Original Article

Postcommunist politics in a magnetic field: How transition and EU accession structure party competition on European integration

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Abstract How do political parties in Central and Eastern Europe position themselves on European integration? We show that the strongest predictor of a party's stance is ideology. The communist legacy and the European Union (EU) accession process – what we call the demarcation and integration magnets – created a bipolar magnetic field, in which political parties are aligned on a single axis from one pole bundling left-wing economics and cultural traditionalism to another pole combining market liberalism and cultural openness. Over time, the EU accession process compressed this axis by inducing parties to shift away from authoritarian-nationalist and hard left economic positions. Our analysis reveals how EU leverage has critically influenced the character of political competition in postcommunist states.
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Introduction

Europe's postcommunist governments have made many fateful policy choices since the advent of democracy in 1989, but few have had more sweeping implications than the choice to seek membership of the European Union (EU). The long and demanding process of qualifying for EU membership has had a profound impact on nascent party systems in Central and East European (CEE) states. We employ a data set on the positions of national political parties in 2002 to illustrate how the choice for EU membership has structured political competition in the postcommunist democracies. This data set provides the

position of each party on European integration, as well as its position on two dimensions of political competition: the left/right economic dimension and the gal/tan cultural dimension, whereby 'gal' stands for green/alternative/libertarian and 'tan' for traditionalism/authority/nationalism.

Our purpose in this paper is twofold. First, we present party positioning on European integration in east and west at the cusp of postcommunist accession to the EU. Our data are for 2002, the year nearest to accession for which we have systematic data across Europe. We explain why CEE parties differed from their western counterparts, as well as how the structure of party competition varied across CEE states. Second, we take a step back and investigate how the positions of CEE parties on European integration have evolved since 1989, and extend the discussion through 2006.

We argue that, in 2002, a single logic accounts for party positioning on European integration across east and west. A party's position on European integration is in large measure guided by its location on the two axes of domestic competition. This logic works across Europe, and yet the outcome could not be more different in east and west. In the west, pro-European attitudes are associated with *left* and *gal* party positions and anti-European attitudes with *right* and *tan* positions; in the east, pro-Europeanism appears concentrated among parties with *right* and *gal* positions and anti-Europeanism among *left* and *tan* parties.

We understand these differences to be the result of diverging histories of political party development in the two regions. In the east, the transition from communism accompanied by EU accession has forged an axis of competition that is very different from that in the west (Marks *et al*, 2006). The legacy of communist rule has generated what we call a 'demarcation magnet' that bundles left-wing economics with cultural traditionalism, whereas the reforms and constraints of EU accession have produced an 'integration magnet' that pulls parties in the opposite direction toward market-liberal economics and cultural liberalism. The coexistence of these two forces has created a bipolar magnetic field, which has induced political parties to align on a single axis from *left-tan* to *right-gal*. A convincing explanation of party positioning on European integration in eastern Europe thus has to give central place to the legacy of communism and the process of joining the EU.

We choose the terms demarcation and integration to emphasize our intellectual affinity with recent work by Hanspeter Kriesi *et al* (2006, 2007). They argue that European integration and globalization are reshaping the cleavage structure in western Europe (see also Azmanova, 2004). This is strikingly similar to what we diagnose for Central and Eastern Europe. Analyzing public opinion in six west European countries, they note a shift in societal concerns from left/right issues to what they call a demarcation/integration cleavage. This is brought about by European integration and

globalization, which have opened up national boundaries to intensified economic competition between sheltered and unsheltered sectors, cultural competition between natives and immigrants, and political competition between defenders of national institutions and proponents of supranational governance. These new tensions are not easily absorbed in familiar left/right categories, and they are therefore likely to provoke partisan realignment. Losers of globalization (and European integration) will flock to parties that promise protectionist measures to demarcate their society against external competition, whereas winners will seek out parties that advocate international integration. Although Kriesi and his collaborators anticipate future realignment for western Europe, our analysis of the CEE states shows that, in 2002, political parties appeared to be lined up along a demarcation/integration axis. We argue that communism bequeathed to CEE states powerful organizational and ideological building blocks for parties vowing to demarcate their society against outside competition. The conclusion reflects on whether this axis is likely to persist in the post-EU accession era.

How did this axis of competition come into being after 1989? We argue that EU leverage has strengthened *right-gal* ideology, thereby encouraging some political parties to shift away from the *hard left-hard tan* corner associated with communism. While much of the EU conditionality literature has so far focused on EU-induced changes in specific policy areas, we look instead at how EU leverage has affected party positions.[1] Yet not all CEE states in our study responded to the pull of the integration magnet at the same time, even though all were exposed to it simultaneously. To understand the varying influence of EU leverage, the evolution of communism is central. The timing and the extent of the reform of the main communist party are inversely related to the strength of the demarcation magnet in the *left-tan* quadrant.

Our argument builds on two key contributions to the literature on party competition in eastern Europe.[2] The first is that the legacy of communism has shaped party competition in the east in ways that are intelligibly different from the west (Kitschelt, 1992; see also Kostelecky, 2002). Although the communist state disappeared in 1990, the organizations and the resources of the communist party endured in different forms – as did the habits of mind of citizens and politicians based on an ideology that linked *left* and *tan* policies effectively for decades. The second is that the structure of domestic party competition is critical in determining where political parties stand on European integration (Hooghe *et al*, 2002). We move beyond this work to show that the combined effect of the communist legacy and EU accession has created a political divide, which separates those who want to defend their society against external forces, and those who seek to integrate it in a free-market, cosmopolitan Europe. Hence the labels that we choose to describe the poles of the axis of party competition in CEE, where the

communist legacy legitimizes demarcation or protection, and EU accession motivates integration.

In recent years, scholars have analyzed party positioning on European integration in CEE states (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002; Beichelt, 2004; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2004; Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2005). We draw on their research, but we also bring to bear an expert data set covering 14 western EU member states and nine accession countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.[3] This expert survey was conducted in 2002 under the auspices of the UNC-Chapel Hill Center for European Studies (Hooghe *et al*, forthcoming). We asked 238 experts – academics specializing in political parties or European integration – to evaluate how party leaders defined the positions of their political parties on European integration, on nine EU policies and on three ideological dimensions for 98 west and 73 east European political parties. Our time point of reference is 2002. Our analysis is confined here to parties with 2 per cent or more of the vote in the national election in 2002 or the most proximate prior year, that is, 85 parties in the west and 68 parties in the east.[4]

This paper is organized into two parts. First, we compare, across east and west, the robustness of ideological commitments as predictors of where political parties stand on European integration, and then we consider how postcommunist transition and EU accession have shaped party positions. This section finishes by examining the most prominent alternative explanation for party positioning on European integration. Second, we explore how the integration magnet has compelled major parties to bring their political and economic agendas more in line with EU accession demands – thereby constraining ideological debate and changing the structure of political competition over time.

The Party Landscape in East and West and European Integration

What explains the contrast between east and west in how parties position themselves on European integration? We theorize that a party's position is primarily guided by its ideological location in domestic competition. However, how ideology maps onto EU positioning is mediated by a party's historical experience, in particular the relevance and timing of postcommunist reform, and the timing and intensity of EU accession negotiations. These factors go a long way in explaining variation within the east as well as across east and west.

Party ideology and European integration

Let us first establish the validity of our baseline: that party ideology is the strongest predictor of a party's stance on European integration.[5]

Table 1 compares different ways in which ideology maps onto party positioning on European integration. Our dependent variable, party positioning on European integration, is measured by asking country experts to 'describe the *general* position on European integration that the party's leadership had taken over the course of 2002' on a seven-point scale ranging from one (strongly opposed to European integration) to seven (strongly in favor of European integration). We use for each party the average of all expert evaluations on European integration for that party. We measure ideology by asking our experts to place each party on 11-point scales on two ideological dimensions. *Left*/*right* differentiates parties on economic redistribution, welfare and government regulation of the economy. *Gal*/*tan* sets parties apart on lifestyle issues, authority-related issues and national community values, whereby *gal* stands for green, alternative and libertarian; and *tan* stands for traditionalism, authority and nationalism (Hooghe *et al*, 2002). Here too we use the average expert evaluation on *left*/*right* and *gal*/*tan*. The operationalization of these and all other variables used in our multivariate analyses is detailed in Table 2.

