

The influence of European integration on Party Politics and Party Systems of Post-Soviet EU Neighbours

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GARNET Working Paper No: 45/08

May 2008

ABSTRACT

The present paper goes a step further in examining the effects of European integration and of EU external governance by focusing on countries that are not EU members or candidate states, but are neighbouring the European Union: Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. It investigates the influence of European integration process on party politics and party systems in the three countries from the first parliamentary elections until 2006 legislative elections in Ukraine. The work focuses on the linkage between party ideological orientation and its European stand and, successively, on the relationship between Left-Right axis of competition with the European dimension in the party systems of East European neighbours. The empirical findings are drawn from two main datasets: MRG database and Benoit/Laver expert survey. The results point to the existence of a unilateral Euroscepticism in post-Soviet neighbours, approaching the Left margin, and show an interconnection between the systemic transition dimension and the European issue in the examined party systems. Because of the lack of a well-structured ideology in the former Soviet countries, the ideological orientation of a party is not a good indicator of a party's European stance and the salience of the European issue determine even parties from the Left margin to adopt a pro-European attitude.

Key words: - Europeanization of non-member states, European integration, Euroscepticism, party systems, post-communism, East European Neighborhood.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last years a new shift in the literature on European integration has been marked and the Europeanization has obtained a prominent place in EU studies. By contrast to the previous theories on EU, based on a bottom-up perspective, Europeanization research agenda has a top-down approach to the study of European integration. To make a broader comparison with IR debate, it is based on the same tradition as the “Second image reversed” (Gourevitch 1978) literature, when European Communities and European-level policies, which previously were perceived as the *explanandum*, or the dependent variable, are seen as the *explanans*, or the independent variable, in analyzing the relationship between the EU and the domestic politics of its members. (Jachtenfuchs 2001)

The impact of European integration on national political spaces of EU member or candidate states received less attention in EU studies, including Europeanization literature. The major assumption was that there had been a minimal impact of Europe on national party politics and that party systems had proved to be ‘the most impervious to change’ (Mair 2000: 28). Yet, parties are the major political actors in domestic politics and their perception and interpretation of EU, in general, and of European integration, in particular, plays a significant role in the shaping of pro- and anti-European sentiments within a country. Since the last decade, however, a considerable research has been carried out on exploring the role played by Europe for party politics and party systems in EU members and candidates from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Aspinwall 2002; Bielasiak 2002, 2006; Grzymala-Busse and Innes 2003; Kopecky and Mudde 2002; Lewis 2000, 2001, 2003; Marks et al. 2004, 2005; Marks and Wilson, 1999, 2000; Pridham 1999, 2002; Sitter 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2003, Taggart 1999, etc.).

However, in order to draw the broader picture of the role played by EU and especially by European integration process for national level politics, one needs to go further than the borders of European Union or candidate states. One needs to look also at countries to which EU conditionality policy with its ‘sticks’ and ‘carrots’ does not apply, but where European integration perspective is part of domestic politics discourse.

The aim of the present study is to go a step further in examining the broader resonance of European integration process by focusing on countries that are not EU members or candidate states, but are neighbouring the European Union. Its purpose is to analyze the influence of

European integration on party politics and party systems following a comparative longitudinal analysis of the three selected countries: Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. The examined time period starts with the first parliamentary elections after the declaration of independence until 2006.

The primary objective of the present paper is to examine how the European integration question affects the behaviour of the main political actors in East European Neighboring states (EENS) by looking both at party level and party system level. It investigates the link between party ideological profile and its European stance and, consecutively, the connection of the Left-Right axis with the European dimension in the party systems of East European neighbours. I limit myself at locating Euroscepticism in a party system and analyzing whether the ideological orientation of a party is a good indicator of its attitudes towards European integration perspective.

The paper starts with a short description of the state of the field, followed by the introduction of my own theoretical approach, based on the scholarly explanations in the case of old EU members and candidate countries from CEE and on the post-communist studies. The empirical findings are drawn from two major sources of information: MRG (Manifesto Research Group) dataset and Benoit-Laver expert survey from 2003-2004.

THE STATE OF THE FIELD

The process of European integration has determined political scientists to examine the impact of European Union on political parties and party systems both in EU member and in candidate states. Following the positioning of parties with pro- and anti-European attitudes, there seems to be an agreement among researchers that there has been a minimal direct impact of Europe in this area. The major question remains how the European integration matters for party politics and party systems. In the first case, the discussion of party stance towards Europe brings to the conclusion that it depends primarily on two key factors that guide party behaviour: ideology or strategy. According to some authors, such as Kopecky and Mudde (2002), Marks and Wilson (2000), Marks *et al.* (2002), Tsebelis and Garrett (2000), both in the case of old EU members and Central and Eastern European (CEE) candidate countries, ideology is the major factor that explains parties' attitudes towards European integration. Therefore, parties' European stances are less exposed to changes as a result of short-term concerns of political parties. Yet, another group of scholars argue that in the post-

communist countries, because of the fundamental and rapid changes in all spheres of the society there do not exist some well-defined social cleavages in which parties could be deeply rooted and which could determine their political behaviour (Bielasiak, 2002, 2006; Mair, 1997; Mainwaring, 1998; Zielinski, 2002). As a result, parties' ideological profiles are not well-formed and it does not constrain party behaviour and reaction to the new emerging political issues as in the consolidated Western European democracies. In this context, party position in a political spectrum (margin-center), as well as its government/opposition relation, plays an important role for its strategic behaviour.

