What do parties and leaders in Eastern Europe fight about? The goal of this handbook is to help readers understand the content of political change in Eastern Europe, and nothing shapes change as much as political competition and conflict. Our desire to know what political competition is about is encoded in our everyday language about politics: when we hear about an election we ask not just about the names of those who won and lost but about the sides they represent and how far they are to the left or right. Nor do scholars care any less. Even four decades after the publication of Lipset and Rokkan’s *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (1967) it continues to lead citation lists because it offers a guide to the nature of political struggles and the kinds of interests and attitudes endorsed by the winners and losers. But it is no simple task to establish a framework for competition that is comprehensive as well as enduring. This chapter sets out to put the nineteen following chapters in a comparative perspective by presenting and elaborating upon the traditional cleavage model. It also provides a theoretical platform for our attempts to synthesise the findings of the contributing authors in the final and concluding chapter of this volume.

**The Traditional Cleavage Model**

Perhaps the most striking pattern that emerges over the three editions of this *Handbook* is the endurance of certain clear political conflicts. Without looking very hard we find numerous examples of partisan conflict across group lines such as

- Ethnic Hungarians against ethnic Romanians in Romania
- Practicing Catholics against the non-religious in Poland
- Easterners versus Westerners in Ukraine
The word we most often use for such conflicts, of course, is ‘cleavage,’ and Lipset and Rokkan established the tradition of research on cleavages with their contribution to their 1967 volume. They used multiple terms and avoided a formal definition of ‘cleavage’ (Casal 2011, 231). Zuckerman tried several years later to explicate the implicit definition – ‘Lipset and Rokkan use the term cleavage to refer to conflict groups based on perceptions of association in opposition to other such groupings among large segments of a population’ (Zuckerman 1975, 234) – but each subsequent author has also attempted to provide clarifications or modifications and the definitional landscape of ‘cleavages’ has become widely fractured.

It is therefore useful to begin with the most explicit and widely accepted conceptualisation – what Stubager (2003) calls ‘the new orthodoxy’ – and uses it as a basis for further discussion. Building on the definitional work of Rae and Taylor (1970), Bartolini and Mair define cleavage as a conflict with three elements:

an empirical element which identifies the empirical referent of the concept and which we can define in sociostructural terms; a normative element, that is, the set of values and beliefs that provides a sense of identity and role to the empirical element and reflects the self-awareness of the social group(s) involved; and an organisational/behavioural element, that is, the set of individual interactions, institutions, and organisations, such as political parties, that develop, as part of the cleavage (Bartolini 2000, 16–17; cf. Bartolini and Mair 1990, 215).

Knutsen and Scarbrough build on Bartolini and Mair to construct their own definition – ‘members of a structurally defined social group adhere to the value orientation associated with the group and support the party giving political voice to those values’ (Knutsen and Scarbrough 1995, 500) – which they operationalise in terms of quantitative relationships among three sets of differences measured at the individual level in opinion surveys: social group membership, value orientation and party support.

Such a model lends itself to visualisation in the form a triangle (introduced by Krause in the 2004 edition of the Handbook of Political Change) in which a cleavage consists of the overlap of differences at all three levels. In this model cleavages cut deeper than ‘mere’ differences between members of different groups, holders of particular values or voters of particular parties. They involve a combination of conflicts at different levels, and are theoretically more durable than differences differences that occur at only one level (see Figure 3.1).
Figure 3.1: Visualisation of Bartolini and Mair’s three-level model of cleavage

Source: Adapted from Krause (2004) and Deegan-Krause (2007)

A second major orthodoxy of the cleavage literature revolves around the actual content of the conflicts that might be expected to exhibit this pattern of triple overlap. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the now almost universal list of cleavages, pioneered by Lipset and Rokkan, and supplemented by other potential cleavage candidates that have emerged since 1967.

Table 3.1: Levels of overlapping differences in cleavages hypothesized by Lipset and Rokkan and others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cleavage</th>
<th>Structural Difference</th>
<th>Value Difference</th>
<th>Institutional Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church versus State</td>
<td>Religious communities and subcultures</td>
<td>Role of religion in public decision-making</td>
<td>Religious and secular parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre versus Periphery</td>
<td>Linguistic and cultural patterns</td>
<td>Considerations of regional culture</td>
<td>Regional and national parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban versus Rural</td>
<td>Economic sector</td>
<td>Tariffs and subsidies</td>
<td>Bourgeoisie and agrarian parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner versus Worker</td>
<td>Position in industrial workforce</td>
<td>Economic protection and redistribution</td>
<td>Worker and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialist versus Post-</td>
<td>Generation, experience of economic sufficiency</td>
<td>Mode of authority and quality of life</td>
<td>Green and radical right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global versus Local</td>
<td>Professions vulnerable to international trade</td>
<td>Immigration and integration</td>
<td>Neoliberal and protectionist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are not, of course, the only possibilities allowed by the Lipset and Rokkan framework or the Bartolini and Mair/Knutsen and Scarbrough models, but any potential new entrants face extremely high barriers to entry in the academic literature.
The Traditional Cleavage Model Adjusted

‘Cleavage’ as listed in Lipset and Rokkan’s four item categorisation and as defined by Bartolini and Mair in its full three-level form has for many become the Holy Grail of political party research, but grails are few and far between. As Enyedi notes, high definitional requirements have ‘narrowed down radically, and in my mind unnecessarily, the applicability of the concept’ (Enyedi 2008, 288). Indeed, most of the research in the field ultimately refers to combinations that fall short of the full cleavage as envisioned either by Lipset and Rokkan or by Bartolini and Mair but still involve political competition and still have a significant effect on political outcomes.

