



# Factors of party system nationalization

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**Grigorii V Golosov**

European University at St. Petersburg, Russia

## Abstract

This article uses a representative sample of elections held in 80 countries (1992–2012) for a statistical analysis of societal and institutional factors of party system nationalization. The analysis demonstrates that high degrees of political decentralization, such as in federations and devolved states, exert a strong negative effect on party system nationalization. However, in the long-term federalism can accommodate highly nationalized party systems. Another factor that strongly contributes to party system nationalization is a high quality of democracy. The degrees to which different varieties of electoral rules support party system nationalization are associated with a lack of incentives for cultivating the personal vote. Countries with large populations and societies divided along linguistic and/or religious lines tend to have party systems that are less nationalized, but these factors are not as important as institutional determinants. The impact of some of the factors is mitigated by party system fragmentation.

## Keywords

Political parties, party systems, party system nationalization, political institutions, electoral systems

## Introduction

Party system nationalization is defined as the extent to which national parties receive similar shares of the vote across the territorial units of the state. A party system is fully nationalized if the share of the vote received by each of the political parties does not vary from one territorial unit of the country to another, and it completely lacks nationalization if each party receives electoral support in only one of many units. Contemporary research on party system nationalization originates from several path-breaking studies of the formation of a national electorate in the United States (Cain et al., 1987; Stokes, 1967; Vertz et al., 1987). More recently, this stream of research has generated a number of comparative studies focused on Western Europe (Caramani, 2004; Ersson et al., 1985; Hearl et al., 1996; Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2011; Rose and Urwin, 1975), Latin America (Harbers, 2010; Jones and Mainwaring, 2003), federal states (Chhibber and Kollman, 2004; Rodden and Wibbels, 2011), and Eastern Europe (Bochsler, 2010b; Golosov, 2014a; Tiemann, 2012). However, there are

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### Corresponding author:

Grigorii V Golosov, European University at St. Petersburg, Gagarinskaya 3, St. Petersburg, 191187, Russia.  
Email: ggolosov@gmail.com

very few cross-national analyses bringing together empirical evidence from several regions of the world (Brancati, 2008; Morgenstern et al., 2009). While the existing body of research on the subject certainly provides a solid basis upon which to build, the scarcity of broad cross-national comparisons indicated clearly the need for further extension of the scope of inquiry.

Meanwhile, the subject of party system nationalization is of vital theoretical importance for our understanding of party competition in contemporary democracies. Party systems vary with regard to a number of essential characteristics that are conventionally referred to as party system properties. In recent decades, political science scholarship has acquired a substantial amount of knowledge about some of these properties, such as fragmentation, electoral volatility and ideological polarization (Janda, 1993); and party system nationalization is one of them. While presenting a set of analytically distinct phenomena, party system properties interact in a way that determines the nature of political competition in a society. Considering the statics of party systems, it is clear that nationalization has consequences with regard to fragmentation, because small regional parties can contribute greatly to the overall number of parties; to volatility, because the costs of sub-national electoral entry exert influence upon voter calculus and party strategies; and to ideological polarization, because the ideological profiles of regional parties must be taken into account by major national political actors. Turning to the dynamics of party systems, it has long been recognized that the initial patterns of territorial penetration determine the shapes of parties and party systems for many decades ahead (Panbianco, 1988). Without a proper understanding of these complex interactions, our theoretical vision of party systems – and thereby of the mode of operation of competitive political regimes – is substantially incomplete.

At the same time, party system nationalization is essential for our empirical understanding of party competition in contemporary democracies. As convincingly argued by Jones and Mainwaring (2003: 140), even in the conditions when two systems are similar in the number of parties and the degree of polarization,

If level of nationalization diverges sharply between these two systems, then the competitive dynamics are quite different. In a case of high nationalization, electoral competition follows a roughly similar pattern across the country's sub-national units. In a case of low nationalization, the parties that fare well in some sub-national units are minor electoral competitors elsewhere.

From more policy-oriented perspectives, recent research has identified party system nationalization as a crucial factor that affects political stability (Brancati, 2005), the composition of government expenditures (Castañeda-Angarita, 2013), the scope of public policy (Crisp et al., 2013), and the legislative process (Hicken and Stoll, 2011). It is therefore important, both for theoretical reasons and practical purposes, to understand why some party systems are more nationalized than others.