The results for western Europe are on the left-hand side of Table 1, and for CEE on the right-hand side. Column A examines the linear relationship between domestic ideology and party positions on European integration, in west and east respectively; column B checks whether the effect of ideology is curvilinear; and column C investigates the effect of party family.[6]

Linearity is most powerful for the east, whereas curvilinearity captures best dynamics in the west. Linearity explains 48 per cent of variance among CEE parties against 18 per cent among west European parties (for studies of the west European political space, see Pennings, 2002; Gabel and Hix, 2004). In CEE, rightwing views on economic issues and *gal* views on cultural issues go along with greater support for European integration. In contrast, western opposition to European integration is primarily located at the ideological extremes (Taggart, 1998; Hix, 1999; Ray, 2007) as the significant improvement in fit for the west in column B shows.[7] A third way of looking at how ideology shapes views on European integration is by comparing party families.[8] Party families are the product of deep historical struggles, and so they provide a fine-grained understanding of how party competition is structured (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967).[9] Substituting ideology for party family confirms our substantive conjectures about the sources of support for and opposition to integration, which we elaborate below.

However we operationalize ideology, ideology structures party attitudes to European integration in both east and west, but the relationship appears simpler and stronger in the east.

Table 1: Ideology and party positioning on European integration in west and east (2002)

	West			*East*		
	A	*B*	*C*	*A*	*B*	*C*
	Linear ideology	*Ideology (including extremism)*	*Party family*	*Linear ideology*	*Ideology (including extremism)*	*Party family*
Constant	6.06***	6.86***	4.37***	6.70***	7.22***	6.60***
Ideology						
Left/right ideology	0.29*** (0.024)	0.25*** (0.020)	—	0.18*** (0.018)	0.18*** (0.017)	—
Gal/tan ideology	−0.38*** (0.023)	−0.32*** (0.021)	—	−0.34*** (0.018)	−0.33*** (0.016)	—
Ideological extremism						
Left/right extremism	—	−0.16*** (0.008)	—	—	−0.07*** (0.007)	—
Gal/tan extremism	—	−0.08*** (0.007)	—	—	−0.06*** (0.006)	—
Party family						
Radical tan	—	—	−1.84*** (0.224)	—	—	−2.72*** (0.189)
Conservative	—	—	0.95 (0.202)	—	—	−1.36*** (0.170)
Liberal	—	—	1.86*** (0.209)	—	—	−0.04 (0.169)
Christian democrat	—	—	2.08*** (0.207)	—	—	−0.16 (0.178)
Social democrat	—	—	1.76*** (0.199)	—	—	−0.22 (0.166)
Radical left	—	—	−1.10*** (0.227)	—	—	−3.18*** (0.192)
Green	—	—	0.98*** (0.230)	—	—	−1.85 (0.281)
Confessional	—	—	0.91** (0.329)	—	—	−5.60*** (0.300)
Agrarian	—	—	1.33*** (0.847)	—	—	−3.20*** (0.217)
R^2	0.18	0.45	0.53	0.48	0.59	0.71
Adj. R^2	0.18	0.45	0.53	0.48	0.59	0.70

***<0.001; **<0.01; * <0.05 <0.10. OLS models, with unstandardized coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). $N=85$ for west (all EU members except Luxemburg), and $N=68$ for east (all prospective postcommunist EU members in 2002 except Estonia). The analysis is weighted by vote; includes only parties that received more than 2 per cent of the vote in a national election in 2002 or the election most prior. The reference category in the party family model is regionalist parties.

Table 2: Operationalization

Party position on European integration	Mean expert score along seven-point scale ranging from strongly opposed to European integration (1) to strongly in favor of European integration (7). Question: 'How would you describe the *general position on European integration* that the party's leadership has taken over the *course of 2002?*' *Source*: 2002 Chapel Hill data set.
Left/right position	Mean expert score on 11-point scale ranging from extreme left (0) to extreme right (10). Question: 'Political scientists often classify parties in terms of their ideological stance on *economic issues*. Parties to the *right* emphasize a reduced economic role for government. They want privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, reduced government spending and a leaner welfare state. Parties to the *left* want government to play an active role in the economy. Using these criteria, indicate where parties are located in terms of their *economic ideology*.' *Source*: 2002 Chapel Hill data set.
Gal/tan position	Mean expert score on 11-point scale ranging from libertarian/postmaterialist (0) to traditional/authoritarian (10). This score is reversed in our analysis. Question: 'Parties may also be classified in terms of their views on *democratic freedoms and rights*. "*Libertarian" or "postmaterialist"* parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, doctor-assisted suicide, same-sex marriages, and greater democratic participation. "*Traditional" or "authoritarian"* parties often reject these ideas; they value order and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority. Where are parties located in terms of their *ideological views on freedoms and rights?*' *Source*: 2002 Chapel Hill data set.
Left/right extremism	Square of the distance of a party from the median left/right position, calculated for Eastern parties.
Gal/tan extremism	Square of the distance of a party from the median gal/tan position, calculated for Eastern parties.
Party family	Dichotomous variables: Radical-tan, Conservative, Liberal, Christian Democratic, Social Democrat, Radical Left, Green, Regional, Confessional, Agrarian, No Family. *Source*: (1) Derksen's categorization of party families on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Electionworld/Electionworld) and (2) the affiliations of CEEC parties to European/international party families and to party groups in the European Parliament.

Table 2: Continued

Postcommunist transition: Type of successor party	Dichotomous variables distinguishing between early-reformers (Hungarian MSzP, the Latvian LSDSP and PCTVL, the Lithuanian LSDP, the Polish SLD, and the Slovenian ZLSD), late-reformers (Bulgarian KzB, Romanian PSD, and the Slovakian HZDS, and never-reformers (Czech KSCM, Slovakian KSS). *Source*: own coding.
Postcommunist transition: Type of system	Determined by the type of communist successor party; non-communist parties are allocated a value that corresponds with the vote of the communist successor party in their type; they are allocated a zero otherwise, as are communist successor parties. *Source:* own coding; vote percentages from Derksen.
Accession: Government experience during pre-accession	Months in government from 1996 to 2002, with a discount rate of 0.66 by year distant from the reference year of 2002, that is months in 2001 = 0.66 of months in 2002, months in 2000 is 0.66×0.66 of months in 2002, etc. 1996 was the decisive year in which the EU-15 committed themselves to enlargement. *Source*: compiled from Klaus Armingeon and Romana Careja (2004).
Accession: Timing	Three dichotomous variables: Frontrunners: Czech republic, Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia; Catcher-Uppers: Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia; Laggards: Bulgaria and Romania. In the analysis, the reference category consists of the catch-up accession countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia). *Source:* own coding.
Public Euroskepticism	Percentage that considers membership a bad thing in 2002. *Source*: Timm Beichelt (2002)and *Candidate Countries European barometer*, 2002.2 [March 2003], accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cceb_en.htm.
Popularity of party	As measured by vote percentage in the national elections in 2002 or most recent election before that date. *Source*: Derksen website: http:www.electionworld.org.
Opposition status	Quasi-dichotomous variable taking on the value of 1 if the party was in opposition in 2002, the value of 0.5 if the party was in opposition for part of the time, and the value of 0 if the party was in government in 2002. *Source*: Armingeon and Careja (2004).

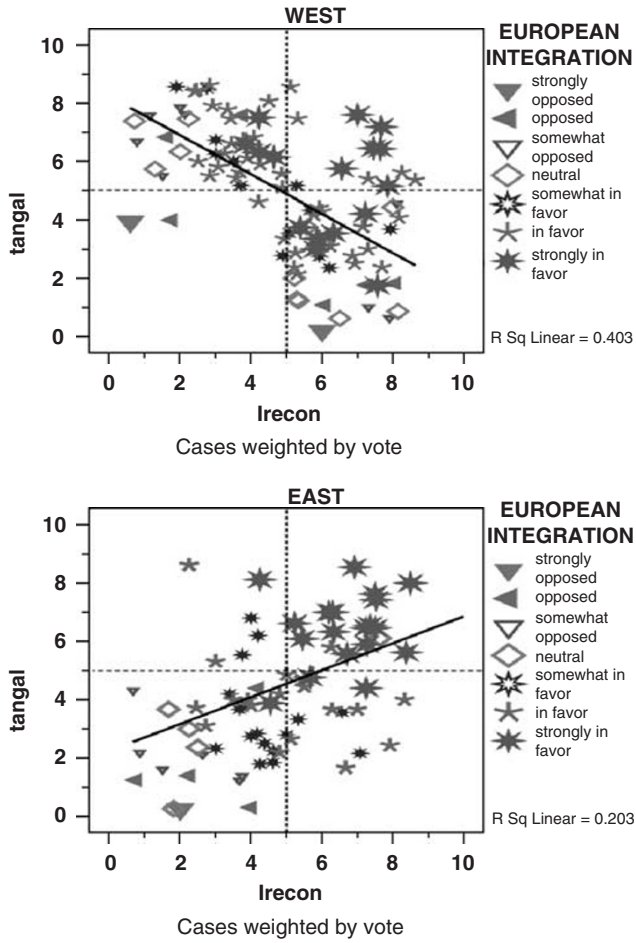


Figure 1: Party competition and European integration: west *vs* east. Tangal = social dimension ranging from traditionalism–authority–nationalism values to green–alternative–libertarian values; lrecon = economic left–right dimension.

