
PARTY COMPETITION AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: A COMPARISON OF WEST-EAST AND CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

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Abstract

How does the domestic structure of party competition affect parties' political support for European integration? Is it possible to estimate a party's position about European integration by looking at its political stance in domestic politics? Previous research has proved that the answer to the above questions is "yes". This article aims to explore whether these findings travel to the candidate countries that are going to join the European family in a near future. Our findings show that this model is applicable to candidate countries. The results, on the other hand, suggest that the four candidate countries Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Macedonia introduce similar patterns with East European countries whereas Turkey is more similar to West Europe in terms of the structure of party competition.

Keywords: *European Union, Candidate Countries, Party Politics.*

Jel Codes: *P26, P48, F53*

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1. Introduction

For the past 60 years, European Union (EU) and the institutions that led to its establishment have affected the structure of politics in member countries. After transforming into a supranational organization with the Single European Act and Maastricht Treaty, the EU has become a multilevel polity in which European issues became important for the governments of member states, citizens, political parties and political groups in those states (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002: 879). As a result of this process issues about EU have gained great importance in the domestic politics of member countries and the political contestation inside the country increasingly engaged with EU dimension. Parties in the member states have revealed their positions about European integration, and EU issues have increasingly become salient.

Since its foundation EU and its predecessors have experienced several waves of enlargement. Currently, it has 27 members and 4 candidate countries (Turkey, Croatia, Macedonia and Iceland). Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina are also expecting to become candidate in a very near future. With the accession of candidate countries, EU will become a huge supra-national entity with 33 members. It is clear that European integration becomes a salient issue in domestic politics and opposition or support towards it constitutes an important dimension of conflict. In this regard, scholars of European Union and European political system have shown an increasing interest to explore whether the domestic structure of party competition affect parties' stance regarding European integration.

In an attempt to answer this question, Liesbet and Hooghe and her colleagues explored the structure of domestic party competition in West Europe and found that the opposition or support towards European integration can be predicted by looking at the parties' positioning in the two dimensions of conflict. These dimensions are an economic left/right and a non-economic new politics dimension. Marks et. al.(2006) expanded the scope of this research by including the East European countries and found that again these two dimensions accurately explains the positioning about European integration. Their results however showed that the basic structures of party competition in West and East Europe are significantly different (Marks et. al., 2006: 155).

This study aims to move one step further and test whether the same logic applies to candidate countries. Examining the candidate countries gives us the opportunity to re-test and confirm the findings of Hooghe et. al. and Marks et. al. because the candidate countries are composed of four former socialist countries and a country that is more similar to West and have replicated western institutions during its development. This study will also give us some insight about the structure of Turkish politics. It is fair to state that no other country's accession to European Union has been debated as Turkey. The opponents of Turkey's membership generally based their argument on the premise that Turkey is fundamentally different from Europe and granting her full membership will harm the harmony of European Union (Arnold, 2007:112-113 Grigoriadis, 2006: 152, Onis, 1999). Some scholars argued that Turkey is the last country to be accepted to European Union due to economic, political and, especially, cultural reasons (Erdogdu, 2002:40)

This study also presents an opportunity to see whether the domestic structure of party competition is fundamentally different from other candidate countries and from West Europe in general and partially confirm or reject the above arguments about Turkey's membership. By using expert survey data for five candidate countries, we found that the parties' position in the two dimensions mentioned above explains fairly accurately the position they take against European integration. The four countries which were former parts of socialist Yugoslavia mimic the East European countries while Turkey is more similar to, but to an extent different, from West Europe.

Understanding the party positions against European integration both in member and in candidate countries (that will become members in a near future) is important because EU has a decision making mechanism which is based on unanimous voting. It is plausible to assume that governments will consider their position in domestic politics while they are adopting or rejecting an EU policy. Predicting a party's position on the economic left/right and non-economic new politics dimension will enable us to understand their stance about European issues. In this context, by knowing the domestic positions of governing parties we may have a better insight about their voting behavior in Council or Parliament.