The purpose of this study is to identify those factors that facilitate or impede party system nationalization in a wide range of countries representing different regions of the world, societal structures and institutional arrangements. Despite some major advances made in previous research, there are significant gaps in our understanding of these factors, which results in academic controversies regarding some of them, such as federalism, and in a somewhat one-dimensional vision of others, such as electoral systems. The first section of this study briefly overviews the literature on the factors of party system nationalization, on the basis of which the second section presents a set of working hypotheses. The third section describes the sample of countries used for this analysis and operationalizes the variables. The fourth section describes the method of inquiry and reports the findings.

## The state of research

What are the factors that account for party system nationalization? Early literature on the subject, however insightful, tended to view high levels of nationalization as an indicator of maturity in the patterns of party competition, which largely equated the process of nationalization with the process of political development in general (Caramani, 2004; Vertz et al., 1987). However, an exclusive focus on this causal relationship narrows the field of inquiry by unintentionally drawing scholarly attention away from those factors that can sustain low levels of nationalization in mature party systems. Recent political developments in West Europe and North America offer little evidence that high levels of party system nationalization, even if achieved in advanced democracies, can be assumed to stay forever. Non-statewide political parties have grown in strength, and demands for decentralization have led to major institutional changes in such undeniably mature democracies as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Belgium (Hopkin, 2003). As a result, the focus of scholarly attention gradually shifts to federalized and multilevel party systems with relatively low levels of nationalization (Gibson and Suarez-Cao, 2010; Schakel, 2013).

Indeed, political decentralization in general and federalism in particular are most often identified as crucial determinants of the lack of party system nationalization. One of the main insights stemming from the extensive research of Chhibber and Kollman (2004) is that regional parties will be powerful if the degree of political authority at the sub-national level is high. An analysis of 17 Latin American countries led Jones and Mainwaring (2003) to the conclusion that federal countries tend to have lower nationalization scores, reflecting greater variance in the electoral performances of the parties across the sub-national units. Later, this conclusion received an additional confirmation from a thorough analysis of Latin American party systems performed by Harbers (2010). The students of West European party systems differ in their assessments, with Thorlakson (2007) confirming the presence of a negative relationship between political decentralization and party system nationalization, while Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas (2011) found no robust association between the two phenomena. Broad cross-national studies also produce mixed evidence. Brancati (2008: 158) showed that the strength of regional parties is greater in decentralized systems of government than in centralized systems, yet the observed effect becomes statistically marginal at the party-system level of analysis. At the same time, Morgenstern et al. (2009) found very limited evidence that federalism reduces party system nationalization.

The second institutional variable that can be plausibly expected to influence party system nationalization is presidentialism. The theoretical rationale for this expectation is based on one of the pivotal arguments of the voluminous literature on the factors of party system fragmentation. According to this argument, presidential elections naturally suppress local sentiment in the electorate by appealing to national political forces (Hicken and Stoll, 2011; Shugart and Carey, 1992). To date, however, attempts to apply this theory to party system nationalization have not produced any decisive conclusions. Brancati (2008) did find that presidentialism is positively related to party system nationalization, but only if presidential elections are concurrent with legislative elections. In contrast, Morgenstern et al. (2009: 1327) found no relationship between presidentialism and what they call 'static' party system nationalization whatsoever, arguing that 'regardless of whether a system is presidential or parliamentary, parties could develop local bases of support and may or may not develop national constituencies'.

The third theory of the institutional sources of party system nationalization also originates from the literature on party system fragmentation. One of the basic tenets of this literature is that local political activism is strongly supported by electoral systems with low district magnitude, namely plurality/majority electoral rules (Rae, 1967; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989), which has clear implications for party system nationalization. This theory was tested and proven correct by Brancati

(2008) and Morgenstern et al. (2009). The effects of different varieties of electoral rules have never been systematically examined, although Brancati (2008) does employ a mixed electoral system variable without stating any specific expectations about the possible effects of this factor. Indeed, her analysis identifies no significant effects whatsoever. With regard to the societal determinants of party system nationalization, both the literature on the sources of party system fragmentation (Amorim Neto and Cox, 1997; Ordeshook and Shvetsova, 1994) and common-sense considerations strongly suggest that, in societies that are divided according to ethnic or religious considerations, salience of regional parties should be greater than in homogeneous societies. However, the only cross-national analysis that includes a corresponding variable (Morgenstern et al., 2009) does not produce any strong evidence of such effects.

## Working hypotheses

When building a set of working hypotheses for this analysis, I sought to correct a clearly observable institutionalist bias of the previous literature by including several variables accounting for possible societal factors of party system nationalization. In what follows I start with these variables and then set out my expectations regarding the effects of institutional design, including electoral systems.

