Dissertation Summary

Márton Kaszap

The Pluralisation of British Party Politics

Is There a Split in the UK Party System?

Ph.D. Dissertation

Supervisors:

Dr. András Lánczi, PhD

Corvinus University of Budapest

Dr. Gergely Egedy, DSc

National University of Public Service

Budapest, 2019

Institute of Political Science

Corvinus University of Budapest

Dissertation Summary

Márton Kaszap

The Pluralisation of British Party Politics

Is There a Split in the UK Party System?

Ph.D. Dissertation

Supervisors:

Dr. András Lánczi, PhD
Corvinus University of Budapest
Dr. Gergely Egedy, DSc
National University of Public Service

Proofread by

Dr. Éva Jakusné Harnos, PhD

National University of Public Service

Budapest, 2019

Contents

1. The background of the research and its importance

The dissertation is intended to explore why we have recently experienced rather irregular political events in Britain. Such irregular events were the 2010 coalition government between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, the 2011 AV referendum on the electoral system reform, the 2014 surprise victory of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) at the European Parliamentary elections, the 2014 independence referendum in Scotland, the 2016 Brexit referendum and the 2017 snap election. These events do not fit into the general concept of Westminster democracy (Lijphart, 1984, 2012). Though it was right previously to label Britain as a Westminster democracy, there are so many irregularities today that we have to reconsider the validity of this concept for Britain. I argue that the irregularities of Westminster democracy can be seen as regularities from another perspective. We just have to find this alternative perspective.

The dissertation starts its investigation from the presumption that British party politics today occurs in different arenas. These arenas have separated from each other over time. What we can see is that the parliamentary arena (derived from MP seats) and the electoral arena (derived from electoral votes) have particularly separated. The dissertation observes this process between 1945 and 2015. It clearly proves that the parliamentary arena has remained a two-, or two-and-a-half party system over time, however, the electoral arena has been continuously pluralising: it was a two-party system in the 1950s, nevertheless, after the 1970s and particularly in the 1990s and 2000s it has become a moderate (or extreme) party system. This pluralisation in the electoral arena contributed to a split between the parliamentary and electoral arenas. This split can be responsible for various things: for the decline of major parties, for the emergence of the smaller (third) parties, for the legitimacy crisis of the first-past-the-post electoral system, for the popularity of regional (devolution) interest representation and for growing anti-establishment sentiment. So we can assume that the irregular political events after 2010 are irregularities (and surprising) only from the Westminster democracy perspective. However, from the split theory perspective, they are not irregularities. Instead, they are the natural consequences of the split process.

The findings of this research are new in Hungary. This scientific approach has not been used until now. Although Nagy (2015: 125–144) analyzes this split problem in his book on electoral disproportionality, he uses the British example only for a case study of electoral distortion. So he

does not go into such detail about British politics as I do. Of course, this research better known among British scholars than among Hungarians. There are a couple of British scholars who have already underlined the importance of the split in the British party system. I particularly relied on the findings of Webb (2000), Bogdanor (2004) and Mair (2009). They all emphasise the importance of pluralisation in British party politics and the potential split that it might cause. Apart from them, I also used the following works: Mitchell (2005), Bardi and Mair (2008), Gallagher and Mitchell (2008), Dunleavy (1995, 1999) and many more. The scientific approach of Webb (2000) and Bogdanor (2004) was particularly sensible. They thought that the evolution of British party politics can be classified in the following way:

Webb (2000)		Bogdanor (2004)	
Period	Patterns of competition	Period	Patterns of competition
		1906–1914	Imbalance (minority and majority governments) without universal suffrage
		1918–1931	Imbalance (majority, minority and coalition governments) with universal suffrage
1945–1970	*Two-party dominance* Two- party combined vote share over 90%, balanced two-party competition, single governments, regular alternation, no third parties	1935–1970	*Two-party stability* based on popular support
1974–today	*Two-party decline* Two party combined vote share under 90%, imbalanced two-party competition, long predominant cycles, alternation is less frequent, third party popularity and influence grows	1974–1992	*Superficial two-party stability* based less on popular support and more on the first-past-the-post electoral system
		1997–today	The emergence of devolved competitions

My dissertation has certain novelty for British scholars as well. I introduced a new approach for understanding the different periods in the evolution of British party politics. This approach used *critical junctures* instead of the intervals. Whilst Webb (2000) and Bogdanor (2004) observe and

classify different time intervals in British party politics according to the existing patterns of party interaction, I preferred focusing on the beginnings of each time interval. With this method, I wanted to understand the dynamics of change in British politics at different moments which served later as path dependencies for the upcoming years. I expected from this method that I can evaluate and understand better the reasons of change in British politics. Therefore, I identified four critical junctures in British politics. This is in harmony with Webb's (2000) and Bogdanor's (2004) classifications as well: (1) the 1945 general election, (2) the 1974 February and October general elections, (3) the 1997 general election and (4) the 2010–2015 general elections. I had two critical junctures with single electoral years (in 1945 and in 1997) and two critical junctures with combined electoral years (in February–October 1974 and in 2010–2015.) The long critical junctures in February–October 1974 and in 2010–2015 are the result of several inter-dependent events which can be scarcely separated from one another. For instance, between 2010 and 2015 many political events happened which can be scarcely explained by using only the 2010 or the 2015 electoral years. However, if they are combined, lots of interim events such as the 2011 AV referendum or the 2014 EP elections can be understood. So, in sum, this method of using critical junctures for the analysis of the evolution of the British party system can be considered as a novelty even in Britain. Previously, British scholars used long continuous periods instead. Nevertheless, my method did not contradict their earlier studies. It could further confirm them from another point of view.

My classification of the evolution of British party politics can be found in the table below. Again, they are the result of the critical junctures I identified. This categorisation is very similar to that of Webb (2000), Bogdanor (2004) or Nagy (2015). The novelty which arose from the method of critical junctures is the dynamics of the party competition. The dynamics (centripetal or centrifugal) are included in the table as well.

