Parliamentary Party Switching: A Specific Feature of Post-Communist Parliamentarism?

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Parliamentary party switching (i.e., the change of parliamentary party groups, PPG) has rarely occurred in most West European countries.[1] Although it is impossible to revoke the MP's mandate if he or she switched to another PPG after the elections, many countries including established democracies have introduced laws that aim at discouraging defections from the parliamentary party groups.[2] For example, in Austria and Belgium, there is a legal requirement that an MP has to sit in the parliament for the political party for which he or she had run for elections.[3] In contrast to most Western European countries, the extent of parliamentary party switching in new democracies and transformation countries (including post-communist countries) has indeed been substantial, as revealed in the cases of Baltic countries, Ukraine, Poland, and Russia.[4]

The importance of parliamentary party switching has been acknowledged in a recent report on parliamentary party switching by the Council of Europe. This report underlines that in the member states of the Council of Europe, "imperative mandates are prohibited and parliamentarians are free to exercise their mandates as they see fit. Nevertheless, the mandates are moral contracts between voters and the parliamentarians, based on the principles, values and opinions defended in their election manifestos. Switches in political affiliation after elections therefore raise questions and criticisms – in particular in ethical and moral terms – relating to political opportunism, potential threats to public confidence in the political class and the internal discipline of political parties"[5].

1 For example, only one Swedish MP changed the PPG during the current legislative period. See *Jordi Xuclà*, Post-Electoral Shifting in Members' Political Affiliation and its Repercussions on the Composition of National Delegations, Report for the Parliamentary Assembly (Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs), Reference to Committee: Doc. 13125, Reference 3944 of April 22, 2014, Council of Europe, http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=21345&lang=en (accessed on June 7, 2015), p. 5.

2 See *Kenneth Janda*, Laws Against Party Switching, Defecting, or Floor-Crossing in National Parliaments, The Legal Regulation of Political Parties, Working Paper 2, August 2009, University of Leiden, http://www.partylaw.leidenuniv.nl/uploads/wp0209.pdf (accessed on May 20, 2015), p. 4.

3 See *Jordi Xuclà*, op. cit. (fn. 1), p. 7.

4 See *Marcus Kreuzer* / *Vello Pettai*, Patterns of Political Instability: Affiliation Patterns of Politicians and Voters in Post-Communist Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in: Studies in Comparative International Development, vol. 38 (2003), no. 2, pp. 85 – 86; *Iain McMenamin* / *Anna Gwiazda*, Three Roads to Institutionalisation: Vote-, Office- and Policy-Seeking Explanations of Party Switching in Poland, in: European Journal of Political Research, vol. 50 (2011), no. 6, pp. 838 – 866; *Kazimierz M. Slomczynski* / *Goldie Shabad* / *Jacub Zielinski*, Fluid Party Systems, Electoral Rules and Accountability of Legislators in Emerging Democracies – The Case of Ukraine, in: Party Politics, vol. 14 (2008), no. 1, pp. 91 – 112; *Frank C. Thames*, Searching for Party Effects in Post-Communist Ukraine, in: Communist and Post-Communist Studies, vol. 38 (2005), no. 1, pp. 89 – 108; *Stephen White* / *Richard Rose* / *Ian McAllister*, How Russia Votes, Chatham House Publishers 1997, pp. 237 f.; *Carol Mershon* / *Olga Shvetsova*, Parliamentary Cycles and Party Switching in Legislatures, in: Comparative Political Studies, vol. 41 (2008), no. 1, pp. 99 – 127.

5 *Jordi Xuclà*, op. cit. (fn. 1), p. 5.

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Yet, the topic of parliamentary party switching is greatly underestimated in legislative and party research.[6] In the first place, party switching is seen as an unusual and eccentric behavior of individual parliamentarians, which stems from a weakly institutionalized party system[7] and occasionally the realignment of voters.[8] Parliamentary party switching is usually perceived as a specific element of party systems in developing and transition countries. It may either result from or contribute to the weak recognition of party labels, the lacking partisan attachments of voters, and the use of non-democratic recruitment strategies such as patronage.[9]

1. Studying party switching: operationalization and hypotheses

The study of party switching is empirically challenging for two major reasons. The first and most important problem related to empirical research is the difficulty of definition and operationalization.

In the existing research, the concept of parliamentary party switching has been used as an "umbrella" term, which describes any change of party affiliation conducted by a member of parliament.[10] However, with respect to the study of post-communist parliaments, this operationalization leads to several theoretical and empirical difficulties, which need to be discussed. First, most researchers on parliamentary party switching in Western European countries have used the term "party switching" to describe the change of affiliations across party-based parliamentary groups. In post-communist countries, however, parliamentary party groups (PPG) were both partisan (i.e., formed by a political party) and non-partisan (i.e., formed by deputies from different parties or non-partisan MPs). Second, some studies on parliamentary party switching in Central and East European (CEE) countries have revealed that the change of a PPG affiliation was not automatically accompanied by a change of party membership. For example, in the 1990s, some MPs elected on the ticket of the Communist Party of Russia changed their PPG affiliation by switching to the Agrarian PPG without giving up their Communist Party membership.[11] Moreover, they were renominated for the following parliamentary term on the ticket of the Communist Party of Russia. Third, the value of partisanship in CEE countries differs from that in advanced parliamentary democracies. Even in post-communist countries with partisan-based coalition governments, non-partisan ministers have been often appointed: For instance between 1990 and 2000, the number of non-partisan ministers in Finland was approximately three

6 See *William Heller* / *Carol Mershon*, Political Parties and Legislative Party Switching, Palgrave Macmillan 2009, p. 4.

7 See *Scott Mainwaring*, Rethinking Party Systems in the Third Wave of Democratization: The Case of Brazil, Stanford University Press 1999.

8 See *David Canon* / *David Sousa*, Party System Change and Political Career Structures in the United States Congress, in: Legislative Studies Quarterly, vol. 17 (1992), no. 3, pp. 347 – 363.

9 See *Scott Desposato*, Party Switching in Brazil: Causes, Effects, and Representation, in: *William Heller* / *Carol Mershon*, op. cit. (fn. 6), pp. 109 – 144.

10 See the chapters in *William Heller* / *Carol Mershon*, op. cit. (fn. 6).

11 See *Thomas F. Remington*, The Russian Parliament: Institutional Evolution in a Transitional Regime, 1989-1999, Yale University Press 2008.

percent while it reached 30 percent in Poland and Lithuania.[12] These peculiarities signify that it is appropriate to study parliamentary party switching in these countries as changes in affiliation among PPGs, while ignoring the existing (or non-existing) partisan affiliation of an MP.