Following the theoretical reasoning presented above, the debate between scholars on the interpretation of the way Europe matters for party systems raised two main explanations. The first argues that the European issue¹ does not produce a new conflicting line among the parties, but the left-right dimension of the political spectrum largely assimilates it and parties deal with Europe according to their historical ideological orientation (Hix 1999; Marks and Steenbergen 2002; Marks and Wilson 1999; Marks *et al.* 2002). Another line of argumentation comes to challenge the previous explanation by looking at the European issue as a *maverick issue*, which cannot be adjusted under the existing cleavages, but cross-cuts them (Sitter 2002). In order to be considered as maverick, however, an issue needs to have a disruptive effect on the existing configuration of party competition and the structure of party system. This term refers to the issues that arise in a bottom-up way and cannot be assimilated by the existing dimensions of party competition but cross-cut them. The values and interests that constitute such an issue, raised by the society, do not fit the major dimensions of a party system (Maore and Smith 1993).

In the present research, I place myself in the current debate by analyzing how the process of European integration affects party politics and party systems of European neighbours. I focus on investigating a major point of scholarly debate over the working of the European issue in a party system – the relationship between the Left-Right axis of a political spectrum and the European dimension², in the case of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

¹ Understood as the sum of parties' references to EU in general and to any norms and values on which the EU is based, as well as to European integration process. The synonyms used in this text are European question and European dimension.

² The European dimension is defined in this paper as the dimension of party competition that represents the European issue and has two extreme poles: Euroscepticism and pro-Europeanism.

The literature on post-communist transformation and democratization represents another set of valuable information for the current study for examining the broader picture of the political arenas in the former communist countries. Kopstein, for example, characterizes the political life in post-communist countries as being dominated by party instability and the fluidity of the party system, where ‘parties constantly enter and leave the scene or change their identity’ (Kopstein, 2003: 250) Mair, in his attempt to describe the political situation in the post-communist countries, suggests that the newly emerging post-communist party systems may look and perform differently from the established ones in Western Europe. He states that party competition is likely to prove both more conflictual and adversarial (Mair 1997: 175). In another article on party systems and the structure of competition, Mair brings the example of post-communist Europe by describing its party systems as atomized ones, where there is a Europeanism high degree of continuous fragmentation and new entries allowed in the political space, and there is a lack of closure, which, in his opinion, means also a lack of ‘systemness’ (Mair 1997: 213–4).

The research aims at examining the arguments made by scholars with regard to political stability and party systems in the post-communist space and exploring how the process of European integration influences the development and consolidation of party systems in the three former Soviet republics.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

The primary aim of this work is to explore the nature and the extent of influence of European integration process on political development in East European neighbouring states (EENS). For achieving this objective, I examine the impact of Europe on party politics and the environments in which they operate - party systems, in the case of three neighbouring countries: Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

The process of European integration represents the independent variable. Because I examine two levels of analysis: party level and system level, there are two dependent variables that this project addresses: party unit and party system.

At party unit level, the influence of European integration is operationalized by looking at parties' attitudes towards Europe³ and the role of the European issue in party politics. I aim at locating Euroscepticism in a particular party system and explore the factors that determine its specific position. At party system level, the operationalization of the impact of Europe is made following two major features of a party system: the *format*, the number of relevant parties, and the *mechanics*, or the interaction between the parties (Mair 2000: 29-37).

In the present paper I focus on exploring how the European question, if at all, relates to party ideological profile in Eastern neighbourhood and, consequently, the interaction of European issue with the main dimension of competition of a party system: ideological Left-right axis.

In Western Europe, party ideological orientation and its position in a party system (center-margin) represent a good indicator for predicting its European stance. Yet, the relationship between party ideological profile and European integration stand is not a linear one, as Euroscepticism is shared by parties from both ideological extremes, though determined by different factors.