Table 2. My categorisation of the evolution of British party politics

Period	Split	Dynamics of the party competition	Description
1945–1974	Marginal	Centripetal (based on issues), centrifugal (based on class competition)	Classical two- party system. Almost perfect overlap between the parliamentary and electoral arenas. The congruence is very high.

1974–1997	Growing	Centrifugal (based on issues)	The beginning of the split in the party system.
			The decline of two-partyism in the electoral arena, however, relatively strong two-partyism in the parliamentary arena.
			Growing but still low incongruence.
1997–2010	Large	Centripetal (based on issues)	The superficial survival of two-partyism.
			Two-partyism in the parliamentary arena and pluralisation in the electoral arena.
			The incongruence is significant.
2010–2015	Extreme	Centripetal (based on issues)	The burst of pluralisation.
			Record high pluralisation in the electoral arena which also spills over into the parliamentary arena. The signs of pluralisation in the parliamentary arena are the coalition government, new issues on the agenda, the proliferation of referenda and the manifestos of major parties react to third party challenges.

2. The methodology of the dissertation

I applied two scientific disciplines when I wrote this dissertation. On the one hand, I followed the traditions and analytical methods of political science. Inside political science, I particularly used the theories, literature and operationalisation of parties and party systems. On the other hand, I also used historical events, facts and data. Hence, I could reconcile two different academic disciplines: history and political science. Nevertheless, the method of political science largely dominates in this dissertation.

I used Sartori's (2005:39) definition of party system:

> *'party system is precisely the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition.'*

This definition had three consequences for my research: *typological, temporal* and *spatial.* The typological consequence is the fact that party systems can be classified according to different criteria. For instance, Duverger (1954) classified party system according to the number of parties, Dahl (1966) and Rokkan (1970) according to the government–opposition rivalry, Blondel (1968) according to the relative weights of parties, Sartori (1976) according to the ideological polarisation of parties, Mainwaring and Scully (1995) according to the level of institutionalisation of the party system and Mair (1996) according to the open or closed competition for the government in a party system. From these approaches, I particularly relied on Sartori's (1976) categorisation. However, I also used Siaroff's (2000) method to reconcile the quantitative and qualitative aspects of party system categorisations. This typological consequence helps us to identify and classify the British party system at a given time and place. This also makes possible the evaluation of change in British party politics.

The second consequence of the definition was the temporal one. It states that the patterns of a party system can become stronger or weaker over time. In other words, certain party systems are more institutionalised while others are less so. The degree of institutionalisation can cause a significant path-dependency or inflexibility over time. For instance, a highly institutionalised party system can successfully resist the adaptational pressure coming from the electorate. The party system in Britain was one of the most institutionalised (and stable) of those in the second half of the 20th century in Europe. The rivalry between the Conservative Party and the Labour Party characterised the whole nature of politics. Mair (2009) points out that the British party system was the most stable in Europe for a long time. However, the recent changes in the patterns of UK party competition have somewhat contradicted this stability. So the temporal aspect is very important when we want to understand change in British politics. I used Mair (1997) to better interpret party system change in the dissertation.

The spatial consequence of the definition is probably the most important. A party system can be observed in different arenas. Such arenas can be the parliamentary arena (based on party seat shares), the electoral arena (based on party vote shares), the governmental, the regional (devolution), the local council and the European Parliamentary arenas. Different authors give different emphasis to different arenas. For instance, Smith (1989: 165), who used the term 'split party system' for the first time, emphasised three arenas: the electoral, the parliamentary and the

governmental arenas. Mair (1996) focused on the governmental arena and made a distinction according to its openness or closeness. Finally, Bardi and Mair (2008: 156–159) makes difference according to the vertical, horizontal and functional aspects of the arenas. My research used their functional approach. They emphasised two parallel arenas: the parliamentary and the electoral arenas. They subsumed Smith's (1989) original governmental arena under the parliamentary arena. I followed their good example. In Britain the governmental arena can be indeed subsumed to the parliamentary arena because the British governments were almost always single governments and lived in symbiosis with their parliamentary faction. So the parliamentary majority was accompanied with single governments. Consequently, I will use two arenas to understand the spatial aspect of British politics: the electoral arena and the parliamentary arena.

After discussing the definition and the concepts, I started operationalisation. In order to create a scientifically correct operationalisation, I used Enyedi and Bértoa's (2011) approach. My operationalisation hence was the following:

- *Polarisation*

Polarisation wants to understand and measure a party's ideological position on a scale. There are usually different sorts of scales for such measurement. However, I will use the most overarching scale which encompasses lots of sub-components: the *left-right* ideological scale. I used the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) for this purpose. Hence I could measure and quantify the ideological positions of the British parties and in particular the two major parties (the Conservatives and Labour.) By using this method, I could achieve two goals at the same time: first, I could identify individual party positions on a left-right scale and second, I could measure the distance between the two major parties. Hence, I could demonstrate that there were certain periods when the two-party competition was consensual (and the party manifestos were very close to each other) and there were other periods when the two-party competition was polarised (and the party manifestos diverged considerably from each other.) The figure below shows us this trend in British politics between 1945 and 2015. The positive values stand for right (conservative) manifesto promises whilst the negative values attest left (socialist) manifesto promises. One can easily notice that the 1945–1974 period was indeed a consensual interval based on welfare economics. Both parties were on the left ideological side (negative values) and