The second problem is that collecting data is extremely laborious because it requires information to be gathered at the level of the parliament, the political party, and the individual. Party switching has, therefore, not been studied in depth, particularly from a comparative perspective.[13] In countries where party switching has been rare, a complete set of data is available. In contrast, in countries where party switching has been (or was) more pronounced, the existing studies have often used data from a single legislative term. For example, the empirical studies of parliamentary party switching in Russia have focused exclusively on the first legislative term from 1993 to 1995.[14]

Depending on the direction, we can distinguish in-switching and out-switching. Depending on the changes of the party system, it is possible to examine party switching based on the fission or fusion of political parties, switching between existing parties, and switching to a brand-new party.[15] Finally, depending on the point in time (at the beginning, during, and at the end of legislative term), various incentives for party switching can be identified and studied separately.[16]

The spread of party switching depends on the institutional framework, the organizational structure of parties, and the unstable preferences of the voters. In this article, the focus lies on its micro-foundations. The major research question is directed at the individual incentives. Three major causes for the disloyalty of individual parliamentarians have been defined. The first is the increase of electoral chances i.e., MPs switch to the political party with the highest electoral prospects. This usually takes place at the end of term when they are better able to assess the electoral prospects of the parties and blocs that intend to campaign.[17] The second cause for changing parties is conflict over policy issues. In this case, parliamentarians who are unhappy with policy decisions made by their own parliamentary parties switch to a PPG that better represents policies that are important to them.[18] The third cause is careerism; in other words, MPs desire to ascend the parliamentary career ladder. In order to progress, they search for the party that provides opportunities for career

12 See *Octavio Amorim Neto* / *Kaare Strøm*, Breaking the Parliamentary Chain of Delegation: Presidents and Non-Partisan Cabinet Members in European Democracies, in: British Journal of Political Science, vol. 36 (2006), no. 4, pp. 619 – 643, p. 636.

13 See *Carol Mershon* / *Olga Shvetsova*, Party System Change in Legislatures Worldwide: Moving Outside the Electoral Arena, Cambridge University Press 2013, p. 9.

14 See ibid., pp. 59 – 90; *Stephen White* / *Richard Rose* / *Ian McAllister*, op. cit. (fn. 4), p. 237 f.

15 See *Marcus Kreuzer* / *Vello Pettai*, op. cit. (fn. 4).

16 See *Carol Mershon* / *Olga Shvetsova*, Parliamentary Cycles and Party Switching in Legislatures, in: Comparative Political Studies, vol. 41 (2007), no. 1, pp. 99 – 127.

17 See *Christian R. Grose* / *Antoine Yoshinaka*, The Electoral Consequences of Party Switching by Incumbent Members of Congress, 1947–2000, in: Legislative Studies Quarterly, vol. 28 (2003), no. 1, pp. 55 – 75; *Scott Desposato*, Parties for Rent? Ambition, Ideology, and Party Switching in Brazil's Chamber of Deputies, in: American Journal of Political Science, vol. 50 (2006), no. 1, pp. 62 – 80; *Carol Mershon* / *Olga Shvetsova*, op. cit. (fn. 16), 2007.

18 See *Timothy P. Nokken*, Dynamics of Congressional Loyalty: Party Defection and Roll-Call Behavior, 1947–97, in: Legislative Studies Quarterly, vol. 25 (2000), no. 3, pp. 417 – 444.

advancement (e.g., a committee chair).[19] Usually, however, the decision to switch parties is based on several factors, which are assessed by an MP from the perspective of costs and benefits.[20]

The three forms of party switching (i.e., election-driven, policy-driven, and career-driven) are difficult to study to various extents. In order to understand policy-driven party switching, a roll-call analysis is necessary. Such analysis allows to measure the ideological distance between the party position and the position of an MP to be identified before and after the change of party affiliation. In many CEE countries, however, roll-call data is not available or incomplete. In the case of electorally motivated party switching, we need to consider the organizational developments of party systems in the respective countries. This includes identifying whether the existing political label represents the initial party or a newly-organized one. Our data set does not allow us to systematically compare the organizational changes of party systems in ten CEE countries. It is, however, possible to identify whether an MP switched party groups and whether he was re-elected on the ticket of the party, to which he had previously switched. In this article, the effect of party switching on the parliamentary tenure shall be determined. For this purpose, party switching is operationalized as any change in PPG affiliation during the parliamentary term. The major hypothesis is that MPs switch parliamentary party groups in order to remain in parliament (H1). The expected direction of the party switching effect is positive, i.e., MPs who change their PPGs remain in parliament longer than those who did not change their party alignments. The reason why the MP changes his or her parliamentary party group is the result of "a legislator's utility function"[21], i.e., the results of "strategic interactions between the MPs, party leaders, the various political parties, legislative and party systems and also the electorate"[22].

It will be compared with the effect of political experience on the parliamentary tenure. Two types of political experience should be of particular importance, i.e., party leadership experience and local/regional experience.[23] In Western European countries, "[p]arties must

19 See *Stephen A. Meserve* / *Daniel Pemstein* / *William Bernhard*, Political Ambition and Legislative Behavior in the European Parliament, in: Journal of Politics, vol. 71 (2009), no. 3, pp. 1015 – 1032; *Sarah A. Treul*, Ambition and Party Loyalty in the US Senate, in: American Politics Research, vol. 37 (2009), no. 3, pp. 449 – 464.

20 See *Carol Mershon* / *Olga Shvetsova*, op. cit. (fn. 13), pp. 32 – 43.

21 *Carol Mershon* / *Olga Shvetsova*, op. cit. (fn. 4), p. 101.

22 *Jordi Xuclà*, op. cit. (fn. 1), p. 5.

23 Party leadership experience is operationalized as the position of a party leader at any territorial level (i.e., local, regional, and national, including women's and party youth organizations) that the MP had held before or at the time of his first election to the national parliament. The variable was coded as following: 0 if the MP had not have this experience, 1 if the MP had led a party organization at the local level, 2 if the MP had led a party organization at the regional level, 3 if the MP had led a party organization at the national level. For the purpose of this analysis, the variable "Leading party experience" was coded as a dummy variable i.e., 1 if the MP had led a party organization at the national level and 0 otherwise. Local/regional experience was operationalized as any elected political positions at the local (and if applicable, regional) level (including municipality and mayor positions) that the MP had held before or at the time of his first election to the national parliament. For the purpose of this analysis, local/regional experience was coded as a dummy variable, i.e., 1 if the MP had held such a position and 0 otherwise. The initial coding of these experiences was conducted by the experts of the respective countries and included the data from the first democratically elected parliaments (usually 1991) until 2007–2009 (see *Elena*

actively seek out, screen, and designate candidates who will compete in elections under their label. Many of the parties' internal structures, such as youth groups and internal party offices, are designed to identify and nurture future candidates"[24]. Consequently, candidates for political offices go through a screening process in which parties scrutinize them with respect to their knowledge and professional abilities. In Western Europe, a candidate's chances of being nominated depend on political experience and years spent in a local and/or regional party organization.[25] Based on this finding two additional hypotheses are put forward, both of which represent an alternative to the party switching hypothesis (H1). The first is that parliamentarians who led party organizations remain in parliament longer because they possess resources and networks and can influence the nomination procedure (H2). The second is that local politicians remain in parliament longer because political involvement at the local/regional level allows candidates to build networks and gain experience (H3). Because political parties have time to screen candidates in the local party organization, candidates with extensive experience at this level will have longer tenures in the national parliament.

2. Methods and data

In order to compare the strength of the party switching effect with the effect of political experience on tenure, the first independent variable used in the analysis is party switching, which describes any change in the affiliation to a parliamentary party group that occurred during the legislative term ("PPG switching"). Another independent variable is a leading party position at the national level, which an MP held before being recruited to parliament. The third independent variable used in the analysis is the local political experience of the candidate.

The dependent variable is the parliamentary tenure, which is operationalized as the number of terms, which an MP spent in the parliament (= 1, 2, 3…). The Poisson regression used (a variation of a generalized linear model)[26] predicts the number of events that

Semenova / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best*, Parliamentary Elite Formation After Communism: An Introduction, in: *ead.* (eds.), Parliamentary Elites in Central and Eastern Europe: Recruitment and Representation, London / New York 2014, pp. 1 – 29, pp. 16 – 20).