The orthodox model remains important as the conceptual framework with the largest number of core characteristics, or, in terms of Sartori’s conceptual categories, the greatest intension (Sartori 1984). From there, we can consciously loosen the strictures, reducing the intension and increasing the extension and we can continue to do this until we no longer find conflicts that are of political interest in this volume; and the loosening does not need to be done haphazardly. Relaxing certain assumptions can produce a more widely applicable concept without stretching the narrow concept of cleavage. The next four sections deal with four specific assumptions that allow us to form a better understanding of cleavages and their nearest relations.

The nature of levels

In defining a three-level model of cleavages, Bartolini and Mair sought to bring precision to Lipset and Rokkan’s more amorphous concept, but over the past two decades, some have questioned whether their levels of sociostructural, values and institutional difference are essential to the concept or whether other types of difference might serve as acceptable alternatives or even replacements. Three of these are already implicit in the work of Bartolini and Mair, though they have recently been enhanced by new research methods:

Values substituting for self-consciousness: A significant alteration to Bartolini and Mair’s scheme has already occurred in much of the scholarly literature, and has already shaped the general conception of cleavages. Bartolini and Mair define ‘values and beliefs’ as critical because of their contribution to a ‘sense of identity and role’ and a group’s ‘self-awareness’. However group identity is much more difficult to discern with most ordinary opinion surveys than are basic value orientations. Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995) and many of those who follow in their footsteps have either assumed that common values automatically bring mutual-recognition or rejected the notion of mutual-recognition altogether. Indeed even
Bartolini and Mair’s own quantitative work relaxes the more formal assumption of self-consciousness since it is difficult to demonstrate empirically. Recent research has started to turn back towards thicker notions of this level that include notions of self-awareness using more extensive surveys, social network analysis and other methods.

Demographic characteristics substituting for social closure: Another already common shift in operationalisation of the Bartolini and Mair framework is to replace the standard of ‘closure of social relationships’ with the far less demanding standard of membership within a particular demographic category. Such membership may include no closure whatsoever. Not only is it easy to find anecdotal accounts of graduate students in business school who pass through ‘low’ income status on the way from ‘middle’ to ‘upper’ income status, but nearly all demographic indicators used in cleavage research are fraught with similar patterns of position that contain no expectation of stability much less ‘closure’. As with the question of values as a substitute for self-conscious values, the question of sociostructural position as a substitute for closure has returned to prominence with new modes or research and data collection, and some writers have emphasised the need for a distinct category and measures of ‘groupness’ that can capture the ‘social closure’ and ‘class-for-itself’ character intended by Bartolini and Mair (Deegan-Krause and Enyedi 2010).

Bloc substitutes for party: Does a cleavage cease to exist or undergo fundamental change if a key political party implodes and another emerges to replace it? Bartolini and Mair recognise the ‘difference between the individual party organisation, on the one hand, and the organised expression of a cleavage, on the other, with the latter capable of incorporating more than one party’ (Bartolini and Mair 1990, 66); and Mair’s subsequent work looked at broader, if less precise, categories of ‘sides’ or ‘camps’ or ‘blocs’ which may be less prone to rapid change (Mair 2006). The difficulty, of course, lies in identifying the boundaries of the blocs since these tend to be more amorphous than the boundaries of political parties (themselves increasingly uncertain in an era of declining membership and overlap between parties, social movements and non-governmental organisations). Emphasis on parties alone may significantly underestimate the strength of cleavage relationships in volatile party systems, whereas emphasis on blocs may overestimate coherence and continuity.

Clientelist networks substitute for sociostructural ties: The sociostructural indicators that scholars use when assessing cleavages may differ from country to country or change over time. Kitschelt’s assessment of the ‘fabric of sociodemographic traits and relations’ for example moves beyond...
questions such as status, income and education to look specifically at ‘occupation’ and ‘risk exposure’ (Kitschelt 2010, 661). Although questions such as risk exposure are new to the field and difficult to measure, they at least follow many of the same rules as other traits. Enduring networks of clientelism and clan-based political behaviour, by contrast, may involve similarly deep roots in personal identity and social position but their external visibility is limited, often deliberately, by the norms of the social network and the political and economic interest in avoiding scrutiny from outside. Researchers may miss the cleavage-like structures, and those who do see them may find limits imposed on their efforts to describe, much less quantify, these relationships. Of course to reach the status of cleavage as defined by Bartolini and Mair, the clientelist network would require some degree of closure and self-consciousness and something like a set of distinctive common values, but such combinations are well within the realm of possibility (Wank 1995; Deegan-Krause 2007).