2. Dimensions of Cleavage in Europe

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) in their seminal work on cleavage structures argue that there are three main cleavages which shape the political contestation. They emerged as a response to major junctures in European political development which generated basic ideological conflicts. These cleavages are class cleavage, religious cleavage and regional (center-periphery) cleavage. Since it is published, the theory of social cleavages is challenged by many scholars. Some scholars argue that these cleavages still prevail. Although, the influence of traditional social cleavages has lessened in shaping individual voting choice, scholars argue that these cleavages may still be powerful in structuring the way political parties respond to new issues (Marks and Wilson, 2000:434). It is clear that the left-right dimension is an important cleavage in understanding the political contestation in West Europe.

To what extent the competition over European integration is related to cleavages that shape the structure of domestic competition especially in terms of left-right dimension? Scholars have long been interested in the answer of this question. Before the Single European Act and Maastricht Treaty, European integration was mainly perceived in terms of economic integration and was considered to have little effect on the ideological left-right contestation in domestic politics. But as Europe moved from a "community" to a "union" this view became invalid. As a response to this approach, scholars began to explore European integration as an extension of domestic politics and broadened the study of European integration to public opinion, party politics and social movements in order to understand how ideology frames preferences on this issue (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002). While doing this, they benefited from two important advantages. First, they had readily available theories such as social cleavage theory. Second, they had large sources of data that enabled them to make cross-national comparisons like election-public opinion surveys, party manifesto data and expert survey data.

There are different theories explaining the question of how domestic party competition shapes the preferences about European integration. Tsebilis and Garrett (2000) for example, argue that the conflicts among the institutions of EU do not basically reflect the extent of integration but also different preferences regarding the regulatory environment at the European level that may be subsumed on a left-right dimension. Generally left favors common economic regulations across Europe and right supports less regulation. Hix and Lord (1997), on the other hand, argue that the left-right contestation and European integration are not related to each other because European integration is concerned with national sovereignty which is a question regarding where the authority should be. Left-right conflict is more about allocating values among functional interests. Therefore these two areas are independent of each other (Hooghe et. al., 2002).

Building on these two theories Hooghe and Marks argue that left-right conflict determines parties' position about European integration only on issues that are related to redistribution and regulating capitalism (Hooghe and Marks, 1999: 88). Their model also defines a second dimension which is more related to post-materialist values. Beginning with 1970s, the issues about immigration, life choices, culture, minorities, environment and nationalism became increasingly salient in the public's agenda. In his book *Modernization and Postmodernization* (1997), Inglehart explores the changing perceptions about religion, family values, political and economical goals and examines the effect of these changes

on economic growth rates, political party strategies and the prospects for democratic institutions (Inglehart, 1997:3). Acknowledging the importance of materialist values, Inglehart argues that there is a gradual shift towards postmaterialist values. He also states that all societies will reach a point in their development after which they will experience diminishing returns and will move to a new dimension.

Different scholars labeled this new dimension of conflict with different names. Inglehart named it as postmaterialist/materialist (Inglehart, 1990) while Franklin (1992) called it new politics/old politics dimension and Hooghe et. al. described the parties in this “new politics dimension” as either green/alternative/libertarian (GAL) or traditionalist/authoritarian/nationalist (TAN). The Gal parties are more environmentalist, less skeptical to immigration and in favor of libertarian and post-materialist values whereas the opposite combination (Tan) is opposed to immigration, supports traditional values, and puts emphasis on national sovereignty.

In terms of explaining the relationship between the domestic party contestation and European integration, previous studies have shown that the new politics dimension has more explanatory power than the left/right dimension (Hooghe et. al., 2002; Marks et. al., 2006). This is a plausible finding because most of the European Union policies are strongly related to the issues aroused by the new politics dimension. EU’s asylum and environmental policy are just two examples. In fact, a closer examination of the Copenhagen Criteria² reveals that European integration is structured around the economic and new politics dimension. Membership criteria require the following conditions from those states that are willing to apply for candidacy:

- “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.”

As clearly stated above, the political criterion is strongly related to new politics dimension whereas the economical criterion is related to economic left/right dimension.