24 *Russell J. Dalton* / *Martin P. Wattenberg*, Unthinkable Democracy: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies, in: *dies*. (eds.), Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies, Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 3 – 18, p. 7.

25 Ibid., p. 7.

26 This regression was chosen because it is most suitable in the cases, in which the dependent variable is a count variable. See *Jacob Cohen* / *Patricia Cohen* / *Stephen G. West* / *Leona S. Aiken*, Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences, Erlbaum Associates 2009, pp. 525 – 531. The regressions were conducted at the country-based level because this accounts for national specifics in parliamentary careers. In order to provide comparison between countries, we used similar determinants in each Poisson regression. There were no missing values of the dependent variable; missing values for the categorical predictors were not estimated. Because of missing values for independent variables, sample size varied slightly for different analyses. In each country, we used various categorical predictors in Poisson regressions, which depended on the number of occurrences as well as the control of multicollinearity among the variables used in the models. We also checked the robustness of each Poisson regression by omitting predictors

occur in a specific timeframe; the ratios of the expected counts, computed as *exp(B)*, served as effect size measures. The results of each Poisson regression will therefore be presented in the form of *exp(B)* as well as the upper and lower confidence intervals (CI 95 percent).

Geographically, the analysis includes ten CEE countries: Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Croatia.[27] Longitudinal data for the period since 1990/1991 were available for the democratically elected parliaments in these post-communist countries.[28] The data used in this article was collected by country experts within the framework of the EurElite project, which was carried out by researchers from the University of Jena and the University of Siena. In each country, a single code book was applied, thereby guaranteeing the comparability of the data. The initial sample of post-communist countries examined in the EurElite Project included 13 post-communist countries.

On the basis of geographical proximity and similarities in the social and political frameworks, we selected the following post-communist sample countries. First, the sample comprises Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. All three gained their independence at the end of World War I. Since the Second World War they shared a common history of Nazi occupation followed by half a century of communist domination. They were the only former Soviet republics to join NATO and the EU. Despite the similarities in their political systems, there is considerable variance among them with regard to party system formation and development. They also differ in their treatment of ethnic minorities, especially the large Russian-speaking population.

The sample also includes Croatia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Romania (i.e., Southeast European countries). Croatia became independent from former Yugoslavia in 1991 and was subsequently involved in the war with Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This war not only had demographic and economic consequences but also delayed democratization.[29] Under *Franjo Tuđman*, Croatia experienced semi-authoritarian politics and restricted political competition. Following the end of his regime, the presidential-parliamentary system of Croatia was transformed into a parliamentary system. Slovenia, after declaring its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, entered into a violent conflict with the Yugoslav Peo-

with a low effect size. All Poisson regressions were controlled by basic socio-demographic characteristics of a parliamentarian. As virtually all MPs from CEE countries had studied in universities, this variable was not used in the models. The type of education (i.e., technical, social science, and law degrees) had no effect on the length of a parliamentary career and was therefore omitted from the models presented for each country.

27 For further details, see *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best*, Parliamentary Elite Formation After Communism, op. cit. (fn. 23), pp. 16 – 25.

28 The analysis is based on the period after the collapse of communism. 1991 is used as a starting point for the analysis because by that time, most CEE parliaments were democratically elected. In these democratically elected parliaments, the Communist parties lost their dominance, thereby allowing the formation of parties with different ideological orientations. This liberalization of the party landscape was the starting point for parliamentary party switching. In some CEE countries (i.e., Russia, Moldova, and Ukraine), the first democratically elected parliaments were formed in 1993/94. Therefore, in these countries, these years were used as the starting point for this analysis of parliamentary party switching.

29 See *Danica Fink-Hafner* / *Robert Ladrech*, Introduction: Europeanization and Party Politics in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia, in: Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans, vol. 10 (2008), no. 2, pp. 135 – 138, p. 137.

ple's Army, which ended after ten days with the Brioni Accord. Slovenia joined both NATO and the EU and was the first post-communist country to be accepted in the Eurozone. Romania has struggled with economic and political problems since the end of the *Ceauşescu* regime in 1989. Following the strong economic growth of the early 2000s, it experienced setbacks. Bulgaria has similarly struggled with severe economic problems. Until the early 2000s, the quality of life and economic performance in the country was lower than it had been under communism. Both Bulgaria and Romania were "latecomers" with respect to European integration. In contrast to Slovenia, which is ethnically homogeneous, the other three countries have substantial numbers of ethnic minorities. The Serbs are the largest minority group in Croatia, the Hungarians in Romania, and the Turks are the largest ethnic group in Bulgaria. In the Freedom House index of 2013, only Slovenia is ranked as consolidated democracy, while the others are ranked as semi-consolidated.

Moreover, the sample includes three post-Soviet republics outside the Baltic region, Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova. In all three countries, the founding election was not held until 1993/94. The rather incomplete political transformation of these three countries is reflected in their poor Freedom House rankings on civil liberties and political rights. Although the constitutions of Russia and Ukraine established a presidential – parliamentary political system after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a parliamentary – presidential system emerged after the Orange Revolution of 2004 in Ukraine and lasted until 2010. In Russia, however, a super-presidential system developed. Whereas democratic performance gradually improved in Ukraine (until 2010), Freedom House has classified Russia as a consolidated authoritarian regime since 2009. In Moldova, the post-communist transformation started with the conflict between the central government of Moldova and the government in Transnistria. In contrast to Russia and Ukraine, the office of the president was marginalized after direct elections were abolished. Moldova and Ukraine inherited a large Russian-speaking minority from the Soviet period, but ethnic conflict had not been a dominant topic in political debates (until the 2013 conflict in Ukraine). Multi-ethnic Russia has attempted to reduce ethnic tension by prohibiting the formation of political parties based on ethnicity and religion.

The last group consists of the Visegrád states, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. These countries share strong historical ties to Western Europe. They all have parliamentary systems, have not been exposed to substantial ethnic conflict, and have been classified by Freedom House as consolidated democracies for many years. All became members of the European Union in 2004. Unfortunately, only aggregate-level data were available for this group of countries, making it impossible to assess the effect of parliamentary party switching, party leadership and local/regional experience on parliamentary tenures. These countries were therefore excluded from the sample used in the article.

3. Post-1990 institutional frameworks and party switching in CEE countries

In the late 1980s, the political landscape of CEE countries was dominated by the Communists, although oppositional movements did exist (e.g., Solidarity in Poland, Sajūdis in Lithuania, and the Union of Democratic Forces in Bulgaria). By the mid-1990s, however, parties with various ideological and programmatic orientations were founded throughout CEE. Only few of them managed to achieve parliamentary representation, especially after

the electoral thresholds were raised in countries with proportional representation or mixed electoral systems. The emergence of political parties partly differs from the Western European experience because the post-communist societies were characterized by a low degree of social and political differentiation.[30] Therefore, CEE parties did not usually develop along cleavage lines but rather as "tabula rasa": The tabula rasa hypothesis "accentuates the lack of historic cleavage dimensions, the chaotic social and economic environment, and the unrestrained opportunities for popular mobilization by new political entrepreneurs"[31].

Many developments in CEE countries provided evidence for this hypothesis. For example, numerous parties in the CEE countries had a low level of institutionalization, lacked both a membership base and an organizational infrastructure.[32] The exceptions to this are many of the communist successor parties.[33] Moreover, the CEE party landscape was a fruitful ground for "many 'political entrepreneurs' to build small parties in order to fulfil their ambitions. Creation of such parties that were not rooted into the society contributed to volatility of the party system and 'impede the consolidation of an effective party system'"[34].