**Habit substitutes for sociostructural ties:** Does a cleavage still exist if the rootedness is personal, habitual and endures despite the absence of a clear demographic distinction? Some approaches to the study of cleavage-like competition downplay the need for sociostructural anchors as the basis of cleavage stability and instead emphasise the role of habit, socialisation, and party identification in prolonging particular patterns of political behaviour. Van der Eijk, Franklin, Mackie and Valen, for example, argue that political preference may endure even when it no longer depends on positional ties to socio-demographic factors or ideology: ‘longstanding loyalties to political parties do not always require the underpinning of social cleavages […] In such a situation individuals may still seemingly retain identifications with established cleavage-based parties, but these would increasingly rest upon inertia and be subject to change without notice’ (Van der Eijk, Franklin, Mackie and Valen 1992, 421). The suggestion that ‘remembered’ ties might substitute for actual ones is not a small step and it has more than a trivial impact on the meaning and definition of cleavage, distancing it from the actual sociostructural level. For their part Bartolini and Mair consider the ‘enfeeblement’ of the social-structural basis of a cleavage as a source of ‘the decline of a cleavage’ but not necessarily a cause of its removal from the category of ‘cleavage’ altogether (Bartolini and Mair 1990, 203), and inertia is consistent with their concern for closure of mobility, if not the insistence on social homogeneity.

**Values substitute for sociostructural ties:** In almost identical terms, some scholars also argue that the concept of cleavage applies in cases where deep value differences serve approximately the same function as sociostructural differences. Enyedi in particular has argued that ‘institutions and values, instead of social categories, may in some instances also dominate the
identity of deep-seated, enduring, and comprehensive (that is, cleavage-like) political conflicts’ (Enyedi 2008, 288). He suggests that ‘conflicts may be rooted in primarily political-cultural differences and [that] the mechanisms that sustain the politicised collective identities may have little to do with social categories measured by censuses’, and makes the additional point that removing the absolute necessity of sociostructural origins and basis from the concept of cleavage may make it ‘suitable for analyzing a wider range of phenomena without losing its distinctiveness from ordinary and ephemeral political debates’ (Enyedi 2008, 288).

The number of levels
Even when suggesting that socio-structural elements or specific organisational relationships are not necessary for the definition of cleavage, these variations on the cleavage theme still insist on the presence of alternative, supplementary levels with lower intension. In this way they widen the extension of the cleavage concept without abandoning its core components. Other scholars on political competition are content to let go of the need for three levels in exchange for still wider extension. Here again, the triangular model is helpful as a starting point. The pairwise combination of three categories of difference produces in turn three categories of partial cleavages or, in our terminology, divides. These divides may lack the full elements of cleavage, but they play a fundamental role in understanding what politics is about, particularly in many of the East European cases addressed in this book.

Figure 3.2: Schematic diagram of partial cleavages

A structural divide consists of overlapping demographic and attitudinal elements. A structural divide involves a relationship between particular material conditions or identities and specific sets of beliefs such as, for example, pro-redistribution sentiments of working classes or attitudes favouring majority elections in a dominant ethnic group that may create a wide and enduring split in society. Yet without a behavioural component that produces, say, labour unions or labour parties, the split may yield little conflict and even less change. This corresponds quite closely to
Mainwaring’s description of ‘salient social cleavages without clear party expressions’ (Mainwaring 1999, 46).

A census or caste divide, finally, consists of a direct overlap between ascriptive or demographic elements, on the one hand, and behavioural elements, on the other. Lacking an attitudinal component, this is the least familiar of the three divides, but it may come into being when social groups have not consciously articulated the nature of an underlying group identity. If the members of a group can agree on questions of identity and formulate corresponding demands, this divide can develop into a full cleavage. If they cannot, caste divides are vulnerable to political entrepreneurs, who may try to seek support by emphasising attitudinal factors that cut across group and party lines.

An issue divide consists of overlapping attitudinal and behavioural elements. As such, it involves a relationship between particular beliefs and particular party choices. These divides may have an immediate political impact, but they may not endure from one election to the next because they lack roots in society. In fact, observers often refer to such cleavages as ‘political cleavages’ to distinguish them from ‘social cleavages’ that involve ties to particular social groups. These cleavages also correspond closely to the ‘issue dimensions’ of party competition discussed by Lijphart (1999).

Whether the question is best solved by loosening the definition of cleavage as in the previous section or by emphasising distinct divides or partial cleavages is beyond the scope of this chapter and may be irrelevant as long as scholars acknowledge the meaning of the terms in question. What is not in doubt is that the chapters in this volume point to a strong role for modes of political competition that do not quite possess all of the key levels specified by Bartolini and Mair.

Closure of the sides

Even if we were to resolve the question of the number and type of levels necessary for a conflict to rise to our attention, there would still be dispute about the nature of the levels. The discussions above allude at many points to differences in the types of socio-structural and value competition. In some cases the competition appears to occur between two distinct and largely separate parts, while in other cases it appears to occur along a spectrum between two distinct poles. Bartolini and Mair draw explicit attention to this difference by contrasting between patterns of ‘identity’ and ‘segmentation’ in which closure is high and cross-closure mobility is low against patterns of ‘competition’ and ‘fragmentation’ in which mobility is high and barriers are low. Integrating this aspect into the triangular model above produces significantly different images based on rival metaphors.

