

**Up to the challenge? The electoral performance of challenger parties
after their first period in power**

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Keywords: challenger parties, Europe, elections, comparative politics, Qualitative Comparative Analysis

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Introduction

Throughout the past decades, mainstream parties in Western Europe have increasingly become challenged by new parties of various ideological kinds. Notable examples are green parties and parties of the populist radical right (PRR). A substantial number of these parties solidified their position within parliamentary arenas and some have even succeeded in securing executive power. Many party systems in post-communist European countries, meanwhile, were unstable after their transitions to democracy, and a large number of parties entered (and disappeared from) the political scene. In many of these countries one could nevertheless observe the establishment of mainstream camps that dominated politics in the first decade after communism (Pop-Eleches 2010). Towards the end of the 1990s, these mainstream camps were challenged by parties on the fringes of the political system, but also by more centrist anti-establishment parties with a more elusive appeal of ‘newness’ (Sikk 2011; Hanley and Sikk 2014).

The rise of various kinds of new parties indicates that previously dominant mainstream parties lost the backing of a substantial share of the electorate. This is not necessarily problematic, since it might demonstrate the adaptive capacity of representative democracies to incorporate new issues and demands. Yet, if new parties cannot live up to expectations and if established parties fail to respond to new demands, this could feed into more widespread political dissatisfaction or apathy. The risk of disappointment is particularly great if parties that challenge the mainstream enter office, but fail to redeem their pledges.

This study intends to contribute to a closer understanding of the conditions underlying the electoral survival and demise of ‘challenger parties’ after their first term in office. The central puzzle is why some of these parties are able to survive reasonably well in the subsequent parliamentary election, while others fail to shield themselves from being gobbled up by their coalition partners or other electoral rivals. By means of a systematic comparison of 25 newly governing challenger parties across Europe this study will add to the literature in several ways. First of all, it will extend the scope beyond Western Europe by including challengers from post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, the analysis focuses more explicitly than existing larger-N comparative studies on the agency of the newly governing challenger parties in office. Although small-N and single case studies have stressed the importance of agential conditions in relation to the electoral survival or demise of newly governing parties, an assessment of such conditions is often missing in comparative studies with a broader scope. This study involves a qualitative appraisal of individual parties’ performances in office as well as a more data-oriented cross-national analysis. Since the conditions underlying the electoral performance of newly governing challenger parties are unlikely to be uniform across all cases, the study makes use of fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) techniques, which can demonstrate this ‘causal complexity’.

The following section first discusses the main types of newly governing challenger parties that are included in this study. The paper then discusses the analytical framework and the selection of explanatory conditions. It subsequently touches on the operationalisation of these conditions and the data collection. The remaining sections present the findings and discuss the results. The findings show that surviving challengers did not necessarily leave a great impression in office in terms of policy effectiveness. However, in most cases they were characterised by a higher degree of organisational cohesion and rootedness than their less

successful counterparts, including many new anti-establishment parties from Central and Eastern Europe.

Newly governing challenger parties

Extant academic contributions investigating the electoral fate of newly governing parties often focused on parties of a certain ideological kind, such as green parties, the radical left or the radical right (e.g. Müller Rommel and Poguntke 2002; Dunphy and Bale 2011; Heinisch 2003; Akkerman and De Lange 2012; Zaslove 2012). This study has a broader focus as it is interested in all newly governing parties characterised by a criticism of mainstream ideologies, or a more general anti-establishment discourse. These are here described using the term ‘challenger parties’. Other potentially suitable concepts are discarded for various reasons.² It is worth pointing out that the concept ‘challenger party’ is given a different meaning in several other accounts. Thomas Rochon, for instance, distinguished between ‘mobilisers’ and ‘challengers’, the former type of party mobilising support with a new ideology, the latter on the basis of an existing cleavage (Rochon 1985). In this study, both types of parties could fit under the ‘challenger’ label.³ De Vries and Hobolt, on the other hand,

² For instance, this study does not use the concept of anti-political establishment (APE) parties. Schedler’s (1996) and Abedi’s (2004) definitions of APE parties overlap considerably with definitions of populism, due to their emphasis on a fundamental divide between ‘the political establishment’ and ‘the people’. Not all challengers (e.g. greens) actually comply with this definition. The study also does not adopt the label ‘niche parties’, since challenger parties, especially those in post-communist Europe, do not necessarily seek to compete with established parties on the basis of different issues and policy areas (Sikk 2011; see e.g. Wagner (2011) and Meyer and Miller (2015) for a conceptual discussion). The inclusion of cases from Central and Eastern Europe also makes the term ‘outsider parties’, as defined by McDonnell and Newell (2011, 445), unsuitable; many of these parties have not genuinely ‘gone through a period of not being ‘coalitionable’.

³ Paul Lucardie (2000) distinguished between ‘prophetic parties’, which articulate a new ideology; ‘purifiers’, which resemble Rochon’s challengers; and prolocutors, which represent neglected interests. Again, ‘challenger parties’ could in principle fall into either one of these categories.

have a non-ideological conception of challenger parties and simply include all those ‘that have not previously held political office’ (De Vries and Hobolt 2012: 251). It is questionable whether all parties without governing experience can be seen as genuine ‘challengers’ to the establishment, or whether parties necessarily lose their challenger character once they enter office. In any case, since this paper focuses on *newly governing* challenger parties – a pleonasm following the definition of De Vries and Hobolt – the implications of this different conceptualisation in terms of case selection may be limited.

In Western Europe, newly governing challenger parties are typically green parties, and parties of the radical left or the populist (radical) right. Green parties are known for their environmentalist policies, but many also subscribe to a ‘new politics’ agenda, which involves a desire to break with traditional representative politics in favour of a more participatory and decentralised form of democracy (e.g. Poguntke 1987; Kitschelt 1988; Rihoux and Rüdig 2006). Radical left parties can be seen as challengers as they ‘advocate alternative economic and power structures involving a major redistribution of resources from existing political elites’ (March 2011: 8). Populist parties, including those of the radical right, denounce the political elites for being unresponsive to the ‘popular will’, or even corrupt (e.g. Mudde 2007).

In former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), challenger parties often emerged in a different form. Roughly a decade after the transition to democracy, many CEE countries saw the rise of ideologically centrist new parties, which pledged to improve the quality of government, and typically criticised the existing political elites for their corruption (Sikk 2011). Hanley and Sikk (2014: 1) labelled these newcomers ‘anti-establishment reform parties (AERPs)’, and described them as parties combining a ‘mainstream ideology on economic and socio-cultural issues with fierce anti-establishment rhetoric and demands for political reform, transparency and new ways of ‘doing politics’.

Even though this study has a broad scope it excludes parties with a specific and essentially limited electoral appeal, such as regionalist or minority nationalist parties, and pensioner parties. Furthermore, to avoid including parties which are challengers at first sight, but projects of political elite members in reality – which is a typical phenomenon in post-communist countries – only ‘genuinely new’ challengers are selected. Following Alan Sikk (2005: 398), these are ‘parties that are *not successors to any previous parliamentary parties, have a novel name and structure, and do not have any important figures from past democratic politics among their major members*’. In effect, the study concentrates on, what Nicole Bolleyer (2013: 44) calls, ‘outsider formations’. These are parties which are not founded by national parliamentarians as splinters from existing parties.

The paper further limits itself to challenger parties that took full government responsibility and provided cabinet ministers, and thus excludes parties that merely provided parliamentary support for minority governments. These latter parties are arguably not scrutinised as stringently as full coalition partners, as they lack genuine government responsibility. Nor are they subject to the same organisational pressures as newly governing parties with an (inexperienced) cabinet branch (see below).

The study focuses on post-incumbency elections between 2000 and 2014, and thus generally includes newly governing challenger parties that were in government from the late 1990s onwards. This choice relates in particular to Pop-Eleches’s observation that ‘unorthodox’ parties began to make inroads in Central and Eastern European party systems around this time (Pop-Eleches 2010). After a first democratic period in which mainstream political camps alternated power, many dissatisfied voters turned to these unorthodox parties in ‘third generation elections’ in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In Western Europe, on the other hand, not many challenger parties entered government before the late 1990s.⁴ One

⁴ The Italian case is complicated in this regard, due to the party system collapse in 1994, and the entrance of parties without an incumbency record into the first Berlusconi Cabinet. For the sake of comparability, no exception is made for Italy concerning the period of study, and parties in the Berlusconi I coalition are excluded from the analysis.

prominent exception is the Finnish Green Party (VIHR), which competed in a post-incumbency election in 1999. This case is included in this study, in particular because it is one of the few challengers that increased its vote share after its first period in office.