Voters in CEE countries have generally supported this volatility. For example in the Baltic states, they often shifted their preferences to parties organized through the merge or split of established ones as well as to newly organized parties.[35] The same pattern can be found in Russia and Ukraine, e.g., approximately 32 percent of the votes cast in the 1998 Ukrainian elections were for newly organized parties. Although electoral support of the newly organized parties has declined over time, some of these parties have become major forces in the political process (e.g., the Liberal Union in Lithuania) or retained their popularity (e.g., the Our Home is Estonia/Estonian United People's Party and the Business Bloc in Bulgaria).[36] Some of these parties have even received prime ministerial positions (e.g., the Liberal Union in Lithuania) and ministerial portfolios (e.g., the New Union in Lithuania and Social Democratic Alliance in Latvia).[37] Although this success at the cabinet level has been rather exceptional, the (enduring) success of the newcomers is a strong indicator of the electoral weakness of parties in CEE countries.

During the 1990s, the position of political parties was also rather weak because some CEE countries applied an electoral system with a majoritarian component (Table 1). This resulted in a pronounced proportion of party unaffiliated parliamentarians, who were not bound to a specific party label or even ideology and were therefore free to choose the PPG. Within the national parliament, these MPs sometimes joined existing party-based PPGs,

30 See *Bernhard Wessels* / *Hans-Dieter Klingemann*, Democratic Transformation and the Prerequisites of Democratic Opposition in East and Central Europe, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Berlin 1994, pp. 12 – 15.

31 *Jack Bielasiak*, Substance and Process in the Development of Party Systems in East Central Europe, in: Communist and Post-Communist Studies, vol. 30 (1997), no. 1, pp. 23 – 44, p. 25.

32 See *Paul G. Lewis*, Democratization and Party Development in Eastern Europe, in: Democratization, vol. 1 (1994), no. 2, pp. 391 – 405.

33 See *Jack Bielasiak*, op. cit. (fn. 31), p. 37.

34 Ibid., p. 25.

35 See *Allan Sikk*, How Unstable? Volatility and the Genuinely New Parties in Eastern Europe, in: European Journal of Political Research, vol. 44 (2005), no. 3, pp 391 – 412, p 401.

36 Ibid., p. 406.

37 Ibid., p. 408.

thereby affecting the distribution of seats in the house and even of committee chair positions. In the 1998 Ukrainian Rada, for example, only 37 of 116 independent MPs elected in single-member districts had not joined one of the eight PPGs by the summer of that year.[38] Similarly, at the beginning of the 2002 legislative term, the "For a United Ukraine" bloc had increased its membership from 101 to 175 deputies because independent MPs had re-affiliated with this bloc.[39]

In addition to electoral and party systems, immature rules of procedure, applied in the post-communist parliaments of the 1990s and early 2000s, facilitated the PPG switching of MPs. Specifically, in most CEE countries, there existed no strict requirements for building a PPG. This led to the extensive emergence of PPGs and caused inter-PPG mobility associated with the development of new parliamentary structures. For example, eight parties and blocs elected to the 1992 Czech parliament formed 12 PPGs.[40] In Croatia, a PPG could be organized by a minimum of three MPs independent of their party affiliation. In Russia, until the early 2000s, a PPG could be formed by 35 MPs (both party-affiliated and non-partisan), which resulted in high mobility between party-based PPGs and (usually) non-partisan deputy groups. For instance, in the 1998 State Duma, there were six party-based PPGs and three deputy groups organized from party-affiliated and party-unaffiliated MPs. A similar situation existed in the Ukrainian parliament where PPGs coexisted with small deputy groups that were either built by non-partisans[41] or attached to political parties.[42]

The electoral and elite-induced volatility (e.g., through the building of new parties) is reflected in the individual careers of parliamentarians. In some CEE countries (e.g., Russia and Romania), intensive parliamentary party switching occured in the first post-communist legislative term. 35.2 percent of Romanian MPs changed their PPG between 1990 and 1992 (Table 1, column "Party switching, 1991"). In Latvia, MPs with three or more legislative terms were members of approximately 2.9 PPGs during their careers.[43] Party switching was even more prominent in Russia: On average, MPs with four or more terms were members of 4.7 PPGs. Some Russian MPs were even affiliated with six or more PPGs. Considering the average degree of party switching, there is a noticeable variation across the national parliaments of CEE countries (Table 1). For example, in the Southeast European and post-Yugoslav countries (Croatia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria), the average proportion of MPs who had changed their PPG during the legislative term was approximately five

38 See *Andrew Wilson* / *Sarah Birch*, Voting Stability, Political Gridlock: Ukraine's 1998 Parliamentary Elections, in: Europe-Asia Studies, vol. 51 (1999), no. 6, pp. 1039 – 1068, p. 1058.

39 See *Sarah Birch*, The Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine, March 2002, in: Electoral Studies, vol. 22 (2003), no. 3, pp. 524 – 531, p. 530.

40 See *Zdenka Mansfeldová*, The Czech Parliament on the Road to Professionalization and Stabilization, in: *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best* (eds.), op. cit. (fn. 23), pp. 33 – 53, p. 41.

41 See *Frank Thames*, op. cit. (fn. 4), p. 224.

42 See *Vladimir Pigenko* / *Charles R. Wise* / *Trevor L. Brown*, Elite Attitudes and Democratic Stability: Analysing Legislators' Attitudes towards the Separation of Powers in Ukraine, in: Europe-Asia Studies, vol. 54 (2002), no. 1, pp. 87 – 107.

43 See *Mindaugas Kuklys*, Transformation of Parliamentary Elites: Recruitment and Careers of Legislators in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 1990–2012, University of Jena, unpublished PhD-Thesis 2013, p. 193.

Table 1: Electoral systems, parliamentary party switching and political experience of MPs in CEE countries

	Electoral system		Party switching (in %)		Leading party experience (in %)		Local political experience (in %)		N	
	1991	2009	1991	2009	1991	2009	1991	2009	1991	2009
UA*	Majoritarian	Proportional	19.0	0.0	29.8	38.0	28.9	36.9	338	450
RU**	Segmented	Proportional	21.2	0.0	32.2	12.0	20.0	19.0	444	450
MD***	Majoritarian	Proportional	7.7	15.7	7.7	6.9	5.8	0.0	104	101
EE	Majoritarian	Two-tier compensatory	0.0	12.8	27.6	19.8	41.0	77.2	105	101
LA	Majoritarian	Proportional	0.0	3.0	13.9	37.0	18.9	45.0	201	100
LT	Majoritarian	Segmented	14.8	6.4	0.0	11.3	0.0	45.4	135	141
RO	Proportional	Proportional	35.1	4.2	30.8	74.3	26.3	51.2	396	334
HR	Majoritarian	Proportional	3.8	6.5	43.8	73.2	0.0	45.1	80	153
BG	Proportional	Proportional	1.7	6.3	18.3	22.9	3.3	17.9	240	240
SI	Proportional	Proportional	5.0	1.1	23.8	5.6	3.8	11.1	80	90

Notes: Country codes: Ukraine (UA), Russia (RU), Moldova (MD), Estonia (EE), Latvia (LA), Lithuania (LT), Romania (RO), Croatia (HR), Bulgaria (BG), Slovenia (SI).
* The first post-communist legislative term for Ukraine is 1994.
** The first post-communist legislative term for Russia is 1993.
*** The first post-communist legislative term for Moldova is 1994.
Source: author's own calculations.

percent, the lowest of all parliaments analyzed. In other CEE parliaments (e.g., in Romania), the occurrence of party switching has declined over time.