I start with a potentially important factor that is glaringly – and unjustifiably – absent in the previous research on the subject: the size of polity. As demonstrated by a seminal work of Dahl and Tufte (1973), population size is a major determinant of many aspects of democratic politics and there is no apparent reason to believe that it is inconsequential for party system nationalization. Common sense suggests that large countries are more likely to develop sub-national bases of party politics than small polities, partly because the populations of large countries exhibit higher levels of diversity, and partly because the territorial structures of large countries tend to be complex (Potter, 2014). This is the first working hypothesis of my study. Building on the previous literature, I also expect ethno-linguistic and religious diversity to be negatively associated with party system nationalization. In addition, I follow the early literature on the subject by embracing its idea that to a certain extent, party system nationalization is related to higher levels of societal and political maturity. Correspondingly, I hypothesize that more economically developed countries, as well as countries with higher levels of democracy, have party systems that are more nationalized.

Turning to the institutional variables, in line with the previous literature I expect presidentialism to be positively related to party system nationalization. This relationship can be expected to be particularly well-expressed if presidential and legislative elections are held concurrently. Consistent with the previous research, I also expect federalism to exert a negative impact upon party system nationalization. At the same time, it is important to recognize that there can be an entirely different perspective on federalism as a factor of party system nationalization. The seminal work of Riker (1964) offers a party-based theory of federalism, according to which strong national parties are major crafters of contemporary federations. Riker's theory, while finding firm support in some of the contemporary empirical studies (Gordin, 2004), clearly suggests that even if federal arrangements are in place, levels of party system nationalization can be very high. In my view, there is a way to reconcile these apparently contradictory theories. The argument of Riker, largely derived from the historical experience of the United States, is based on the notion of a complex process of state building in which party development intervenes with the creation of federal institution. Such processes take time. Therefore, I expect that the effects suggested by Riker's theory, if they do occur, can be related to the length of time during which federal arrangements have been in place. Thus long-standing federations are likely to have nationalized party systems.

Of course, federalism is not the only form of political decentralization in the contemporary world. Devolution in unitary states, conventionally defined as the statutory granting of powers from the

central government to governments at sub-national levels, has been shown to be quite consequential for party system development (Bohrer, 2005; Hopkin, 2009), and there are good reasons for theorizing that its effect on party system nationalization is negative.

An electoral system variable that has not yet been used in the institutional explanations of party system nationalization is the diversity of electoral districts. We can reasonably expect party system nationalization to grow as the homogeneity of districts increases. A theory that partially accounts for this factor has been recently proposed by Kjaer and Elklit (2010).

Given that a strong negative association between single-member district electoral rules and party system nationalization is an empirical fact firmly established in the previous research, I opted for an alternative formulation of my theory of electoral system effects by shifting attention towards the differentiated consequences of large district magnitudes under a variety of institutional arrangements. While using single-member district plurality/majority systems as the base category, I anticipate that the effects of electoral systems belonging to different categories are conditioned primarily by their propensity to cultivate the personal vote (Carey and Shugart, 1995). Of the two main varieties of party-list proportional representation, open-list systems obviously favor the personal vote, and thereby the denationalization of party systems, to a greater extent than closed-list rules. Two relatively rare electoral systems, single non-transferable vote (SNTV) and single transferable vote (STV), offer very strong incentives to cultivate the personal vote, in part because both systems allow for intra-party electoral competition. They are therefore expected to be negatively related to party system nationalization.

In addition, I singled out the effects of mixed electoral systems upon party system nationalization. There is a long-standing argument according to which mixed electoral systems, due to the so-called contamination effects, produce additional incentives for fragmentation in their majoritarian sections (Herron and Nishikawa, 2001). I hypothesize that mixed electoral rules in single-member districts may negatively affect party system nationalization for two reasons: first, because they may link locally prominent personalities who want to avoid the burden of party discipline to nationally insignificant parties; and, second, because they may link nationally prominent parties to locally insignificant personalities in those conditions when such parties are unable to recruit local elites. Whatever the flow of causality, the ultimate effect is detrimental for party system nationalization. Note, however, that this explanation applies to only one variety of mixed electoral rules, the so-called mixed-superposition systems in which the proportional tier does not compensate for any disproportionalities generated in the single-member tier, and votes are cast separately in different tiers (Massicotte and Blais, 1999). Mixed compensatory rules and single-vote mixed systems clearly produce their own sets of strategic incentives (Ferrara, 2006), and I see no obvious reason to expect that their effects upon party system nationalization will be negative.<sup>1</sup>