3. Data and Methods

The Dataset that is used in this study provides the raw expert data for the 2007 Chapel Hill Expert Survey on the positioning of 39 political parties on European integration in five candidate countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and a member country Croatia³. The survey was administered in the fall of 2008 to 104 academics specializing in political parties and European integration in one of the countries considered. Thirty-seven surveys were completed, a 36 percent response rate.⁴

² In 1993, at the Copenhagen European Council, the European Union took a decisive step towards determined criteria for those states who are willing to be a full member and the Council declared that “Accession will take place as soon as an associated country is able to assume the obligations of membership by satisfying the economic and political conditions required.” At the same time, it defined the membership criteria, which are often referred to as the ‘Copenhagen criteria’. For more detail see:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accession_process/criteria/index_en.htm

³ Croatia was a candidate country during the period interview was conducted.

⁴ The survey is available online at: http://www.unc.edu/~hooghe/data_pp.php

3.1. Using Expert Judgments to Measure Party Positions

How can we determine the positions of political parties in different dimensions? This question has been on the agenda of scholars for a long time and there are different answers to it. It is possible to summarize different approaches under four topics:

Election/Public Opinion Surveys: These surveys have questions about the voters' perception of political parties. The question usually requires voters to position political parties on a left/right (or anti-pro EU) continuum. These surveys are conducted in a number of countries (i.e. EU member and candidate countries) and therefore it is easy to make cross-national comparisons. The opponents of this approach argue that scholars using this method assume that voters can meaningfully place parties along a continuum and ignore the problem about the sophistication of mass publics. This is a plausible criticism especially for the East European countries where the democratic experience of the citizens is fairly new.

Elite Survey of Parliamentarians or Party Leaders: These surveys are hard to conduct and usually available for specific countries. Therefore it is not possible to make cross-national comparisons. Another downside is that there is a distinct possibility to get ideologically biased results because the respondents are politicians who will be answering the questions according to how they want to present themselves. On the other hand, this measure is advantageous in that the respondents are the ones who run the parties or have important positions in the parties. Therefore it presents an endogenous measure.

Party Manifestos: This type of measurement uses content analysis of national party manifestos. The advantage of this approach is that it is exogenous and therefore leads us to an independent interpretation of the policy dimensions rather than a subjective interpretation. On the other hand party manifestos usually focus on salient issues and parties frame it taking into account the voters. In other words, they market themselves in the way which will bring them maximum amount of vote. Therefore these results might also be biased.

Expert Surveys: This type of measurement uses expert surveys. Party positions are determined according to the experts' responses to survey questions. Parties are evaluated by experts in terms of their stance about several issues like ideology, opposition to EU Integration, party's position about post material values. The advantage of this approach is that it is based on experts of political parties who have sufficient scholarly and practical knowledge about parties. Another important benefit of this approach is that it is conducted with experts in different countries and enables us to make cross-national comparisons.

The question regarding the superiority of the above mentioned approaches is debatable and out of the scope of this study. However, some scholars posed questions about the validity of expert surveys. Ian Budge (2000:103-104) draw attention to several points: Whose position are we judging? Is it the leaders activists or voters or all three combined? What are the criteria for expert judgments especially in terms of left-right classification? Are their judgments based on intensions and preferences or explicit behavior? These questions are worth academic scrutiny and those who use expert surveys should definitely take into account these issues. In this regard, a number of scholars attempted to prove that expert surveys are an appropriate way to measure party positions against European integration. Steenbergen and Marks (2007) for example, have evaluated their own study of party positions on European integration and showed that expert surveys are reliable. The experts showed significant consistency in their responses and their placements converged with other measures (Steenbergen and Marks, 2007:366)

In their article “Cross-validating Data on Party Positioning on European integration”, Marks et. al (2007) also tried to cross-validate expert and manifesto measures of party positioning on European integration by comparing these measures with each other and with measures from a European election survey and an elite survey of parliamentarians. Their findings showed that expert surveys provide the most accurate data for party positioning on European integration.