Identity and segmentation produce the stark differences of the first image while competition and fragmentation produce the gradient effect of the
second. Both forms of competition emphasise the lines of conflict but they do so in strikingly different ways. In segmented, identity-focused contexts, the line is an axis, a term close to its linguistic cousin the ‘axe’ (and therefore to ‘cleavers’ and cleavage) implying a distinct separation between parts. In fragmented, competitive contexts, the line is dimensional and continuous, with many possible shades and no sharp distinctions.

*Figure 3.3: Metaphors for understanding lines of competition*

Lipset and Rokkan and Bartolini and Mair tend to focus on the former model, but the modifications of the traditional model proposed above highlight the importance of the latter. These distinctions become critical in the subsequent chapters of this volume as authors contrast specific, group-based differences particularly related to ethnic and religious groups against incremental differences related to income redistribution preferences, intensity of national feeling, and rejection of corruption.

*Symmetry of sides*

The type of division is not the only element necessary for understanding specific levels of cleavage and partial cleavage. The relative weight of the sides also plays a critical role in shaping the dynamics. In most democracies, this relative weight depends on the relative share of the population. Although easily visible, the type of difference depicted in Figure 3.4 has only recently inspired significant scholarly attention.

*Figure 3.4: Metaphors for understanding lines of competition*
The concept in question is the notion of the ‘niche’ party which has grown over time from a rather idiosyncratic descriptive term for particular parties in particular countries towards a theoretically grounded concept. The most specific of the recent definitions is Meguid’s meticulous 2005 analysis of the interaction between ‘niche’ and ‘mainstream’ parties. ‘Niche’ here means ‘away from the main’, and it is notable that Meguid defines ‘niche’ against ‘mainstream’ rather than ‘catchall’ suggesting that the differences lie both in a party’s eccentric position within the party system and in the limits that the party may face in recruiting new voters. By this definition, niche parties are thus not only distinctive and relatively small, but they are also unlikely to move to the centre or to get much bigger because of relatively high group boundaries.

The Nature of Conflicts

Much has happened in Europe, East and West, since Lipset and Rokkan launched their cleavage model in the 1960s. In Western Europe, the closed class based party systems have withered away to the extent that some scholars suggest that we have entered an era of ‘new politics’ or politics without cleavages (Knutsen and Scarbrough 1995). Eastern Europe is at best in a stage of cleavage crystallisation. Communism had wiped out the socioeconomic basis of cleavages in the making in the interwar era (see Chapter 2); and ethnicity is nowadays the closest we get to full cleavages in the region. But the subsequent chapters will provide us with a number of partial cleavages or divides (see Figure 3.2). Most of them are issue divides such as the conflict about the nature of the former communist regime, but there are also intimations of structural divides. The losers of the transition tend to vote for parties calling for the preservation of the communist welfare system, a slow pace of privatisation and state subsides to bankrupt companies. The winners of the transition tend to support parties calling for more rather than less market economy, including reformed communist parties now running as socialists or social democrats. The country specific chapters also testify to the resilience as well as the malleability of the Lipset and Rokkan framework.

The flexibility is in fact built into the original model. When tracing the origin of their classical four cleavages, Lipset and Rokkan implicitly acknowledge considerable reformulation of the initial conflict over time. The conflict between Church and state parties when the article appeared in the 1960s did not have the same qualities as the church-state competition of the 16th century. Furthermore, the successors of Lipset and Rokkan have continued to revise the nature of the original four cleavages to address issues of contemporary society. The original name of the division has thereby become metaphor for something rather different. The church/state
cleavage has been recast to include conflicts between the secular and religious. The cleavage separating employers and workers now refers to conflicts between the middle class and the working class; the centre/periphery cleavage now captures conflicts between ethno-cultural groups, and the urban/rural cleavage involves central cities, suburbs and exurbs as well as agricultural, industrial and service sectors.

There are ways of extending cleavage metaphors further to incorporate post-materialism into the once ‘religious’ conflict that is now about culture, and to incorporate globalisation as a successor to urban-rural conflicts, but such extensions may push the limits of the metaphor and there are still other cleavage-like issues that are not so easily incorporated. It is more useful to accept a broader roster of conflict areas and narrow them down where possible rather than to squeeze issues into only four categories. But how should we move beyond Lipset and Rokkan’s four? Lijphart defines seven ‘issue dimensions of partisan conflict’ (Lijphart 1999, 79) and Stoll’s work on Western Europe identifies ‘six theoretically interesting ideological conflicts’ (2010, 455). For a framework tailored to Eastern Europe, it is possible to turn to the literature survey by Berglund and Ekman who refer to the findings of the 2004 edition of this Handbook to generate a list of ten cleavages (2010). Whitefield and Rohrschneider also identify ten relevant attitudinal conflicts, but their list differs in important ways from the others (2009).