*** TABLE 1 HERE ***

Table 1 shows the newly governing challenger parties that are included in this study.⁵ The selection of AERPs in post-communist countries is largely based on the study of Hanley and Sikk (2014: 4), although several parties have been excluded as they did not fit the ‘genuinely new’ criterion.⁶ The data is mainly collected by means of *European Journal of Political Research* Political Data Yearbooks and *The Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (Berglund et al. 2013). The table provides information about the selected cases, including their ideology (‘type’), the nature of their origin or ‘formative constellation’ (‘orig.’, see following section), the year of their parliamentary entrance (‘entr.’) and their years in office (‘office yrs.’). The ‘prtf%’ column shows the challenger parties’ portfolio share (or their maximum share if this changed throughout the governing term); the ‘partners’ column shows the coalition partners. The subsequent columns contain the national election vote shares of the challenger parties before (‘vote ante’) and after (‘vote post’) their period in office, as well as their relative vote gain or loss (Δ) between those elections.

⁵ Although the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) had already governed between 1983 and 1986, the party is included because its ideological focus changed substantially after Jörg Haider assumed leadership in 1986, and steered the FPÖ populist radical right direction. The Czech Greens (SZ, in government between 2007 and 2009), on the other hand, are excluded. SZ made an ideological shift from radical post-modernism to moderate liberalism before entering parliament in 2006.

⁶ These are the Czech TOP09, Latvian Reform Party (RP), Polish Law and Justice (PiS), Slovakian Smer, and Slovenian Gregor Virant's Civic List (LGV). At the time of these parties’ foundation, their leadership included prominent national level politicians, who previously acted as independents or as representatives of existing parties. Smer, moreover, muted its anti-establishment appeal in the years before it entered government (Učeň et al. 2005: 17).

The electoral prospects of newly governing challenger parties

Previous contributions suggested that it is difficult for newly governing parties to leave a good impression in office and, thus, to sustain their electoral support (Deschouwer 2008; McDonnell and Newell 2011). Indeed, while all parties normally face a trade-off between participating into government and vote maximisation (Müller and Strøm 1999), studies have shown that ‘anti-political establishment parties’ tend to lose more heavily than established parties after a period in office (Van Spanje 2011; see also Buelens and Hino 2008). The success, but mostly failure, of newly governing challenger parties in post-incumbency elections has in the literature often been related to their performance in office as well as their organisational robustness. Indeed, rather than institutional or sociological conditions, it is mainly the agency of political parties which matters in understanding short-term shifts in their electoral fortunes (Luther 2011; Akkerman and de Lange 2012; Zaslove 2012). This study aims to bring in the role of party agency in a comparative research design with a relatively large number of cases.

As far as performance is concerned, the seeds for success or failure in government are arguably already sown during the coalition formation stage. In her account on small parties in government, Nicole Bolleyer (2007) distinguishes between a party’s formation weight and coalition weight. The former concept relates to a party’s ability to exert influence during the coalition’s formation, and to maximise concessions from its partners in terms of portfolios and policies. If a party fails to secure a good deal during the coalition negotiations, it runs the risk of being dominated during the government’s term. Coalition weight, on the other hand, relates to a party’s impact during the government’s term and ‘refers to the influence that an actor possesses when intra-coalitional conflicts emerge’ (Bolleyer 2007: 127).

The analytical distinction between the formation phase and the government phase is meaningful with regard to the electoral appeal of challenger parties in post-incumbency elections. While greater formation weight might add to a party's ability to influence government decisions, it also poses a risk for a newly governing challenger; it becomes harder to deny responsibility and shift the blame to coalition partners if government actions turn out unpopular. Greater formation weight may, in other words, not necessarily be a blessing in vote-seeking terms. It therefore makes sense to consider the **formation weight** of newly governing challengers in addition to their performance during their term in office.

As far as the governing period is concerned, the ability to sustain ideological credibility and claim credit for achievements have often been identified as key conditions underlying the electoral survival or demise of various kinds of (newly governing) challengers (e.g. Dunphy and Bale 2011; Albertazzi et al. 2011; Zaslove 2012). These conditions overlap considerably in practice, as a party can claim to have remained true to its ideology if it redeemed most of its campaign pledges. At the same time, voters are likely to be disappointed if the newly governing challenger is perceived to realise few of its promises or to sell out its principles (McDonnell and Newell 2011).

Since newly governing challengers lack experience in national government and are often short of capable candidates for office, the risk of disappointment tends to be great (Bolleyer 2008).⁷ For parties with an outspoken anti-establishment appeal it is particularly challenging to strike a balance between acting effectively as a responsible coalition partner and maintaining a credible outsider appeal (Heinisch 2003; Van Spanje 2011). Not all governing challengers successfully manage to play the role of 'opposition within government' and to 'keep one foot in and one foot out of government' (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005; Albertazzi et al. 2011; Zaslove 2012).

⁷ It is worthwhile to note that success in national government may be facilitated by previous experience in regional or local government. This is not directly relevant for the analysis, however, since this study considers impression in office not as the explanandum, but as an explanans for the challengers' performance in post-incumbency elections.

Besides its own competence, a challenger's performance in office is in part dependent on the performance of its coalition partners. It is a common scenario that some coalition partners win in post-incumbency elections, while others lose (Rose and Mackie 1983). If the challenger party is on the losing side, this is a likely reflection of a lack of 'coalition weight' (Bolleyer 2007). That is, a failure to distinguish itself favourably from its coalition partners and to win intra-coalitional conflicts. Alternatively, a challenger may be unable to claim credit for successes, even if the government's policies were broadly in line with its programme. In terms of electoral appeal, perception may thus be more important than reality. Indeed, Akkerman and De Lange found that actual policy achievements did not account for the variation in the post-incumbency performances of governing radical right parties (Akkerman and De Lange 2012). In this study, it is therefore considered whether challenger parties left a good **impression in office**, by assessing their *perceived* policy effectiveness and ideological integrity.

Besides a challenger's ability to stick to its promises and principles, also its organisational robustness is expected to affect its performance in the post-incumbency election. Even though government participation is not necessarily detrimental to a (new) party's organisation, a party can fall into disarray if its leadership 'fails to create an infrastructure able to cope with the pressures generated by government' (Bolleyer et al. 2012: 973). Tensions may typically emerge between the different party branches (in office, in parliament and 'on the ground') (Bolleyer 2008). Notably, entering a coalition government requires making compromises, and this may leave grass-root members dissatisfied with the actions of the more pragmatic politicians in office (e.g. McDonnell and Newell 2011; Luther 2011; Rihoux and Rüdiger 2006). If a party falls victim to internal strife and splits, this is likely to impact negatively on its electoral appeal (e.g. Luther 2011; Akkerman and De Lange 2012; Zaslove 2012). Bearing this in mind, the **organisational cohesion** of the challenger parties is taken into consideration: did a challenger withstand the organisational pressures of entering

office and preserve organisational cohesion? This relates primarily to the degree to which internal disagreements about the party course could be contained.

If the newly governing challenger fails to prevent publicly visible rows and splits, its electoral appeal may seriously dwindle in a relatively short period of time. However, the extent to which this – or a lack of policy effectiveness and ideological credibility – truly harms the electoral chances of the challenger is also likely to depend on more long-term factors; in particular, the party's rootedness in society and degree of institutionalisation (Panebianco 1988). If a party developed stable 'survival interests' and organisational loyalties among its members and followers, it is less likely to be punished severely after a disappointing spell in office.