From the analysis above it follows that there is an overlap between the sets of factors that account for the fragmentation and nationalization of party systems, with fragmented party systems expectedly featuring lower levels of nationalization. This theory, supported by Golosov and Ponarin (1999), Jones and Mainwaring (2003) and others, has never been tested empirically, yet it certainly deserves an empirical test. However, a word of caution is in order. To a much greater extent than the factors discussed above, fragmentation, if used in explanatory models of party system nationalization, invites the problem of endogeneity. Speaking in terms of substance rather than statistics, we do not know – and there are no clear theoretical reasons for deciding – whether party systems become fragmented because they sustain sizeable regional parties, or fragmentation as such decreases nationalization because small parties survive because of their local appeal. While not disqualifying fragmentation as a possible explanatory variable, this makes it necessary to treat it differently from other factors.

## The sample and variables

Overall, the sample for this analysis includes 80 countries. It comprises about one half of the entire population of countries that, in the course of the recent two decades, have held fully or partially competitive party-structured elections to national legislative assemblies. The sample includes both democracies and electoral authoritarian regimes. While there can be substantive reservations regarding the inclusion of dictatorships in my sample, the importance of electoral authoritarianism in the contemporary world (Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010) makes it imperative to move away from ignoring it in scholarship on political parties and towards taking it into account as an important contextual factor. Authoritarian party systems also emerge as an important subject of study in political science (Golosov, 2013; Trantidis, 2013). Cases for this analysis were deliberately selected to represent, in nearly equal numbers, the regions of the contemporary world. Within these regionally defined groups, my major criterion for case selection was data availability. Each of the selected countries enters the sample with one election to the single or lower chamber of its national legislature held in the period 1993 to 2012.<sup>2</sup> The mixed electoral systems of Bolivia and Hungary produced different sets of results in their majoritarian and proportional tiers which, within the design of this inquiry, allowed them to be treated as separate observations. This increased the overall number of observations to 82. All calculations are performed on vote distributions rather than seat distributions. I used only complete electoral data. Independent candidates were counted as individual parties at the national and sub-national levels. In order to provide for data comparability, I invariably used electoral districts rather than administrative units or precincts as the basis for sub-national data aggregation. Thus party-list elections held in nationwide districts were naturally excluded from my sample. The uncontested districts in majoritarian elections and the compensatory tiers in multitier proportional electoral systems were systematically discounted in all calculations.

The dependent variable, party system nationalization, is operationally defined as the index of party system nationalization. The algebraic build-up of the index, derived from the well-known Herfindahl–Hirschman index of concentration and thereby from the standard deviation (Feld and Grofman, 2007; Golosov, 2010), a measure with very solid theoretical credentials, is explained in detail elsewhere (Golosov, 2014b). The formula is thus:

$$N = \sum_1^x \left( \left( 1 - \frac{n - \left( \frac{\sum_1^n s_i}{1} \right)^2 / \sum_1^n s_i^2}{n - 1} \right) p_i \right),$$

where sigma is summation;  $x$  is the raw number of parties;  $n$  is the number of electoral districts;  $s_i$  is the percentage or fractional share of the vote received by the  $i$ -th party in each of the districts; and  $p_i$  is the fractional share of the vote received by the  $i$ -th party nationally. Despite the apparent complexity of the formula, it is much easier to use than the major alternative proposed in the contemporary literature, the party system nationalization score defined as the sum of the inversed Gini indices of inequality in territorial support for individual parties weighted by party sizes (Jones and Mainwaring, 2003). The reason is that the index of party system nationalization does not involve ranking the components from the largest to the smallest. In addition, the values of two indices are intercorrelated at 0.997 (Pearson's  $r$ ). In the recent literature there have been proposals to improve the measurement of party system nationalization by overloading earlier proposed indices with information about the relative sizes of electoral districts, different types of electoral systems, district magnitudes and the like (Bochsler, 2010a; Morgenstern et al., 2014). In my view, attempting to compress all potentially relevant information into a single numerical value is neither useful, because it hinders empirical research by greatly increasing data demands, nor even feasible,

because index-building necessarily involves emphasizing most relevant aspects of information at the expense of secondary – even if not entirely unrelated – aspects.