party positions were very close to each other (low polarisation). However, the 1974–1997 period was the opposite: parties significantly diverged from each other (high polarisation) and the party manifestos became "very right" on the one hand and remained "very left" on the other hand. One can also easily notice that the post-1997 period meant a return to consensual politics (low polarisation) mainly on the right ideological side. After 2010, the two-party polarisation remained low, however the party manifestos equally moved to the left side. The main reason for such movement to the left can be found in the reaction to the 2008–2009 financial and economic crises. Both parties backed the bail-out (and nationalisation) of banks and their debts. This step was a little bit similar to the post-1945 left consensual era; however, it remained still more on the right.
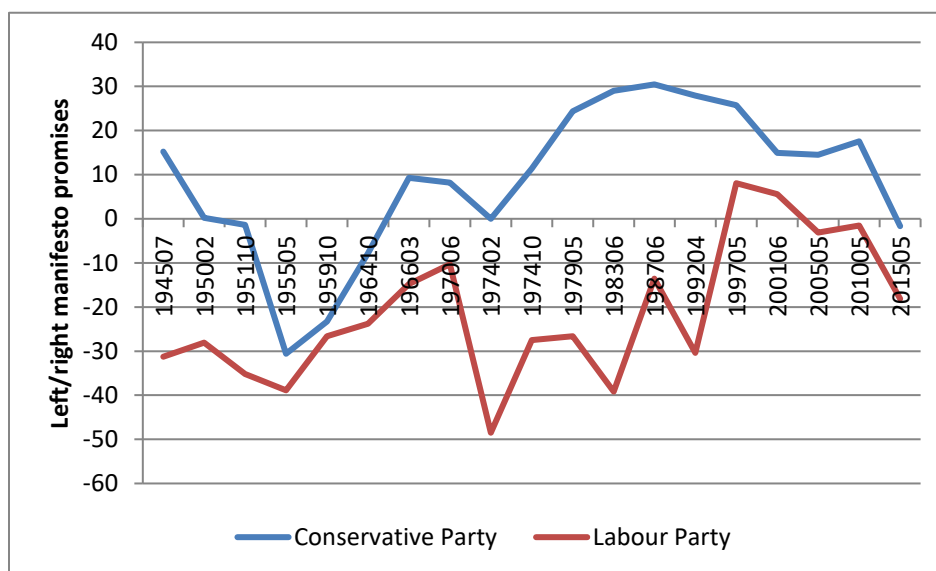

Figure 1. The ideological positions of major UK parties in different electoral years (CMP data)

- *Electoral volatility*

Electoral volatility measures the average vote share change for every party between two general elections. It hence offers estimation about how many percentage of the electorate changed their electoral party affiliation from one election to another. This method is very useful to measure the stability and institutionalisation of the party system as well. I will use Pedersen's index, which is a consensual method in political science to measure electoral volatility (Pedersen, 1979):

$$V = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} |P_{i,t+1} - P_{i,t}|}{2}$$

where *n* is the number of parties, *t* is the electoral year, *P* is the vote share percentage of *i* given party.

The measurement of electoral volatility is particularly important to identify and confirm critical junctures in the evolution of British party politics. In these years, a large segment of the electorate changed their party affiliation and the volatility was high. If volatility is low, we can think that the party system is quite stable and institutionalised. For instance, in the 1950s, electoral volatility was very low and two-party support was stable. However, both in 1945 and in 1974, electoral volatility was high. Please see the figure below to illustrate this. So volatility was usually very high at critical junctures.
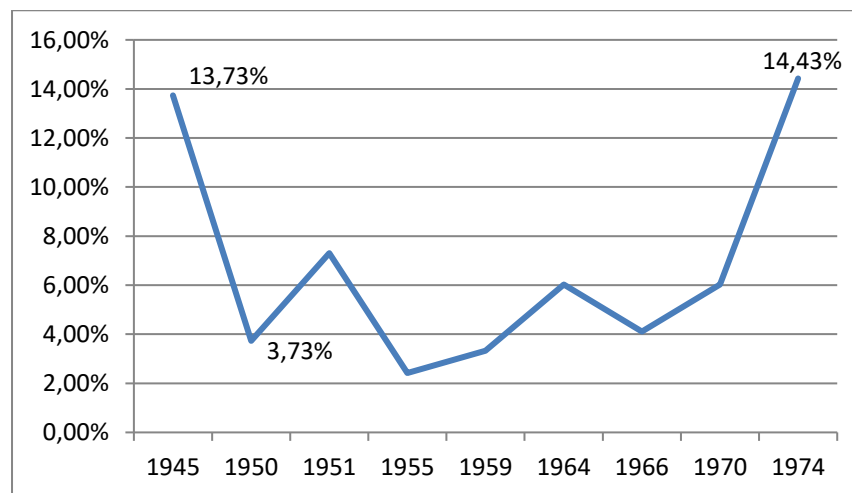

Figure 2. Electoral volatility in Britain between 1945 and February 1974 (Pedersen index)

- *Fragmentation*

Last but not least, fragmentation wants to measure the number of parties in the party system. I use here again a consensual index in political science: the *effective number of parties.* This index is both very easy to calculate and to understand. If the effective number of parties equals two, we can say that the party system contains two same-sized parties. In other words, it is a two-party system. If the index is three, there are three equally sized parties in the party system, so we have a three-party system, and so on. Moreover, the effective number of parties can be calculated in different arenas of the party system. For instance, it can be calculated by parliamentary seat share

(in the parliamentary arena) or by electoral vote share (in the electoral arena). Hence, we can estimate and compare the fragmentation of the party system in different arenas. The indexes are the following:

The effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP):

$$\text{ENPP} = \sum_{i=0}^{n} \frac{1}{s_i{}^2}$$

where *n* is the number of parties, *i* is a given party and *s* is the parliamentary seat share.

The effective number of electoral parties (ENEP):

$$\text{ENEP} = \sum_{i=0}^{k} \frac{1}{v_i{}^2}$$

where *k* is the number of parties, *i* is a given party and *v* is the electoral vote share.