As Nicole Bolleyer (2013) showed, there is a strong relationship between new parties' **formative constellations** and their ability to persist as an organisation and sustain their electoral support. Bolleyer distinguished between 'rooted' and 'entrepreneurial' parties in this regard; the former being able to 'draw on linkages to societal groups which predate the party's formation', the latter lacking such linkages to 'promoter organisations' (Bolleyer, 2013: 17). Entrepreneurial parties have the tendency to rely on the personal appeal of their leader and to be driven by short-term considerations. They are therefore more vulnerable in the longer run – even though the persistence and sustainability of entrepreneurs also largely depends on party elite choices. Rooted parties, on the other hand, are often characterised by a more robust organisation and a more stable group of followers. In this study it is therefore expected that, even if their performance in office was disappointing, rooted challengers will be better able to survive a period in office than their entrepreneurial counterparts.

Method and data

For the analysis, the study resorts to fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) techniques (e.g. Ragin 2008; Schneider and Wagemann 2012).⁸ This choice is primarily based on the notion that the causality underlying the challenger parties' performance is complex. Therefore, this study does not pose hypotheses which are centred on the effects of the individual explanatory conditions. For instance, some challengers may have suffered defeats mainly because they added little weight to the coalition, others because they were seen to betray their core principles, and yet others because they failed to preserve organisational cohesiveness. Rooted challengers may be able to survive irrespective of the above conditions.

By means of a QCA, one is able to demonstrate the different paths towards a certain outcome. Besides this principle of 'equifinality', a key assumption of QCA is that it is the *combination* of conditions (a configuration) that underlies a particular outcome. Conditions are thus not assumed to affect the outcome independently, and instead of the term 'independent variable' the term 'condition' is preferred. The QCA approach, finally, adheres to the notion that causality is not necessarily symmetrical; the presence of a certain phenomenon may be explained by a different configuration of conditions than its absence.

What follows from this is that an fsQCA is not geared at discovering correlations between individual variables. The notion of equifinality, for instance, implies that a correlation between one single condition and an outcome may exist in some, but not all cases. Instead, the analysis is focused on the search for necessary and (jointly) sufficient conditions for a certain outcome to occur (see e.g. Schneider and Wagemann 2012). In relation to the conditions selected in this study, an fsQCA can for instance show whether a good impression of challengers in office is a *necessary* condition for electoral survival, irrespective of whether it is also a *sufficient* condition. Or, using another example, the fsQCA may show that a lack of organisational cohesion in combination with a lack of societal linkages provides a *sufficient* combination of conditions for electoral demise, even though neither of the single conditions

⁸ Buelens and Hino (2008) use the more rudimentary variant of QCA (crisp set) in their analysis of new parties in government in Western European countries.

may be necessary for this outcome in isolation. In view of the assumed causal complexity underlying challenger parties' electoral fortunes, reasoning in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions seems more appropriate than reasoning in terms of correlations between individual variables.

This section discusses the way in which the outcome variable and individual conditions are operationalised. For an fsQCA, 'raw data' is calibrated into fuzzy set 'membership scores' ranging anywhere in between 0 and 1. This is based on theoretically and substantively informed choices. Table 2 presents an overview of the 'calibration anchors', which are further discussed below.

*** TABLE 2 HERE ***

Newly governing challenger party electoral survival (SURV)

The outcome variable relates to the post-incumbency electoral performance of newly governing challenger parties. In order to operationalise this variable, the 'direct method' of calibration is applied. Accordingly, three qualitative anchors are defined; one for full membership (1), one for full non-membership (0) and one indicating the crossover point (0.5). By means of logarithmic functions, the FSQCA 2.5 software used in this study then calculates for all cases the fuzzy set membership score (Ragin and Davey 2012).

Table 1 showed that most challengers suffered quite heavily after their first term in office. This is why it makes more sense to study the electoral 'survival' of these parties, rather than their 'success'; very few newly governing challengers can actually be deemed successful in post-incumbency elections. Bearing in mind the electoral incumbency costs, as well as the presumed difficulty of governing for the first time, maintaining the previous vote share can be

seen as an excellent result for newly governing challenger parties. If a challenger managed to match its previous vote share it is thus considered to have ‘fully survived’, and receives a score of ‘1’.⁹

The crossover point in this analysis equals a relative vote loss of 55 per cent, which corresponds to the average electoral change figure of the cases in this study.¹⁰ If a newly governing challenger loses roughly half of its vote share, this is a very substantial defeat, but it does not necessarily signify the demise of the party. One clear exception is the Italian Communist Refoundation Party (PRC), which failed to return any MPs after its post-incumbency election. In fact, the PRC’s ‘vote post’ figure in Table 1 is the vote share of the Rainbow Left coalition in which the party took part. Since this percentage denotes an exaggeration of the party’s support, the SURV score of the PRC is set at 0.33.

Finally, a case is considered to have ‘fully demised’, and receives a membership score of 0, if it failed to win any votes. This normally happens when the party ceases to exist after participating in a governing coalition; a few examples being Public Affairs (VV) in the Czech Republic and the National Resurrection Party (TPP) in Lithuania.

Formation weight (WEIGH)

The first explanatory condition relates to a newly governing challenger’s formation weight, and is operationalised by considering the parties’ share of portfolios (included in Table 1). The

⁹ Two parties even improved their vote shares: the German and Finish Greens. Yet these are clearly exceptions to the rule.

¹⁰ Fixing the crossover point to the mean is not necessarily good practice in the calibration procedure. Alternative calibrations of the outcome will therefore be considered in a subsequent version of the analysis. At the moment, the -0.55 crossover value is still considered most appropriate, since it indicates a substantial, but in most cases a non-fatal, loss for newly governing challengers in practice. One suggested alternative route is to consider whether the challenger loses more or less than its coalition partners. This approach would not be consistent with the aim of this study, however, which is to assess the electoral survival or demise of challengers *per se*, not their performance relative to their coalition partners. The post-incumbency performance of the coalition partners in this study varies substantively and is not clearly related to the performance of the challengers.

‘full membership’ anchor equals 50 per cent of the ministerial posts. When a challenger attains half of the portfolios, its strength within the coalition can evidently be considered very substantial. For the cross-over point (0.5) a portfolio share of 20 per cent is chosen. This percentage, which is close to the median of 18.8 per cent, indicates that the challenger is a junior coalition partner, but not one that is gravely outnumbered at the cabinet table.¹¹ The lower anchor is set at 5 per cent, which implies a role on the sidelines of the coalition. Cases that approximate this anchor could either thank their government participation to pre-electoral pacts (Italian PRC, French Greens) or the tradition of having oversized coalitions (Finnish Greens).

Impression in office (IMPR)

The second condition concerns the impression that newly governing challenger parties left in office. The condition is operationalised by means of a qualitative assessment of the cases’ perceived policy effectiveness and ideological integrity. This was primarily done on the basis of secondary literature. In case of doubt about individual parties, country experts were contacted, and their judgement requested with regard to the draft case descriptions. As will become clear from the assessment below, no challengers were found to be truly effective or ideologically consistent. Therefore, there are no good theoretical grounds for allocating a score of ‘1’ – implying an optimal impression – to certain cases. The parties are, consequently, grouped in the three categories below.

¹¹ The portfolio share of 20 per cent, not the median value, is key in determining the crossover point. This percentage implies that the challenger is not the most dominant coalition partner, but still has a considerable share of the portfolios. A suggested alternative is to fix the crossover point on the basis of whether the challenger has a higher or lower proportion of ministerial portfolios compared with its vote or seat share. However, this approach would not necessarily lead to a sound proxy for the parties’ bargaining power. For instance, while the Finnish, French, Italian and individual Belgian greens all participated as non-pivotal partners in oversized coalitions, their vote share to portfolio share ratios varied considerably. Moreover, this condition is not primarily included to gauge whether challengers have ‘punched above their weight’ during the coalition formation stage, but rather as a measure of their actual weight at the start of the coalition.

Reasonable effectiveness and ideological consistency (score of 0.67)

Seven parties have performed reasonably well during their time in office, at least when their governing record is compared with the remaining challengers in this study. These are mostly Western European greens. None of these parties played a dominant role within their coalitions and all faced painful compromises which were disappointing to their supporters (Müller Rommel and Poguntke 2002). Though their effectiveness was thus small in absolute terms, most could be seen to make attempts to advance their agendas. The parties also managed to get at least some of their policies implemented. The Belgian greens (Agalev in Flanders and Ecolo in Wallonia), for instance, saw their preferred liberal policies on drugs, euthanasia and same-sex relationship realised (Buelens and Deschouwer 2002). The Green Party in Finland (VIHR) could claim victory with regard to the implementation of eco taxes and fiscal benefits for lower incomes (Paastela 2002). In France, *Les Verts* could implement at least parts of their environmentalist agenda, which was appreciated by many of the party's members (Boy 2002). The German *Grüne* saw successes such as the introduction of 'dual nationality' for long-standing foreign residents (Rüdiger 2002). In addition, the floods that struck Germany in the run-up to the federal election of 2002 constituted an 'event' which the Greens could conveniently frame as evidence for global warming.