The operationalization of the majority of independent variables was not problematic. Voting Population Size is defined in hundreds of millions. My choice of voting population size at the time of elections rather than general population size results from the considerations of data compatibility. Three different measures of societal fractionalization – ethnic, linguistic, and religious – were taken from Alesina et al. (2003). As indirect measures of economic prosperity/societal maturity, I used such conventional indicators as GDP per capita (in hundreds of thousands of US dollars, 2004), urbanization, and life expectancy at birth. Democracy was measured with transformed Freedom House political rights scores. While these scores range from 1 for most democratic countries to 7 for overt dictatorships, for the sake of simplicity of interpretation I inverted the values so that Democracy scored 7. In order to account for presidentialism, I used two different dichotomous variables, one ascribing the value of 1 to all presidential and semi-presidential systems, and the other defined as a dummy variable coding as 1 all countries that routinely hold presidential and legislative elections concurrently, even if it does not apply to the elections included into my sample, such as in the case of the United States. My focus on concurrent elections is consistent with the earlier study by Brancati (2008). Federalism and Devolution are dichotomous variables that code federations and devolved states, respectively, as 1, and all other countries, as 0. Note that the Devolution variable includes not only the devolved states in the narrow sense of the word, such as the United Kingdom and Spain, but also all unitary countries that legally grant some significant special powers, such as primary legislative powers, to one or more of their territorial units.<sup>3</sup> Consistent with theoretical considerations, I introduced the Federal Experience variable as the overall number of years during which the given country was a federation.

District diversity is defined as the normalized coefficient of variation on the effective number of district parties:

$$DD = \frac{\sigma}{ENDP \times \sqrt{n}},$$

where sigma is the standard deviation, *ENDP* is the average effective number of parties per district (the operational definition of the effective number of parties is provided below), and *n* is the number of districts. Average district magnitude has been recognized for a long time as a crucial determinant of party system fragmentation (Rae, 1967). In this study, in order to provide for a more nuanced analysis, I use average district magnitude to build several interactive variables. One of them, Open List PR, is obtained by multiplying average district magnitude by a dummy that codes open list proportional representation systems (including panachage) as 1, and all other systems as 0. The Closed List PR and SNTV/STV variables are built in the same way for the respective categories of electoral systems. The rationale for joining these two rare electoral systems together is that both of them, while producing quite proportional results – which is fairly obvious in the case of STV and has been established both theoretically and empirically in the case of SNTV (Cox, 1991) – at the same time allow for intra-party electoral competition and the cultivation of the personal vote. When constructing these variables, I diverged from the well-established tradition of using logged district magnitudes and employed raw averages instead. Note, however, that especially large magnitudes, characteristic of nationwide districts, are not in my analysis, and that my method still ascribes zero values to single-member majoritarian systems, thus meeting one of the major arguments in favor of log-transformation (Lowery et al., 2010). Regarding mixed-superposition electoral rules, there is no apparent reason to believe that the magnitudes of their proportional tiers are consequential for

fragmentation in majoritarian districts. Therefore, the corresponding variable is dichotomous. It codes the majoritarian sections of mixed systems as 1, and all other systems as zero.

As a measure of party system fragmentation, I used the effective number of electoral parties, operationally defined as:

$$N_G = \sum_1^x \frac{p_i}{p_i + p_i^2 - p_i^2},$$

where  $p_i$  and  $p_l$  are the fractional shares of the national vote received by the  $i$ -th and the largest parties respectively (Golosov, 2010). The more conventional index proposed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) was not employed because it is less suitable as a means of description in those situations in which the sample includes highly concentrated party systems. From the point of view of statistical analysis, however, the choice between the two indices is inconsequential, as attested by the fact that on my sample, the two measures are intercorrelated at 0.98 (Pearson's  $r$ ). Indeed, an analysis that used the Laakso-Taagepera index, not reported here, produced results that differed from the analysis performed on the Golosov index only in the numerical values of the coefficients, revealing no differences in statistical significance whatsoever.

## The method and findings

The method of empirical inquiry employed in this study is multiple linear regression analysis. The homoscedasticity in the distribution of standardized residuals was tested graphically with scatter plots and, despite the fact that very modest levels of heteroscedasticity were detected, only robust standard errors for all estimations are reported. At the same time, the difference between robust and non-robust standard errors is negligible, which implies that there were no errors with regard to model specification: that is, the reported models are consistent with the facts (King and Roberts, 2012). The models were tested for multicollinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor and found to be consistent with the basic assumptions of linear regression analysis.

