with smaller parties. However, the biggest gains in vote share came when the PSD entered into coalition with, instead of absorbing, other parties.

The KSCM is just now entering coalition status; its consistent voter base coupled with the continuing distance from the totalitarian regime that dominated the country for half a century has attracted the attention of the CR's other major parties. Having been denied entrance into coalition with any party for all of the transition period and beyond, only time will tell if the KSCM will reimage itself to be a more viable coalition partner, or if it will maintain its dogmatic platform. The impact that entering into a coalition will have on the KSCM's electoral success remains to be seen, and will be a point of interesting analysis after the 2016 election cycle.

Social Indicators such as GDP growth, HDI, and GINI varied in their impact on election outcomes. While the standard of living rose in both the CR and Romania, reflected by increasing HDI scores, the GINI score demonstrated increasing inequality. Despite this, the PSD managed unprecedented voter turnout consistently since the transition. Although a strengthening right-wing has challenged the PSD in recent years, the social democrats remain at the top of Romania's political food chain. GDP growth was the singular social indicator that seemed to have any impact on election results. For the KSCM, this translated into protest votes being cast in their favor as a result of the perceived inadequacies of the right-wing ODS's policies. For the PSD, the stakes were much higher as Romania's most powerful party. This party had positive growth in vote share every year until the global economic crisis of 2008.

When it comes to social indicators, voter behavior is apparently fixated solely on the actions of the political party in power at the time of economic distress. The surge in vote share for the KSCM in 2002 was due to protest votes to condemn the policies of the ODS, not necessarily because there were suddenly 200,000 more communists in the CR. The action was not to support the communists, but to punish the ruling party. Similarly, the PSD lost support in the December 2008 elections because its policies were deemed ineffective. However, this slump

in vote share was not as drastic as could be expected, and the PSD quickly recovered through the use of coalition building.

Leadership played a significant role in the success of both parties. The KSCM suffered from internal division between moderates and die-hard communists in its early years; without consistent, strong leadership that could rally the entire party, it was unable to transition to a social democratic model. The PSD was able to rally the population during the revolution as the FSN, and continued to guide Romania during the transition process. With Ion Iliescu constantly in the spotlight, the public associated Iliescu and the PSD with democracy. That association, whether subconscious or otherwise, largely contributed to the party's success during elections.

It is important to discuss the interrelationships of the factors, as they impact each other in major ways. For example, coalition building and party reimaging are closely related. The party seeks to expand its legislative influence by partnering with other parties. In multiparty systems it is essential for parties to build coalitions to pass legislation. While involved in a coalition, member parties negotiate the details of a piece of legislation, inevitably compromising aspects of their platform to satisfy the needs of all members. This is a form of reimaging because the party sacrifices or changes some aspect of itself in order to pass legislation and attract more votes.

Reimaging is heavily influenced by party leadership. While the obvious influences such as guiding policy and choosing the party logo are important, leaders can also influence the structure of the party and even impact the success of other parties. The FSN would not have split in 1992 if there had not been internal division among the party elite. With a new party with a consolidated platform and leadership, Ion Iliescu basically destroyed any hope that the more radical components remaining in the FSN had in functioning within Romania's new democratic

system. Strong party leadership can also influence coalitions, creating a standard platform that smaller coalition partners conform to. It is little surprise that even though the PSD partnered with the right-wing PNL party in 2012 to form the USL coalition, the platform remained largely leftist.

The results of this project emphasize several additional factors that influence the electoral success of the communist-successor parties - the first of which is the historical voter base, the die-hards that had always supported the party and did so before the transition. Supporters of the KSCM consist largely of working class citizens that lost out in the privatization process. These are workers in Czech industry that benefitted from a large state apparatus that covered everything from vocational training to child daycare during the work day. The KSCM voter base does not necessarily support a reversion back to totalitarianism, but is hopeful for the return of state benefits that were removed or under-funded during the transition process. Historical party loyalty is an intrinsic component in party success that I only uncovered throughout the course of this project.

Similarly, the party's individual history has a major impact on its success rate during elections. Iliescu's success as a leader is largely a result of the role he played in the country's revolution and transition to democracy. If the KSCM had been more proactive in supporting the transition, it may have been able to consolidate more of the left-wing in the CR. Instead, the KSCM was ostracized from national politics. The PSD was able to highlight its support of democracy despite the party's origins from within the previous communist regime. This factor is potent enough to mitigate corruption and scandal, while similarly buffering the negative impacts of economic crisis. Even as the public perceives local and national politics as being corrupt, the

history of the PSD is intertwined with a relatively positive aspect of the country's history, and that contributes largely to its continued success.