Similar to most green parties, the Norwegian Socialist Left Party (SV) had to make painful compromises and was often out-manoeuvred by its social democratic senior partner (Allern 2010; Dunphy and Bale 2011). At least, however, the party could be seen standing up for its principles in areas such as foreign affairs and immigration. Beyond Western Europe, finally, the Latvian New Era party (JL) was able to retain its challenger character as it continued its supposed fight against corruption in office (Ikstens 2004; Sikk 2011). Although fraud accusations against party leader Einars Repše dented the party's anti-corruption credibility, the JL leader was eventually cleared (Ikstens 2007).

Limited effectiveness and ideological consistency (score of 0.33)

The second category includes parties that were (even) less successful in maintaining their ideological profile or receiving credit for enacting their policies. One such case was the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) after it took office in 1999. A high degree of ministerial turnover attested the incompetence of individual FPÖ ministers, and the party was blamed by its grass-root members for selling out its core principles (Luther 2011). Governing partner ÖVP was able to profit from the FPÖ's weakness. The List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) won the 2002 Dutch national election – after its leader was assassinated – and entered office, but continuous bickering between inexperienced and ostensibly incompetent LPF politicians tainted the party's credibility and limited its effectiveness (De Lange and Art 2011). Another newcomer that experienced a meteoric rise, the Estonian Res Publica (RP), failed to implement the promised political reforms and alienated its core constituency by moving away from economic centrism (Taagepera 2006: 78). In neighbouring Latvia, the much smaller New Party (JP) was not able to stand out positively from its senior coalition partners – even less so after its popular figurehead Raimonds Pauls left the party.

Three left-wing junior coalition partners also failed to impress. In Italy, the Greens (*Verdi*) failed to play a visible role in government or to claim credit for the environmental policies enacted (Biorcio 2002). Verdi's approval of Italy's participation in the Kosovo war alienated many supporters in particular. The governing record of the radical left Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) was also poor; the party 'could neither credibly disclaim responsibility for unpopular measures nor obtain results on issues central to the party' (Albertazzi et al. 2011: 482). The Irish Greens took part in a reviled government, which was held responsible for the deep recession that hit the country. The Irish public mainly came to view the Greens 'as having propped up a corrupt and failed government for far too long and apparently punished them accordingly' (FitzGibbon 2011: 11).

Finally, two parties are placed in this category mainly because they lost their ‘challenger’ credentials in office. By the end of its (second) period in government in 2004, the Lithuanian New Union (Social Liberals) (NS) was hardly distinguishable from the social democratic LSDP in programmatic terms, and the two coalition partners even formed a joint list for the 2004 election (Sikk 2011). In Slovakia, the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) underwent a similar fate. The party discarded its anti-establishment appeal in office and ran on the social democratic (SDL’) list in 2002 (Učeň et al. 2005).

Lack of effectiveness and ideological consistency (score of 0)

The third category includes cases in Central and Eastern Europe which disappointed in office, but also betrayed their promise of ‘cleansing politics’ due to their involvement in scandals. The Bulgarian National Movement Simeon the Second (NDSV) not only failed to live up to expectations (Karasimeonov and Lyubenov 2013: 413), but also ‘proved to be just as corrupt and opaque as previous governments’ (Ghodsee 2008: 29). The government that was later formed by the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) similarly failed to improve the Bulgarians’ quality of life, and various corruption scandals blemished the party’s image (Kolarova and Spirova 2011; 2012; 2013; Cholova 2013). The government resigned in 2013 amidst swelling public protests.

In Slovakia, the Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO) not only ‘abandoned its anti-establishment plea’ (Učeň et al. 2005: 17), but also lost its corruption-fighting credibility when its leader, media tycoon Pavol Rusko, was involved in a blackmailing scandal and suspicious business deals (Učeň 2004; 2006). Four years after ANO’s demise, the party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) joined an unsuccessful coalition that fell within two years. In addition, SaS leader Richard Sulík came under fire as he was found to have ‘discussed sensitive parliamentary business with a notorious entrepreneur who had a very dubious history’ (Henderson 2012: 6).

Two new Lithuanian AERPs followed a similar trajectory. The Labour Party (DP) was tainted by scandals soon after it entered office, and charges of tax fraud led to the resignation of party leader Viktor Uspaskich as minister, and the party's departure from office (Krupavicius, 2007). The National Resurrection Party (TPP) entered government in 2008, but its figurehead Arūnas Valinskas soon became a figure of controversy, not least due to his alleged criminal ties (Krupavicius 2010: 1067).

In Poland, the populist left-wing Self Defence (SO) became outflanked by senior partner Law and Justice and, furthermore, entangled in practices of sleaze, bribery and corruption (Millard 2010: 145-7). The Czech Public Affairs (VV) could also not live up to its promises of fighting corruption and improving transparency in politics, as the party was soon ridden with scandals itself (Havlík 2012). Finally, the leader of Positive Slovenia (PS), Zoran Janković, was charged with corruption even before the party entered office (Krašovec and Haughton 2014). Under a new leadership, PS subsequently headed a coalition that only lasted for little more than a year.

Organisational Cohesion (COH)

The operationalisation of the third condition, organisational cohesion, is similarly based on a qualitative assessment of the cases, on the basis of which the four categories below can be distinguished.

Internal conflicts largely absent (score of 1)

Two cases can be rewarded a maximum score for their organisational cohesion. In France, *Les Verts'* partaking in office was met with little opposition inside the party and was generally judged positively (Boy 2002). The same applies to the Flemish Agalev, whose members were less reluctant to enter office than their Walloon counterparts (Buelens and Delwit 2008).

Publicly visible dissent, but few or no defections (score of 0.67)

The grass-root members of other green parties in, for instance, Wallonia, Finland and Germany, were less unified in their support for government participation and the related compromises (Müller Rommel and Poguntke 2002; Frankland et al. 2008). Generally speaking, however, conflicts within the party organisations could be contained, so that parliamentary party splits or defection from high-profile politicians were avoided. In the wake of the crisis and the bailing out of banks, tensions also rose within the Irish Green Party, but this did not lead to a split in the parliamentary party. In Norway, SV politicians repeatedly voiced opposition to government actions (Dunphy and Bale 2011: 496), but the party's organisational integrity was preserved. In post-communist-Europe, the Latvian JL did not suffer from prominent intra-party conflicts either in the period between 2002 and 2006, irrespective of the departure of a few MPs. GERB in Bulgaria, finally, did not suffer from genuine splits during its first period on office. A raft of ministers were replaced following poor performance and scandals (Kolarova and Spirova 2011; 2012; 2013), but this was not primarily borne out of ideological disagreement.

Publicly visible dissent provoking defections or government breakdown (score of 0.33)

Other newly governing challengers had greater problems with avoiding defections or ruptures. The Austrian FPÖ was troubled by conflicts between the more pragmatic party in office and the ideologically-driven extra-parliamentary party (Luther 2011). These eventually provoked the resignation of the government in 2002. Conflicts also plagued the Italian Greens throughout their period in office, prompting leadership changes as well as the departure of senior members (Biorcio 2002). The radical left PRC also faced disagreements over the party's role in government, a lack of party discipline, and breakaways from the parliamentary group (Albertazzi et al. 2011: 472-3). The Dutch LPF was marked by internal turmoil even

since the murder of its leader, causing the rapid breakdown of the government (De Lange and Art 2011).