All estimates in the models are statistically significant at the 0.05 level or better. Therefore, I have to start the exposition of my findings with those variables that failed to display any statistically significant association with the dependent variable. *Prima facie*, this applies to several measures of economic development/societal maturity employed in this study: GDP per capita, urbanization and life expectancy at birth. This indicates that economically prosperous countries are as likely to have nationalized party systems as those societies that struggle to achieve economic development. Consistent with the earlier findings of Morgenstern et al. (2009), I found no statistically significant impact of presidentialism on party system nationalization. Given that the importance of economic development and presidentialism for party system nationalization has been established empirically in several studies with a regional focus, I re-examined these findings by running an additional test: the results are reported in Online Appendix 2 (available at <http://ips.sagepub.com/>). Among the three variables that were expected to account for societal diversity, one – ethnic fractionalization – was strongly intercorrelated with another, linguistic fractionalization. In the reported models, the latter performed better. This is why only models with linguistic fractionalization are reported. Note, however, that in statistical terms the two variables are to a certain extent interchangeable. Table 1 reports the descriptive characteristics of the continuous variables that enter the models. The dichotomous variables, Federalism, Devolution and Mixed Electoral Systems, are coded as 1 for 16, 9, and 5 observations, respectively.



**Table 1.** The descriptive characteristics of the continuous variables in this analysis.

	Mean	Median	Range	Standard deviation
Party System Nationalization	0.76	0.80	0.15–0.99	0.19
Voting Population Size	0.16	0.03	0.00–3.90	0.47
Linguistic Fractionalization	0.34	0.22	0.00–0.92	0.30
Religious Fractionalization	0.46	0.46	0.08–0.86	0.22
Democracy	5.67	6.00	1.00–7.00	1.50
Federal Experience	18.10	0.00	0.00–231.00	46.99
District Diversity	0.04	0.03	0.00–0.33	0.04
Open List PR	2.61	0.00	0.00–21.00	5.40
Closed List PR	2.84	0.00	0.00–44.44	6.76
SNTV/STV	0.23	0.00	0.00–5.68	1.02
Effective Number of Parties	3.62	2.94	1.39–12.09	2.29

Sources: see Online Appendix 1, available at <http://ips.sagepub.com/>.

Table 2 reports the model in which the impact of party system fragmentation is not controlled for. While all factors are statistically significant, the relative importance of the estimated factors can be inferred from the values of standardized coefficients. It follows from the data in Table 1 that the factor that most visibly suppresses party system nationalization is federalism, because it decreases the index of party system nationalization by about 0.25, which makes a large difference for a variable that runs from 0 to 1. The impact of federalism, however, is strongly counter-balanced by the impact of federal experience, which confirms the theory according to which federalism in the long-term can accommodate highly nationalized patterns of party competition. As anticipated, devolution affects party system nationalization in the same direction as federalism, but the impact is much weaker. In line with the early approaches to party system nationalization, democracy proves to be strongly positively associated with the dependent variable. In my view, not only is this finding important per se, as an indication that democratization is indeed conducive to the formation of national electorates, but also it adds to our understanding of electoral authoritarianism by suggesting that, even in the presence of political monopoly, at least some non-governing parties are able to survive by retaining the territorial bases of their support.

Some of the electoral system variables perform very well in the model under discussion. Primarily, this concerns district diversity, which proves to exert the second-strongest negative influence upon party system nationalization. Of course, it is scarcely surprising that the presence of electorally idiosyncratic districts is detrimental for party system nationalization. However, given that district-level fragmentation enters the index of district diversity as its core component, the final assessment of this factor can be made only if party system fragmentation is controlled for. In line with theoretical expectations, the variables that account for party-list proportional representation – Open List PR and Closed List PR – display strong positive associations with party system nationalization. The impact of closed-list rules is stronger, which is consistent with lower propensity of these rules for cultivating the personal vote. As expected, the impact of mixed-superposition systems is negative and it proves to be very strong. The SNTV/STV variable is also negatively associated with party system nationalization, but it is the weakest explanatory variable in the model under discussion. The impact of three non-institutional variables – Population Size, Linguistic Fractionalization, and Religious Fractionalization – is statistically significant and expectedly negative, but none of these variables can be characterized as a strong explanatory factor in this model. Institutional factors obviously prevail.