Contrasting axes of competition, different party landscapes

While ideology shapes party positioning on European integration across Europe, different axes of ideological competition produce dissimilar EU landscapes in east and west. Figures 1a and b show the location of parties in 2002 as they map on the two-dimensional space in west and east, respectively. We have reversed the coding for *gal/tan* to make our visualization consistent

with convention in the literature (Kitschelt, 1992; Kriesi *et al*, 2006). Positions range from extreme *left* to extreme *right* on the east–west axis, and from extreme *tan* to extreme *gal* on the south–north axis. Stars represent degrees of Eurosupport, triangles denote degrees of Euroskepticism. The images could hardly be starker: unipolar concentration of Euroskepticism in the east contrasts with bipolar Euroskepticism in the west.

The reasons for opposing (or supporting) European integration are the same throughout Europe. In the east, hard *left* parties, such as the Czech Communist Party (KSČM) or the Slovak Communist Party (KSS), resist European integration on the grounds that it interferes with the state's ability to protect economic well-being by requiring privatization, deregulation and the influx of foreign goods and investors. Similarly, in the west, radical *left* parties, such as the Swedish Vänsterpartiet or the Portuguese Coligacao Democratica Unitaria, view integration as a Trojan horse for international capitalism. *Tan* parties, such as the League of Polish Families (LPR), the Justice and Life Party in Hungary (MIEP) and the Slovenian National Party (SNS) in the east, or the Danish People's Party and the French National Front in the west, oppose European integration because they believe that European integration dilutes national culture, brings unwanted immigration and undermines the national community.

But the difference is that, in the west, the main sources of opposition to European integration are dispersed at opposite extremes of the ideological space. In the east, they are bundled in the *left-tan* corner. All Euroskeptic parties (a score between 1 and 3.5) or neutral parties (a score between 3.6 and 4.5) are located in the *left-tan* quadrant. The one exception in 2002 is the Czech Civic Democratic Party (ODS), which we discuss below. The main axis of domestic party competition in the east is at a 90° angle to that in the west (Evans and Whitefield, 1993; Sitter, 2002).

Communist rule in the east forged an affinity between *left* and *tan* – a historically contingent configuration (Kitschelt, 1992; Kostelecky, 2002). As the unraveling of the communist system put the transition process in motion, proponents of marketization and liberal democracy converged to the opposite pole. Contestation about the character and timing of the transition set these societies on course for developing an axis of competition that was distinctly different from the west. And from the mid-1990s, the prospect of EU membership reinforced this axis as accession required delivering market-oriented economic reforms and upholding liberal democratic standards.

We have argued so far that postcommunist transition and EU accession have reinforced ideological competition between *left-tan* values and *right-gal* values across the CEE, thus creating a common structure of conflict starkly different from that in the west. But our ideology explanation does not work equally well

Table 3: Beyond ideology – Residuals for 12 outliers among East European parties under alternative model specifications

Party	*Country*	*Vote for party in 2002*	*Actual position on EI*	*Residuals*					
				1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
				Ideology baseline model[a]	*Communist transition*[b]	*Accession*[c]	*Accession + communist transition*	*Electoral advantage*[d]	*Full model*[e]
SNS	SLOVEN	4.40	2.40	−3.69	−3.43	−2.91	−2.77	−2.97	−2.66
ODS	CZECH	24.50	3.78	−2.80	−2.30	−2.15	−1.98	−2.46	−1.76
MIEP	HUNG	4.40	1.64	−1.97	−1.73	−1.70	−1.64	−1.93	−1.64
LPR	POL	7.90	1.00	−1.69	−1.54	−1.45	−1.41	−1.65	−1.47
Samoobrona	POL	10.20	2.75	−1.65	−1.44	−1.04	−0.96	−1.34	−1.00
PSNS	SLOVAK	3.70	3.07	−1.30	−1.01	−1.44	−0.98	−1.14	−0.67
SMS	SLOVEN	4.30	5.20	−1.29	−1.02	−0.69	−0.43	−0.43	−0.22
KSS	CZECH	6.30	3.00	−1.23	−0.32	−1.14	−0.63	−1.30	−0.70
KDU-CSL	CZECH	10.29	6.44	+1.23	+1.66	+1.74	+1.69	+0.61	+1.20
KzB	BUL	17.10	6.18	+1.18	+0.30	+0.93	+0.56	+1.37	+0.84
G-VMRO	LITH	3.60	4.88	−1.12	−1.28	−1.28	−1.11	−0.95	−0.92
PSD	ROM	43.10	6.18	+1.03	+0.13	+0.42	−0.01	+0.36	−0.17
Sum of absolute resit duals	—	—	—	20.19	16.16	16.87	14.17	16.51	13.25
Explained variance (R^2)	—	—	—	0.59	0.68	0.68	0.72	0.66	0.75
Adjusted variance explained (Adj. R^2)	—	—	—	0.59	0.68	0.68	0.72	0.66	0.74

Models 2–6 build on the ideology baseline model (linearity and extremism: model B in Table 1), to explore the complementary explanatory power of alternative factors. All models are tested on the whole data set ($N = 68$), weighted for vote. The columns list residuals for the 12 parties for which the base model overestimates (−) or underestimates (+) support by at least one point out of a seven-point scale. The penultimate and last rows list the overall explained variance for all cases. The operationalization of all variables is detailed in Table 2.

[a] *Ideology base model*: Support for European integration = party's left/right position − party's gal/tan position − party's distance from left/right median − party's distance from gal/tan median.

[b] *Postcommunist transition model* ('communist or demarcation magnet'): Support = F [type of communist party, timing and character of country's party system] = early-reforming communist successor party + late-reforming communist party-unreformed communist successor party + late-reforming system − non-reforming system ± Slovakia. [Reference category is system with early reformed party.] The system variables are weighted for the size of the communist successor party.

[c] *Accession model* ('EU or integration magnet'): Support = delayed accession country − frontrunner + catcher-upper + party's government experience during accession.

[d] *Maximizing electoral advantage*: Support = popularity of party (size) − party in opposition in 2002 − Euroskepticism among country's public opinion.

[e] *Full model*: Support = ideology + postcommunist transition + accession + maximizing electoral advantage.

for all parties. Table 3 displays the 12 parties that are least well predicted by our ideology baseline model, that is to say, parties for which the predicted value in 2002 is at least one point away from the actual value on the seven-point scale of support (column 1 – ideology baseline model). Can we improve our understanding of the positions parties take? We now turn to how communist party reform and participation in EU accession have differentiated party positions across CEE states.

Postcommunist transition

The collapse of communism forced communist parties to compete in (more or less) free and fair democratic elections. But their response to democratic competition varied considerably.

We hypothesize first that the *character* of reform had a direct impact on the positioning of ex-communist *parties*. Parties that eschew a democratic agenda should be predisposed to Euroskepticism, because integration bundles the values (and demands the policies) that they vehemently oppose. European integration is a lightning rod for ex-communists that have not embraced liberal democracy. Conversely, reformed ex-communists should be inclined to support European integration. This is borne out in the data: among our 11 communist or communist successor parties, the more radical, that is to say, the more *left* and *tan* the party, the more likely it was Euroskeptic in 2002 ($R = 0.74$). An ex-communist party's extent of reform is a near-perfect litmus test for its position on European integration. We investigate this argument by means of three dichotomous variables, one for each type of communist party: immediate reformers, late reformers and never reformers.

We also hypothesize that the *timing* of communist party reform affected how other parties in the *party system* position themselves on European integration. Party competition, at least in the early years of democratization, is constrained by the choices that communist successor parties make (Grzymala-Busse, 2002; see also Kitschelt *et al*, 1999; Bozóki and Ishiyama, 2002). Our expectation is that the persistence of a large, radical and Euroskeptic communist successor party – an authoritative voice for demarcation – increased the likelihood that other parties in the system turned Euroskeptic. Large communist parties were able to amass enormous resources over decades of communism, which they could now employ to frame the debate to their advantage. The longer a communist party postpones democratic reform, the more constraining its influence on the party system.