Table 3.2 arrays these multiple conflicts according to general category and the level at which the main conflict seems to occur. The table points to several important conclusions. The structural roots and geographical spread of some conflicts is quite limited: post-materialism and foreign policy evoke conflict primarily at the value level, while questions about internal politics involve basic institutional competition. Post-materialism plays little role in the typologies created for Eastern Europe, while regime support plays a relatively small role in typologies created for Western Europe. The other four areas of conflict, geographical and economic distribution, and ethnic and religious culture – which map metaphorically on to Lipset and Rokkan’s typology – occur in both regions, and both involve the possibility of relatively complex interactions between structure and value. Although the urban-rural conflicts endure, the value-basis of the definition has eroded to the point that such conflicts have shrunk to simple disagreements over allocation or merged with questions about broader economic policy over market and state-based allocation.

Economic contests theoretically maintain a stronger structural base, but the complex array of potential ideological disagreements (redistribution, trade, regulation) is more difficult to map onto a single structural framework.
### Table 3.2: Summary typology of cleavage and cleavage-like conflicts according to primary level of conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Western Europe</th>
<th>Eastern Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lijphart</td>
<td>Stoll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Urban-rural</td>
<td>Urban v. rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Urban v. rural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Markets v. welfare state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Cultural-ethnic</td>
<td>Core v. ethnic minorities National v. cosmopolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Multicultural v. Centralised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Religious v. Secular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Material</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Post-materialist</td>
<td>Environmental protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External political</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Foreign policy</td>
<td>Foreign policy relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal political</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Regime support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apparatus v. fronts Social Dems. v. Communists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethnic and religious questions are similarly complicated: the distinction between majority and minority community does not always explain the full variation of beliefs because so much of the difference occurs within the majority community. In many cases the most significant ethnicity-related conflict is not between majority and minority groups but within the majority group about how to handle minority rights.

Finally, there is the question of corruption. This question does not appear on any of the lists of significant conflicts and yet the chapters in this *Handbook* repeatedly return to the propensity of political leaders to fight over the issue of corruption and voters to cast their ballots on that basis. There is a reasonable argument for not including corruption on the list of cleavages (or even partial cleavages) on the grounds that is a ‘mere’ valence issue. According to this assessment, parties disagree not about whether to fight corruption, but about how to do it and who best to entrust with this task. However, recent studies offer preliminary indications of a reasonably consistent core group of voters (bound more by values than demographics) who repeatedly vote for new parties that promise to reduce corruption instead of more established parties that emphasise other issues because of their own perceived participation in corrupt activities (Bochsler and Szekely 2010). By this analysis, corruption fails to resemble other issue dimensions not because it is a valence issue but because the inability of parties to stay clean produces a constant shift in the roster of parties on the ‘we oppose corruption’ and the ‘we don’t talk about corruption’ poles of the dimension.

Even less clear is the role of clientelism as a political division. The chapters in this *Handbook* on Macedonia, Bosnia and Georgia suggest that chains of patron-client relations may generate a form of enclosure and that these ties are distributed symmetrically across the political spectrum, but the very nature of these ties makes the gathering of comprehensive data extremely difficult.

It is useful to be able to condense multiple lists of cleavages and divides into seven overarching categories as in Table 3.2 (and adding a potential eighth and ninth), but for the sake of clarity it is worth an effort to determine whether positions on these conflicts overlap in such a way that the list of nine differences can be further shortened. Unfortunately, the measurement of how many dimensions shape political competition, and what specific issues they actually contain is an extremely difficult task that depends heavily on the level of analysis and the type of data. As Budge and Bara note, the upper end of the dimensionality scale has ‘as many dimensions as there are political actors and public preferences held by them – forming an underlying space of almost infinite dimensions therefore’ (Budge and Bara 2001, 59). The need for clarity, however, calls for the least misleading possible reduction to a relatively small number. At the other extreme of this process of reduction is the uni-dimensional conflict between two dominant positions which bundle together almost everything.
The most common framework for understanding uni-dimensionality, of course, is ‘left’ and ‘right.’ According to Mair this framework still ‘appears to offer both sense and shape to an otherwise complex political reality’ at the level of voter self-definition, expert surveys and party programmes (Mair 2007, 208), but as Budge et al note, the positions bundled by ‘left’ and ‘right’ are highly idiosyncratic, differing from country to country and even from one time period to the next in a single country:

The specific policy position contents of ‘left’ and ‘right’ or of ‘progressive’, ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ global ideological positions are accidental. There is after all no logical or inherent reason why support for peace (for instance) should be associated with government interventionism (Budge et al 2001, 13).