While analyzing the inter-relation between party ideological orientation and its European stance it is important to understand the difference of the Left-Right ideological philosophy in Eastern Europe from the well-established party families of Western democracies due to the historical context in which it emerged in the post-communist space. The newly emerged post-Soviet states lack some well-defined social divisions, which could be rendered by parties into political identities. At the same time, most of the parties in the region do not possess a political activity experience during the pre-Soviet and Communist times. As a result, party ideological profiles are not well-established because of the lack of 'historically rooted orientations' (Marks and Wilson 2000: 434), and, thus, do not constrain party reaction to newly emerging social and political issues in the way they do in the old EU-member states. Therefore, I hypothesize that in the post-Soviet neighbouring countries there is no clear relationship between party ideological profile and its European stance and, consequently, the Left-Right dimension (in the form that it exists in these states) does not subsume the

³ I use this expression because in the post-communist space European Union represents Europe as such and apart from direct references to EU or European integration (understood basically as EU joining), such historical arguments as 'return to Europe' or 'belonging to European civilization' also refer to EU and to the norms and values on which it is built.

European issue. Rather, parties react to the European issue according to the emerging opportunities they perceive the European integration process might bring them.

Yet, I do expect to find a connection between party ideological orientation and its attitudes towards Europe based on the following reasoning. As the European Union is an organization that is founded on and promotes liberal-democratic norms and values, as well as a market economy, it envisages the ideal principles on which a newly emerging post-communist society has to be established. As a result, I expect to find a correlation between the promotion of democracy and market economy, on the one hand, and the European profiles of parties. I argue that political parties that have opposed the Soviet system and communist ideology share a pro-European stance, though at different levels. These parties perceive European integration as the only viable alternative of getting rid of the authoritarian communist rule and paving the way towards a democratic capitalist society. At the same time, non-reformed Communist parties, 'retrofitting' the orthodox Soviet analysis of capitalism to accommodate Western post-industrial society (Curry and Urban 2003: 254) and preferring the re-institution of the soviet system, as well as the 'losers' of transitional reforms (e.g. Agrarian, ethnic or extreme nationalist parties) (Tucker *et al.* 2002) will tend to have a Eurosceptic position.

The major assumption on which this reasoning is based is that the systemic transformation (building democracy and market economy) represents one of the key issues that define party identity and is a core axis of competition in the post-Soviet states. Therefore, if there is a high degree of influence of Europe on party politics, then the empirical evidence should point to changes in party attitudes towards the systemic transformation issue. In the contrary case, if there is no or scarce influence of European question, then I expect, at party level, not to find any significant changes in parties' identities, specifically in its attitudes towards democracy building and market economy, which are perceived as one of the core issues that shape post-Soviet parties' identities.

At party system level, in case of a significant influence of European integration process, I expect to find the emergence of new parties with the primary goal of mobilizing support for or against the sharing of European norms and values and EU joining (format of a party system), as well as the re-alignment of parties in a political space according to their European stances (merely examining coalition formation process) (mechanics of a party system).

METHODOLOGY

The research constitutes a comparative longitudinal analysis of political parties in the three selected countries: Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. The examined time period includes all parliamentary elections after the declaration of independence in 1990's until the year 2006. The study will include all relevant parties, defined by the mentioned criteria.

The two major data sources of the present project are represented by party electoral programs dataset and expert surveys. The first one consists of MRG (Manifesto Research Group) dataset on Georgia and Ukraine (from the first parliamentary elections until the last ones) and my own dataset on Moldavian parties, developed for the MRG and under the supervision of Andrea Volkens. Election programs cover a broad range of political positions and issues and, according to Budge et.al. (Budge *et al.* 1987: 18) can be regarded as a 'set of key central statements of party positions.' They are representative statements for the whole party, and not statements of one group within the party. Because they appear before every parliamentary election, they offer a possibility of studying the changes of parties' positions over time. Hence, manifesto dataset provides valuable information with regard to the importance (salience) of different issues (including the European one) for parties' programmatic content, their ideological profile, and offers the possibility of a comparative longitudinal analysis both at intra- and inter-state levels. Yet, manifesto research presents a limitation in studying party practical behaviour between the election dates. In order to overcome this limitation, I use discourse analysis of official declarations and speeches of party leaders, as well as secondary sources analysis to explore the real behaviour of parties.

The second data source is represented, so far, by one expert survey, carried out by Benoit and Laver in 2003-2004, which covers only two of the three studies countries (Ukraine during the 2002 parliamentary elections and Moldova during the 2001 elections.).

The use of both electoral manifestos and expert surveys allows for a cross-validation of the two most commonly used measures of party positioning on European integration, as well as on other issues. It makes possible the avoidance of individual measurement errors of which suffer each of the data sources (e.g. subjective judgment, informational asymmetry, or temporal constraints in the case of expert data, or declared salience, timing, or intra-party dissent for the election manifestos) (Marks et al. 2005: 8-10).

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND PARTY POLITICS IN EENS

The preliminary analysis of MRG dataset on Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia since the first parliamentary elections in 1990's provides the following empirical evidence for the influence of Europe on party politics and party systems in the two countries.