The degree of PPG switching has also been underestimated because most MPs changed their allegiances within the same party family, as was the case in Croatia and Slovenia.[44] In Russia, most PPG changes occurred within the pro-presidential party family.[45] Because there were always two pro-presidential parties that participated in the elections, many MPs elected to the list of one party switched to another of the same party family (e.g., from the Unity party to the Fatherland-All Russia bloc during the 1999–2003 term). In Lithuania, the right-wing parties had a less stable membership than their left-wing counterparts.[46] Also oppositional PPGs as well as PPGs built by newly organized political parties have usu-

44 See *Uroš Pinteric*, Developing a Parliamentary Seniority System: A Case Study of Slovenia, in: Problems of Post-Communism, vol. 58 (2011), no. 6, pp. 36 – 47.

45 See *Elena Semenova*, Ministerial and Parliamentary Elites in an Executive-Dominated System: Post-Soviet Russia 1991–2009, in: Comparative Sociology, vol. 10 (2011), no. 6, pp. 908 – 927, p. 920.

46 See *Irmina Matonytė* / *Gintaras Šumkas*, Lithuanian Parliamentary Elites after 1990: Dilemmas of Political Representation and Political Professionalism, in: *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best* (eds.), op. cit. (fn. 23), pp. 145 – 168, pp. 150 ff.

ally had less stable membership than governing coalitions and PPGs built by established parties. These patterns can be seen in the Czech Republic as well. Because of mobility from the oppositional parties, the governing coalition of 1992–1996 increased from the initial 105 MPs to 112 by the end of the legislative term.[47]

Throughout the 2000s, the situation has slowly changed in many CEE parliaments. More specifically, many CEE countries changed their electoral systems towards proportional representation and installed greater electoral thresholds. This made it more difficult for independents to run for seats, which increased the significance of parties.[48] In addition, legal measures such as limiting or even prohibiting party realignment among MPs were adopted in order to curb parliamentary volatility[49], as was the case in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution (from 2004 until 2008).[50] The increasing importance of parties is also evident in the growing number of party leaders elected to national parliaments in most of the CEE countries analyzed (Table 1). The number of MPs with local and regional political experience has increased to an even greater extent, although this engagement might include positions in both local party organizations and other authorities. These developments could be found in all but three parliaments, which have been characterized by the increasing de-professionalization of political personnel, i.e., in Russia, Moldova, and Slovenia.

4. *Party switching and parliamentary tenures in CEE countries: empirical analysis of alternative hypotheses*

The instability of the party landscape in CEE countries was accompanied by the volatility of parliamentary parties and reinforced by the shifting preferences of voters. It is unclear how this instability affected parliamentary careers.

In all ten parliaments, the Poisson regressions revealed the positive effect of party leadership on parliamentary tenure (Table 2). Parliamentarians with experience in leading a political party remained in their positions longer than those without such experience. Reasons for this career advantage include the centralized procedure of party list formation[51] as well as the growing role of parties as the major selectorates for political positions.[52] In contrast, in all countries except for Slovenia, the tenures of local politicians were slightly shorter than that of their colleagues without this experience. In this case, three major explanations were identified: First, in all CEE countries except for Slovenia, local party organizations have

47 See *Zdenka Mansfeldová*, op. cit. (fn. 40), p. 41.

48 See *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best*, Patterns of Parliamentary Elite Recruitment in Central and Eastern Europe: A Comparative Analysis, in: *ead.* (eds.), op. cit. (fn. 23), pp. 284 – 307, p. 296.

49 See *Jordi Xuclà*, op. cit. (fn. 1), p. 5.

50 This decision was overruled by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine in 2008 (Decision 12 – rp/2008 from July 25, 2008), http://www.ccu.gov.ua/doccatalog/document?id=38345 (accessed on April 27, 2015).

51 See *Vlasta Ilišin* / *Goran Čular*, Croatian Parliamentary Elites: Toward Professionalization and Homogenization, in: *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best* (eds.), op. cit. (fn. 23), pp. 171 – 193.

52 See *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best*, op. cit. (fn. 48), p. 296.

Table 2: The effect sizes of party switching, leading party experience, and local experience on parliamentary tenures (Poisson regressions, in exp(B))

	Party switching	Leading party position	Local experience	Age	Gender
Russia	1.296	1.114	0.921	1.011	1.112
Ukraine	1.287	1.093	0.947	1.014	1.037
Moldova	1.323	1.184	N/A	1.015	1.020
Estonia	1.267	1.109	0.922	1.009	N/A
Latvia	1.502	1.042	0.994	1.003	1.072
Lithuania	1.392	1.184	0.983	1.006	1.076
Croatia	N/A	1.192	0.782	1.018	1.068
Slovenia	N/A	1.351	1.059	1.015	1.016
Bulgaria	N/A	1.242	0.938	1.013	1.023
Romania	1.167	1.133	0.935	1.013	1.068

Source: author's own calculations.

little, if any, influence on the nomination of parliamentary candidates.[53] Second, parties active at the local level often do not have any electoral prospects at the national level and are, therefore, unable to promote their members to the national parliament.[54] Finally, in some countries (e.g., Romania), careers at the local level (e.g., mayor) are viewed as more prestigious than a position in a national parliament.[55]

The hypothesis read that party switching would prolong parliamentary tenures. In most CEE parliaments, this is indeed the case. As is evident from Table 2, for example, the number of legislative terms for Latvian MPs who changed their PPGs is 1.502 times higher than for those MPs who remained loyal to their initial PPG. In other words, the ratios of the expected counts (i.e., the number of legislative terms) for Latvian MPs who changed their PPGs is 50 percent higher than that of their loyal colleagues. The ratios of the expected counts for Latvian MPs who held a leadership position in a party organization is approximately four percent higher than that of their colleagues without such office. In contrast, the number of terms for Latvian MPs who were politically active at the local/regional level is 0.994 times lower than that of their colleagues without such experience; therefore, the ratios of the expected counts for Latvian MPs with local political experience is approximately one percent lower than that of their colleagues without such experience.

53 See *Alenka Krašovec* / *Tim Haughton*, Money, Organization and the State: The Partial Cartelization of Party Politics in Slovenia, in: Communist and Post-Communist Studies, vol. 44 (2011), no. 3, pp. 199 – 209.

54 See *Elena Semenova*, Parliamentary Representation in Post-Communist Ukraine: Change and Stability, in: *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best* (eds.), op. cit. (fn. 23), pp. 261 – 283.

55 See *Laurentiu Ştefan* / *Razvan Grecu*, The "waiting room": Romanian parliament after 1989, in: *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best* (eds.), op. cit. (fn. 23), pp. 194 – 215.

Detailed empirical analysis of the results has revealed three types of effects that party switching has on parliamentary tenures. As expected, the first effect is that MPs who changed their PPGs remain in the parliament longer than those who did not (Type I). The second effect is a specific form of the first one, whereby party switching increases parliamentary tenure but not for all MPs (Type II). The third effect of party switching is completely the opposite, i.e., those who changed parties are not re-elected (Type III).