Also from a practical point of view, this study is trying to understand whether the previous findings about the relationship between domestic party structure and party stance against European integration are applicable to candidate countries as well. In this regard, it is appropriate to use the same expert survey data in order to be able to make accurate comparisons.

OLS regression is used to measure the effect of domestic party structure on European integration. Following the footprints of Marks et. al., the below variables are used:

Position on European Integration: Mean expert score along a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly opposed to European integration*) to 7 (*strongly in favor of European integration*).

Left/Right Position: Mean expert score on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (*extreme Left*) to 10 (*extreme Right*).

Gal/Tan Position⁵: Mean expert score on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (*libertarian/postmaterialist*) to 10 (*traditional/authoritarian*).

Left/Right Extremism: Square of the distance of a party from the median Left/Right position.

Gal/Tan Extremism: Square of the distance of a party from the median Left/Right position.

As previous studies introduce the basic relationship between left-right dimension and party support for EU integration is similar to an inverted U curve in West (Hooghe et. al., 2002). This is not a surprising finding. Far left and far right parties are skeptical to European integration while parties near to the center such as Christian Democrats, Social Democratic parties, liberal and conservative(centrist) parties are much more supportive towards European Union. There are several explanations for this picture. The inverted U curve introduces the strategic responses of parties against European Union. If a party is successful in the existing structure of party contestation it has little incentive to break the system while parties with weak electoral support and little chance to take part in government are trying to restructure the contestation (Hooghe et. al., 2002). In this regard, far right and far left parties exploit European integration and try to manipulate the issues raised by the European integration in order to shake up the party system (Hix, 1999a, 1999b). In terms of the new dimension, the far right parties mainly structured their position using the perceived threats against their nation. These threats are mainly posed by immigrants and the influence of foreign cultures. The supra-national nature of the EU has also led the far right parties to be skeptical to integration because by definition European integration weakens national authority (Marks et. al., 2002; Williams, 1990).

4. Results and Discussion

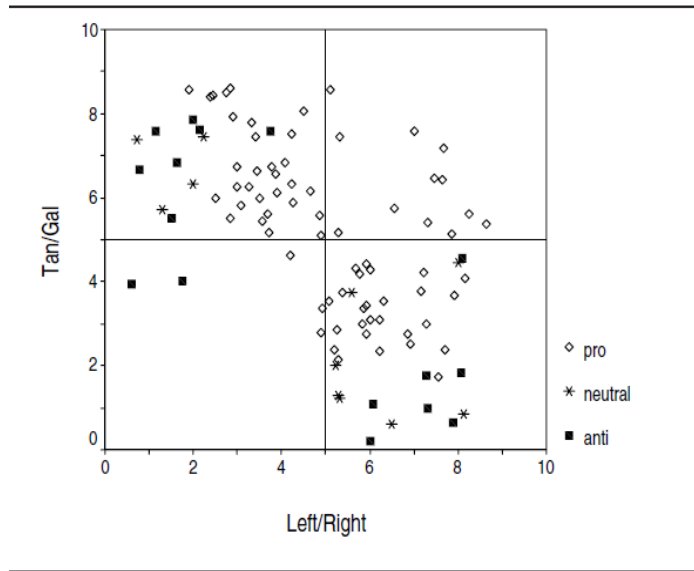
Before exploring the candidate countries we will examine the situation in West and East Europe by looking at the findings of Marks et. al.⁶ The below figure pictures the structure of domestic party competition and provides a bird eye view about the level of support or opposition to European

⁵ Gal stands for “green/alternative/libertarian” and Tan stands for traditionalism/authority/nationalism

⁶ The data used by Marks et. al is gathered by University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill Center for European Studies. This survey tapped 238 country experts—scholarly specialists on political parties or European politics—to evaluate the ideological and policy locations of 171 political parties in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and all EU member states except Luxembourg.

integration in West.⁷ As expected, the far right and far left parties are skeptical to integration. This finding makes intuitive sense because European integration is a centrist project which is created by center left and right parties. As seen in the below figure the opposition against European integration is clustered in the Right/Tan and Left/Gal quadrants. Parties in the far right and far left have a negative stance against European integration because of different reasons. The far left parties consider European integration as an elitist capitalist project that isolates decision making from citizens in the interests of powerful corporations while tan parties perceive European integration as an elitist supranational project that hampers national sovereignty and traditional values (Marks et. al., 2006:163).