Firstly, the analysis of party scores on category 108, EC+ (positive references to European Community), shows the importance of the European issue for party electoral programs and, consequently, the salience of the European discourse in the domestic competition of a certain country. In the Georgian case, during the first parliamentary elections in 1992, one third (four out of 13) of relevant parties make specific positive reference to EC in their electoral programs, in 1995 - two out of six parties, in 1999 - the two parties that gained the majority of votes in the parliament: Shevardnadze's SMK (Citizen's Union) and SSAK (All-Georgian Revival Union) score positively on EC+, and in 2004 - four out of six relevant parties are pro-European. Another important observation is that the highest percentage of programmatic references dedicated to EC+ belongs to the governing party blocs (e.g. Shevardnadze's *Citizen's Union* in 1999, or *National Movement-Democrats* in 2004). However, in order to investigate a clearer relationship between party/government position of a party and its European stance a deeper analysis is needed.

In Moldova, in 1994 elections, out of four relevant parties and electoral blocs, only one – Peasants and Intellectuals Bloc, makes explicit references to European Community, in 1998 – all the relevant parties, with the exception of Communists Party of Moldova (PCRM) and Socialists Party (PSM), refer positively to European Community. In 2001 elections six out of ten relevant parties score positively on their attitudes towards EU, and the remaining four that make no reference to European Community are all Left-wing parties, merely those approaching the Left margin of party system. In 2005, surprisingly enough, PCRM, which since its first parliamentary elections made no explicit reference at all to Europe, appeared to reference to EC remained to be two Left-wing parties: 'Ravnopravie' Republican Social-score the highest (15.25 per cent) on European Community dimension. The only parties that made no Political Movement and 'Patria-Rodina' Bloc, which have a nostalgic Soviet rhetoric.

In Ukraine, in the late 1994 first parliamentary elections, one half of parties (four out of eight) score positively on EC, in 1998 four out of ten parties make positive reference to EC,

while in 2002, one half of parties are pro-European in their electoral programs. Comparing the saliency of the European issue for party programs in Ukraine and Georgia, one is to observe that the European issue appears to be more prominent for parties in their electoral programs in Georgian case (maximum of 8,89 references dedicated to EC+) than in Ukraine (maximum of 1,04). Therefore, according to party programs, the saliency of the European discourse is higher in Georgia, than in Ukrainian electoral competition. This serves as an indicator that geographic closeness to EU is not a major factor in the influence of the European issue in a political space.

Secondly, examining 110 category of MRG dataset (EC-), the conclusion is, surprisingly enough, that no party makes negative references to European Union in their electoral programs in the three countries. However, following a qualitative analysis of parties that do not make any reference to EC, the observation is that most of these parties are radical Left parties or those approaching the Left margin (e.g. KPU, SPU (until 2002 elections) in Ukraine; SMSP Socialist Workers' Party or SSP Socialist Party in Georgia; PCRM (until 2005), Patria-Rodina, and Ravnopravie in Moldova), which promote an alternative to democracy form of government - the restoration of the socialist system, and even of the USSR. Other groups of parties that lack any mention of EU in their electoral programs are, on the one hand, agrarian or peasants' parties, such as APU Agrarian Party and SelPU Peasant Party, BSP-SP Socialist Party-Peasant Party in Ukraine, and SSFK All-Georgian Farmers' Union; Democratic-Agrarian Party of Moldova, and on the other hand, nationalist parties (KUN Congress of Nationalists, UKRP Conservative Republican Party, NF National Front in Ukraine, and SEDP National Independence Party, SRKET Reformers' Union - National Accord, AMA New Rights-Novas in Georgia). A closer look at these parties reveals that most of them are 'losers of transition,' which oppose liberal-democratic changes. In this case, one might interpret the lack of references to Europe in their case as being related to their lack of support for democratization and market liberalization and promotion of an alternative socialist system based on a planned economy. However, a more complex qualitative analysis of parties' history and activities is needed for understanding the lack of reference to EU in party programs and drawing its relationship to other party ideological identities.

Table 1. Georgia 1992-2004 parliamentary elections. The importance of the European issue for party programmatic content

	LEFT	RIGHT
	<u>1992:</u>	<u>1992:</u>
	- Greens	- EDP National Democratic Party
		- KTK Union of Traditionalists
		- SEDP National Independence Party
	<u>1995:</u>	<u>1995:</u>
	--	- KTK Union of Traditionalists
		- EDP National Democratic Party
	<u>1999:</u>	<u>1999:</u>
	- SMK Citizens' Union	- SAK All-Georgian Revival Union (<i>far right</i>)
	<u>2004:</u>	<u>2004:</u>
	- DAP Democratic Union of Revival	- BD Burjadnaze Democrats
	- SLP Labour Party	- BAS Bloc 'For a New Georgia'
EC - EC +	--	--

Source: MRG Georgia 1992-2004.