In Slovakia, SOP saw defections from its parliamentary group in 2001, in part due to ideological disagreements (Učeň 2002). ANO, too, suffered from conflicts and a particularly serious split in August 2005, when several ANO politicians rebelled against leader Rusko and took over the party's positions in government (Učeň 2006). SaS, in turn, experienced a split when four of its 18 allied deputies of the 'Ordinary People' faction seceded from the party authority (Deegan-Krause 2013: 274). In Lithuania, the NS lost six of its 28 MPs throughout its time in office. In the subsequent period, the DP also had organisational problems; the parliamentary group saw a considerable number of defections and party leader Uspaskich went into hiding in Russia between 2006 and 2007 after facing fraud accusations (Krupavicius 2007).

Challengers in other post-communist countries also had their share of organisational problems. The Bulgarian NDSV witnessed the breakaway of a 'succession of splinter movements' (Karasimeonov and Lyubenov 2013: 414). The Estonian Res Publica ceased to exist as an autonomous entity; a sheer downfall in the party's popularity induced a merger with the conservative Pro Patria Union (Pettai 2007). By that time, the party's first high-profile leader Rein Taagepera had already left the party and intra-party conflicts arose about the shape of the new party organisation. In Poland, SO continued to suffer from defecting MPs, partly due to the efforts of senior partner Law and Justice to undermine its coalition partners (Millard 2010: 145).¹² The Slovenian PS, finally, witnessed a split after a leadership change in April 2014 – which also instigated the end of the governing coalition.

¹² The other coalition partner, the League of Polish Families (LPR), was also a newly governing party with an anti-establishment appeal. Since the LPR partly emerged out of the previously governing Solidarity Electoral Action alliance this case does not comply with the 'genuinely new' criterion, and is therefore excluded from the analysis. Its governing record and electoral trajectory are, in any case, similar to SO's.

Complete party disintegration (score of 0)

The final category includes party organisations which truly ceased to exist. The Lithuanian TPP split into two in July 2009 due to internal conflicts. One faction was later absorbed by coalition partner Liberal and Centre Union, the other did not stand in the subsequent election. The Czech VV was marked by conflicts between party chairman Bárta and several MPs. After several defections and expulsions, VV eventually faced a split in 2012 and did not compete in the subsequent election of 2013. The Latvian JP, finally, disintegrated after leader Pauls became an independent MP, and several JP politicians joined the new conservative Latvia's First Party.

Rootedness of challenger formation (ROOT)

In order to operationalise the condition related to the challengers' organisational roots, this study borrows Bolleyer's (2013) distinction between rooted and entrepreneurial parties. Since rooted parties are expected to have a greater chance of survival, a score of '1' is allocated to these parties, and a score of '0' to the entrepreneurs. The green and radical left parties included in this study are examples of rooted formations, originally relying on the support of environmental and leftist promoter organisations, respectively (Bolleyer 2013). SO in Poland grew out of a farmer's trade union and protest movement (Millard 2010: 102), while the Austrian FPÖ originated from a range of (German) nationalist movements. The Dutch LPF and the AERPs in Central and Eastern Europe are typical examples of entrepreneurial parties, and could more often than not be considered the personal vehicles of their leaders. A comparison between the 'orig.' and 'entr.' columns in Table 1 reveals that the rooted challengers in this study tended to have a much longer parliamentary experience than the entrepreneurs.

Based on the qualitative anchors set, Table 3 shows the fuzzy set membership scores of the cases in all conditions and the outcome.

*** TABLE 3 HERE ***

Findings

Assessment of Necessity

The first step in the fsQCA is to assess whether there are any single conditions that can be considered necessary for the presence (or absence) of challenger party survival. In order to determine whether a particular condition is necessary, it is considered whether challenger party survival or demise is a ‘subset’ of this condition. If this is the case, the membership values of the cases in the condition (X) are equal to or higher than the corresponding values in the outcome (Y). If a condition is necessary, after all, X should be present whenever Y is present. The degree to which a subset relation has been approximated is calculated by means of a ‘set theoretic consistency’ formula.¹³

Taking challenger party survival as the outcome, the analysis returned no consistency scores close to one, meaning that no necessary conditions were found.¹⁴ If challenger party demise is taken as the outcome, the analysis yielded a consistency score of 0.912 for the negated IMPR condition (\sim IMPR).¹⁵ This means that the *lack of* a good impression in office of a challenger can be considered a necessary condition for the challenger party’s electoral demise (\sim SURV). Only two cases can be seen as truly deviant: Agalev and Ecolo in Belgium (see Figure 1). These parties have experienced a serious electoral loss after their period in

¹³ The consistency formula for necessary conditions is $\sum(\min(X_i, Y_i))/\sum(Y_i)$ (Ragin 2006, 291).

¹⁴ With SURV as outcome, the consistency scores related to the various conditions are: WEIGH 0.623; IMPR 0.574; COH 0.763; ROOT 0.577; \sim WEIGH 0.572; \sim IMPR 0.712; \sim COH 0.601; \sim ROOT 0.423. The ‘ \sim ’ sign denotes the absence of the condition.

¹⁵ With \sim SURV as outcome, the consistency score related to the other conditions are: WEIGH 0.546; IMPR 0.321; COH 0.472; ROOT 0.328; \sim WEIGH 0.612; \sim COH 0.824; \sim ROOT 0.672.

office, even though they made a relatively reasonable, or at least not-devastating, impression in office.

*** FIGURE 1 HERE ***

It must be noted that the relevance of \sim IMPR as a necessary condition is not very high. This is suggested by the measure for the coverage of necessary conditions, which yields a value of 0.725,¹⁶ as well as the distribution of cases in Figure 1 (see Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 233-7). The \sim IMPR set on the x-axis is somewhat skewed towards high membership. That is, most challenger parties left a rather poor impression in office, whether they survived or not. Thus, although a poor impression in office can be considered a necessary condition for challenger demise, this does not mean that electoral survivors always left a much better impression. This leads us back to the finding that a good impression in office is not a necessary condition for challenger party survival. There are various instances where newly governing challengers have survived reasonably well despite a relatively poor performance in office, the Bulgarian GERB being the most obvious case in point.

*** FIGURE 2 HERE ***

While there are thus no single conditions which can be considered necessary for the survival of newly governing challengers, a closer examination of the data does reveal that survivors were all characterised by *either* a hefty formation weight *or* a rooted party organisation. Figure 2 also shows that the SURV outcome is a subset of the WEIGHT+ROOT configuration (denoting the presence of either formation weight or organisational rootedness).

¹⁶ The formula for the coverage of a necessary condition is $\sum(\min(X_i, Y_i)) / \sum(X_i)$ (see Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 144).

Assessment of Sufficiency

The next objective in the analysis is to determine which (combinations of) conditions were *sufficient* for the presence (or absence) of challenger party survival. This again involves a search for subset relationships. Contrary to the consistency test for necessary conditions, the consistency test for sufficient configurations assesses whether the configurations are a subset of the outcome.¹⁷ This follows from the logic that, in theory, the presence of a sufficient configuration should lead to the presence of the outcome – in practice, consistency scores tend to be lower than 1. Following the calibration process, cases have previously received a fuzzy set membership score between 0 and 1 in each individual condition (see Table 3). Subsequently, their membership in each of the possible *combinations* of conditions (the configurations) can be calculated.¹⁸ Each case has a membership of >0.5 in one (dichotomously expressed) configuration only. Table 4 presents a ‘truth table’ which provides an overview of the configurations with empirical referents, i.e. those configurations which are ‘covered’ by corresponding cases with a membership score of more than 0.5. The consistency (‘consist.’) columns in Table 4 report to what extent a subset relationship has been approximated with SURV and ~SURV as outcomes.

*** TABLE 4 HERE ***

Sufficiency for challenger party survival (SURV)

The first part of the analysis considers which configurations of conditions are sufficient for challenger party survival. The configurations in the first six rows of the truth table reach consistency levels high enough to conventionally consider them subsets of the ‘survive’ outcome. The consistency score of row 7 is also reasonably high, but the path is covered by

¹⁷ The consistency formula for sufficient conditions is $\sum(\min(X_i, Y_i)) / \sum(X_i)$ (see Ragin 2009, 108; Schneider and Wagemann 2012, Chapter 5).