4.1. Type I: Party switching as career strategy

In five CEE parliaments (i.e., Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Moldova, and Romania), the parliamentary tenures of MPs who changed their initial PPG have been longer than tenures of those who remained with their PPG. Here, the Ukrainian parliament will be presented as a "typical" case with respect to the effects of party switching as well as party leadership and local experience on parliamentary tenures.

In the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the average number of legislative terms for MPs who changed their PPGs is 1.3 times higher than that of their loyal colleagues (Table 3). PPG switching was primarily stimulated by institutional incentives. First, because of the mixed electoral system, many MPs elected in single member districts were non-partisan. During the 1990s, non-partisan MPs could decide whether to join a PPG. Second, PPGs could be established by both political parties and deputy groups. For example, 20 PPGs were formed in the 1998–2002 legislative term, and twelve of them had little to no party organizational structure outside of parliament.[56] Because the threshold for building a PPG was only 25 MPs, voting discipline was low and intra-parliamentary volatility was high.[57] In order to decrease the latter, changing a PPG was legally prohibited after the Orange Revolution of 2004.[58]

In addition to institutional incentives, party switching in the Ukrainian parliament stemmed from the individual ambitions of MPs. For instance, MPs who participated in the constituting session of the parliament changed their PPGs more often than substitute MPs (i.e., those who entered the national parliament only during the legislative term as a replacement for another MP) because the former were in a better bargaining position and had more possibilities for searching a PPG best suited to their political and career interests. After analyzing party switching in the Ukrainian Rada from 1998 to 2002, *Frank C. Thames*[59] discovered that the changes in PPGs had followed electoral logic; MPs switched from their PPG to a PPG that was built by a party with strong electoral prospects.

Compared with the effect of party switching, the effect size of leadership experience on parliamentary tenures is smaller. The number of legislative terms for former party leaders is 1.093 times higher than that of those without such office. In contrast, local experience

56 See *Frank C. Thames*, Searching for the Electoral Connection: Parliamentary Party Switching in the Ukrainian Rada, 1998-2002, in: Legislative Studies Quarterly, vol. 32 (2007), no. 2, pp. 223 – 246, p. 224.

57 See *Charles R. Wise* / *Trevor L. Brown*, The Internal Development of the Ukrainian Parliament, in: Public Administration and Development, vol. 16 (1996), no. 3, pp. 265 – 279, p. 276.

58 See *Elena Semenova*, op. cit. (fn. 54).

59 See *Frank C. Thames* 2011, op. cit. (fn. 56), p. 223.

Table 3: The determinants of the parliamentary tenure in the Ukrainian parliament (Poisson regression, 1994–2008)

	exp(B)	Lower CI95%	Higher CI95%
Age	1.014	1.012	1.017
Females (= 1)	1.037	0.924	1.164
Substitute MPs (= 1)	0.699	0.651	0.752
Local/regional political experience (= 1)	0.947	0.892	1.006
Leading party position (= 1)	1.093	1.020	1.172
PPG switching (= 1)	1.287	1.218	1.360

Source: author's own calculations.

tended to impede the length of a parliamentary career in the Rada. During the 1990s, a parliamentary candidate could have easily gained leadership experience in a political party because parties rapidly emerged, disappeared, and split. Because of the high level of party and electoral volatility, a small number of candidates with leadership experience were directly drawn from parties and trade unions. A larger proportion of former party leaders changed their occupational affiliation (e.g., moved to business) and was drawn from other occupational groups.[60] In contrast to former party leaders, local politicians have remained in the Ukrainian parliament for a slightly shorter time than their colleagues have. This finding can be explained by the low importance of the local political arena for national politics[61] and the regionalized patterns of party recruitment. For example, the blocs Our Ukraine and Fatherland, which had an electoral stronghold in Western and Central Ukraine, consistently recruited approximately 30 percent of MPs with local and regional experience, whereas the Party of Regions, which had an electoral stronghold in Eastern Ukraine, was true to its name: It had the highest proportion of MPs with regional and local experience, i.e., more than 40 percent in the 2006 and 2007 elections.[62]

Similarly, an increasing effect of party switching and party leadership experience as well as the decreasing effect of local political experience on parliamentary tenures can be found in Russia, Lithuania, Moldova, and Romania. In these countries, party switching was particularly pronounced in the 1990s and early 2000s but has since been decreasing because of institutional measures (e.g., prohibition of party switching or the adoption of a proportional electoral system) (Table 1). The institutional framework has been able to prevent the change in parliamentary party groups during the legislative term. However, it has been useless in preventing party switching in the form of the change of party affiliation that takes place shortly before the coming elections. For example, since the late 2000s, MPs in the Russian parliament have switched PPGs formed by the established parties (particularly between the United Russia and the Just Russia) between elections, i.e., they remained with the initial party until the end of the legislative term but were then nominated to the list of another party. A similar situation exists in the Lithuanian and Romanian parliament.

60 See *Elena Semenova*, Patterns of Parliamentary Representation and Careers in Ukraine: 1990–2007, in: East European Politics and Societies, vol. 26 (2012), no. 3, pp. 538 – 560.
61 See *Elena Semenova*, op. cit. (fn. 54), pp. 276 f.
62 See *Elena Semenova*, op. cit. (fn. 60), p. 547.

4.2. Type II: Party switching as an increasing factor for all MPs but ethnic minorities

In the Latvian and Estonian parliament, party switching prolonged parliamentary tenure but only for ethnic Latvians and Estonians. The effect of party switching for ethnic MPs is completely the opposite, i.e., they are not re-elected to the national parliament.

Russians made up the largest minority group in the Baltic countries. Although they were overrepresented in political positions during the Soviet period; their representation in parliament dropped drastically after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[63] Reasons for this dramatic decline in the number of ethnic minorities among the Estonian and Latvian elites included public discontent with the communist past and unfavorable citizenship laws. According to these laws, many Russian-speaking minorities who came to Estonia and Latvia after 1945 were disenfranchised.[64] The empirical results of parliamentary tenures revealed that ethnic minorities were disadvantaged both during candidate nomination and within parliament. This specific interaction between ethnic background and party switching will be examined using the example of the Estonian national parliament.

The first model we calculated included the determinants of leading party experience and local experience, while the second model included the additional predictor "PPG switching" (Table 4). The number of elections for MPs who had changed their PPG is 1.3 times higher than that of their colleagues who remained loyal to their original PPG (Table 4, Model II). Indeed, parliamentary mobility was widespread in the Baltic countries.[65] Most Estonian MPs (77.1 percent) stayed with their PPGs, 18.6 percent changed once, and the remainder did it two or more times.[66] During the 1990s and early 2000s, the basic pattern of parliamentary party switching was the mobility between PPGs formed by established parties as well as the mobility between PPGs organized because of the reconfiguration of established parties (e.g., fission or fusion PPGs).[67] Compared to the other Baltic countries, Estonian fusion parties performed better in elections, thereby reinforcing party switching among politicians.[68] Ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russian-speaking minorities have followed different patterns of party switching. In contrast to ethnic Estonians, ethnic minority MPs have rarely changed their PPG affiliation and usually remained with the same PPG.