Table 2. Ukraine 1994-2002 parliamentary elections. The importance of the European issue for party programmatic content

	LEFT	RIGHT	CENTER (Power party)
	<u>1994:</u>	<u>1994:</u>	<u>1994</u>
	--	- Rukh Popular Movement	- Kuchma Bloc for Reforms
		URP Republican Party	
		DemPU Democratic Party	
	<u>1998:</u>	<u>1998:</u>	<u>1998:</u>
	- PZU Green Party	- Hromada Community	
	- NDPU People's Democratic Party	- Rukh Popular Movement	-
	<u>2002:</u>	<u>2002:</u>	<u>2002:</u>
	--	--	--
EC - EC +	--	--	--

Source: MRG Ukraine 1994-2002

Table 3. Moldova 1994-2005 parliamentary elections. The importance of the European issue for party programmatic content

	LEFT	RIGHT
	<u>1994:</u>	<u>1994:</u>
	- BTI Peasants and Intellectual Bloc	-
	<u>1998:</u>	<u>1998:</u>
	- MPMDP Social-Political Movement 'For a Prosperous and Democratic Moldova'	- CDM Democratic Convention of Moldova
	- PDAM Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova	- PFD Party of Democratic Forces
	<u>2001:</u>	<u>2001:</u>
	- PSM Socialists Party of Moldova	- PRCM Party of Rebirth and Reconciliation
	- PDM Democratic Party of Moldova	- PPCD Christian-Democratic People's Party
	- BEAB Electoral Bloc 'Braghis Alliance'	- PFD Party of Democratic Forces
	<u>2005:</u>	<u>2005:</u>
	- PSDM Social-Democratic Party of Moldova	- DM Democratic Moldova Bloc
	- PCRM Communists Party of Moldova	- PPCD Christian-Democratic People's Party
EC +		
EC -	--	--

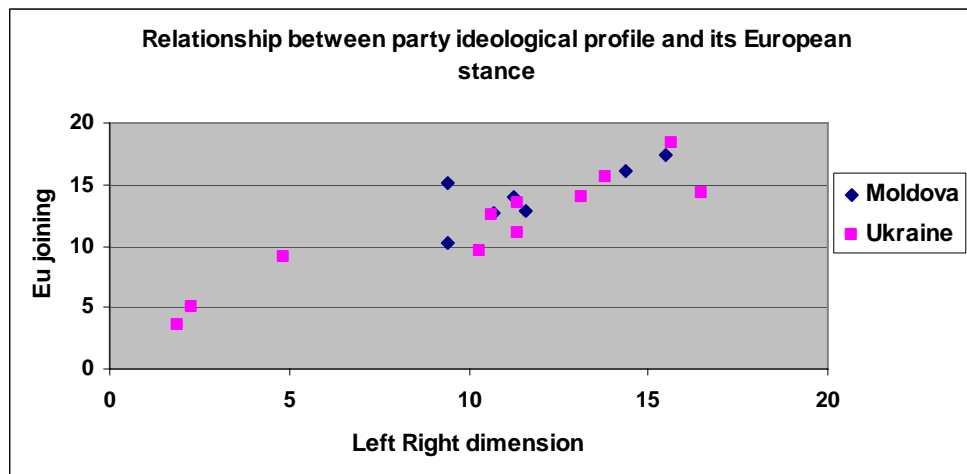
Source: MRG Moldova 1994-2005.

In conclusion, the MRG dataset provides information on the importance of the European issue for party programs, as well as domestic competition in general. However, it does not allow for discerning the real position a party adopts towards a specific issue. The dataset presents also a limitation in drawing more clearly pro- and anti-European stances of parties and the connection of the European issue with the Left-Right axis, as well as other major dimensions of political competition. Similarly, it is not possible to explore under which circumstances a change in party European discourse appears and whether this change is for good or a temporary one, for example determined by government/opposition shift.

In this respect, Benoit-Laver expert survey data, drawn on Moldavian and Ukrainian parties in 2003-2004, represents a valuable set of information that complements much of the variation found in the MRG dataset. Having real scores for each of the major parties on EU joining (dimension 4 of the expert survey), as well as for the ideological divide (dimension 13) on a scale from 1 to 20, it is possible to trace a clearer interaction of the European issue

with the Left-Right political conflict. Figure 1 reflects the interconnection of the two mentioned above dimensions in Ukraine and Moldova.

Figure 1. The relationship between party ideological profile and its European stance in Moldova and Ukraine