We test this timing argument by classifying non-communist parties into belonging to immediate, late, and never reforming systems, and allocating to them the vote in 2002 of the communist successor party of their respective

country.[10] The rationale for using vote proportion is that we expect the bellwether function of a communist successor's policy choices to vary with its size. In other words, all other things equal, a large Romanian PSD should put a firmer stamp on the party system than a smallish Slovenian ZLSD.

EU accession

Our 2002 survey came at the end of seven long years of EU scrutiny of the domestic comportment of CEE political parties, particularly those holding office. This period began in 1996 as the EU evaluated the applications of 10 CEE states that had applied for membership. Five candidates were invited to begin accession negotiations in April 1998, and five more in February 2000. By the time of our survey in 2002, eight were on the brink of securing May 2004 as the accession date. Bulgaria and Romania were still in the middle of negotiations. For its part, the EU had developed substantial leverage on the content of policymaking as the CEE candidates made their way through the pre-accession process (Mattli and Plümper, 2004; Pridham, 2005; Vachudova, 2005; Grabbe, 2006; see also footnote 1).

Qualifying for EU membership was, at the time of our survey, the single most important external influence on party politics.[11] Moving forward in the pre-accession process involved satisfying the Copenhagen Requirements and adopting the EU's *acquis communautaire* – with substantial implications for policies ranging from state regulation of the economy to ethnic minority rights. The benefits of EU membership, reinforced by the costs of falling behind, constituted a powerful magnet, vying with the communist legacy in shaping the agendas of parties, even those with a strong *left-tan* past. We develop two lines of argument here.

Our first argument emphasizes the importance of *experience in government* during the pre-accession process. The more time parties spent in government between 1997 and 2002, the more they were exposed to the integration magnet.[12] Government parties are held responsible for demonstrating their country's willingness *and* capacity to become an EU member. Government ministers, not opposition leaders, have their policies evaluated by the Commission; promote the country's fitness for membership in EU capitals and risk domestic disfavor if EU accession is delayed. Once accession negotiations begin, the day-to-day experience of negotiating with the Commission also pushes party leaders to moderate rhetoric and policies (Glenn, 2004). Indeed, some scholars argue that the imperative of conforming to EU expectations meant that mainstream parties in the candidate states no longer campaigned on substance, but on their competence in doing the bidding of Brussels (Grzymala-Busse and Innes, 2003).

On this logic, government parties may choose to adjust their agendas to avoid falling behind in the competitive EU accession game. Left-wing parties in Hungary (1994–1998), the Czech Republic (1998–2002), Poland (2001–2005), and Romania (2000–2004) privatized banks and large enterprises, and reduced state involvement in the economy. Two successive center-right governments in Bulgaria (1997–2001, 2001–2005) implemented an austerity program to prepare Bulgaria for EU membership, even while poverty reduced their chances of re-election. And Hungary's Fidesz-led right-wing government of 1998–2002 responded to an EU ultimatum by modifying the rights it wished to grant ethnic Hungarians living abroad. Governing during the pre-accession process, the Romanian PSD and the Bulgarian KzB implemented dramatically different policies than during their respective tenures in government before 1996.[13]

Our second argument emphasizes the *weakening of EU leverage* on the party system *as accession nears*. The further along countries are in the negotiations, the more we expect the general principled attitude in favor of European integration to be tempered by specific criticism about particular EU measures (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2004). There are several reasons for this. As accession is linked with difficult reforms, the perceived costs for organized groups such as workers or farmers enter the national debate. This may give parties electoral reasons to soft-pedal support. In addition, at the conclusion of the negotiations, the EU used its superior bargaining power to force candidates to accept reductions in the anticipated immediate benefits of membership (Moravcsik and Vachudova, 2003). At the same time, the EU threat to suspend accession became less credible, especially for frontrunners. Following this logic, Euroskepticism in 2002 should be greater among parties from the early negotiating countries than among parties in countries that only began negotiations in 2000. We test this by means of three dichotomous variables that distinguish between frontrunners, catcher-uppers and laggards.

Statistical analysis corroborates our argument. In Table 3, the third row from below sums the absolute residuals for the 12 outliers for each model, and the bottom rows report the explained variance (R^2 and adjusted R^2) for all 68 parties.[14] Thus for the ideology model, the absolute sum of residuals for the 12 outliers is 20.19 and the explained variance for all 68 parties is 59 per cent.

Columns 2 and 3 report the effects of postcommunist transition and EU accession (controlling for ideology), respectively, and column 4 combines these. For the transition-accession model, explained variance increases to 72 per cent. When we focus on the 12 outliers, the sum of absolute residuals is reduced by 30 per cent compared to the ideology model. The model accounts especially well for 'abnormally high' support for European integration among Bulgarian and Romanian parties, and 'abnormally low' support among Czech parties. This model is both elegant and accurate in predicting party positioning in the

east. We find statistical support for our conjecture that, to understand the current CEE political party landscape, one needs to pay attention to the twin influences of postcommunist transition and EU accession.

Alternative explanations

How confident can we be of these results? The most prominent alternative explanation to the transition-accession model emphasizes that parties tailor their positions to maximize electoral advantage. We consider three related lines of argument.

The first is that party positions on European integration follow public opinion, an explanation that has some bite in the west (Ray, 2004). In competitive party democracies, political parties cannot stray too far from public opinion. Thus in countries with high levels of Euroskepticism among the voters, parties may attenuate their support for European integration.[15]

The second argument emphasizes the size of parties. The claim here is that large parties target the median voter, and this voter tends, on European issues as on most policy issues, to hold middle-of-the road opinions. So one would expect that the larger the party, the more moderate it is on European integration.

The third asks whether a party's status as opposition party induces it to temper support (Taggart, 1998). Parties in opposition may have strategic reasons for opposing European integration. Given the central role of national governments in EU decision making – or in the case of the CEE countries, in accession negotiations – exclusion from national government reduces a party's influence in EU politics and opens the way for criticizing the government's EU policies. There is some evidence in the west that parties moving out of office turn less supportive (Ray, 2007). Consistent with this, one would expect incumbent parties to be more in favor of European integration than opposition parties.

None of these three hypotheses alone offers a viable alternative to the transition-accession model proposed above. Controlling for ideology, a model that combines all three electoral advantage arguments (column 5 in Table 3) captures a respectable amount of explained variance – 66 per cent, but that is a significant cut below our transition-accession model that captures 72 per cent. The only political parties for which electoral advantage outperforms the transition-accession logic is the group of non-communist parties in immediate reformers. Still, the bottom line is clear: the main alternative argument, that party positions on European integration are influenced by maximizing short-term electoral advantage, has considerably less explanatory power than the strategic transition-accession argument.[16]

The analysis so far tells much about party positioning in the early twenty-first century, but little about how party positions have evolved in the east since 1989. The demarcation and integration magnets helped consolidate – that is, anchor – an emerging axis of competition spanning from *left-tan* to *right-gal*. Yet during the 1990s several major parties shed their resistance to an EU-compatible domestic agenda. What explains the timing and extent of these changes? In the next section we argue that whether and when the former communist party moved decisively to endorse liberal democracy and market reform helps explain the varying impact of EU leverage, which in turn helps account for different levels of Euroskepticism in postcommunist party systems until the advent of EU membership. We take the story up to 2006, at which time seven of the nine CEE countries in this survey are EU members and the remaining two are on the cusp of joining. We note more pronounced national variation in the structure of party competition, and yet the overall structure remains remarkably consistent with the demarcation/integration axis we set out.