Finding a unified sense of ‘left’ and ‘right’ is especially difficult in post-communist Europe where communist successor parties pursue pro-market economic reforms (Tavits 2009) and where debates over ethnic rights and corruption defy easy categorisation into ‘left’ and ‘right.’ Nor do all ‘lefts’ and ‘rights’ easily coincide. Recent research by Bakker et al (2010) uses the University of North Carolina expert surveys to assess the correlations between party positions on an economic left/right scale and the GAL/TAN scale frequently referred to in the East European setting (see Chapters 8, 11 and 16). GAL (Green-Alternative-Libertarian) receives the label ‘left’ and TAN (Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist) is coded ‘right’. Their findings caution against the use of a simple left/right framework, particularly in the East European context. The general trend is for Green-Alternative-Libertarian (GAL) to correlate positively with ‘left’ on the socioeconomic scale, but not so in Eastern Europe. Three countries – Slovenia, Latvia and Estonia – show a positive correlation, while six others produce a negative correlation. In these countries – Hungary, Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Lithuania – economic ‘left’ coincide with Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist (TAN). In Slovakia, finally, there is no correlation at all between the two scales (Bakker et al. 2010, 6). The correlations are, moreover, quite variable, and most countries do not produce anything approaching one-dimensional political competition, and thus conform to the findings of Whitefield and Rohrschneider (2009), Henjak (2010) and Stoll (2010), who identify socioeconomic competition as pervasive and usually primary, while adding that the number, type and strength of non-primary dimensions vary rather significantly from country to country and from one time period to the next.
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Concluding Remarks

Sten Berglund, Kevin Deegan-Krause and Joakim Ekman

The collapse of Soviet-style communism and the acceptance of competitive political pluralism in the late 1980s and early 1990s were decisive for the political development of Central and Eastern Europe. The systemic change in Eastern Europe did not wipe out all the differences between East and West, but – to paraphrase a slogan from the early days of the political transition – it brought Eastern Europe back to the family of European nations committed to democracy, the rule of law and human rights. In the process, the change opened up Eastern Europe to the standard tool box of comparative political science. The authors of the country-specific chapters in this volume thus focus on the extent to which cleavages – a concept firmly anchored in the West European context – make themselves felt in their respective countries. In this chapter, we make an attempt to synthesise their findings using the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3. As a prelude to this exercise, the chapter offers short sections on two related topics of obvious relevance in this context – democratisation and the relevance of party politics.

Democratisation

Cleavages are deep-seated conflicts that structure political behaviour. The emergence of cleavage politics may therefore contribute to political stability – one of the most frequently cited indicators of democratic consolidation. But all cleavages are not equally wholesome for democracy. If the political regime is at the very heart of the political controversy, we may have a problem anyway. Our sample of countries includes stable democracies as well as hybrid regimes presumably leaning towards democracy (see Table 1.2); and several of the countries now listed as democracies have a relatively recent record as hybrid regimes (see Table 1.1). The democratic shortcomings are particularly conspicuous in stable hybrid regimes such as
Albania, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine. Albania has thus far had six more or less democratic elections, all under different sets of rules; the electoral process has been marred by irregularities prompting the allegedly injured parties to paralyse political decision making by boycotting the parliamentary sessions; and corruption, patronage and nepotism seem to be common practices (see Chapter 19). Macedonia and Montenegro are caught up in a climate of corruption, clientilism, and inter-ethnic strife (see Chapters 17–18). So is Bosnia, but Bosnia is worse off not only by virtue of the complexity of its ethnic mosaic. Bosnia also has a stateness problem and would presumably break up if it were not for the support of the international community (see Chapter 15). Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have roughly the same scores on democratic performance as the Balkan hybrid regimes, but play in another league. They are former Soviet republics only loosely tied to the European Union. Albania will eventually have to limit its current legislation on political immunity in order to qualify for EU candidate membership. Not eligible for EU membership in the near future, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are not constrained by European standards of good governance to the same extent as the Balkan countries. In Ukraine and Georgia we also find the most blatant deviations from these norms in the form of outright repression of opposition candidates as well as self-serving manipulations of the constitutional and electoral framework (see Chapters 20 and 22).

The twelve democracies in our sample have a record of smoothly run and uncontested elections, stable constitutional frameworks, and orderly transitions of power (cf Figure 1.2). They are all committed to the rule of law, but without always succeeding in implementing it. The rule of law is admittedly difficult to operationalise. But, wherever it occurs, corruption suggests that the rule of law is not being upheld. In Eastern Europe, corruption appears everywhere. Almost all the contributing authors refer to it, and many of them describe it as a serious problem. In the Latvian case, it is even launched as a cleavage (see Chapter 5); and it could easily be marketed as a cleavage in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and perhaps in Slovakia and the Czech Republic as well. The most visible form of corruption, the so-called street level corruption, can be wiped out through a combination of rewards and penalties. Rather than being dependent on bribe taking, civil servants should have salaries they can live on and face stiff penalties if they do not comply with the anti-corruption regime. The less visible form of corruption that takes place on the elite level in clientilistic networks is more difficult to come to grips with; and it may be noted that there are references to such networks also in countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Democracy is not just about free and fair elections and the rule of law. It is also about political organisation in the broad sense of the term. It may be challenged by party system instability, party fragmentation and – in some
cases – by the irrelevance of party politics. We will address these organisational issues in the following section. Here we will just add a few words about another organisational aspect – the structure and content of cleavages. A high level of polarisation in a divided society may eventually prove destabilising (see Chapters 3 and 15). Some cleavages are also inherently more explosive than others. The regime divide in Serbia thus slowed down the process of democratisation for years and could have overturned it (see Chapter 16); and ethnic divides and cleavages raise issues of national identity and constitute a challenge also to societies with numerically small ethnic minorities. It is a central topic, almost on a par with nationalism, in most of the country chapters just as might be expected in a region still in the process of state- and nation building. Some authors refer to what may be described as a conservative backlash (see Chapters 6 and 11) and there are more than occasional references to mounting xenophobia in the region (see Chapter 8, 10 and 13).