The method of using fragmentation indices leads to further consequences. If the fragmentation values of the two arenas are close to each other, we can say that the overlap is good and the congruence is high. However, if the fragmentation of the two arenas is very different, we can say that the overlap is bad and congruence is low (or incongruence is high.) This method is a useful way to estimate the split between the two arenas in the British polity. The figure below demonstrates how fragmentation indices diverged from each other between 1945 and 2015. One can see that the electoral arena has been diverging from the parliamentary arena since the 1970s. This decade is also the beginning of pluralisation and third party success. The incongruence between the two arenas has become very high since then.
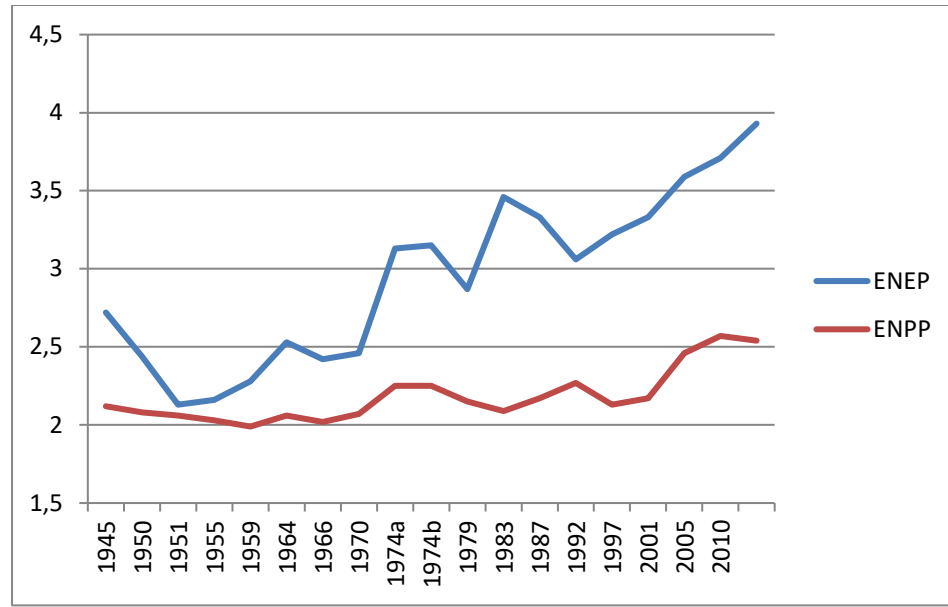
Figure 3. ENEP and ENPP in the UK (1945–2015)

At the same time, I also measured the disproportionality of the UK first-past-the-post electoral system. I used Gallagher's (LSq) index for this measurement (Gallagher and Mitchell, 2008):

$$LSq = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(V_i - S_i)^2}$$

where *n* is the number of parties, *i* is the given party, *V* is the vote share and *S* is the parliamentary seat share.

The table below summarises the electoral distortion of the first-past-the-post electoral system over time in Britain. One can notice that electoral distortion has been growing since the 1970s. It usually affected third (smaller) parties very negatively. At the same time, it gave some extra leverage for the two major parties. So it was more beneficial for the Conservatives and for Labour, one can presume. However, it is just one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is that electoral distortion sometimes helped smaller (third) parties for the detriment of bigger parties. In the first-past-the post electoral system, the geographic concentration of votes can give leverage. Therefore, smaller parties with geographically concentrated votes could benefit from the electoral distortion. For instance, this was the case for the Scottish National Party in 2015 when they achieved a landslide victory in Scotland. At the same time, the Labour Party (and the

16

Liberal Democrats) lost their strongholds in Scotland. Therefore, the SNP could suddenly penetrate into the parliamentary arena. So electoral distortion does not automatically help bigger parties and hinder smaller ones. Moreover, electoral distortion often decides the outcome of the Conservative-Labour rivalry as well. The Conservative Party has often been hindered by the first-past-the-post electoral system against the Labour Party. The Conservatives usually had to have more vote share for the very same seat share if they wanted to level with Labour. This is what exactly decided the outcome of the 2010 general election. In 2010 and in 2015, the Conservatives got almost identical vote shares. However, the electoral system negatively discriminated them in 2010 and it was neutral for them in 2015. The 2010 electoral bias generated a coalition government whilst the 2015 neutrality provided a stable single government for them. In sum, high electoral distortion does not always hinder small parties but sometimes (and more and more often) bigger parties as well. Therefore, the predictability of the general election results has become increasingly problematic recently. The continuous errors of opinion polls can prove it.

Table 3. ENEP, ENPP and LSq values in the UK (1945−2015)

	LSq	ENEP	ENPP
1945	11.62	2.72	2.12
1950	6.91	2.44	2.08
1951	2.61	2.13	2.06
1955	4.13	2.16	2.03
1959	7.3	2.28	1.99
1964	8.88	2.53	2.06
1966	8.44	2.42	2.02
1970	6.59	2.46	2.07
1974a	15.47	3.13	2.25
1974b	14.96	3.15	2.25
1979	11.58	2.87	2.15
1983	17.45	3.46	2.09
1987	14.95	3.33	2.17
1992	13.55	3.06	2.27

1997	16.51	3.22	2.13
2001	17.76	3.33	2.17
2005	16.73	3.59	2.46
2010	15.1	3.71	2.57
2015	16.58	3.93	2.54

After determining the concepts and the operationalisation, I formulated three hypotheses. These hypotheses were intended to test my presumptions about the British party system. They are the following:

Hypothesis 1 – The growing incongruence between the parliamentary and electoral arenas was a long-term trend of British party politics between 1945 and 2015.

H_1 states that there was an increasing split in the UK party system between 1945 and 2015. This split appeared in the form of growing incongruence between the UK parliamentary and electoral arenas. The hypothesis supposes two things; first, there has been a long-term trend in the evolution of British party politics. This long-term trend was characterized by a gradual incongruence between the parliamentary and electoral arenas. Second, it also supposes that the post-war patterns of party competition (two-party politics) mainly remained in the parliamentary arena; however, the electoral arena differed from it. Therefore, the split in the UK party system was caused by both a stable parliamentary arena and a pluralising electoral arena.

Hypothesis 2 – Although the growing incongruence was a long-term trend of British party politics, there were also certain periods when it temporarily slowed down or reversed.