**Table 2.** Factors of party system nationalization, effective number of parties excluded.

	Unstandardized coefficients	Robust standard errors	Standardized coefficients
Voting Population Size	-0.080**	0.020	-0.203
Linguistic Fractionalization	-0.125**	0.047	-0.200
Religious Fractionalization	-0.124*	0.053	-0.149
Democracy	0.030**	0.011	0.239
Federalism	-0.242**	0.067	-0.520
Federal Experience	0.001**	0.000	0.273
Devolution	-0.124**	0.030	-0.210
District Diversity	-1.577**	0.285	-0.362
Open List PR	0.006**	0.002	0.185
Closed List PR	0.007**	0.001	0.252
SNTV/STV	-0.024*	0.010	-0.129
Mixed-superposition	-0.199**	0.050	-0.258
Constant	0.794**	0.070	N/A
R-squared	0.784		

\*\*significant at 0.01; \*significant at 0.05.

Sources: see Online Appendix 1, available at <http://ips.sagepub.com/>.

In this respect, the model in which party system fragmentation is controlled for (reported in Table 3) displays little difference. Moreover, societal factors, while retaining statistical significance, tend to lose some of their previously registered importance, which suggests that their effect on party system nationalization is further mitigated in the presence of the effective number of parties. When entered into my regression analysis, the effective number of parties becomes one of the most important factors, yielding only to Federalism. It is hardly surprising that fragmented party systems are less nationalized than concentrated ones. More importantly for this analysis, the presence of the effective number of parties affects nearly all other variables, but not to the same extent, revealing a complex interplay of factors in the causal dynamics of party system fragmentation and nationalization. Note that in terms of overall explanatory power the two models are not very different, which implies that the strong impact of the effective number of parties comes largely at the expense of some other variables.

The data in Table 3 show that the impact of two variables – Democracy and Open List PR – while retaining the expected positive direction, becomes even stronger in the presence of the effective number of parties. The strong effect of the Federalism and Federal Experiences variables remains almost untouched. This means that all four factors support party system nationalization irrespective of the relative sizes of political parties. However, the explanatory strength of several other variables declines. The presence of the effective number of parties is quite detrimental for Population Size, Devolution, District Diversity, and Mixed-Superposition Systems. From a substantive point of view, the analysis presented in Table 3 allows for distinguishing between direct influences upon party system nationalization, exerted by those variables that increase or retain their significance if party system fragmentation is controlled for, and indirect influences. Some variables are positively or negatively associated with party system nationalization because they affect the survival of small parties, and such parties tend to rely on local bases of electoral support, while other factors directly facilitate the emergence of large national parties. Note, however, that all explanatory factors, even if their effects are mitigated by the effective number of parties, remain statistically significant and retain the predicted directions. Finally, since most of the empirical

**Table 3.** Factors of party system nationalization, effective number of parties included.

	Unstandardized coefficients	Robust standard errors	Standardized coefficients
Voting Population Size	-0.044*	0.020	-0.110
Linguistic Fractionalization	-0.105*	0.043	-0.169
Religious Fractionalization	-0.140**	0.047	-0.169
Democracy	0.032**	0.009	0.261
Federalism	-0.213**	0.060	-0.458
Federal Experience	0.001**	0.000	0.241
Devolution	-0.101**	0.032	-0.170
District Diversity	-0.987**	0.255	-0.227
Open List PR	0.009**	0.002	0.269
Closed List PR	0.005**	0.001	0.192
SNTV/STV	-0.023**	0.009	-0.125
Mixed-superposition	-0.161**	0.053	-0.209
Effective number of parties	-0.025**	0.006	-0.307
Constant	0.826**	0.063	N/A
R-squared	0.822		

\*\*significant at 0.01; \*significant at 0.05.

Sources: see Online Appendix 1, available at <http://ips.sagepub.com/>.

studies on party system nationalization have had a regional basis, it was important to examine whether the effect of each of the independent variables presents significant inter-regional differences. The results of regional analysis are presented in Online Appendix 2 (available at <http://ips.sagepub.com/>): they do not alter the overall conclusions.