Figure 1: Dimensions of Party Competition and Position on European Integration in West Europe



Note: $n = 98$ parties. On a scale from 1 (*strongly opposed to European integration*) to 7 (*strongly in favor*), supportive parties have a score between 4.5 and 7; neutral parties have a score between 3.51 and 4.49; opposing parties score between 1 and 3.5.

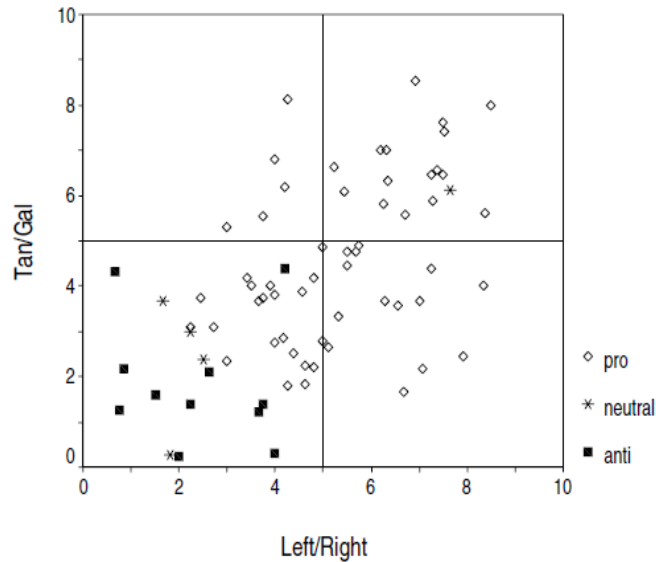
Source: Marks et. al., 2007:162.

The above picture is significantly different in East Europe. Similar to West, opposition against European integration in Central and Eastern Europe⁸ is prevalent among radical Left and radical Tan parties. However, radical Left and radical Tan values tend to combine in the same parties which introduces that opposition to European integration is unipolar. As we see in Figure 2 the opposition against European integration is prevalent in the Left/Tan quadrant.

⁷ Parties from the EU 15 countries minus Luxembourg.

⁸ Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Figure 2: Dimensions of Party Competition and Position on European Integration in East Europe



Note: $n = 98$ parties. On a scale from 1 (*strongly opposed to European integration*) to 7 (*strongly in favor*), supportive parties have a score between 4.5 and 7; neutral parties have a score between 3.51 and 4.49; opposing parties score between 1 and 3.5.

Source: Marks et. al., 2007:166.

How can we explain the different patterns we observe in East and West? Scholars argue that the answer to this question can be explained by looking at the way communism and liberal capitalism combine Left/Right and Gal/Tan (Lane, 2002). Communism was a Left-Tan phenomenon and by definition Communist regimes delivered more economic equality compared to market economies and suppressed public dissent and alternative lifestyles (Marks et. al., 2006:159). European integration process required free market economy and democratic transparency. In this regard, the losers of the transition challenged this process by emphasizing the polar opposite which is more economic equality and authority. On the other hand parties that are the winners of the transition denied their ties with the former communist system and rapidly moved to Gal/Right quadrant (Tavits and Letki, 2009).

4.1. Party Competition and Position on European Integration in Candidate Countries

So far we draw the picture of the relationship between domestic party competition and European integration in West and East Europe. Do these findings travel to candidate countries? Does economic left-right and non-economic new politics (gal/tan) dimension explain the structure of domestic party competition and its effect on European integration in candidate countries as well? The results of the OLS regression suggest that the same dimensions explain this relationship fairly accurately in candidate countries. The basic model with two linear variables tapping the Left/Right and Gal/Tan dimensions explains the 56% of the variance in party positioning on European integration. When we add the variables tapping extremism in order to capture the non-linear effect of extremism, the explained variance increases to 66%. The results suggest that part positioning on the Gal/Tan dimension better explains the position against European integration. Figure 3 provides us a better sight.