The Relevance of Parties

Parties are essential to democracies, but somewhat paradoxically there may be too many of them and – in some cases – the political parties may turn out to be politically irrelevant. The first problem is well know and well documented. The more parties there are running for election, the more difficult it is for the voters to make up their minds; and the more parties there are in parliament, the more difficult it is to form stable government coalitions; and the more frequent the turnover of governments, the more likely it is that the political system slides into a state of decision making paralysis before eventually succumbing to the lures of strongman rule. This scenario is part of the story of the breakdown of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe between the two world wars; and it helps to account for the widespread concern about the high level of political fragmentation in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. We will return to the long term developments shortly, but only after an excursion into the possible irrelevance of political parties.

If we run into a political system, where parties are irrelevant, chances are we are not talking about a democracy; and true enough, the phenomenon we have in mind is most visible in late and tentative arrivals to democratisation such as Ukraine and Georgia. It is beautifully illustrated by Oleh Protsyk in a pairwise comparison of the share of partisan and non-partisan cabinet members in Romania and Ukraine over time (see Figure 20.2). The message is loud and clear. The Romanian cabinets are dominated by partisan ministers from the early 1990s and onwards; while the Ukrainian cabinets remain dominated by independents until 2004. The Georgian data on the composition of governments conveys an even stronger message of limited
party politicisation (see Appendix 22.2). This is not just a product of late democratisation and weak political parties; it is also a by-product of the electoral and constitutional framework. Ukraine and Georgia have semi-presidential constitutions defining the president as a key political player. This makes the government dependent not only on the confidence of the parliament but also on the support of the president. Ukraine and Georgia have furthermore had a preference for mixed electoral systems combining proportional representation and majority elections in single member districts (SMD). Georgia has had a mixed electoral system since the early 1990s; Ukraine at least temporarily switched over to a fully proportional system in 2006. This incidentally coincides with a sharp increase in the share of partisan cabinet ministers in Ukraine (see Figure 20.2). Proportional representation thus promotes the process of party politicisation and majority elections in single member districts (SMD) slow it down. But the single member mandates may serve the president well in his attempts to forge a parliamentary majority for his government. MPs elected in single member constituencies tend to be local notables running as independents and ready to strike a deal with the executive for the good of their respective localities or clans. The attraction of the mixed system among incumbent presidents is therefore understandable.

On the whole, however, the political parties of Eastern Europe are not irrelevant. Weak would be more to the point. Some authors refer to their character as elite parties (see Chapter 16); others complain about their failure to reach out to and mobilise voters throughout the country and not just in the urban centres (see Chapter 19); and most authors would seem to agree that parties are poorly institutionalised (see Chapters 11, 13 and 21). With the notable exception of Hungary, Romania and Albania, there is nothing in Eastern Europe even approaching the frozen party systems of Western Europe during the 1960s and a few years on. These three countries have remained dominated by the same major players from the beginning of the democratic transition and onwards: in Hungary by FIDESZ and the Socialist Party (MSZP): in Romania by communist successor parties and a bloc of liberal and conservative parties: in in Albania by the reformed communists in the Socialist Party (PSSH) and their opponents in the Democratic Party (DP). But this development has not been entirely without drama. In Hungary one of the two dominant parties (FIDESZ) changed its party programme and constituency from liberal to conservative and eventually reduced the socialist opposition to political insignificance; and the dominant parties in all three countries have had to cope with new arrivals on the political arena every now and then along the way.

The other countries in the region have more fluid and fragmented party systems. The Baltic countries are frequently cited as textbook examples of electoral volatility. In Latvia, none of the parties currently in parliament has been elected to all seven parliaments, and only one parliamentarian –
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Dzintars Ābiķis – has been elected to every parliament, albeit in three different parties and party alliances (see Chapter 5). Lithuania and Estonia have always trailed somewhat behind Latvia in terms of volatility but now seem to be on the way towards increasing party system stability. Electoral volatility is on a downward trend in both countries and the most recent elections in Estonia were not accompanied by party system change (see Chapters 6 and 4). But the political history of Eastern Europe is full of surprises and we are probably well advised not to extrapolate trends too far. The two parties that now dominate Polish politics – Civic Platform (PO) and Law and Justice (PiS) – have a parliamentary record of a little more than one decade (see Chapter 7). Long hailed as stable, the Czech party system went through a radical overhaul in 2010 (see Chapter 8); and the once seemingly stable Bulgarian party system has been in a constant state of flux since the beginning of this century when it was overrun by a succession of populist parties (see Chapter 13). Macedonia had 88 registered parties in 2007; and 53 parties took part in the June 2011 elections (see Chapter 18). This is a regional all-time high, but the high level of fragmentation is mitigated by a coalition pattern revolving around two major political parties reminiscent of the configuration in Albania.