The Evolution of Party Positions on European Integration Since 1989

Figures 2a–f depict for each country the positioning of political parties on European integration in 2002. In country after country, Euroskeptic and Euroneutral parties are located in the *left-tan* quadrant – with one exception: the ODS in the Czech Republic. If we had data to draw these country tableaux for the early 1990s, we would have found a crowded radical *left-tan* quadrant in countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, as well as more widespread and more radical Euroskepticism. In others, such as Poland or Hungary, we would have observed a less populated *left-tan* quadrant, as well as less Euroskepticism.[17]

The evolution of the former communist party is central to understanding changing party positions on European integration as well as broad changes in the structure of political competition over time. Between 1989 and 2002, postcommunist parties in several CEE states shifted their political agenda to make it compatible with the country's bid to join the EU. The character and timing of the reform of the main communist party helps determine the strength of the demarcation magnet in the *left-tan* quadrant, and this in turn influences the openness of the system to EU leverage. This is consistent with research demonstrating that the communist party has remained a key determinant of the political landscape since 1989 (Hanson, 1995; Bozóki and Ishiyama, 2002; Grzymala-Busse, 2002). But we argue that the influence of the communist legacy needs to be analyzed in conjunction with the EU accession process. We identify three groups of states based on the timing of the reform of their communist parties: those that reform immediately after 1989; those that reform

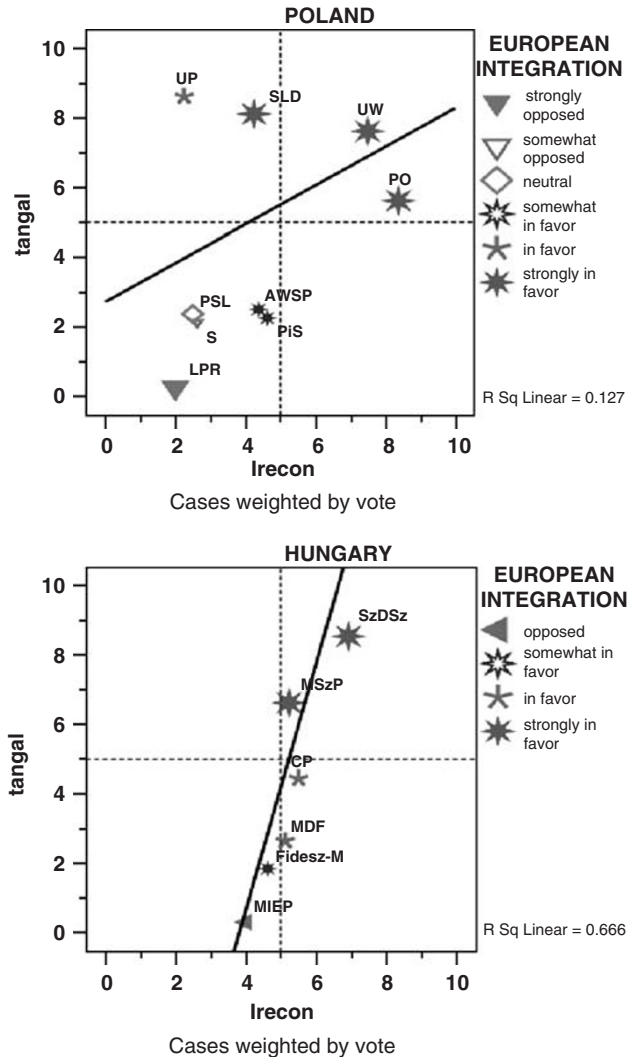
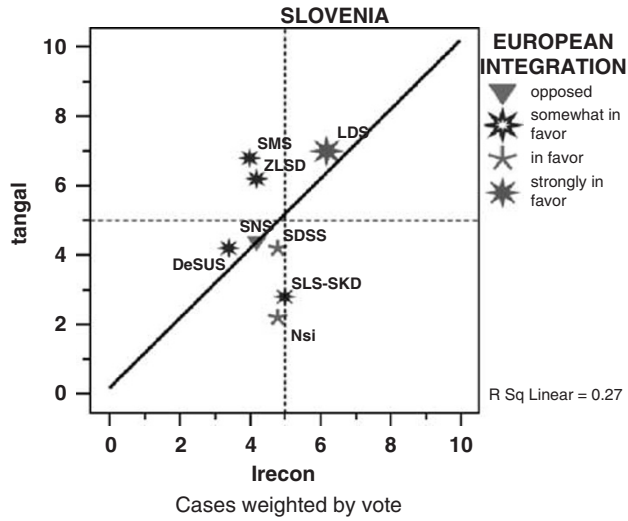


Figure 2: Structure of party competition on European integration by country. Tangal = social dimension ranging from traditionalism–authority–nationalism values to green–alternative–libertarian values; lrecon = economic left–right dimension.

late in response to the EU and those that never reform. By reform, we mean upholding liberal democratic standards, supporting comprehensive market-oriented reforms and condemning the party's crimes and mismanagement during the decades of communist rule. As countries become full-fledged



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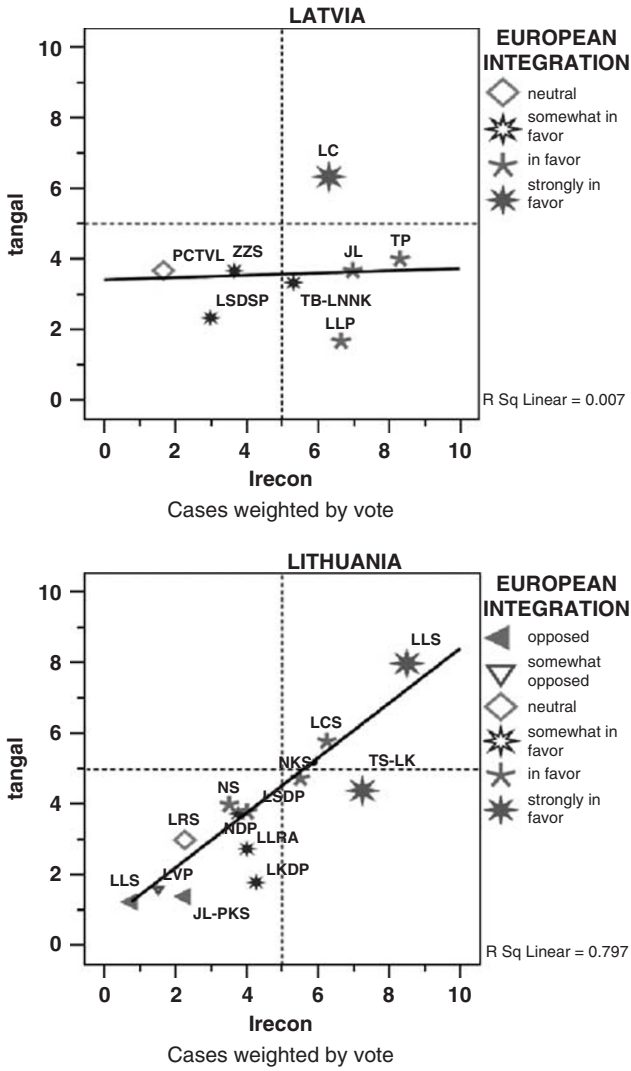
members, EU leverage wanes and we anticipate that this may over time induce political parties to position themselves further away from the dominant axis of competition. By 2006 some tentative repositioning can be discerned, and we discuss these cases below.

Immediate reformers

In the first group of CEE states, including Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia, the communist party reformed itself rapidly after 1989 into a modern European social democratic party, which embraced comprehensive market-oriented reforms and EU membership.[18]

The Polish and Hungarian communist parties best fit the ideal type: they were already reforming themselves in the 1980s in dialogue with a strong opposition which, for them, led to a negotiated end to communism. Far from being located in the *left-tan* quadrant in the early 1990s, the Polish and Hungarian socialist parties were much closer to the *right-gal* quadrant, and won the second free elections in 1993 and 1994, respectively, on a *centrist-gal* platform. On national and cultural issues, both parties were hailed as moderate alternatives to the right-wing post-opposition parties that had ruled before them. On economic issues, the Polish Socialists (SLD) continued Poland's far-reaching reforms, while the Hungarian Socialists (MSZP) initiated and implemented Hungary's most radical economic reforms. As Figure 2a shows,



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by 2002, Hungary's Socialists had become equally centrist on economic policy as Hungary's right-wing parties.

Early reform deprived Euroskepticism from a natural ideological and organizational base in the *left-tan* quadrant. Instead, ex-communist parties made preparing for EU membership a priority. Hence, a *centrist-gal*

ex-communist party amplified the integration magnet, though, in time, this also opened them up to the charge that they had exchanged the tutelage of Moscow for that of Brussels.

It also meant that the Euroskeptic *left-tan* quadrant remained organizationally thinly populated throughout much of the 1990s. In Poland, one mildly *left-tan* party sat in parliament before 1997, the Polish Peasants (PSL). In 1997, two new *tan* parties, the Polish Peasants Self-Defense Party (Samoobrona) and the extremist Catholic-nationalist League of Polish Families (LPR) emerged as strongly Euroskeptic parties. They were considered 'unusable' as government parties by Poland's mainstream. In Hungary, the extreme-right Justice and Life Party (MIEP) did not jump the 5 per cent threshold to enter parliament in 1994 or 2002; it did in 1998, but it was also considered 'unusable.' A major reason for excluding these parties from government was their hostility towards EU accession. As the integration magnet gained strength, it combined with the immediate reform of the communist party to keep Euroskeptic parties out of government and often out of parliament as well.

In the late 1990s, the strengthening of *tan* parties such as Samoobrona, LPR and MIEP signaled that these party systems were about to turn more critical toward the EU. As the postcommunist transition plays itself out, the effect of the early reforming communist party wears off. And as EU membership becomes a political certainty, the integration magnet weakens as well, opening new opportunities for opposition to European integration.