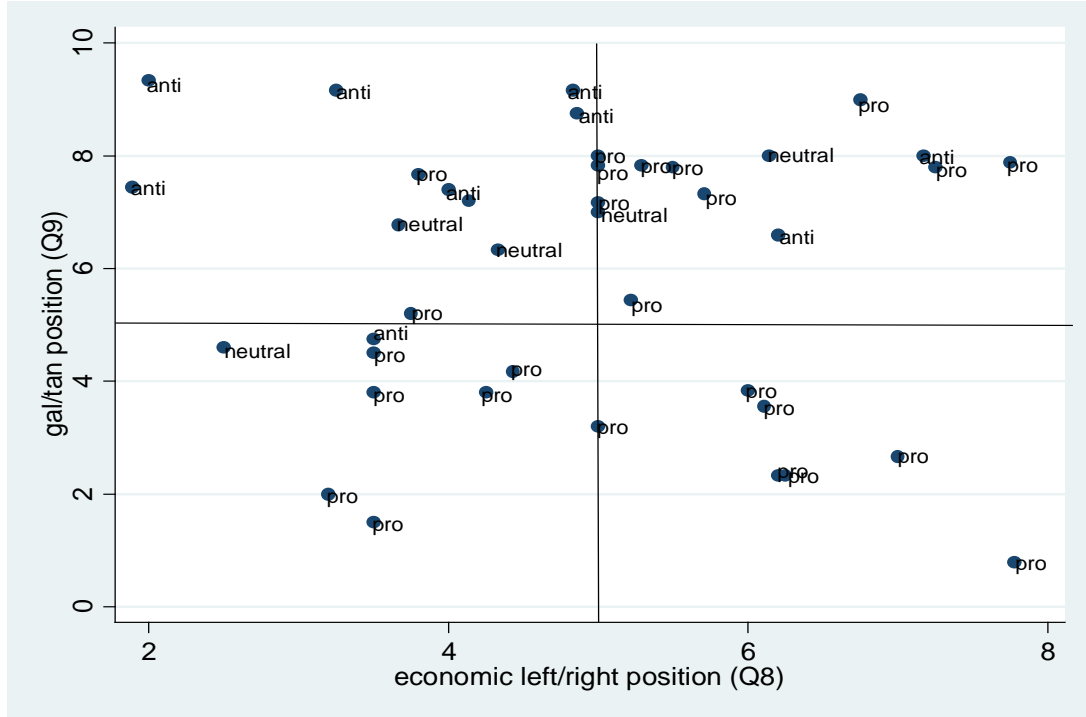
Table 1: West Versus East: Left/Right, Gal/Tan, Extremism, and Party Position on European Integration

	Linear Model	Nonlinear Model
Constant	6.15** (.715)	5.54** (.677)
Left-Right	0.24* (.110)	0.35** (.104)
Gal/Tan	-0.43** (.060)	-0.38** (.063)
Left-Right Extremism	-	-0.26** (.081)
Gal/Tan Extremism	-	-0.05* (.002)
R squared	.56	.66
Number of Obs.	39	39

Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at $p < 0.05$, ** significant at $p < 0.01$

The opposition against European integration is dominant in the left/tan quadrant. This result is similar to the findings regarding the East Europe. The same logic applies here, parties coming from a communist heritage put emphasis on traditional authoritarianism and economic equality provided by Communism in the past, as a response to free market and democratic rights posed by European integration. The four former Yugoslav republics Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina fit in this picture. All parties in the Right/Gal quadrant are pro integration in candidate countries. An important finding is that Turkey does not fit into this picture and introduces a different path which is more similar to Western patterns. However, the relationship between domestic party competition and European integration does not completely mimic the West European countries as well.