¹⁸ See e.g. Schneider and Wagemann (2012), Chapter 4 for this procedure.

two cases of demise (SO and PRC) and one party (Verdi) whose electoral and parliamentary survival has partly been secured through participation in an electoral coalition. Rows 3 through 5 also raise questions, as they include cases of non-survival; the Irish and Flemish Greens even disappeared from parliament after their post-incumbency elections. Hence, while the consistency scores suggest that the first six rows constitute ‘paths to survival’, this is not always confirmed by the empirical referents.

In the end, only the first three rows are included in the in the analysis of sufficiency, since the PRI consistency values of rows 4 through 6 do not reach satisfactory levels (see Schneider and Wagemann 2012: 237-244). This implies that the associated configurations are not evidently subsets of the SURV outcome only; particularly the sixth configuration also reaches a high consistency score if the \sim SURV outcome is selected. While only the first three rows are included, the survival of GERB remains unexplained by the following analysis. In the next step, a Boolean minimisation process is carried out to discard conditions in a particular configuration that are irrelevant for the outcome. This leads to minimised configurations or ‘prime implicants’. A typical analysis by means of the FSQCA software produces three different results: a complex, parsimonious, and intermediate solution. Regarding the latter two solutions, simplifying assumptions are made about the configurations without empirical referents (the logical remainders). For a parsimonious solution, a hypothetical outcome is allocated to the logical remainders if this leads to a more parsimonious solution. For the intermediate solution, which is here preferred, only theoretically plausible simplifying assumptions are made. The analyses for the intermediate solution only made use of logical remainders if the outcomes were consistent with the notion that IMPR, COH, and ROOT stimulate challenger party survival (and vice versa for the analysis of challenger party demise). No assumptions were made about WEIGH. As discussed above, a heavy formation weight may not necessarily be a virtue if the government turns out to be unpopular.

*** TABLE 5 HERE ***

The complex solution equals the intermediate solution, and is depicted in Table 5. It constitutes of two paths, which both contain the combination of a reasonable impression in office and a reasonable degree of organisational cohesion, in addition to either a substantial formation weight, or a rooted party organisation. The presence of either WEIGH or ROOT in the paths is unsurprising, as the previous analysis of necessity indicated that either one of these conditions was always present in case of challenger party survival. The sufficiency analysis shows that surviving challenger parties combined WEIGH or ROOT with a reasonable impression in office and organisational cohesiveness. Note that the Norwegian SV complies with both configurations.

Two caveats must be stressed. First, the second path is covered by two cases, the Belgian green parties, which were actually cases of demise. This indicates that the configuration IMPR*COH*ROOT does not in all cases imply the survival of newly governing challengers. Second, not all cases of survival are explained by this solution as their corresponding truth table rows have not been included in the analysis. GERB is one prominent example.

Notably, while most surviving challengers were characterised by a reasonable (or not-disastrous) impression in office, the Bulgarian GERB is a clear exception to the rule. There are also parties which (barely) survived after leaving a poor impression in office *and* failing to preserve organisational cohesion: Verdi, Res Publica, SaS and NDSV. Their survival cannot be accounted for by the given solutions. However, since SaS and NDSV are very close to the 0.5 crossover value in the outcome, these are not the most clear-cut cases of survival. At the same time, the employed post-incumbency election figures of Verdi and Res Publica exaggerate their actual performance. Verdi, as mentioned, participated in an electoral

coalition, while the Res Publica figure represents the vote share of the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, which was the party Res Publica merged into prior to the 2007 election.

Sufficiency for challenger party demise (~SURV)

The final step in the fsQCA is to assess which configurations can be deemed sufficient for the electoral demise of newly governing challenger parties. Table 6 shows the complex solution – which is identical to the intermediate solution – when truth table rows 7 through 9 are included in the analysis (see Table 4). It must be noted that the inclusion of row 7 is somewhat disputable, since it has a low consistency score. This is largely due to the Verdi case, whose score in the SURV outcome can be seen as an overestimation of the party’s actual popularity. If the party’s SURV score is lowered to 0.33, the consistency level of row 7 with ~SURV as outcome actually rises to 0.784.

*** TABLE 6 HERE ***

The results indicate that challengers which failed to survive were all characterised by a poor impression in office and a lack of organisational cohesiveness. In addition, they were non-rooted entrepreneurial parties or parties which lacked formation weight – TPP, JP, SOP and ANO actually comply with all these characteristics. The results are a mirror image of the findings from the sufficiency analysis with SURV as outcome, and are generally in line with the theoretical expectations. Four cases constitute exceptions to the rule: NDSV, RP, SaS and Verdi. As discussed, however, these four parties are not unambiguous cases of survival. When, following a conservative approach, row 7 is excluded from the analysis, the ~IMPR*~COH*~WEIGH path disappears from the solution. This does not defy the observation that most demising challengers, including many AERPs in post-communist

Europe, were marked by a lack of cohesiveness, a poor impression in office and an entrepreneurial origin.

Two cases of non-survival remain unexplained by the solution altogether: the FPÖ and the Irish Greens. It can be noted that the FPÖ is arguably not a clear-cut case of ‘non-survival’; the party still easily crossed the electoral threshold with 10 per cent of the vote. Irrespective of this, an in-depth appraisal of the case suggests that a weak impression in office and a lack of internal unity lay at the basis of a poor result in the post-incumbency election (Luther 2011). Even though the Irish Greens remained fairly united, their electoral demise should be assessed in light of exceptional crisis-laden circumstances and the public disapproval of the entire governing coalition (FitzGibbon 2011).

Conclusions

In many countries in Europe, members of mainstream party families have seen their dominant electoral position being challenged. As became evident in this study, however, ‘challenger parties’ tend to have a hard time sustaining their support after they enter office (see Deschouwer 2008; Van Spanje 2011). This is true in Western Europe, where traditional parties have long dominated national governments, but also in many post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe marked by more volatile party systems. This study sought to clarify the conditions underlying the electoral survival or demise of a broad range of newly governing challenger parties. This category included green, radical left and populist right parties, as well as so-called ‘anti-establishment reform parties’ (AERPs) in post-communist Europe (Hanley and Sikk 2014).

The analysis indicated that surviving challengers were all characterised by either a considerable formation weight (in terms of portfolio share) or, in most cases, a rooted party organisation – which normally also translated into more years of parliamentary experience. In addition, survivors were typically characterised by a reasonable impression in office and organisational cohesiveness; that is, the ability to prevent serious intra-party conflicts and defections. It must be stressed that none of them truly left a great impression in office. The surviving green parties, for instance, saw some of their policies enacted, but all had to swallow painful compromises and none genuinely controlled their government's agenda. Compared with many less successful cases, however, most surviving challengers could at least claim to have shown a decent degree of ideological integrity.

On the other hand, most parties that failed to survive electorally, or at least lost more than half of their pre-incumbency vote share, were characterised by a poor impression in office (see e.g. Akkerman and De Lange 2012; Zaslove 2012). Their politicians came across as ineffective and incompetent, or betrayed their party's core promise of 'cleaning politics' due to their involvement in murky financial deals or other scandals. Most non-survivors also failed to prevent intra-party conflicts and saw the defection of a substantial amount of parliamentarians, or even the complete disintegration of their party. Particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, failing challengers were typically leader-centred entrepreneurial parties.

The clearest, albeit rough, divide in this study can be made between surviving Western European green parties and demising AERPs in post-communist Europe – which also happen to be the two most 'populous' party categories in this study. Even though their achievements in office were limited, surviving green parties could benefit from a more loyal share of supporters, who were seemingly more 'appreciative of the inherent limitations of governmental participation' and readier to tolerate their parties' concessions in office (Poguntke 2002: 141). In addition, their ability to prevent organisational disintegration can be related to their rootedness and higher degrees of professionalisation and institutionalisation

(Frankland et al. 2008; Bolleyer 2013). The AERPs, on the other hand, were entrepreneurs whose support crumbled soon after a disappointing spell in office. In post-communist Europe ties between voters and parties generally remain weak, political trust and participation low, and volatility levels high (e.g. Pop-Eleches 2010). Erstwhile supporters lacking party loyalty have little reason to continue lending their votes to challengers which failed to make a difference.