In both countries, the effect size of party switching is stronger than the effect sizes of party and local experience on parliamentary tenures. The ethnic divide is also visible in the effects of ethnic minority background and local political experience on parliamentary tenures in the Estonian Riigikogu (Table 4, Model I). With political parties as major selectorates for a parliamentary position, Russian-speaking minorities have been disadvantaged

63 See *Michael Edinger* / *Mindaugas Kuklys*, Ethnische Minderheiten im Parlament. Repräsentation im osteuropäischen Vergleich, in: Osteuropa, vol. 57 (2007), no. 11, pp. 163 – 175, p. 170.
64 See *Pål Kolsto*, The New Russian Diaspora – Minority Protection in the Soviet Successor States, in: Journal of Peace Research, vol. 30 (1993), no. 2, pp. 197 – 217.
65 See. *Marcus Kreuzer* / *Vello Pettai*, op. cit. (fn. 4), pp. 85 – 86.
66 See *Mindaugas Kuklys*, op. cit. (fn. 43), p. 193.
67 See *Marcus Kreuzer* / *Vello Pettai*, op. cit. (fn. 4), pp. 85 – 86.
68 Ibid., p. 92.

Table 4: The determinants of tenure in the Estonian parliament (Poisson regression, 1994–2011)

	Model I			Model II		
	exp(B)	Lower CI95%	Higher CI95%	*exp(B)*	Lower CI95%	Higher CI95%
Age	1.016	1.010	1.022	1.009	1.005	1.013
Ethnic Background (= 1)	0.728	0.608	0.873	0.961	0.813	1.134
Local political experience (= 1)	.817	.702	.951	.922	.832	1.022
Leading party position (= 1)	1.227	1.060	1.421	1.109	.998	1.232
PPG switching (= 1)	–	–	–	1.267	1.048	1.509

Source: author's own calculations.

since the early 1990s.[69] Nationwide Estonian parties were not particularly open toward ethnic candidates[70], although they started to nominate them to their lists in the 2000s.[71] The low interest of Estonian parties to promote Russian-speaking candidates led to a concentration of ethnic Russian politicians at the local level.[72] As a result, ethnic Estonians tend to have more experience in political parties (also at the national level), while ethnic minority MPs had usually more experience at the local level and less experience in leading a political party. Although candidates with local experience tended to be more successful electorally[73], weak ties within political parties have forced ethnic minorities to leave national politics within a relatively short time. Moreover, ethnic Russian-speaking minorities had low chances of being promoted to a leadership position within parliament. From 1992 to 2003, only four minority MPs held leadership positions in the Riigikogu.[74]

In summary, analyzing the careers of Estonian and Latvian parliamentarians reveals that the strategy of party switching is not only motivated by the individual ambitions of MPs and the electoral prospects of political parties but also by the opportunities provided by the selectorates (i.e., political parties) to party switchers. When PPGs were not interested in increasing their membership and the selectorates did not have strong incentives to promote ethnic candidates, MPs remained loyal to their initial PPG, as was the case with ethnic Russian parliamentarians.

69 See *Vadim Poleshchuk* (ed.), Chance to Survive. Minority Rights in Estonia and Latvia, Moscow / Paris / Tallinn, Foundation for Historical Outlook 2009, http://www.lichr.ee/main/assets/L-3-eng.pdf (accessed on April 28, 2015), p. 62.

70 Ibid., p. 58.

71 See *Leonas Tolvaišis*, Ethnic Minority Policies and Political Parties' Appeal to Ethnic Voters: A Case Study of Estonia's Russians, in: Baltic Journal of Law and Politics, vol. 4 (2011), no. 1, pp. 106 – 133, p. 115.

72 Ibid., p. 122.

73 See *Margit Tavits*, Effect of Local Ties on Electoral Success and Parliamentary Behaviour the Case of Estonia, in: Party Politics, vol. 16 (2010), no. 2, pp. 215 – 235.

74 See *William Crowther / Irmina Matonyte*, Parliamentary Elites as a Democratic Thermometer: Estonia, Lithuania and Moldova Compared, in: Communist and Post-Communist Studies, vol. 40 (2007), no. 3, pp. 281 – 299, p. 289.

4.3. Type III: Party switching as the stumbling block

In contrast to other CEE parliaments, party switching was less pronounced in the Slovenian, Bulgarian, and Croatian parliament. The major explanation is that disloyal MPs were punished by their parties. For example, from 1990 until 2008, only 28 Slovenian parliamentarians of all 440 elected (6.4 percent) have changed their PPG; most of them have not been re-nominated for the next election.[75] Similarly, less than ten percent of Croatian MPs have changed their PPG alignments since the early 1990s.[76] This number is far below the average level of CEE countries. Other factors that facilitated loyalty include the centralized system of parliamentary nomination and the pivotal importance of party leaders as the major selectorates.

In Croatia, Bulgaria, and Slovenia, party systems were very volatile during the 1990s and were marked by substantial party splitting.[77] Since the late 1990s, these countries have slowly curbed party switching.[78] In Croatia and Bulgaria, parties have been using highly centralized nomination procedures for political positions. These are exclusively controlled by leaders of the national party organizations.[79] Like in Western European countries, parties in Croatia and Bulgaria have preferred to nominate parliamentary candidates with extensive experience in party organizations.[80] Because nomination itself requires a long-standing career in a political party and parties were the only selectorates for national parliamentary positions, candidates remained loyal to their parties both before the elections and within the national parliament. The systematic punishment of party switchers by parties forced elected MPs to conform to party standards. For example, in Slovenia, out of twelve MPs who had changed parliamentary party groups during the 1992–1996 legislative term, none was re-nominated and therefore, not a single of these MPs was re-elected.

In contrast to Bulgaria and Croatia, the nomination procedures applied by most Slovenian parties have been decentralized and strongly influenced by territorial party organizations.[81] These have often nominated candidates with strong local political ties[82], although

75 See *Uros Pinterič*, Developing a Parliamentary Seniority System A Case Study of Slovenia, in: Problems of Post-Communism, vol. 58 (2011), no. 6, pp. 36 – 47, pp. 42 f.

76 See *Vlasta Ilišin*, The Social Structure of the Croatian Parliament in Five Mandates, in: Politička misao 2007, XLIV, p. 63.

77 See *Vlasta Ilišin* / *Goran Čular*, op. cit. (fn. 51), p. 176; *Georgi Karasimeonov*, Internal Party Democracy. The Case of Four Major Political Parties in Bulgaria, in: *id.* (ed.) Organizational Structures and Internal Party Democracy in South Eastern Europe, GorexPress 2005, pp. 96 – 113, p. 109.

78 See *Vlasta Ilišin*, op. cit. (fn. 76), p. 48.

79 See *Goran Čular*, Organizational Development of Parties and Internal Party Democracy in Croatia, in: *Georgi Karasimeonov* (ed.), op. cit. (fn. 77), pp. 62 – 95, pp. 70 ff.; *Vlasta Ilišin* / *Goran Čular*, op. cit. (fn. 51), p. 173.

80 See *Mirjana Kasapović*, Kandidacijski postupci u demokratskim političkim sustavima, in: Politička misao, vol. 38 (2002), no. 4, pp. 3 – 20, pp. 15 f.; *Tatiana Kostadinova*, Women's Legislative Representation in Post-Communist Bulgaria, in: *Richard E. Matland* / *Kathleen A. Montgomery* (eds.), Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe, Oxford University Press 2003, pp. 304 – 320, p. 312.