Figure 3: Dimensions of Party Competition and Position on European Integration in Candidate Countries



Note: $n = 39$ parties. On a scale from 1 (*strongly opposed to European integration*) to 7 (*strongly in favor*), supportive parties have a score between 4.5 and 7; neutral parties have a score between 3.51 and 4.49; opposing parties score between 1 and 3.5.

A closer examination of Figure 3 reveals these findings. According to the general pattern, parties in the right/tan quadrant are pro integration in East. The only two anti-integration parties on the Right/Tan quadrant are Turkish parties: Young Party (GP) and True Path Party (DYP). Especially GP is known with its strong opposition against EU membership. The main argument of the party is that EU is eroding national values and encouraging, even provoking, the minorities in the country which will eventually lead to secession. They also argue that the reforms that have been implemented in the past decade in order to adapt to EU system made the country weaker and vulnerable to internal and external threats. This profile introduces a typical far-right party which is quite similar to Western radical right parties. GP is skeptical about integration because it thinks integration is going to erode national-traditional values and will grant minorities more rights than they deserve. Also practically, they are trying to change the direction of competition in order to be able to get more votes and participate in government. MHP which is ideologically far right is located at the center in the economic left dimension but far right in the Gal/Tan dimension strongly opposes (with a score of 1,5) to EU because of the same reasons with GP. These findings are similar to the patterns we observed in the West.

Figure 3 presents another interesting result. The only anti-integration party in the Left/Gal quadrant is Republican People's Party (CHP), a center left party in Turkey. Although CHP is close to center in both dimensions, it is against European integration. This finding is a little counter-intuitive considering that EU is a centrist project and center left and right parties generally support integration and begs for

explanation. CHP has been founded in 1923 by the founder of the new Turkish state Kemal Ataturk and ruled the country for 27 years without opposition. After Turkey's transition to multi party system in 1950s, CHP never had the chance to form the government without coalition. However party's strong affiliation with bureaucracy and the military kept it powerful and they had great influence on the country's agenda even when they were not in the government. Due to its strong relationship with military and its ideology, CHP generally remained skeptical towards minorities and individual freedoms especially for the period under study. However, with the European Union process the institutions in Turkey began to normalize and the huge influence of bureaucracy and military significantly diminished. As a result, this ongoing process hampered the influence of CHP and led to dissatisfaction with European Union. It should be noted that the expert surveys were conducted in 2006 and 2007 and reflects the party positions during that period. One last point to mention is that Turkey does not have a strong far (radical) left party which is common in most European countries.

5. Conclusion

The structure of domestic party competition has an important effect on European integration. The ideological profile of a party is an important factor in terms of explaining its stance against European integration. Previous research have proved this fact and showed that by looking at a party's position in the economic Left/Right and noneconomic new politics (Gal/Tan) dimension, it is possible to predict where that party stands in terms of integration. The results also showed that the basic structures of party competition in West and East Europe are significantly different.

This study aimed to investigate whether these findings travel to candidate countries that are expecting to become full members in near future. Our results confirmed that the same two dimensions correctly predict opposition or support for European integration in candidate countries as well. We also found that the new politics dimension has a better explanatory power. Another important finding of this study is that candidate countries show similar patterns with East and West Europe. The domestic party competition and party stance against European integration in the four former Yugoslav republics show a similar pattern with East. Opposing parties are clustered in Left/Tan combination. Turkey, on the other hand is more similar to West. Far right and radical Tan parties are skeptical about integration and opposition is prevalent in Right/Tan quadrant. However, the main center left (social democrat) party which is located in the center on both dimensions is opposed to European integration. This finding contradicts with the Western example where the center left parties are supportive towards European integration.

As mentioned, one of the main arguments against the full-membership of Turkey is that it is different from Europe economically, politically and culturally. The findings of this research partially shows that the domestic party competition in Turkey is more similar to West compared to East European countries which means Turkey is not so different at least "politically" from West European countries. In this study we used expert surveys from the same source. However compared to West and East Europe the number of observations was smaller in candidate countries (39). This might have affected the results of our analysis. Future research should be based on data with a larger number of observations in order to be able to sure about the robustness of the results.

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