## Conclusion

This article presents a systematic empirical analysis of factors that facilitate or impede party system nationalization in a wide variety of countries across the world. The analysis does not confirm some of the theoretical expectations previously stated or assumed in the literature. In particular, the level of social and economic development is not found to be related to party system nationalization. The impact of presidentialism, an institutional structure that certainly affects many aspects of contemporary politics, is also not strong enough to be registered by means of cross-national statistical analysis. The breakdown of results by regions shows that, in both cases, theoretical reasoning that leads to our expectations regarding the possible impact of these factors is not rebutted, although this reasoning needs to account for certain peculiarities of inchoate party systems, especially in Africa and Asia. One factor that emerges as the strongest negative determinant of party system nationalization is federalism. Devolution exerts a similar but weaker effect. The analysis shows that while the short-term impact of federalism is detrimental to party system nationalization, long-standing federations can with time develop highly nationalized patterns of party competition, which is consistent with William Riker's theory of party-based federalism. Another factor that strongly contributes to party system nationalization is democracy. Electoral system design exerts a strong effect on party system nationalization. While in the previous literature this effect was registered only on the basis of the dichotomy between single-member and multimember systems, this present study introduces a more differentiated approach by assessing separately the effects of the

open-list and closed-list varieties of proportional representation systems, the single non-transferable and single transferable vote electoral rules, and mixed-superposition systems. It is shown that party-list proportional representation systems lead to higher levels of party system nationalization, and that variations on this parameter can be explained by their varying propensities for cultivating personal vote. The SNTV and STV varieties of electoral rules, while producing fairly proportional distributions of seats, are negatively associated with party system nationalization because they bring the personalization of the vote to a higher level by allowing for intra-party electoral competition. Mixed-superposition electoral rules also exert a strong denationalizing impact upon the patterns of competition in the single-member tiers of such systems, which is consistent with the theory of contamination effects. Three societal factors – population size, linguistic fractionalization, and religious fractionalization – are found to be negatively associated with party system nationalization, although their impact is somewhat weak in comparison to institutional factors. The relationship between party system nationalization and party system fragmentation is strongly negative. The analysis demonstrates that party system fragmentation mitigates the impact of other institutional and societal factors to varying degrees, which reflects the difference between direct and indirect influences upon party system nationalization.

From a theoretical perspective, the results of this study allow for characterizing party system nationalization not only as a process that leads to the emergence of nationwide patterns of party competition, but also as a party system property determined by a number of sustainable societal factors. High levels of linguistic and/or religious fractionalization, especially (but not necessarily) in large countries, can be conducive to low nationalization even in well-developed party systems, which contributes to our understanding of the existence of very fragmented, stable, and ideologically non-polarized patterns of party competition in those long-standing democracies that are often viewed as representative of the ‘consensual’ type of politics (Lijphart, 1984). At the same time, the impact of the societal factors of party system nationalization can be either reinforced or mitigated by a large number of institutional factors, ranging from such obvious influences as federalism or territorial devolution of powers to rather more subtle effects exerted by different aspects of electoral system design. This provides an additional insight into the nature of strategic incentives that underlie institutional engineering. For instance, it is not unusual to view electoral reforms as motivated by the parties’ desire to preserve the levels of party system fragmentation that generate a strategic leverage for major actors (Colomer, 2005). This research indicates that political actors can seek gains on party system nationalization as well. Since party system nationalization and fragmentation are fundamentally interconnected, such an approach promises a more nuanced, theoretically and empirically enriched vision of institution building in contemporary democracies and electoral authoritarian regimes.

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## Notes

1. The timing between elections has also been identified as a factor affecting levels of party system nationalization in federal countries (Rodden and Wibbels, 2010). My experimentation with this variable did

not yield statistically significant results. Other electoral system/party system variables that have been identified in the previous studies as potentially consequential for party system nationalization include the way in which public funding is distributed to different levels of party organizations (van Houten, 2009; see also van Biezen and Hopkin, 2006), the spatial requirements to form parties (Birmir, 2004), and the information content of party labels (Rodden and Wibbels, 2010). These factors, however potentially important, were not tested in this study due to the lack of sufficient cross-national evidence and/or difficulties of operationalization in a wide comparative context.

2. See Online Appendix I (available at <http://ips.sagepub.com/>) for a list of elections in this analysis.
3. Even though the United Kingdom enters my sample with the 1997 elections, which could have led to its disqualification as a case of devolution, I chose to include it into the correspondent category due to the fact that the 1997 elections were held on the eve of signing the 1998 devolution Acts, and the soon-to-be devolved countries certainly displayed distinct voting patterns in these elections (Keating, 1998).

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### Author biography

Grigori V. Golosov is the University Professor of Comparative Politics at the European University at St. Petersburg, Russia. He is the author of *Political parties in the regions of Russia: democracy unclaimed* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004) and several other books, and has published extensively on political parties and elections, including articles in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Europe–Asia Studies*, *International Political Science Review*, *Party Politics*, and other journals.