81 See *Alenka Krašovec* / *Tim Haughton*, op. cit. (fn. 53), pp. 203 f.

82 See *Uros Pinterič*, op. cit. (fn. 75), p. 43.

the overall proportion of MPs with local experience was relatively low (Table 1). Like in Bulgaria and Croatia, however, Slovenian party switchers have not been re-nominated to any party list. Although Slovenian parties were able to nominate non-partisan candidates to their lists, the electoral chances of party switchers who were nominated as non-partisans were almost non-existent.[83]

In all three countries, previous party leadership is the strongest determinant that increases parliamentary tenure. The effect of local political experience, however, corresponds to the type of the nomination procedure. In Croatia and Bulgaria, the tenure of local politicians has been shorter than that of their other colleagues. In Slovenia, local politicians have remained in parliament slightly longer than those without such experience. In Bulgaria, because local party organizations have had little influence on the formation of candidate lists, local politicians have often been placed on lower positions on the lists, whereas party leaders have received the list position with the highest probability of being elected.[84] It is therefore not surprising that party leaders enjoy longer parliamentary careers than their colleagues with previous local activity.

The moderate proportion of former local politicians in the Croatian parliament reflects the low influence of local politics in Croatia because it hardly affects politics at the national level.[85] Furthermore, politicians at the local level rarely belonged to established political parties[86] or were non-partisan[87]; this decreased their chances of being nominated in the national parliamentary elections. For most Croatian parties, the role of local organizations in the formation of a national parliamentary party list has been negligible.[88] Local politicians have therefore had lower chances of being promoted to the national parliament and have remained there. In contrast, party leaders have enjoyed greater prospects for a long-standing parliamentary career.

In Slovenia, local politics has been the springboard to the national parliament. Although the proportion of local politicians recruited to the national parliament was relatively small, approximately 80 percent of Slovenian MPs have strong local connections, i.e., they were elected in the same constituency, in which they were born or raised.[89] The strong influence of territorial party organizations on the formation of candidate lists for parliamentary elections explains the increasing effect of both local and leadership experience on the number of legislative terms.

In summary, in all three countries, political parties have gained an ultimate power over the electoral prospects of candidates and parliamentarians. In this situation, any parliamentary party switching has been disadvantageous for an MP's career. Strikingly, Slovenia,

83 See *Drago Zajc*, Razvoj parlamentarizma. Funkcije sodobnih parlamentov, Ljubljana, Fakulteta za družbene vede 2004, http://knjigarna.fdv.si/s/u/pdf/135.pdf (accessed on April 28, 2015), p. 124.
84 See *Tatiana Kostadinova*, op. cit. (fn. 80), p. 312.
85 See *Vlasta Ilišin*, Mladi u lokalnoj vlasti u Hrvatskoj – Youth in Croatian Local Government, Zagreb, DIM 2006, http://www.dimonline.hr/wp-content/uploads/mladi-u-lokalnojvlasti.pdf (accessed on April 28, 2015), p. 70.
86 Ibid., p. 71.
87 See *Vlasta Ilišin* / *Goran Čular*, op. cit. (fn. 51), p. 174.
88 See *Goran Čular*, op. cit. (fn. 79), p. 76.
89 See *Uros Pinterič*, op. cit. (fn. 75), p. 42.

Croatia, and Bulgaria had adopted these West European patterns of candidate recruitment by the end of the 1990s.

5. Conclusion: Party switching and parliamentary careers in a comparative perspective

In Western European countries, parliamentary party switching has indeed been a singular behavior of individual parliamentarians. In contrast, intra-parliamentary mobility was pronounced in most post-communist countries except for Southeast and Central European countries (i.e., Slovenia, Croatia, and Bulgaria).[90] The intra-parliamentary party movements can be observed in both parliamentary and parliamentary-presidential countries (e.g., the Czech Republic, Poland, and the Baltic states) as well as in presidential-parliamentary systems (e.g., Russia and Ukraine). In most CEE countries, the peak of parliamentary party switching occurred in the late 1990s (e.g., in Moldova and the Baltic countries). In contrast, in Russia and Ukraine, parliamentary party mobility has also taken place in the early 2000s. Based on the individual career data and the occurrence of PPG switching during the legislative period, we discovered that the disloyal behavior of MPs allowed them to remain longer in the national parliaments. For this effect, various factors such as the institutional framework (e.g., the majoritarian electoral system), the parliamentary rules of procedure (i.e., allowing the creation of deputy groups), the volatile preferences of voters, and the electoral volatility of political parties were responsible.

These macro- and meso-factors were accompanied by the individual career ambitions of MPs who switched to a PPG with better career perspectives and better electoral prospects. In addition, many political parties were interested in attracting additional members to their PPGs in order to increase their number of legislative seats and parliamentary positions of power. Some parliamentary party groups (e.g., in Russia and Ukraine) were interested in party switchers because of their political experience, i.e., because of lacking professionalized personnel, PPGs are keen to attract politicians from other parties. The strong influence of opportunities provided by parties on parliamentary party switching was evident in the cases of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bulgaria, where parties consistently punish any realignment with party-based PPGs. In the Estonian and Latvian parliament, parties selectively restricted party switching by not re-nominating disloyal MPs from ethnic Russian-speaking minorities, while ethnic Estonian party switchers enjoyed the prolonging effect on their tenures.

In all parliaments except for those of Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Croatia, the party switching hypothesis was confirmed. The effect size of this determinant was also higher than those of party leadership and local/regional experience on parliamentary tenures. Hypothesis 2 (i.e., party leadership experience prolongs parliamentary tenures) was confirmed in most CEE countries, although the effect size of this determinant slightly varies across countries. Hypothesis 3 (local experience prolongs parliamentary tenures) was rejected in virtually all countries. If we consider the institutional development of parties in CEE countries, the longer careers of MPs with party leadership experience are particularly interesting. Because

90 See *Elena Semenova* / *Michael Edinger* / *Heinrich Best*, op. cit. (fn. 48), p. 296.

they were able to install centralized nomination procedures (e.g., in Slovenia), party leaders (particularly those of the national party organizations) were usually placed at the top of the party list, which to some extent protected them from the volatile preferences of the voters. Political experience at the local and regional levels often impedes (or at least does not prolong) parliamentary tenure at the national level. The major exception to this rule is Slovenia, where local politicians have had slightly longer tenures compared to those MPs without such experience.

Using the delegation approach, the role of political parties is crucial in stimulating and preventing parliamentary party switching. In CEE countries, parties screened their parliamentary candidates both during nomination and within parliament. Strikingly, MPs from other parties were also screened because party-based PPGs sometimes provide incentives for MPs to switch in order to create a majority or re-distribute parliamentary positions. With the growing concentration of party systems in CEE, parties have started to protect their positions at the national arena by punishing party switching during the legislative term. By the late 2000s, however, all CEE parliaments had restricted parliamentary party switching, even that which takes place within the same party family. The instruments that parliaments used in order to restrict PPG defections included the introduction of legal measures e.g., the laws against parliamentary party defections (e.g., in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine).[91]

From the point of view of the individual MP in post-communist countries, parliamentary party switching was expected to decrease electoral uncertainty while increasing career security. Some parliamentarians were proactive in securing their careers and changed their parties during the legislative term and before elections. At the aggregate level, the instrumental behavior of individual MPs actually augmented uncertainty because it increased elite-induced party volatility and weakened the party attachment of the voters. With political parties strengthening their position as the major career gatekeepers, the opportunities for MPs to switch PPGs were reduced.

Although it has yielded interesting findings, this study is not without limitations as only one form of party switching (i.e., that during the legislative term) was operationalized and tested. Further studies should focus on the interaction between parliamentary party switching and the organizational changes of parties (e.g., whether switching to a PPG organized by an established or a newly-organized party makes a difference). Another aspect of research should focus on push and pull factors for switching and attracting switchers for political parties.

91 See *Kenneth Janda*, op. cit. (fn. 2), p. 4.