Cleavage Models and Countries

Much has happened in Eastern Europe since the first two editions of this handbook in 1998 and 2004 respectively. But what we said about parties and party systems in Eastern Europe back then still largely applies. Party fragmentation remains widespread and the party systems are still in the process of being built. So are in a sense all party systems, but the East European setting is apparently particularly congenial to political entrepreneurs. Extreme multi-partyism is rightly seen as an obstacle to democratisation, but all things considered the countries of Eastern Europe have handled this problem quite well. The number of democracies in the region is greater now than ever before.

Looking at it from another angle, the constant reshuffling of party systems in Eastern Europe is an indication that cleavage politics is yet to settle in the region. This does not mean that Eastern Europe is without cleavages. One of the most striking things about the 19 cases covered in this book is the wide range of cleavages and cleavage-like competition. The editors deliberate chose not to tell the authors of the country chapters what cleavages to look for and encouraged them to address the conflicts that really matter in their respective countries and to address the actual depth, extent, and bundling, implicitly or explicitly dealing with the degree to which they resemble cleavages and in what manner. What was striking in the 2004 edition of this volume has become even more striking today: the
high degree of diversity both across national boundaries and within individual countries. Some of the political conflicts display the full range of cleavage levels while others barely move beyond a single level. Equally noteworthy is the diversity in the amount of institutional change in these countries. Some of the political party systems have endured almost unchanged for twenty years while others appear to undergo major roster changes during nearly every election.

Nevertheless, amid the diversity and the change detailed in the country chapters, there are certain patterns that do have persisted across large swaths of the region over significant periods of time. Table 23.1 offers an initial assessment of these by arraying persistent divides and cleavages in each country along axes defined by the characteristics of closure and symmetry of sides (see Chapter 3).

The table suggests a number of patterns that apply in a number of cases over time. First, and perhaps most obvious is the political isolation of minority ethnic groups from the majority ethnic population. These political conflicts offer a powerful counterpoint to evidence of a general dealignment and the erosion of cleavage. They involve sharp and closely overlapping differences at all three cleavage levels in their strongest sense of self-consciousness and social closure used by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) or Bartolini and Mair (1990). Many of the ethnic groups, however, are quite small by comparison with the broader national electorate and the ethnic divides form the primary axis of political competition only in countries such as Bosnia, where the combination of high closure and high symmetry puts the country at constant risk of break up. This combination of factors is by no means unique. This is what happened in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union; and it is the fate Val Lorwin warned against in Belgium when making the point that the tensions might become unbearable, if all cleavage lines run in the same direction (Lorwin 1966, 177). In Belgium the two dominant ethnic groups are about the same size, but large ethnic minorities may also constitute a problem. Latvia and Estonia have sizeable Russian-speaking minority groups. Macedonia has a large ethnic Albanian minority group and was on the verge of an outright civil war a decade ago. But as we have seen not even Macedonia would qualify for the same category as Bosnia. We have classified these three countries as cases of high closure and medium symmetry.

The differences in size between majority and minority groups prevent ethnic issues from playing a role even where they are most asymmetric. In countries such as Slovakia, Croatia and Serbia, questions about minority rights and national identity prompt a relatively symmetric divide within the national core populations, and in these cases the divide is less dichotomous and less likely to involve socio-structural characteristics. The same combination of high symmetry but and low-to-moderate closure also characterises the religiously related cultural divides in Hungary and Poland,
and the geographical divide in Ukraine. In Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Lithuania, the cultural groups that define themselves according to religion are smaller and the divide is less symmetric.

**Figure 23.1: Cleavages and partial cleavages according to approximate degree of symmetry and closure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symmetry</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corruption:</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Economic:</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Slovakia</td>
<td>-Many</td>
<td>-Czech Republic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Czech Republic</td>
<td>Corruption:</td>
<td>-Estonia</td>
<td>-Lithuania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural/Religious:</td>
<td>-Latvia</td>
<td>-Bulgaria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Czech Republic</td>
<td>Cultural/Religious:</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Slovakia</td>
<td>Cultural/Ethnic:</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Lithuania</td>
<td>Clientelist:</td>
<td>- Perhaps Georgia,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Macedonia, Ukraine</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and Bosnia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural/Religious:</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Cultural/Ethnic:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Romania</td>
<td>-Bulgaria</td>
<td>-Bosnia</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Bulgaria</td>
<td>Cultural/Ethnic:</td>
<td>(USSR, Yugoslavia,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Czechoslovakia)</td>
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Economy also emerges as a relatively symmetrical divide with low levels of closure. Though appearing in nearly every country in the region, these economic divides play a smaller-than-expected role in shaping overall political choice, except in countries such as the Czech Republic which lack the socio-structural conditions that sustain other kinds of cleavages. In the Baltics and Bulgaria, corruption has rivaled economics as a relatively symmetric divide with rather shallow socio-cultural roots; and without being dominant, this cleavage makes itself felt in a number of other countries as well in the form of a regular supply of parties raising the banner of the struggle against corruption.
The rise of the corruption divide is significant in its overall effect on the region, but its sporadic eruptions further complicate an already complex terrain of deep divides between majority and minority ethnic groups, and shallower but equally consequential divides within majority groups over economics, religion and the role of the ethnic majority.

REFERENCES