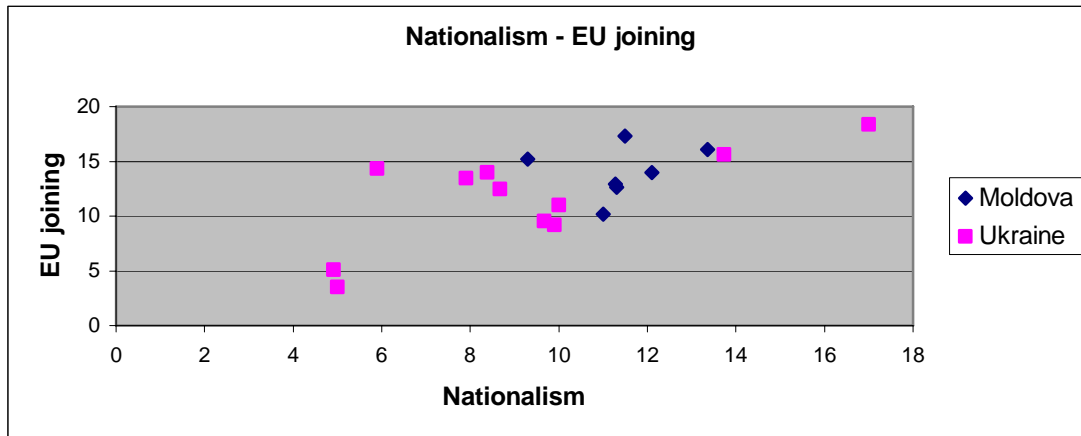


Source: Kenneth Benoit and Michael Laver. *Party Policy in Modern Democracies. Expert survey scores of policy positions of political parties in 47 countries.* London, Routledge, 2006.

This graph shows an interesting correlation between EU joining position and ideological orientation of a party in the two countries, as well as about the location of Euroscepticism in post-Soviet party systems. It appears that the following statement is true: the more Leftist a party is, the more Eurosceptic it is, and *vice versa*, the more Right-wing a party is, the stronger its pro-European stance. At the same time, the analysis of the link between the nationalist issue and the European question shows a remarkable relationship, as compared to the case of Central and East European countries and also the old-EU members. One might see in the Figure 2, especially in Ukrainian case, that there is a trend of the most nationalistic parties to be also the most pro-European ones and vice-versa. Yet, this kind of relationship is the result of the shortcoming of the present expert survey to include country-specific factors. The experts in these countries are assuming usually that the answer should be related to the dominant nationalistic discourse. Yet, when one is to look at the cases that score the lowest on Figure 2 graph, it appears that these are the Communists parties from the both countries, and Natalya Vytrenko bloc, which promote the idea of the restoration of the socialist system and have a very nationalistic discourse, but based on Russian/Slavic nationalism (in Ukrainian case), and also a Moldavian nationalism based on Soviet theories of Moldavian

nation. Therefore, Benoit/Laver survey dataset presents a limitation in investigating the actual relationship between nationalism and the European issue. This interesting finding about the link between the nationalistic discourse and the European stance of a party needs to be devoted more attention in the future research.

Figure 2. The relationship between nationalist issue and European question in Moldova and Ukraine

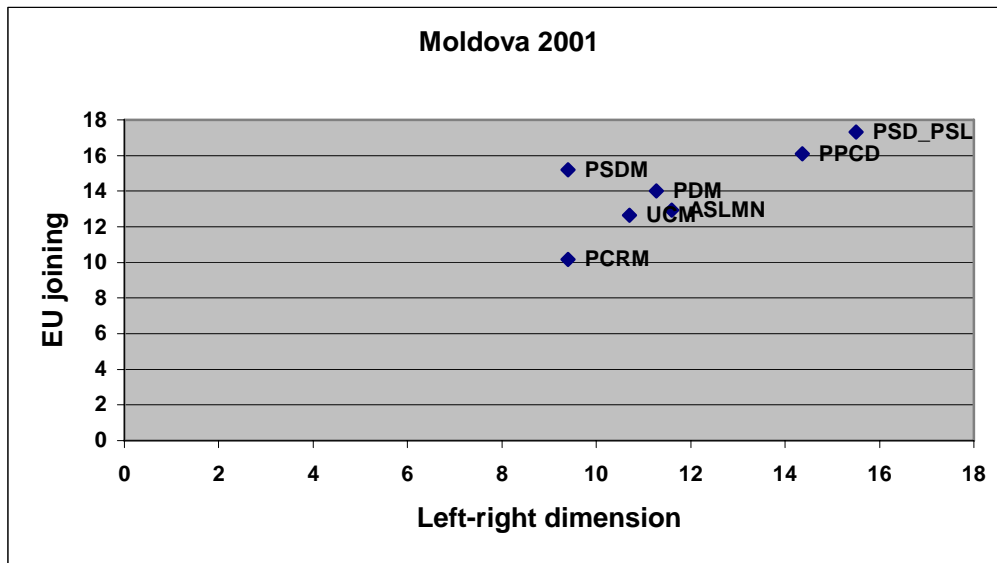


Source: Benoit and Laver, *op.cit.*

Thus, the analysis of Benoit/Laver data on the two of the three examined EEN (as Georgia is missing from the expert survey) point to a unipolar Euroscepticism, situated only at one of the margins of a political space, specifically on the Left.

A closer look in each of the two countries at the interaction of party European stances with the Left-Right ideological dimension provides more explanatory factors for the mentioned above statement. Figure 3 shows the interaction of the two dimensions in the Moldavian case.