From the findings we can also deduce that, even though they can be described as challengers to mainstream ideologies, most survivors lacked a genuinely aggressive anti-establishment appeal (see Buelens and Hino 2008). These include green parties who have, over time, actually become conventional members of their party systems (Frankland et al. 2008; Bolleyer 2013: 123). For these parties there was less need to play the role of ‘opposition within government’ in order to maintain their ideological credibility (see Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005; Zaslove 2012). They could therefore adopt a more accommodating attitude towards mainstream coalition partners. In the cases of the German and Finish Greens, as well as the Norwegian Socialist Left, government participation was even renewed after their first period in power.¹⁹ For parties such as the populist FPÖ and LPF and the AERPs in Central and Eastern Europe, it was more daunting to strike a balance between acting responsibly and preserving their distinctive anti-establishment character. For governing challengers characterised by a genuinely antagonistic attitude towards established politics, it is ostensibly more difficult to sustain their electoral appeal.

Notwithstanding the broad patterns outlined, the survival or demise of several cases remains somewhat puzzling from a comparative perspective. Why did the Belgian green parties suffer badly in their post-incumbency election, while their record in office was not markedly worse in comparison with surviving counterparts? One possible answer is that, perhaps more than concrete achievements, the management of supporters’ expectations plays

¹⁹ The Bulgarian NDSV also continued governing, but this only led to the party’s further demise.

an important role. Hindered by unfavourable ‘events’ in the run up to the 2003 election (Swyngedouw 2004), the Belgian Greens had problems conveying their achievements to their supporters, a lot of whom eventually defected to the socialists (Buelens and Delwit 2008; Rihoux and Rüdig 2006: S24). Many members of the French *Verts*, on the other hand, accepted that being marginally effective in government was better than a role on the side-lines as an insignificant opposition party (without parliamentary representation) (Boy 2002). GERB in Bulgaria also stands out as an interesting case, as it survived reasonably well despite the growing disappointment with the GERB single-party government towards the end of its term. Part of the explanation should probably be sought in the weakness of the opposition, which consisted of parties that built up a disreputable image during their earlier spells in office (Kolarova and Spirova 2011).

Thus, even though particularly rootedness and organisational stability go a long way in explaining electoral survival, the role of political context and additional agential conditions should not be ignored (see Bolleyer 2013). Further research could therefore focus also on the strength of the opposition, as well as the ways in which governing challengers frame their achievements in their aim to satisfy core supporters. Future studies will also have to point out whether more radical anti-establishment challengers in office will be able to learn from the mistakes of their unsuccessful predecessors (see De Lange and Art 2011). This question also applies to the entrepreneurial AERPs in post-communist Europe, which have thus far found it difficult to sustain their (often quite substantial) initial levels of support.

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Table 1: Newly governing challenger parties in Europe (1999-2014)

country	party	type	orig.	entr.	office yrs [†]	prtf%	partners [§]	vote ante	vote post [~]	$\Delta^{\#}$
Austria	FPÖ	Pop Right	root	1956	2000-2002	50.0%	ÖVP	26.9%	10.0%	-0.63
Belgium	Agalev	Green	root	1981	1999-2003	11.1%	VLD, PRL, SP, PS	7.0%	2.5%	-0.64
	Ecolo	Green	root	1981	1999-2003	11.1%	VLD, PRL, SP, PS	7.4%	3.1%	-0.58
Bulgaria	NDSV	AERP	entr	2001	2001-2005	76.4%	DPS	42.7%	19.9%	-0.53
	GERB	AERP	entr	2009	2009-2013	100.0%	-	39.7%	30.5%	-0.23
Czech Rep.	VV	AERP	entr	2010	2010-2013	26.7%	ODS, TOP09	10.9%	0.0%	-1.00
Estonia	RP	AERP	entr	2003	2003-2005	35.7%	RE, ERL	24.6%	17.9%	-0.27
Finland	VIHR	Green	root	1983	1995-1999	5.6%	SDP, KOK, SFP, VAS	6.5%	7.3%	0.12
France	Verts	Green	root	1997	1997-2002	5.9%	PS, PCF, PRG, MDC	6.8%	4.5%	-0.34
Germany	Grüne	Green	root	1983	1998-2002	18.8%	SPD	6.7%	8.6%	0.28
Ireland	Green	Green	root	1989	2007-2011	13.3%	FF, PD, GP	4.7%	1.8%	-0.62
Italy	Verdi	Green	root	1987	1996-2001	8.0%	ULIVO	2.5%	2.2%	-0.12
	PRC	Rad Left	root	1992	2006-2008	3.7%	UNIONE	5.8%	3.1%	-0.47
Latvia	JP	AERP	entr	1998	1998-2002	13.3%	LC, TB-LNNK, LSDSP / TP	7.3%	0.0%	-1.00
	JL	AERP	entr	2002	2002-2006	50.0%	ZZS, LPP, TB-LNNK / TP	23.9%	16.4%	-0.31
Lithuania	NS	AERP	entr	2000	2000-2004	42.8%	LLS / LSDP	19.6%	7.3%	-0.63
	DP	AERP	entr	2004	2004-2006	35.7%	LSDP, NS, LVLS	28.4%	9.0%	-0.68
	TPP	AERP	entr	2008	2008-2010	13.3%	TS-LKD, LRLS, LiCS	15.1%	0.0%	-1.00
Netherlands	LPF	Pop Right	entr	2002	2002-2003	28.6%	CDA, VVD	17.0%	5.6%	-0.67
Norway	SV	Rad Left	root	1973	2005-2009	26.3%	DNA, SP	8.8%	6.2%	-0.30
Poland	SO	Rad Left	root	2001	2006-2007	9.1%	PiS, LPR	11.4%	1.5%	-0.87
Slovakia	SOP	AERP	entr	1998	1998-2002	10.0%	SDK, SDL', SMK	8.0%	0.0%	-1.00

	ANO	AERP	entr	2002	2002-2006	18.8%	SDKU, SMK, KDH	8.0%	1.4%	-0.83
	SaS	AERP	entr	2010	2010-2012	26.7%	SDKU-DS, KDH, MH	12.1%	5.9%	-0.51
Slovenia	PS	AERP	entr	2011	2013-2014	38.5%	SD, LGV, DESUS	28.5%	3.0%	-0.89

* For the following cases, given years in office do not equal the election years (specified between brackets): Austria (1999; 2002); Estonia (2003; 2007); Lithuania (2004; 2008; 2012); Poland (2005; 2007); Slovenia (2011; 2014).

§ Cabinet composition changed during the parliamentary term in Italy (both periods); Latvia (both periods); Lithuania (2000-2004).

~ In the case of Italy, the figures overrate the performance of the challenger parties since they represent the election results of the electoral alliances they were part of. This also applies to the Estonian Res Publica, which merged with the then smaller conservative Pro Patria Union. The Lithuanian NS, meanwhile, entered an electoral coalition with the Social Democratic LSDP in 2004. The given NS vote share is calculated by dividing the coalition's vote share (20.7) according to the seat distribution between the two parties (20 for LSDP, 11 for NS).

This column shows the relative vote gain/loss of the challengers, and is calculated by dividing the vote gain/loss in percentage points by the 'vote ante' percentage.

Table 2: Conditions in the fsQCA

Conditions	Description	Calibration
SURV	Relative vote gain/loss of the challenger party after its period in office. Calibration on the basis of 'Δ' column in in Table 1.	1 = 0.0 0.5 = -0.55 0 = -1.0
WEIGH	Portfolios allocated to the challenger party. Calibration on the basis of 'prtfl%' column in in Table 1.	1 = 50.0% 0.5 = 20.0% 0 = 5.0%
IMPR	Challenger party impression in office.	See text
COH	Organisational cohesion of the challenger party	See text
ROOT	Party origin: rooted or entrepreneurial	1 = rooted 0 = entrepreneurial