The hypothesis wants to find out if there was any period in the history of UK party competition when incongruence could have been stopped or reversed. In other words, the hypothesis investigates how pre-determined is the pluralisation of British party politics. Was it possible at any time to slow down, stop or decrease the pace of pluralisation? If we found such short-term periods in the long-term trend of pluralisation, we would also need to understand why such short-term set-backs happened. If short-term set-backs are likely, the entire nature of long-term pluralisation is different. Hence, H_2 can serve both

tools; to further confirm H_1 by saying that pluralisation is a very stable trend, or to sophisticate H_1 by saying that, though pluralisation is a long-term trend, sometimes short term set-backs can happen. In both two cases, we can understand the patterns of British party competition better.

Hypothesis 3 – The growing incongruence between the parliamentary and electoral arenas was never large enough to trigger the electoral system change of the UK general elections.

The hypothesis tries to evaluate the potential consequence that a split in the UK party system can lead to. If incongruence is significant, one could think that the UK parliamentary arena is not responsive to the electoral arena. This lack of responsiveness also suggests that the FPTP electoral system can be blamed for such an outcome. However, if the electoral system is changed for a mixed or PR one, the level of incongruence can decline. So the growing incongruence could have generated a demand for electoral system change over time. I want to find correlation between the growing incongruence and the likelihood of electoral system change in Britain between 1945 and 2015.

The electoral data used in this dissertation was available on the UK Parliament website. Particularly, I used the following source: Commons Briefing Paper (2017) No. CBP-7529 *UK Election Statistics: 1918-2017.* This paper was available both in .pdf and in .xls files. So I could make my own calculations with these data as well. Another electoral source was the *Political Science Resources* website (http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk.htm). Moreover, I also included maps with prior permission from Dr Benjamin Hennig (http://www.viewsoftheworld.net/) and from *Vision of Britain through Time* (http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/).

During my stay in Britain, I also made academic interviews with British politicians about topical questions in British politics. Although originally I wanted to include the findings of these interviews in my dissertation, in order to avoid methodological mistakes and statistical bias, I decided to leave them out. I could only make six interviews, which is too small a sample for statistically representative research. So I made reading these interviews optional at the end of my dissertation (in the annex). I also included a short comparison of the interviews there. I am very

grateful to these politicians for helping me understand British politics! I list these politicians and their party affiliations below: Lord Beecham (Labour), Lord Balfe (Conservatives), Lord Wallace (Lib Dems), Kelvin Hopkins, MP (Labour), Douglas Carswell, MP (UKIP) and Paul Monaghan, MP (SNP.) I asked them the same six questions: (1) the causes of pluralisation in British party politics, (2) the EU's impact on UK party politics, (3) the possibility of an electoral system change in Britain, (4) the strength of party line in their respective parties, (5) the importance of devolution to pluralisation and (6) the politicians' own perception of anti-establishment sentiment in Britain.

3. The results of the dissertation

The 1945 general election was indeed a critical juncture in the evolution of British politics. This was the moment when the Conservative–Labour dichotomy was born. Before the 1945 general election, it was not clear which party would be the counterpart of the Conservative Party on the left. Both the Liberals and Labour rivalled each other. However, in 1945, it was decided that Labour would become the only party on the left. The 1945 general election had also a long path-dependency. Almost every succeeding general election reflected the results of the 1945 general election in some way. For instance, the 1974 general election might have questioned the post-war two-partyism, Margaret Thatcher might have questioned the post-war welfare consensus, Labour landslide victory might have confirmed the 1945 patterns and the 2010 coalition government might have questioned the 1945 patterns, however, every time there was a reference to the very same general election. So the 1945 general election became a *pro et contra* reference in the second half of the 20th century.

The consequences of the 1945 general election were dual: on the one hand, it created two-partyism. Two parties (the Conservatives and Labour) competed against each other with an almost complete overlap between the electoral and parliamentary arenas. Third parties were marginal, electoral support was stable and single governments were strong. On the other hand, this two-party competition was characterized by a welfare economic consensus, too. Both parties agreed and supported full employment, public services and even nationalisation. Perhaps the most palpable evidence of the path dependency and heritage of this time is the creation of the National Health Service (NHS). It has been supported by every major party since then.

Moreover, class differences were also strong between the Conservatives and Labour at that time. It meant that party identification and voting loyalty was very high among the electorate in favour of their preferred party. In other words, people's attachment to their respective party was stronger than their policy preferences. General elections were only decided by a handful of hesitating voters who did not know which party to choose. Therefore, the results of the general elections in the 1950s and 1960s were always very tight. The whole party system was dominated by two parties.

The change started to happen from the 1970s. The popularity of third parties was on the rise. This phenomenon caused pluralisation in the electoral arena whereas two-party stability still remained in the parliamentary arena. Hence, incongruence started to characterize the relationship between the different arenas of the UK party system. Nevertheless, this incongruence remained still limited. The popularity of third parties was fuelled by de-alienation. This phenomenon meant that voters started to detach from their original class preferences. Instead, they often voted for other parties because of their manifestos. Hence electoral volatility rose and the whole stability of the post-war British party system started to erode. If party identification was decided by class politics between 1945 and 1974, it was issue politics (and manifesto promises) after the 1970s. Therefore, the 1970s did not only mean the start of pluralisation but also a change in party identification: class competition made place for issue competition. In 1979, this new issue competition was demonstrated by Margaret Thatcher's rupture with the post-war economic consensus (which was neoliberal politics.) During the upcoming years (1979–1997), the two major parties had a polarized party competition over issues: the Conservatives supported neoliberalism whilst Labour stuck to the post-war economic consensus. Although de-alienation resulted that the Conservative and Labour Parties have become similar in class competition, the other aspect of competition (issue competition) has significantly differentiated the two parties from each other. The different party manifestos, promises and polarized campaigns helped the electorate to make a clear distinction between them.