Figure 3. The relationship between party ideological profile and its European stance in Moldova



Source: Benoit and Laver, *op.cit.*

According to expert survey results, there is no relevant political party that scores negatively on EU joining, and even the Communist party, which at the moment the survey was conducted was still a non-reformed doctrinarian Communist party (running in 2001 on a platform that proposed the unification of Moldova with Russia-Belarus Union), scores a bit more than 10 points (10,17).

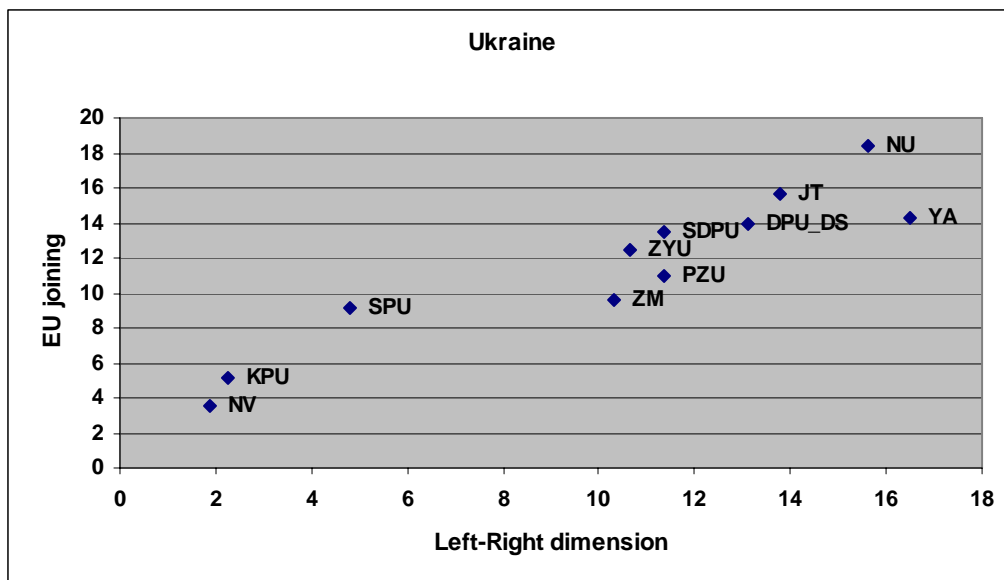
If one is to conduct another expert survey nowadays in Moldova, the same political parties will be placed even higher to the top of the EU joining scale, as all the relevant parties that run for the recent 2005 parliamentary elections had a pro-European orientation. By contrast to any expectations, the Communist party made a radical shift from a strong Euroscepticism at the beginning of its activity in 1993 towards a pro-European position in 2004-2005, committing itself before the recent parliamentary elections to reform and become a ‘European party,’ and even change its name (Bransten 2005).

The conclusion that can be drawn from the case study of Moldavian domestic competition is that European integration represents a major objective for most of the relevant parties and the European issue can be characterized as a valence issue, when practically all the parties agree on the European course, advocating the promotion of European norms and values and the achievement of European standards that would allow the country to join one day the EU.

The influence of the process of European integration on Moldova’s domestic politics is attested also while analyzing the format of the party system. So, at the moment there are two parties in Moldova that emerged with the primary purpose of drawing support for European integration and declaring themselves parties of ‘European type’, The first is the Social-Liberal Party (PSL), which also is placed highest on its pro-European stance in the Figure 3. Established on May 9, 2001, on Europe’s Day, PSL declares itself a Center-right ‘social-liberal party of European vocation’ (*Official Program of PSL 2001*) According to its official program, ‘European Unity represents the pivot of PSL’s actions, and its ‘whole activity being subordinated to this desideratum’, The second is the European Party, founded on September 2005 mostly by young people and intelligentsia. It declares itself the party of those that ‘want to see Europe in the Republic of Moldova,’ in other words, to make people ‘feel themselves Europeans not only geographically, but also with regard to their way of living and values they share’ (Ghimpu 2005).

The interaction of the European issue with the ideological axis in Ukrainian domestic structure of competition is illustrated by Figure 4.

Figure 4. The relationship between party ideological profile and its European stance in Ukraine



Source: Benoit and Laver, *op.cit.*

As one can observe, in Ukrainian case there are four parties that score under 10 on EU joining in 2003-2004, which means they can be defined as Eurosceptic. A close look shows that all the parties that score negatively on European integration are Left-wing parties, with the exception of the ZM Women for the Future union, which according to the present expert survey is placed in the Center of the Left-Right ideological divide. All these parties are promoting, more or less, the Soviet-times socialist ideas, with the exception of SPU, which evolved since its political activities in the early 1990's to a reformed Left-wing party, a proof of this being its close contacts with the European Socialists and being a consultative party in Socialist International. After the Ukrainian presidential election campaign in 2004, SPU for sure scores higher than 10 on its European position, as it supported Yushchenko's presidential candidature and is one of the members of Orange revolution political coalition. (Rakhmanin and Mostovaya 2002).

Parties that are the lowest on their support to Europe are the two Left extremist parties: KPU Communist Party of Ukraine, and NV Natalya Vytrenko's bloc. The latter scores the lowest on the EU joining (3,5), even lower than KPU. It is based on a group of the former ruling Communist party members that split from SPU in 1996 and founded the Progressive Socialist Party; and also on some other minor radical Left parties. NV bloc concluded a cooperation agreement with the Party of Iraq's Socialist revival, with the Russian party 'People's Will,' and with the Radical Serbian Party (Lubensky 2002).

The anti-European position of KPU is explained by the merging of the Marxist-Leninist ideological thinking and the nostalgia for Soviet times with the idea of pan-Slavism. KPU maintains close contacts with the Russian Communist Party and its counterparts from the CIS countries and the restoration of the Soviet system and even of the USSR is one of the major points of KPU's policies and its winning formula during the electoral competition (Wilson 2002).

The last party that is approaching a neutral position towards Europe, but still it is placed below the 10-point gridline of the Figure 4 is the All-Ukrainian Political Union *Women for the Future* (ZM). According to a Western gender expert from Ukraine, the organization follows a Soviet-type ideology regarding women's role in the society, focusing merely on maternal and child-welfare issues (Kuzio 2002), which contradicts the liberal-democratic and market economy reforms promoted by the European structures.

The analysis of the parties that adopt a pro-European stance shows that these are all Right-wing parties. Parties that are the most Europhile are the two parties that led the Orange revolution's pro-European coalition: Yushchenko's *Our Ukraine* bloc and Julia Timoshenko's bloc. Both parties combine a Ukrainian nationalistic discourse with a pro-Western/European orientation that goes against special relations with Russia/CIS. This, in fact, represented the winning formula of the large Ukrainian coalition during the 2004 presidential elections. Therefore, European issue seems to have an important role played an important role in influencing the mechanics of Ukrainian party system, particularly by aligning parties in accordance to their European stance during the Orange revolution and the Orange government.

At the same time, there can be attested even the influence of European issue on the format of a party system, i.e. the emergence of parties with the aim of mobilizing mass support on the basis of their European stance. So far the empirical findings of the present research point to one party, the European Capital Party (ES), registered in 1999. It declares itself an all-Ukrainian party, the party of voters who 'made a European choice' and perceive the achievement of European standards and of European integration as their primary objectives. (Electoral Program of ES) Their slogan in 2006 parliamentary elections was 'From a European capital to a European country.'

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are several important findings this paper points to regarding the influence of the process of European integration on party politics and party systems of EEN.

First of all, at party level, parties who oppose the European integration are also identified as 'losers of transition,' situated nearby Left pole of a party system. These are usually unreformed communist parties, the core political identity of which is based on the restoration of the socialist system, or even of the USSR. Therefore, they oppose the promotion of democracy and market economy, on which European Union relies, as well as the capitalistic nature of EU.

Thus, Euroscepticism is a unipolar phenomenon in the examined party systems, by contrast to Central and East European countries (CEECs) or old EU members. This empirical findings point to the fact that ideological profile of a party is not always a good indicator of its

European stance and the European issue cannot be subsumed to the Left-Right dimension of competition. However, there is a correlation between the systemic dimension (building democracy and market economy) and the European dimension of a political space.

Secondly, some scholarly explanations in the case of post-communist countries argue that the majority of Eurosceptic parties are to be right-wing, because of the conservative nationalistic views as a reaction to the communist past (Bielasciak 2004: 16). Yet, the above-mentioned empirical finding proves that in East European neighbouring states there are no Right-wing Eurosceptic parties at all. Moreover, there is a relative link between a party's nationalist discourse and its pro-European stance, in the sense that the present data shows that the most nationalistic parties (promoting Ukrainian and, in Moldavian case, Romanian-oriented nationalism) are also the most pro-European ones. This is merely due to the representation of European integration by political parties as the only alternative to get rid of the communist legacies and to promote democratic and market economy reforms. Yet, Benoit/Laver dataset presents a limitation in exploring deeper this relationship.

Thirdly, the power of the European issue makes parties who shift from a Eurosceptic position to a pro-European one to suffer significant changes in their identities and internal structures. Even in cases when ideology is well-based and represents a strong determinant of party's behaviour, it is subjected to changes according to the European stance of a party, as clearly illustrated in the case of the Communist Party of Moldova. Yet, further research is needed to investigate whether the changes determined by the European issue in party identities are for good or a temporary.

Last, but not least, the influence of European integration process is felt both on the format and the mechanics of the examined party systems. In Ukraine and Moldova, there are several parties emerging with the primary intention of getting mass support on the basis of their pro-European stances. At the same time, the European issue influences the alignment of parties according to their European stances, as seen in the case of pro-European coalitions in the three examined countries.

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