The place each party occupies on the political spectrum is another uncovered factor that merits separate investigation. Simply put, the KSCM sits on the fringe of the CR's political spectrum. In multiparty systems, a party on the edge of the political arena can still enter parliament with a relatively low percentage of the vote. The KSCM benefits from its historical voter base that still identifies as communist. Meanwhile the PSD moderated its policies despite an initial desire to maintain aspects of the communist ideology. Social democrats are more palatable to a broader range of people than communists are, so the PSD moved closer to the center of the political spectrum; this minimized the distance between most voters' beliefs and the PSD's platform. In essence, this project questioned how each party's position on the political spectrum influenced its electoral success.

The PSD has always had a goal not shared with the KSCM: executive power. This goalsetting guided the policies of the PSD to be marketable to the broader public. If the party was going to get someone into the presidency, it had to be popular enough to amass enough support. The KSCM on the other hand was able to focus on its narrow end of the spectrum to capitalize on votes from former communists. The KSCM moved toward the end of the Czech political spectrum, meanwhile the PSD moved toward the center gradually. The audience was different for both parties. The KSCM is content with monopolizing support within the socialist and communist communities, and does so with great success. The PSD had to restructure in order to achieve its longer term goals.

There are also a few country-specific factors that influence elections. In the Czech Republic, the split from Slovakia shook up elections on a level that is difficult to quantify. The population was basically cut by one-third, which could account for the large decrease in overall votes received by the KSCM between the 1992 and 1996 elections, and could also explain similar results in the 1998 elections. While the party received almost 15% of the vote prior to the split, that number dropped to as low as 10%. This is because parties that were regionalized between the CR and Slovakia gained more influence in national elections after the split because they did not have to compete with each other for the same number of seats. Despite this, the Czech communist voter base is clearly consistent and easy to identify.

The country-specific factor in Romania is a series of violent anti-communist protests known as the Mineriada during the early years of the transition period. Out of fear of former communists assuming power again in the parliament, the Proclamation of Timisoara was written in effort to ban former communist party members from participating in national politics (Gallagher 2005, 213). The Mineriada often turned violent and even lead to the occupation of some cities by a makeshift militia. The impact of the Mineriada on the public perception of the FSN and its successors should be analyzed separately from the broader context of communist-successor party success because of the violent nature of these events. While there were large anti-communist protests in most former-communist countries, few neared open rebellion in the same fashion as the Mineriada.

A few specific election years warrant particular scrutiny. Namely, the 2002 Czech elections are such an outlier when compared to the rest of the KSCM's history. Capturing 18.5% of the vote was unprecedented, and the KSCM has been unable to recapture that same success. So why did the KSCM receive such a high percentage of the vote? And why was it not able to do

so again? One argument is that the 2002 election experienced almost record low voter turnout, with only 58% of citizens registered (compared with 74% in the previous election) (Czech Inter-Parliamentary Union 2002). If the KSCM's voter base was among the more consistent voters in the country, than it follows that their boost could be indicative of simple party loyalty. However, the number of voters for the KSCM reached over 880,000, a figure not seen since before the split of Czechoslovakia. This is more likely a result of public dissatisfaction with the majority government. In fact, a spike in votes in 2002 for the KSCM also marked a sharp decrease in votes for the CSSD, meaning the success of the KSCM was dependent on the failures of the CSSD. The more socialist supporters of the CSSD "punished" their party by casting a protest vote for the KSCM (Pehe 2002). The existence of protest voting explains the temporary boost in KSCM vote share.

The 1996 Romanian election is also important to analyze because on the one hand it marked a decrease in vote share, but almost tripled the aggregate number of votes received. Ion Iliescu actually lost the presidential election that year to the right-wing candidate, Emil Constantinescu from the PNL. Constantinescu only served one term, losing to Iliescu in the 2000 elections. This year also marked a bump in votes for the Social Democratic Union (an attempt by the PSDR[14] at coalition building with the remnants of the FSN). The Social Democratic Union cut into the vote share of the PDSR, meriting the creation of a merger framework between the PSDR and the PDSR a few years later. So, the 1996 elections consisted of a shift in balance between right and left, and featured a divide between leftist parties.

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[14] Again, it is important to note the difference between the PSDR and the PDSR, especially during the 1996 election. The PSDR is separate leftist party that contested the PDSR until their merger in 2004 that created the PSD.

In the future, more research is needed about each factor and how they influence broader national politics not just in the two case countries, but in all former-communist countries and other countries seeking to overcome a totalitarian, authoritarian past. The ranking of the factors applies to both the CR and Romania, which makes a poignant case for the creation of a model of electoral success. I believe that these factors would be similarly ranked if applied to other countries in the region. Additionally, future research is needed about the two additional factors, party history and spectrum location, in conjunction with the six case factors. These factors can always fluctuate in importance, which can happen in a single election cycle, but in the end all are important components of the electoral success of communist-successor parties.

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