Table 3: Calibrated data for the fsQCA

Country	Party	Conditions				Outcome
		WEIGH	IMPR	COH	ROOT	SURV
Austria	FPÖ	1	0.33	0.33	1	0.37
Belgium	Agalev	0.14	0.67	1	1	0.35
	Ecolo	0.14	0.67	0.67	1	0.45
Bulgaria	NDSV	1	0	0.33	0	0.53
	GERB	1	0	0.67	0	0.85
Czech Rep.	VV	0.67	0	0	0	0
Estonia	RP	0.83	0.33	0.33	0	0.82
Finland	VIHR	0.06	0.67	0.67	1	1
France	Verts	0.06	0.67	1	1	0.76
Germany	Grüne	0.45	0.67	0.67	1	1
Ireland	Green	0.2	0.33	0.67	1	0.39
Italy	Verdi	0.07	0.33	0.33	1	0.91
	PRC	0	0.33	0.33	1	0.33
Latvia	JP	0.2	0.33	0	0	0
	JL	1	0.67	0.67	0	0.79
Lithuania	NS	0.91	0.33	0.33	0	0.37
	DP	0.83	0	0.33	0	0.3
	TPP	0.2	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	LPF	0.71	0.33	0.33	0	0.31
Norway	SV	0.65	0.67	0.67	1	0.8
Poland	SO	0.1	0	0.33	1	0.11
Slovakia	SOP	0.12	0.33	0.33	0	0
	ANO	0.45	0	0.33	0	0.13
	SaS	0.67	0	0.33	0	0.55
Slovenia	PS	0.87	0	0.33	0	0.09

Figure 1: Plot of cases' membership in \sim SURV against their membership in \sim IMPR

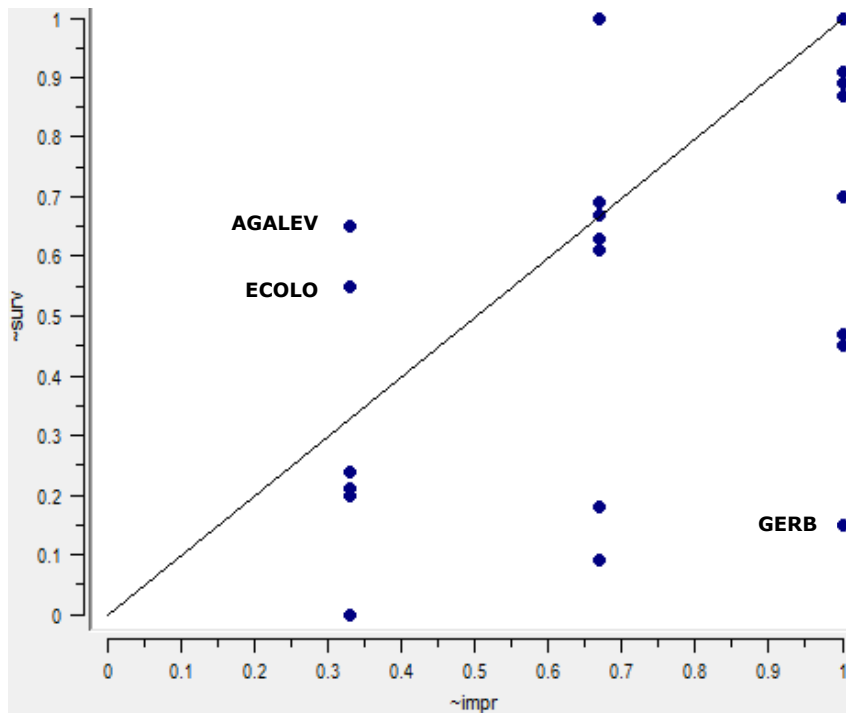


Figure 2: Plot of cases' membership in SURV against their membership in WEIGH+ROOT

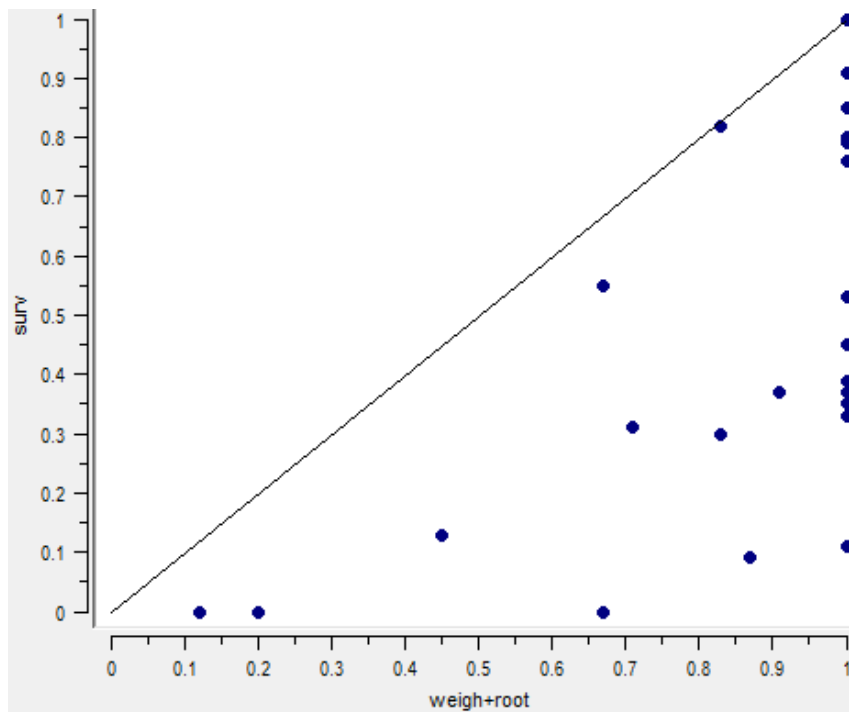


Table 4: Truth Table

Row	Conditions				No.	Cases	SURV			~SURV		
	weigh	impr	coh	root			outc.	consist.	PRI	outc.	consist	PRI
1.	1	1	1	1	1	SV	1	1.000	1	0	0.543	0
2.	1	1	1	0	1	JL	1	0.921	0.813	0	0.657	0.187
3.	0	1	1	1	5	Agalev, Ecolo, VIHR, Verts, Grüne	1	0.882	0.791	0	0.523	0.155
4.	0	0	1	1	1	Green	0	0.863	0.691	0	0.676	0.272
5.	1	0	0	1	1	FPÖ	0	0.842	0.634	0	0.705	0.317
6.	1	0	1	0	1	GERB	0	0.838	0.564	0	0.790	0.436
7.	0	0	0	1	3	Verdi, PRC, SO	0	0.754	0.604	1	0.626	0.396
8.	1	0	0	0	8	NDSV, VV, RP, NS, DP, LPF, SaS, PS	0	0.516	0.219	1	0.821	0.711
9.	0	0	0	0	4	JP, TPP, SOP, ANO	0	0.302	0	1	1.000	1

Table 5: Paths implying SURV

	IMPR * COH * WEIGH	IMPR * COH * ROOT
Consistency	0.963918	0.898876
Raw Coverage	0.333631	0.428189
Unique Coverage	0.146298	0.240856
Covered Cases*	JL (0.67, 0.79); SV (0.65, 0.8)	VIHR (0.67, 1); Verts (0.67, 0.76); Grüne (0.67, 1); SV (0.67, 0.8)
Contradictory cases**		Agalev (0.67, 0.35); Ecolo (0.67, 0.45)
Solution Consistency	0.904494	
Solution Coverage	0.574487	

*Cases with membership in configuration and outcome > 0.5. The values correspond to the cases' scores in the configuration and outcome, respectively.

**Cases with membership in configuration > 0.5 and outcome < 0.5.

Table 6: Paths implying ~SURV

	~IMPR * ~COH * ~ROOT	~IMPR * ~COH * ~WEIGH
Consistency	0.866453	0.825700
Raw Coverage	0.588107	0.470631
Unique Coverage	0.283539	0.166062
Covered Cases*	VV (1, 1); TPP (1, 1); JP (0.67, 1); NS (0.67, 0.63); DP (0.67, 0.7); LPF (0.67, 0.69); SOP (0.67, 1); ANO (0.67, 0.87); PS (0.67, 0.91)	TPP (0.8, 1); PRC (0.67, 0.67); JP (0.67, 1); SO (0.67, 0.89); SOP (0.67, 1), ANO (0.55, 0.87)
Contradictory cases**	NDSV (0.67, 0.47); RP (0.67, 0.18); SaS (0.67, 0.45)	Verdi (0.67, 0.09)
Solution Consistency	0.798771	
Solution Coverage	0.754170	

*Cases with membership in configuration and outcome > 0.5. The values correspond to the cases' scores in the configuration and outcome, respectively.

**Cases with membership in configuration > 0.5 and outcome < 0.5.