By 2006, important shifts in the party landscape in Hungary and in Poland had ushered in a new era, in which the postcommunist transition and the EU accession process had run their course. The thrust of these shifts was to recalibrate the mainstream right. In Hungary, Fidesz vacated the *right-gal quadrant*, which had become crowded since the Socialists (MSZP) had moved into the center, and adopted *tan* appeals. Under the leadership of Viktor Orban, it had by 2002 become the hegemon on the mainstream right. In the process, it appropriated the nationalist rhetoric of the radical-*tan* MIEP and took positions slightly to the left of the MSZP on matters of economic reform.[19] As it adjusted its ideological profile, Fidesz also updated its European partners. In 2000, Fidesz left the pro-European, predominantly *gal* Liberal International and joined the more conservative European People's Party, where it is closest to Forza Italia and the German Conservative CSU (Enyedi, 2005). Although Fidesz is not Euroskeptic, it protests strongly against EU encroachments on national sovereignty and culture, unlike its socialist competitor.

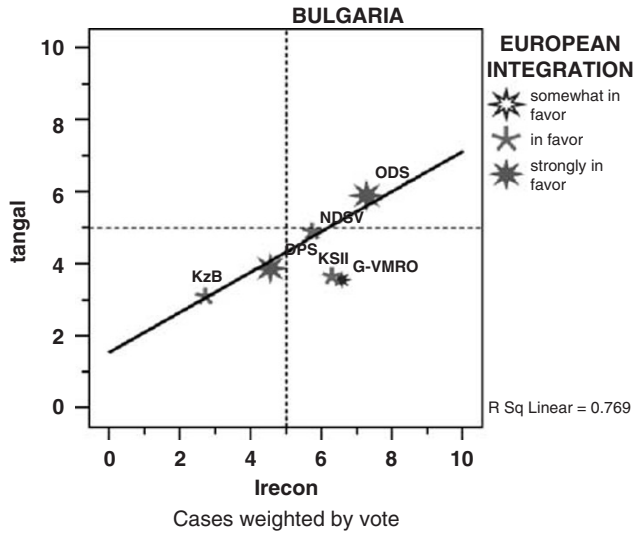
In Poland, a new party, the Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS), successfully organized disparate *tan* fractions and won the national elections in 2005. The party is strongly nationalist, traditionalist, and populist, and an outspoken critic of EU powers. Its coalition government included two *left-tan* parties,

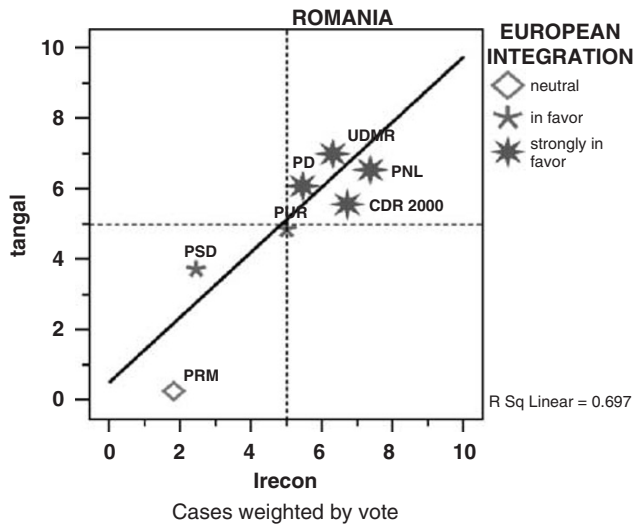
Samoobrona and the extremist LPR. With the Czech ODS and the British Conservatives, it is the major driving force behind a new party-political formation in Europe, the 'Alliance for an Open Europe,' which seeks to transform the EU into a free trade zone championing national sovereignty and strong transatlantic ties. The openly Euroskeptic EU policy of the PiS-led government not only upset its EU partners, but also helped the pro-market and pro-*gal* segments of Polish society to mobilize against the government's agenda. Polish politics became sharply polarized on the demarcation/integration axis. In the October 2007 elections, it came to an open confrontation between the two visions, which was won at the ballot box by the *right-gal* Civic Forum (PO).

We detect a clear pattern among immediate reformers. By adopting a market-oriented, non-nationalist and pro-European political agenda immediately after 1989, the reforming communist party helped set the parameters of the national debate, and brought along a large portion of the traditionalist electorate that might otherwise have voted for radical *left-tan* parties. By 2002, however, other parties had emerged in the *left-tan* quadrant vacated by the reforming communist party. These parties took up, among other issues, Euroskepticism. The most dynamic new parties in this quadrant have tended to be more *tan* than *left*, making few if any connections to the country's communist past. At the same time, conservative mainstream parties have begun to take a more critical position on Europe.

Late reformers

Bulgaria and Romania constitute the group of late reformers because their communist parties did not embrace liberal democracy and economic reform for many years. Hard-line communist parties that had faced little opposition before 1989 found that the surest way to transform themselves into credible players on the new democratic scene was to exploit left-wing economic populism and ethnic nationalism while rewarding supporters with opportunities to extract resources from a partially reformed economy (Hellman, 1998; Gould, 2004). The Bulgarian and Romanian communist parties were not only hard *left* but also hard *tan* well before the end of communism, brutally suppressing ethnic minorities during the 1980s to shore up the legitimacy of the regime (Kolakowski, 1992). Even as they adopted the formal institutions of democracy and began economic reforms after 1989, these parties did little to move away from the demarcation magnet. We also include Slovakia here because the evolution of party competition there shares many characteristics with the late reformers, although the dominant force was not a former communist party but a new nationalist-populist party.





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The late reformers among our nine CEE states were the Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PSDR) (now called the Democratic Party (PSD)), and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (KzB). In Slovakia, Vladimír Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), despite its different, non-communist genesis, ran election campaigns that were a textbook mixture of left-wing economic

populism and xenophobic nationalism (Haughton, 2001; Fisher, 2006). The PSDR, the KzB and the HZDS all kept to the economic left, promising to protect workers from radical 'Polish-style' economic reform. They also embraced xenophobic nationalism, out-competing but also befriending the radical *tan* parties that emerged after 1989. These parties, which supported the PDSR and the HZDS in governing coalitions in Romania (1994–1996) and Slovakia (1994–1998), respectively, blended nostalgia for fascism's national triumphalism with nostalgia for communism's economic security and closed polity.

Late reform had major implications for party positioning on European integration. In the early reforming countries *left-tan* parties were marginalized, but here the former communist parties and Slovakia's HZDS used radical *left-tan* appeals – defense of the nation from its enemies and defense of the citizen from unfettered capitalism – to win elections and concentrate political power. This delayed the effect of EU accession. In their quest to hold power and divide up its spoils, these parties and their *left-tan* allies implemented policies that were inimical to progress towards EU membership. The EU factor was confined to working slowly and indirectly by censuring governments and buttressing domestic opposition.

By the second half of the 1990s, EU leverage gained enough momentum to push back the demarcation magnet. This worked in three ways. First, the EU became bolder in its assessments and criticisms of the candidates, and also in its threats to postpone negotiations indefinitely. Slovakia received the most explicit threat, when the EU made it known during the 1998 election campaign that a government under HZDS control would not be invited to the negotiation table. Second, as a variety of opposition parties campaigned against the *left-tan* policies of the governing parties, qualifying to join the EU became a common plank of their electoral platforms. Third, after countries became enmeshed in the EU's pre-accession process, the costs of backsliding became prohibitive: to stay in the electoral game, formerly anti-EU parties shifted their political and economic agenda to make it compatible with the country's bid for EU membership (Vachudova, 2005).