This sort of clue for the electorate (to make difference based on issues) has started to evaporate since the arrival of Tony Blair and New Labour at the Labour Party. Tony Blair's idea to give up Clause IV and move the Labour Party to the right by accepting Margaret Thatcher's legacy resulted in two very similar major parties. The Conservatives and Labour had become similar

both in class and issue competition. Due to de-alienation, the class difference between the two parties was already relatively small. Electoral volatility was high, which was confirmed by Labour's landslide electoral victory in 1997. So we had two very similar big parties both in class support and in issue politics after 1997. In other words, it was very difficult to make difference between the two major parties. Although the 1945–1974 period was also a consensual period (post-war welfare consensus), the class differences of the era still helped the electorate to distinguish between the Conservatives and the Labour Party. After 1997, the new consensual period (neoliberal consensus) coincided with no or limited class differences. I argue that this two-party similarity led to the political changes after 2010.

I call the 2010–2015 critical juncture the burst of pluralisation. Previously, I have demonstrated that pluralisation was on the rise since the 1970s. This pluralisation, however, only affected the electoral arena and not (really) the parliamentary arena. Even the 1997 landslide Labour victory made the impression that two-party politics remained the backbone of British politics. In this context, the 2010 coalition government was a big surprise for many. This was the first clear sign of pluralisation inside the parliamentary arena. Later, after 2010, the signs of pluralisation continued: the 2011 AV referendum was initiated by the Lib Dems, the 2014 EP elections were won by UKIP (the first time after 1945 that a third party could win), the Scottish independence referendum was initiated by the SNP and David Cameron's 2013 Brexit promise was very much influenced by UKIP's growing popularity. I argue that all these events arose from two parallel things: on the one hand, growing incongruence between the parliamentary and electoral arenas (which caused legitimacy problems) and on the other hand, the neoliberal consensual politics between Labour and the Conservatives after 1997 (which only partially mirrored the electoral preferences of the wider British society). These two phenomena gave fertile grounds for a third phenomenon called anti-establishment sentiment. I argue that the conflicting nature of British politics, which was traditionally characterised by the Government-Opposition dichotomy has disappeared since 1997. This conflict was class politics between 1945 and 1974. It was issue politics between 1974 and 1997. However, this conflict gradually disappeared after 1997. At the same time pluralisation still continued latently under the surface. So a new conflict suddenly erupted in 2010. I call this new conflict the conflict between the established and anti-established parties. So the traditional left-right competition got suddenly a new dimension: the established–anti-established or bottom-up conflict. Now, Labour and the Conservatives should

both compete against each other and against smaller third parties as well (i.e. Lib Dems, SNP, UKIP, Greens etc.) Moreover, third parties also compete against each other. In 2015, the collapse of the Lib Dems happened in parallel with the rise of the SNP (in seat share), UKIP and Greens (in vote shares). So third parties also compete against each other. Today, a three-dimensional competition characterises British politics: the Conservative–Labour competition, the established–anti-established competition and the competition among third parties. It is easy to accept that this party system is very far from the initial two-party system of the 1950s.

At the end of my dissertation, I used the initial hypotheses to test the validity of my findings about the change of British party politics. The first hypothesis stated that the growing incongruence between the electoral and parliamentary arenas was a long-term trend of British party politics between 1945 and 2015. I could verify this hypothesis by using ENEP/ENPP data. I could also confirm that the trend was particularly strong for the ENEP data (electoral arena) between the 1992–2015 interval. Otherwise, the parliamentary arena provided also good fit. So the growing incongruence was indeed a long-term trend in British party politics between 1945 and 2015.

The second hypothesis said that although the growing incongruence was a long-term trend of British politics, there were certain periods when it temporarily stopped or declined. By using the same ENEP/ENPP data, I could figure out that the period between 1979 and 1997 had indeed certain electoral years when pluralisation stopped or dropped in the electoral arena. (Please see the figure below.) During this period, it was only the 1983 general election when ENEP temporarily jumped up due to the internal conflicts inside the Labour Party. This was the time when the Social Democrats left the Labour party and later joined the Liberals, which led to the birth of the Liberal Democrats. Nevertheless, this period had rather declining ENEP values. So I can accept the second hypothesis. Moreover, I also found reasons why this decline could have happened. The decline in third party support coincided with one of the most polarized party competition between the Conservatives and Labour after 1945. In my opinion, this polarized party competition helped major parties to get back their votes from third parties. Voters felt that their vote was decisive in the outcome of the tight race between the two major parties. So any vote for a third party would have been wasted. However, when the same two parties had

consensual competition after 1997, pluralisation took off again. Therefore, pluralisation and polarisation are two interdependent phenomena.
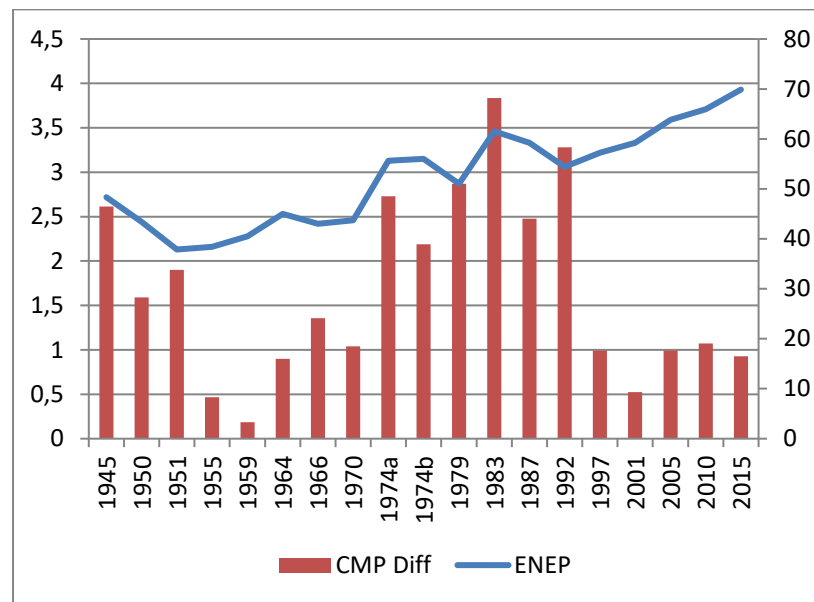

Figure 4. The relationship between the pluralisation of the electoral arena (ENEP) and the polarisation between the Conservative and Labour parties (CMP diff) (The left scale is the absolute benchmark of party system fragmentation and the right scale is the relative benchmark of party manifesto differences (in %.))