The contrast between early and late reformers is stark. In 1995, there were no parties embracing radical *left*, radical *tan,* or Euroskeptic platforms in government or even in parliament in Poland or Hungary, while *all* parties in the coalition governments of Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia fit these labels in deeds and rhetoric. Yet when we look at the figures depicting the party landscape in Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia in 2002, we see that things have changed dramatically. EU leverage has pulled all parties away from the demarcation magnet, including Romania and Bulgaria's big late reforming ex-communist parties and Slovakia's HZDS. Romania's former communist party, now the PSD, has shed much of its *tan* political agenda. It is following

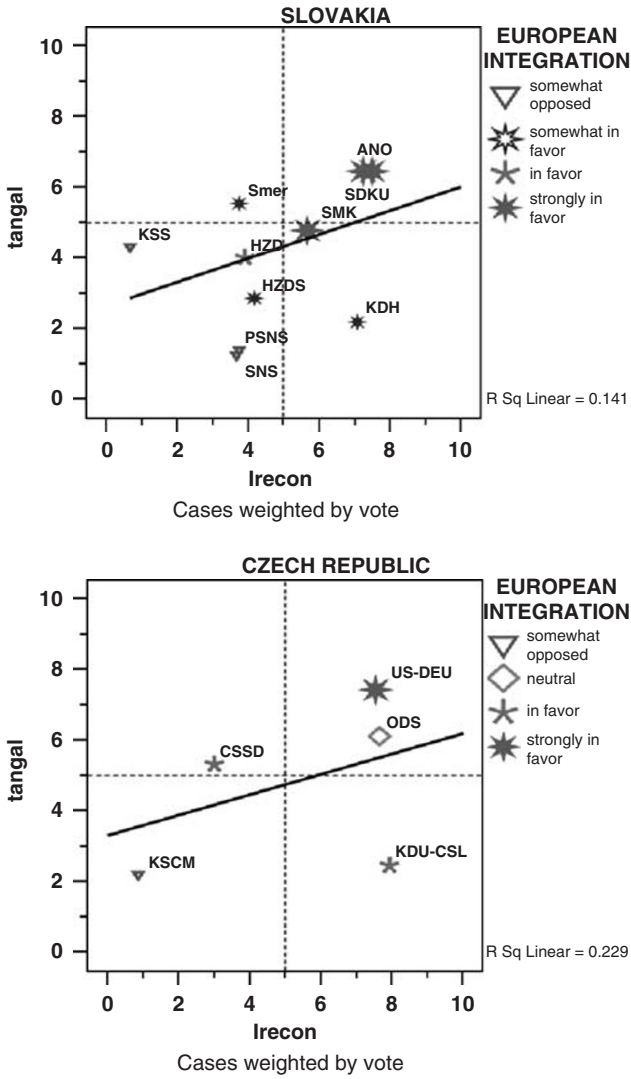
the Polish and Hungarian socialist parties in hailing its technocratic skills and joining the Socialist International. After winning the 2000 elections, it pragmatically pursued the reforms necessary for EU membership. Similarly, the Bulgarian Socialist Party shed its radical *left* and *tan* agenda in preparation for the 2005 elections, which it won. As leader of the coalition government, it pushed through Bulgaria's flat tax in 2006. Finally, the HZDS, after being defeated in 1998, gradually became more moderate and begged to be trusted as a party that could bring Slovakia into the EU, although the Slovak voters (and the EU) were in no mood to give it a chance in 2002.

The transformation has been so great that, by 2002, more citizens were actually voting for Euroskeptic and Euroneutral parties in Poland and Hungary than in Romania and Bulgaria. Polish parties that fit these categories received 27.1 per cent of the vote, and Hungarian parties 4.4 per cent (this does not include 35 per cent for Fidesz, which, with a score of 4.6 on our scale, fell just outside the range of Euroskeptic-Euroneutral parties in 2002). In contrast, Romanian parties received 19.5 per cent and Bulgarian parties zero. In the *left-tan* quadrant, Romania's premier radical *tan* party, the Greater Romania Party (PRM) of Vadim Tudor, perseveres with a hard *tan* agenda, although it has tempered its position on the EU considerably. In Bulgaria, the *left-tan* quadrant was emptied of parliamentary parties as the Bulgarian Socialist Party gradually shifted its agenda after 1997. If early reformers are a guide, however, one would expect the integration magnet to weaken after accession. Indeed, during the elections of 2005, a new nationalist, anti-European party emerged in Bulgaria's hard *left-tan* political space. Named 'Attack,' this new Bulgarian party received 8.2 per cent of the vote.

Never reformers

Only one major communist party remains, in 2007, unreformed and unrepentant: the radical *left* and *tan* Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), which has continuously garnered between 10 and 20 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections after 1989. The Czech Republic is unique among our cases, although not of course in the whole postcommunist region, for sustaining a sizeable unreconstructed communist party for so long. The consequences of having a large hard-line communist party in parliament that is unusable as a coalition partner have been substantial for the structure of political competition, producing a fragmented and weaker left-wing counterweight to the right.

Until the Social Democrats gained strength after 1996, the largest right-wing party, the ODS was not constrained by having to compete with a united *centrist-gal* party on the left akin to the large reformed communist parties in



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Poland and Hungary. As the dominant leader of a right-wing coalition from 1992 to 1997, the ODS government of Prime Minister Vclav Klaus adopted a mix of strong right-wing economic rhetoric, left-wing economic practices and *tan* rhetoric. The left-wing economic practices included delaying the privatiza-

tion of state banks that were paying out bad loans in order to reward party supporters and keep unemployment low (Appel, 2001; Orenstein, 2001). The *tan* rhetoric of the ODS has included attacks on the country's Roma minority, incantations of the superiority of the Czech nation and fierce criticism of European integration (Williams, 1997; Hanley, 2007). In power again since 2006, the ODS's hallmark remains strong right-wing economic rhetoric and some radical *tan* appeals.[20]

The ODS is the largest Euroskeptic party in our eastern data set, and also the only party on the right to be openly hostile to the EU. It has a score of 3.8 on our seven-point scale, which reflects the party leadership's position. There is a divide between the party leadership, which denigrates the EU regularly and champions pairing it down to a free trade zone, and the rank-and-file, who are in favor of EU membership but have reservations about a federal EU.[21] For over 15 years now Klaus has portrayed the EU as a dangerous socialist experiment, and a threat to national identity and sovereignty along the lines of *right-tan* Euroskeptic parties in western Europe.

The Czech Republic has the highest percentage of voters casting their ballots for Euroskeptic or Euroneutral parties: 43 per cent in the national elections in 2000, and 48.2 per cent in 2006, and this in a party system without a radical *tan* party. The KSČM and the ODS have together put the Czech Republic's extreme right-wing *tan* party out of business. The KSČM has taken over its xenophobic, chauvinistic agenda, whereas the ODS has appealed to more moderate voters who feel threatened by immigrants and ethnic minorities, distrust the EU and identify with Czech parochialism.

If support for integration were a function of economic prospects, mobility or education, the Czech Republic should be a leading supporter among the EU's new postcommunist members. But that is clearly not so. One reason, we argue, is the uninterrupted vibrancy of the demarcation magnet – directly, through the electoral appeal of a hard-line communist party, and indirectly, by helping frame the debate on defining the nation and protecting its sovereignty.

Implications for the character of political competition

One of the most interesting findings by scholars of postcommunist democratization is that strong political competition improves democracy, although there is considerable debate about what makes political competition strong. Scholars generally concur, however, on several factors for jumpstarting strong competition after regime change: the exit of the communist party from power, the existence of a democratic opposition to communism that can initially take its place, the prompt reform of the main branch of the communist party into a modern social democratic party and the alternation of parties in

power (cf. Bunce, 1999; Fish, 1999; Grzymala-Busse, 2002, 2007; Vachudova, 2005). The common assumption underlying these factors is that strong competition requires parties to compete with one another within the parameters of a national consensus on safeguarding liberal democracy and improving the market economy.

Our analysis highlights the critical role of the EU accession process in helping create such a consensus. The effect of EU leverage has been direct, by imposing specific political and economic requirements that prospective members have to meet. It has also been indirect, by strengthening the position of some parties and provoking programmatic changes in others, thereby altering the overall structure of party competition.

The causal weight of EU accession – the integration magnet – in framing the political consensus varies considerably across our cases. The critical other factor here is the timing of the reform of the communist party. It is the interaction between EU accession and postcommunist reform which explains the particular trajectory of each country. In the immediate reformers, the early exit of the communist party from the *left-tan* quadrant paved the way for an early consensus on liberal democracy and market liberalism. The role of EU accession was supportive, but probably not decisive. In the late reformers, the consensus emerged much later and only after concerted pressure by the EU. In the never reformer, the Czech Republic, the enduring strength of an unreformed communist party has made such a consensus less far-reaching and support for European integration consistently weaker.

Party systems of future EU members in postcommunist Europe follow a predictable trajectory. Sooner or later, in almost all cases, the major political parties come to embrace European integration in the run up to accession. From the viewpoint of the democratization literature, the late reformers are the most interesting (Pridham, 2005; Vachudova, 2005; Levitsky and Way, 2006; Schimmelfennig, 2007). For these parties, pushing for EU accession often is a marker of profound changes in their political agenda, including support for democratic standards, economic reform and ethnic minority rights – a move to the integration pole on the demarcation/integration axis of competition diagnosed by Kriesi *et al* (2006, 2007). This was true of the Bulgarian and Romanian ex-communist parties. Formerly dominant nationalist parties are also following this trajectory, including the HZDS in Slovakia, and also the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) in Croatia.