The third hypothesis said that the lack of electoral system reform is due to the still low incongruence between the electoral and parliamentary arenas. In other words, the more incongruence rises the more likely is an electoral system reform. This presumption is based on the fact that pluralisation brought electoral system change on the political agenda in the 1970s. Back in the 1950s and 1960s, when congruence was still almost perfect between the parliamentary and electoral arenas, the electoral system reform was not part of the political debate. So we can presume that incongruence brought electoral system change on the agenda. In order to test this hypothesis, I analysed both British and other foreign cases to understand electoral system change. In the British case, I observed those cases when electoral system change was close or it was actually carried out. Thus, I looked at the political events around the Jenkins Committee, the introduction of new electoral systems in Scotland, Wales, London and Northern Ireland, the electoral system change at EP elections in 1999 and, finally, the 2011 AV referendum. I have particularly focused on the 2011 AV referendum because it was the closest

moment when the first-past-the-post electoral system was dropped. The Jenkins Committee was much further from it, the EP elections might have had an electoral system change but it only affected a secondary arena, and the new electoral systems of the devolved arenas were also somewhat secondary. Therefore, the 2011 AV referendum was the only attempt which wanted to change the first-past-the-post electoral system and it was very close to it (in opposition to the recommendations of the Jenkins Committee). I analysed the 2011 AV referendum in detail in my dissertation.

Furthermore, I also analysed a foreign electoral system reform. I used the 1993 New Zealand electoral system reform to understand any potential changes in Britain. The reason for doing so lies in the similar political and electoral systems in Britain and New Zealand (same political traditions, electoral system, political culture etc.). In New Zealand, the evolution of party politics was very similar to that of Britain: the incongruence between the parliamentary and electoral arenas gradually increased and it later caused democratic and legitimacy crisis. I used the New Zealand case study to evaluate a potential electoral system change in Britain. I could see that both in the British and the New Zealand case studies the growing incongruence between the electoral and parliamentary arenas was not enough alone for an electoral system change. So I had to reject hypothesis three. In Britain, electoral system change did not even happen (the 2011 AV referendum was unsuccessful) and in New Zealand it happened for other reasons. Nevertheless, there was one key endeavour in both cases which helped electoral system reform: it was the momentum of contingent (unexpected) events. I could understand that the fast flow of new and unexpected events which undermined the legitimacy of the first-past-the-post electoral system was more important than the continuously growing incongruence. I could see that the momentum of unexpected events was rather slow before the 2011 AV referendum, so it failed. In contrast, the momentum of contingent events was very fast before the 1993 New Zealand electoral system reform. So this is the reason why a relatively moderate incongruence between the electoral and parliamentary arenas in New Zealand could have generated an electoral system change. So I rejected the third hypothesis. Growing incongruence is not enough for electoral system change. Nevertheless, I can also accept that the growing incongruence can ignite the fast chain-reaction of contingent events. In other words, growing incongruence and legitimacy concerns might lead to political events which, in turn, cause an electoral system reform. However, the mere existence of incongruence is not enough for an electoral system reform. Please see in the figure below that

the UK had sometimes higher incongruence than New Zealand. Yet, there has not been electoral system reform. So incongruence and the momentum of contingent events are equally important.
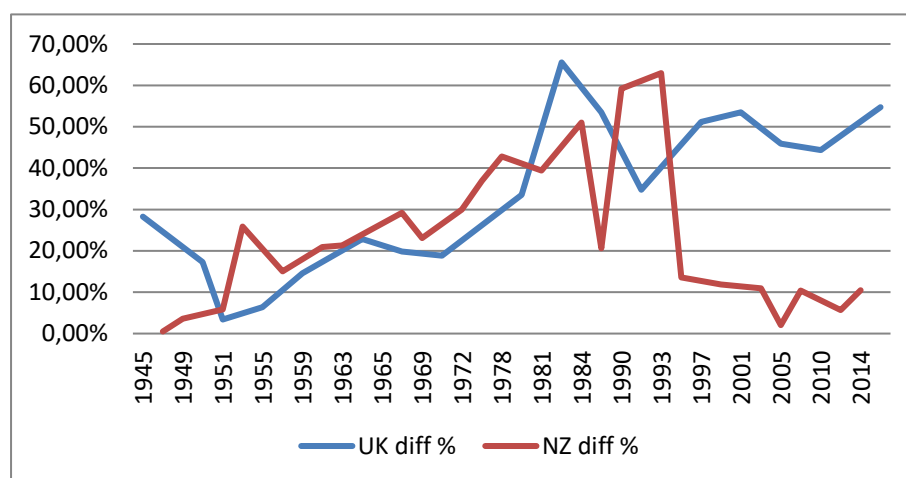

Figure 5. The incongruence between the parliamentary and electoral arenas (ENEP–ENPP relative difference) in New Zealand and in Great Britain

In sum, the future of British politics has become more and more unpredictable. The main reason for this lack of predictability arises from the divergence of the parliamentary and electoral arenas. In this situation, there are parallel competitions in a multi-level polity. The Conservatives and Labour must react and accommodate to the changed competitions in each parallel arena. This has generated a new three dimensional competition: a competition between the Conservatives and Labour, a competition between the established and anti-established parties and a third competition among third parties themselves. The pluralisation in the electoral arena does not affect the parliamentary arena directly and immediately. However, sooner or later, change in the electoral arena spills over into the parliamentary arena as well. This is what we could see between 2010 and 2015. It was a surprise from the Westminster democracy perspective; however, it was expected from the split party system perspective. We could also see that the two major parties try to respond to this. For them, the most successful reaction could be polarisation. So there is still a long way to go before. However, there is one thing which has high probability: the split in the UK party system will produce similarly unexpected events in the future, too.