After EU accession, the parameters for party competition have broadened somewhat, and increased divergence is especially apparent on the *gal*/*tan* dimension. Mainstream right-wing parties seem particularly prone to appropriating some of the nationalist discourse of radical *tan* parties in the *left-tan* quadrant, or to inviting them to support their government (Hanley, 2004; Pop-Eleches, 2004). Hungary's Fidesz, the Polish PiS and the Czech ODS have

used some of the nationalist discourse of radical *tan* parties. And the Polish PiS came into power in 2005 with the support of Poland's *left-tan* parties Samoobrona and the radical LPR. There was also speculation that Hungary's Fidesz would consider a coalition with the radical *tan* MIEP. Yet taking more *tan* positions and courting radical *tan* allies has not necessarily been a winning strategy: in Hungary Fidesz lost the 2006 elections, and in Poland the PiS government lost power to the more centrist, more *gal* PO party after only 2 years in office. Still, if our conjectures are correct, other mainstream conservative right-wing parties may follow this pattern, and social democratic parties and their liberal allies, may soon take their place as the strongest defenders of European integration in the east, as they are in the west.

Conclusion

The quest for membership in the EU casts a sharp light on political competition in postcommunist states. The long list of requirements for entering this liberal-democratic, cosmopolitan and market-capitalist club compels CEE parties to take position.

We have argued that in the east, as in the west, ideology is the strongest predictor of a party's stance on European integration. Simply knowing what values a party espouses allows us to estimate quite accurately how that party views integration. Yet changes in party positioning over time reflect strategic calculation as political parties respond to the changing character of the communist legacy and the process of EU accession.

We find a powerful effect of the communist legacy and EU accession on the axis of ideological competition in postcommunist states. Communism forged a strong affinity between left-wing economics and cultural traditionalism, and this ideological bundle left a communist legacy – of varying strength. The prospect of qualifying for EU membership encouraged some parties to meld market-liberal economics with cultural and political liberalism into an equally coherent, but polar ideological program. We have labeled these the demarcation and integration magnets, respectively. These two magnets sustained a bipolar magnetic field, which pulled political parties to align on a single axis from *left-tan* to *right-gal*.

The causal effect of the communist legacy and EU accession ran primarily through ideology. But legacy and accession also influenced party strategy on Europe directly. We detect a common sequence of party system changes in postcommunist states. The EU accession process compressed the axis of competition by encouraging parties to shift away from the *hard left-hard tan* corner. Sooner or later, most large parties, especially governing parties, adjusted their agendas to make them compatible with EU membership, thereby

narrowing political debate. The timing of EU influence depended on the timing of communist reform: where reform was delayed, so was the moderating influence of EU accession on the structure of party competition. It was not until EU accession negotiations were in full swing and EU membership had become an overriding national priority that these late reformers moved away from their *hard left-hard tan* agenda in order to govern. This reveals how an important *external* factor – EU leverage – can help create the conditions for a national consensus on safeguarding liberal democracy and improving the market economy that is the foundation for strong political competition.

There are reasons to expect party competition in the CEE states to change after accession, and perhaps converge to the west. With membership achieved, EU accession loses its leverage on sustaining the liberal-democratic and pro-market consensus. And indeed, 'market-liberal' and 'anti-national' policies made-in-Brussels have become more widely contested. Of course, EU membership opens up new avenues of leverage on parties. These range from various forms of socialization to structuring incentives for strategic positioning and even, perhaps, to coercion. EU leverage has not entirely disappeared, although the forms it takes look increasingly similar, and equally indirect, across east and west.

The communist legacy is also waning: between 2002 and 2006 the average (post)communist party vote declines from 22.5 to 16.2 per cent. However, other parties in the *tan-left* quadrant – several anti-communist – now occupy the demarcation corner. Although they no longer use the lingua of anti-capitalist class struggle, they tap into a familiar popular well of profound *Angst* among those who feel left behind by European integration, open markets and diverse societies.

In sum, we note more continuity than change. Although much of the EU's accession-related leverage is gone, there has not been a significant shift to the western pattern of party competition. The demarcation/integration axis we discerned at the onset of the twenty-first century continues to influence party competition in the post-accession era.

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Notes

1 For conditionality across policy areas, see Andonova (2003), Jacoby (2004), Kelley (2004), Hughes *et al* (2004), Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005), Sissenich (2007) and Epstein (2008).
2 For more comprehensive analyses of political outcomes in the CEE states, see Ekiert and Hanson (2003) and Ekiert *et al* (2007).
3 Estonia and Luxembourg were excluded because fewer than five experts provided evaluations. Data set and codebook are available from http://www.unc.edu/~hooghe (or contact: hooghe@unc.edu). Crossvalidation of these data with other data sources on party positioning, including the Benoit–Laver data set, comparative manifesto project, and the Rohrschneider/Whitefield data set demonstrates a very high degree of validity and reliability of the data (Marks *et al*, 2007; Whitefield *et al*, 2007).
4 In this article we use several labels – CEE states, the EU's new postcommunist members, and 'the east' – as shorthand for the nine postcommunist states in our study.
5 In an analysis of variance procedure, which explores the amount of variation on a quasi-continuous dependent variable (support for European integration) explained by categorical variables (party family, country), country captures virtually no variance, whereas party family explains 66 per cent of variance. This is comparable to what other researchers have found for the west. See Marks and Wilson (2000).
6 The results reported here are weighted for vote. Unweighted results are very similar.
7 Alternative operationalizations of extremity, such as the absolute distance from the mid-point, produce similar results.

8 The allocation of parties in party families is relatively uncontroversial in the west, but less obvious in the east given the recent vintage of many parties. We use a combination of (1) Derksen's categorization of party families (www.electionworld.org; since 2007 transferred to Wikipedia) and (2) the affiliations of CEE parties to European/international party families and party groups in the European Parliament. Party families in the east are somewhat less coherent than those in the west, and this is reflected in slightly higher standard deviations in the expert placement of east as opposed to west European parties on our ideological dimensions. But many CEE parties have made a concerted effort to conform to an ideological tradition (Pop-Eleches, 2004).

9 For an application of this cleavage model to European integration, see Marks *et al* (2002) and Hooghe *et al* (2002).

10 Slovakia is a special 'late-reforming' case. The main communist successor party, the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), reformed immediately but soon disappeared from parliament; a small unreformed splinter party, the KSS, survived. The dominant successor party, the HZDS, was not postcommunist but authoritarian-nationalist. To reflect its special status we include a separate dummy for Slovakia. The results are the same if we include Slovakia among late reformers.

11 'Europe is the number one issue in all eight postcommunist EU countries and first among two of three postcommunist applicant states (that is Romania and Bulgaria). Irrespective of voter apathy towards Europe as observed in the recent EU accession referendums, eastern European political parties deem Europe the most salient policy dimension for their political competition' (Benoit and Baturo, 2005, p. 7).

12 We expect government experience in recent years to weigh more heavily than in less recent years, and we model our variable accordingly.

13 It is, of course, also possible that EU-compliant parties are more likely to be voted in office, and hence that no learning process is needed. Voters may indeed give preference to pro-EU over anti-EU parties or large parties may be more inclined to hold moderate views, including on European integration, and government parties are usually – though not always – large. We test these alternative hypotheses below.

14 Models available from the authors upon request.

15 We use opinion polls from the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer to test this argument. We employ several indicators, including the proportion of respondents saying their country would not benefit from EU membership, net support for EU membership (proportion saying their country would benefit minus the proportion saying their country would not benefit), and net proportion who would vote yes in a referendum on EU membership (CCEB 2002.2). The results are the same.

16 The full model in column 6 confirms the pre-eminence of ideology, and of transition and accession.

17 We know of one earlier study that mapped parties in this two-dimensional space, limited to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria (see Kitschelt, 1992; Kitschelt *et al*, 1999). We do not have comparable data on party positioning on European integration.

18 In Lithuania and Latvia, the communist party was outlawed at independence in 1991 and dissolved.

19 For more on the challenges of categorizing parties on the economic left-right spectrum in CEE states that we do not have the space to analyze here, see Vachudova (2008).

20 For a recent paper by the ODS think tank CEP that contains radical right messages about the impact of EU-induced immigration on the Czech Republic, and warns of the 'Islamicization' of Europe, see Luks Petrík, 'Centralizace Azylové Politiky,' at http://cepin.cz/docs/newslettery/2007-07.pdf.

21 Our experts appear to have recognized this gap between foot soldiers and generals: the ODS has one of the highest scores on internal dissent in our data set.

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