4. The most important references

Bardi, L. and Mair, P. (2008): *The Parameters of Party Systems.* Party Politics; Vol 14, No.2 pp.
147–166

Blondel, J. (1968): *Party systems and patterns of government in Western democracies.* Canadian
Journal of Political Science, 1(02), 180–203.

Bogdanor, Vernon. (2004): *The constitution and the party system in the twentieth century*
Parliamentary Affairs, 57(4), 717–733.

Butler, D. and Kavanagh, D. (1975): *British General Election of October, 1974*. Palgrave
Macmillan UK.

Butler, D. and Kavanagh, D. (1997): *The British General Election of 1997*. Palgrave Macmillan
UK.

Commons Briefing Papers 7529 (2017): *UK Election Statistics: 1918-2017.* Online paper,
retrieved from
http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7529
Downloaded: 22/05/2017.

Comparative Manifesto Project (2017): *Manifesto Corpus by Lehmann, P., Matthieß, T., Merz, N.,
Regel, S., Werner, A.* Berlin: WZB Berlin Social Science Centre, retrieved from
https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/ Downloaded: 28/06/2018

Dahl, R. A. (1966): *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*. Yale University Press, USA.

Denver, D., Carman, C., & Johns, R. (2012): *Elections and Voters in Britain*. Palgrave UK.

Dunleavy, P. and Margetts, H. (1995): *Understanding the Dynamics of Electoral Reform.*
International Political Science Review, 16(1), 9–29.

Dunleavy, P., and Margetts, H. (1999): *Mixed electoral systems in Britain and the Jenkins
Commission on electoral reform*. The British Journal of Politics and International
Relations, 1(1), 12–38.

Egedy, G. (1998): *Nagy-Britannia története*. Aula, Budapest.

Egedy, G. (2005): *Brit konzervatív gondolkodás és politika (XIX-XX. század).* Századvég kiadó, Budapest

Enyedi, Z., and Bértoa, F. C. (2011): *Patterns of party competition (1990–2009).* In: Paul G Lewis, Radoslaw Markowski (eds.) Europeanizing party politics? Comparative perspectives on Central and Eastern European enlargement. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011. pp. 116-142.

Gallagher, M. (2017): *Values of indices.* Online database, retrieved from http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/index.php Downloaded: 28/05/2017

Gallagher, M and Mitchell, P. (eds.) (2008): *The Politics of Electoral Systems.* Oxford University Press, UK.

Ilonszki, G. (1998): *Westminsteri változatok: Az angolszász politikai rendszerek.* Budapest: Aula, Budapest. 363 p.

Kavanagh, D., and Cowley, P. (2010): *The British general election of 2010.* Palgrave Macmillan, UK

Kavanagh, D., and Cowley, P. (2016): *The British general election of 2015.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Lánczi, A. (2015): *Political Realism and Wisdom.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 211 p.

Lijphart, A. (1984): *Democracies. Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries.* New Haven, Yale University Press.

Lijphart, A. (2012): *Patterns of Democracy. Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Second Edition. New Haven, Yale University Press.

Mainwaring, S., & Scully, T. (1995): *Building democratic institutions: Party systems in Latin America*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California.

Mair, P. (1996): *Party systems and structures of competition.* In Larry LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris (eds): Comparing Democracies. London: Sage. pp. 83–106.

Mair, P. (1997): *Party system change: approaches and interpretations*. Oxford University Press, UK.

Mair, P. (2009): *The Party System.* In Flinders M., Gamble, A., Hay, C., Kenny, M. (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of British Politics, Oxford UP, UK, pp. 283–302.

Mitchell, P. (2005): *The United Kingdom: plurality rule under siege*. In Gallagher, M and Mitchell, P. (eds.) (2005): The Politics of Electoral Systems. Oxford University Press, UK. pp 157–184.

Nagy, L. (2015): *Választás és Arányosság – A demokratikus választások arányossági kérdései.* Debrecen University Press, Debrecen, Hungary.

Pedersen, M. (1979): *The Dynamics Of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns Of Electoral Volatility.* European Journal of Political Research, 7, 1-26

Rokkan, S. (1970): *Citizens, elections, parties : approaches to the comparative study of the process of development*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Sartori, G. (1976). *Parties and Party Systems: Volume 1: A Framework for Analysis*. Cambridge University Press, UK

Sartori, G. (2005): *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*. ECPR Press, UK.

Smith, G. (1989): *Core persistence: Change and the "people"s party'.* West European Politics, 12(4), 157–168.

Webb, P. (2000): *The Modern British Party System*. SAGE Publications, UK

5. My own papers on the topic

Kaszap Márton (2014) *Van-e élet az EU-n túl? Az Egyesült Királyság EU-tagságának alternatívái.* In: Politikatudományi Szemle XXIII/2. 91-108. pp.

Kaszap Márton (2014) UKIP. Hogyan kell értelmezni a radikális jobboldali párt felemelkedését? In: Külügyi Szemle Vol. 13. No. 2. 130-149. pp.

Kaszap Márton (2016): *Critical Junctures in the Evolution of British Party Politics. The 1945 General Election and its Impact on the Westminster Party System.* In: Studia Juridica et Politica Jaurinensis Vol. 3. No. 1. 1-16. pp.

Kaszap Márton (2016): *Critical Junctures in the Evolution of British party politics. The 1974 General Elections and their Impact on Westminster Party System.* In: Studia Juridica et Politica Jaurinensis Vol. 3. No. 2. 14-29. pp.

Kaszap Márton (2018): *Critical Junctures in the Evolution of British Party Politics. The 1997 General Election and its Impact on the Westminster Party System.* In: Studia Juridica et Politica Jaurinensis Vol. 5. No. 1. 20-38. pp.

Soon:

Kaszap Márton (2018-2019?): *BREXIT és a brit pártverseny. A brit pártverseny alakulása a népszavazás előtt és után.* In: Brexit kötet. Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem.