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Ethnic Minorities and Left Party Response: Explaining Party Competition in Eastern Europe

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Introduction

Eastern European party competition is argued to be distinctive from that of western Europe. Eastern European party systems are assumed to be ideologically looser, and – if structure does appear – it is expected to be contrary to the west. Most works expect that eastern European countries – defined by the communist experience and post-communist transition, juxtaposing state-centric authoritarianism to democratic market economy – form a relatively cohesive cluster distinctive from the west. In eastern Europe, the communist legacy is thought to bind left-wing economics with social conservatism, while the economic right remains the champion of pro-democratic social liberalism (Kitschelt 1992, Marks et al. 2006, Vachudova and Hooghe 2009).

Recent empirical evidence, however, uncovers significant variance of party competition patterns across eastern European countries (Rovny & Edwards 2012). While some systems maintain the expected eastern European competition pattern, other systems reflect a more western structure of competition. Furthermore – akin to the west – some eastern systems compete primarily over economic issues, while others tend to concentrate on socio-cultural matters. Can these patterns of eastern competition be explained by the different communist regime types and democratic transition experiences of the region?

This paper argues to the contrary. It contends that party competition structure in eastern Europe is importantly determined by partisan responses to critical social divides which have survived through the communist era, most importantly the issue of ethnic minority rights. This paper identifies left party responses to ethnic minorities as crucial. Where the main ethnic minority consists of members of the nation that dominated the country under a communist federation, left parties support the ethnic minorities or develop multi-ethnic profiles. This consequently shapes the main conflict lines of the party system, and frames the structure of party competition.

The paper first summarizes the literature on eastern European party competition. Secondly, it presents the evidence of heterogeneity in party competition structure in the region. Thirdly, it develops a theoretical ar-

gument explaining this heterogeneity, generating testable hypothesis. The next section tests these hypotheses using quantitative data from the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys on political parties, covering fourteen eastern European countries: Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia. The next section illustrates the quantitative conclusions by providing qualitative evidence from a number of cases across the region. The final section serves as a conclusion.

Eastern European Party Competition

Literature on political competition after communism has extensively debated the structuring of party contest and party ideology. Both sides of the debate, however, point to sharp distinctions between post-communist party competition and competition in established democracies.

One side of the debate argues that eastern European competition and ideological structuring differs from western Europe due to its lacking social bases, making it unstable, ideologically underspecified and personalistic. This view proceeds from the particular nature of Eastern European democratization which amounted to “a triple transformation affecting all three levels of nationhood, constitution making, as well as the ‘normal politics’ of allocation” (Offe 2004: 507). Consequently, a number of scholars argue that Eastern Europeans not only lack experience with the political process, they also lack clear political preferences associated with their socio-economic outlooks which are only forming. Party building is thus dominated by elites, who create political parties only after the first free elections from within parliaments (Kopecky 1995, Agh 1996, Pridham and Lewis 1996, Zielinski 2002, Van Biezen 2003, Webb and White 2007), which leads to fluid, open party systems (Ost 1993, Mair 1997). The ideologically opaque character of Eastern European parties is further deepened by the necessity of economic liberalization, and later by the exigencies of European Union accession, which set the political agenda, circumscribing competition and ideological differentiation (Innes 2002, Grzymala-Busse and Innes 2003). These works sees Eastern European political competition as rather unstructured and fickle.

A growing line of scholarship opposes what they call the *tabula rasa*¹ view of political competition in eastern Europe. It argues that eastern European political competition and ideological structuring is to a surprising degree rooted in social divides that inform voter preferences and translate into party ideologies.² This view, however, also stresses eastern European distinctiveness from the ideological structure of the west. It concentrates on studying how previous communist regime types and the transition process structure political competition in eastern European countries (Kitschelt 1995, Markowski 1997, Kitschelt et. al. 1999, Vachudova 2005, 2008a).

These works tend to divide eastern Europe into groups. The democratic success stories – the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovenia – were able to consolidate state institutions and carry out successful political transition with fast marketization, leading to party competition over socio-economic outlooks (Evans and Whitefield 1993, Kitschelt 1995, Tavits and Letki 2009). The intermediate category – Estonia and Latvia – managed to marketize, but ethnic heterogeneity retained the potential of trumping social class in the formation of political competition (Evans and Whitefield 1993). Finally, the democratic laggards – Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and to a lesser extent Slovakia – initially failed to transfer power to democratic elites and to fully marketize, which gave rise to opposition between populist authoritarians and liberal democrats (Vachudova 2005, 2008).

This line of research thus concludes that eastern European political competition can be meaningfully captured by placing eastern European political parties on two axes: 1) economic left-right, and 2) social liberalism—social conservatism (Kitschelt 1992, Kitschelt 1995, Marks et al. 2006, Vachudova

¹see Kitschelt (1995).

²Extensive research by Evans and Whitefield concludes that “[t]here is considerable evidence that post-communist societies contain structured social and ideological divisions, that social factors – especially age, education, religion, ethnicity, and occupational class – significantly shape ideological perspectives, and that voters choose parties that in large measure programmatically reflect their interests.” (Whitefield 2002: 191, Evans and Whitefield 1993, 1998, 2000). Others stress the significance of different social cleavages, such as ethnicity (Bunce 2003) or center-periphery (Mudde 2005). Whitefield and Rohrschneider (2009) emphasize the stability of eastern European political competition, concluding that there is no evidence of ideological de-alignment or realignment, and that eastern European parties “fulfill the conditions of representational consistency...” (ibid.: 686).

& Hooghe 2009). However – although arguing for structure – these scholars also views political competition in eastern Europe as homogeneously different from that in the west. In the west, left-wing economics coincide with social liberalism. In the east, the left’s association with communist authoritarianism connects the economic left with social conservatism, which – depending on the nature of the communist regime – may lead to cooperation between left-wing and nationalist parties (Ishiyama 1998). The economic right, on the other hand, combines market liberalization with democratic opposition to communist rule, giving it socially liberal outlooks. Political competition in the east is almost a mirror image of the competition in the West (Kitschelt 1992, Marks et al. 2006, Vachudova & Hooghe 2009).

Diverging Patterns of Party Competition in Eastern Europe

The view that eastern European party competition is a mirror image of the west is, however, challenged by recent empirical evidence. The 2006 and 2010 iterations of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey show a number of distinctive competition patterns across eastern Europe, which can be summarized into five groups (Rovny & Edwards 2012).

Figures 1-5 in the appendix present the party systems in each country. They depict the placement of political parties (where vote > 3%), together with the axis of competition. The axis of competition (which is the line of best fit) summarizes the primary conflict line in each system. Where the axis is positive, left-wing economics are connected with social conservatism – the eastern pattern expected by the literature. Where the axis is negative, left-wing economics coincide with social liberalism, which is a pattern typical for western Europe (Marks et al. 2006).

In the first group (Czech Republic and Slovakia), competition occurs mostly along the left-right dimension. In the second group (Hungary, Poland and Lithuania), competition occurs primarily along the socio-cultural dimension, while the right-wing combines social conservatism with left-leaning populism. In group three (Estonia and Latvia), competition is mostly along the economic dimension, but a number of parties champion left-liberal positions. In group four (Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia) competi-

tion occurs almost solely along the socio-cultural dimension, with distinctive social liberal and social conservative party clusters, however the major left-wing parties always belong to the liberal cluster. The final group (Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia) is the only group that exhibits the typical eastern European competition pattern proposed by earlier research. The left is a remnant of communist left-wing authoritarianism, while the right forms a liberal, market-oriented opposition. Strikingly, these competition patterns do not conform to the groups highlighted by the literature, underlining that these competition patterns do not coincide with different communist regime types or transition paths. Why do some left-wing parties espouse socially liberal views contrary to expectations? What can explain the variance in party competition structure across eastern Europe?

Explaining Patterns of Party Competition in Eastern Europe

This paper argues that party competition structure in eastern Europe is importantly determined by party responses to critical social divides. Communism clearly reshaped historical socio-economic structures of society. Simultaneously – as witnessed by the debates around Czechoslovak separation, and more tragically by the Yugoslav wars – communism strikingly conserved pre-existing cultural, ethnic and religious differences. In some cases, these cleavages come to play prominent role in political contests in eastern Europe, and party responses to them are critically formative.

Ethnicity has arguably been the most influential socio-cultural divide in eastern European politics. Ethnic identity is a cornerstone of “the most fundamental level,” of a political system at which “a ‘decision’ must be made as to who ‘we’ are; that is, a decision on identity, citizenship and the territorial as well as social and cultural boundaries of the nation-state” (Offe 2004: 505). While communism pretended to remove ethnic considerations, it effectively preserved or even exacerbated ethnic diversity by changing patterns of ethnic settlement, and by providing various opportunities for ethnic mobilization (Roeder 1991). Furthermore, the collapse of three communist federations – Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia – heightened the salience of ethnicity as basis for the definition of nation-state boundaries,

as well as domestic politics.

Yet the systemic consequences of party response to the ethnic cleavage have been understudied. The ethnic issue has been generally framed as detracting from the democratic development of east European party systems, since it provides particularistic, rather than ideological basis for party support (Kitschelt 1995, Evans and Whitefield 1993). Ethnicity has, however, come to frame the ideological profiles of a number of parties, including the mainstream. Yet there is no satisfactory framework for understanding these ideological developments.

An influential set of studies has focused on the response of the mainstream left, which has – after all – dominated east European politics throughout the communist era. John Ishiyama (1995, 2006), studying communist successor parties, outlines a number of political strategies of the post-communist left. These are: either to embrace change and develop into modern social democratic parties (reformists), to abandon communism but stay true to marxist principles and become western-like radical left parties (liberals), or to remain unreformed status quo parties (standpatters). While these strategies say nothing about partisan response to ethnicity, Ishiyama's later works (1998, 2009) note that unreformed 'standpatter' parties often engage the ethnic issue and adopt nationalist profiles in order to distinguish themselves from their past communist identity (1998: 79). The explanation, according to Ishiyama, lies in the nature of the communist regime. Vachudova (2008a, 2008b, 2005: 52-3) similarly observes that numerous left-wing parties exploit the nationalist issue, by "[warning] that the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity were under threat from ethnic minorities and neighboring states. They encouraged individuals to blame their economic hardships on the rapaciousness of ethnic minorities..." Yet these calls are reported from parties in Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, which did not share the same communist regime type. Other studies suggest that left-wing parties in other eastern European countries embrace minority rights, by either becoming explicit defenders of specific ethnic minorities or by adopting multi-ethnic profiles (Jou 2010, Krasovec and Lajh 2009, Pickering and Baskin 2008). ?

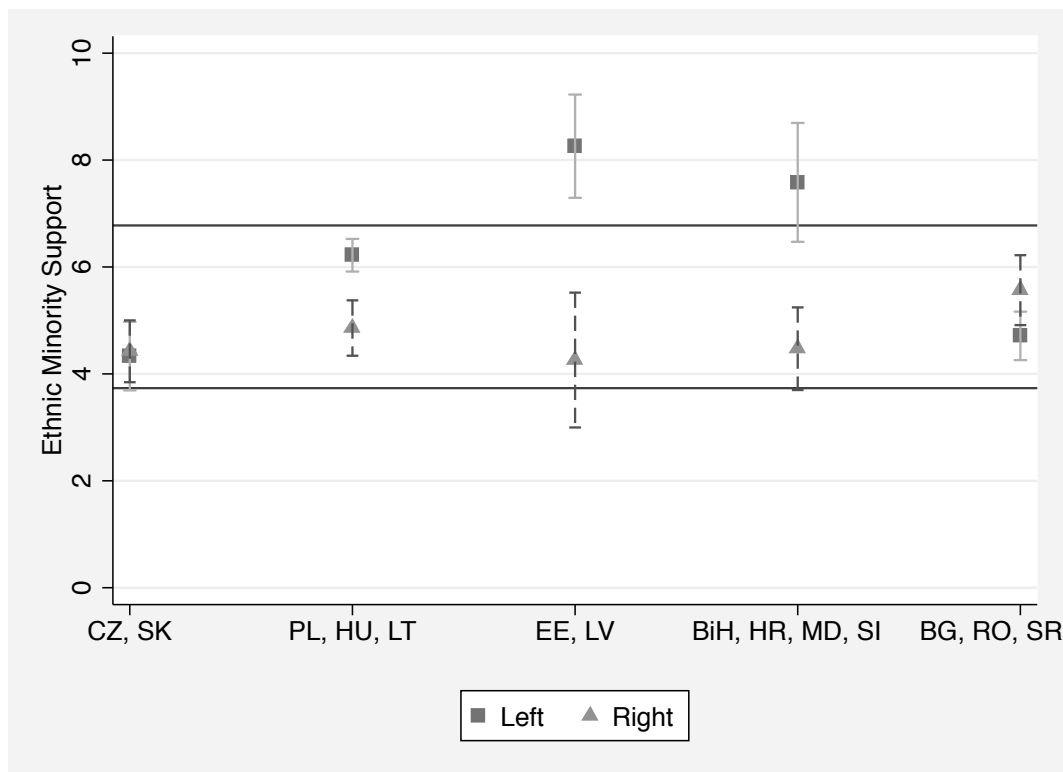


Figure 1: Ethnic minority support by left and right parties over country groups

Mean positions with 95% confidence intervals, weighted by vote. Left parties are communist, radical left or socialist. Right parties are liberal, conservative, Christian democratic or agrarian. See Table 5 for details. Chapel Hill Expert Surveys.

Figure 1 depicts the variance in ethnic minority support across left- and right-wing parties over the five country groups discussed earlier.³ Two groups immediately stand out. In groups 3 (Estonia and Latvia) and 4 (Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia), left-wing parties are significantly more supportive of ethnic minorities than right-wing parties. In ad-

³Left parties are defined as communist, radical left or socialist. Right parties are defined as liberal, conservative, Christian democratic or agrarian. See Table 5 in the appendix for details. Radical right parties are deliberately excluded since they tend to stand on the left of the economic spectrum in eastern Europe. When aggregating party positions, I weight them by vote. This reflects the assumption that electorally larger parties have greater impact on political competition (see Marks et al. 2006).

dition, these left parties stand out of the central band where the majority (50%) of parties are located. What explains this diversity of responses to the ethnic minority issue on the part of left-wing parties?

I argue that two factors determine left-party response to ethnic minority issue. The first factor is ethnic fragmentation. The level of ethnic fragmentation is likely to determine the salience of the ethnic minority issues, and consequently determine whether left parties choose to either ignore or adopt the ethnic minority issue. Where ethnic fragmentation is high, the political salience of ethnicity is likely to be higher, and all parties will likely engage the ethnic issue. On the other hand, countries with low ethnic fragmentation are less likely to face significant political competition over ethnic issues.

Once left parties choose to engage the ethnic minority issue, the critical question is how. Do they support ethnic minorities, or do they rather use the ethnic issue for purposes of nationalistic scapegoating? I argue that this critical decision is not determined by general left party strategies, but rather is a function of left party affinity to the main ethnic group in the country. In cases where the main ethnic minority consists of members of the nation that dominated the country under a communist federation, left parties support the ethnic minorities or develop multi-ethnic profiles. In cases where the main ethnic minority does not consist of members of nations that dominated the country in a communist federation, left parties adopt nationalist stances and use the ethnic minority issue for strategic purposes.

The affinity between left parties and ethnic minorities originating from the communist federal center stems from multiple sources. A number of these left parties originated from the communist party, which existed under the communist regime, and merged support from members of both nationalities – the local and the one from the federal center. At the time of communist collapse, and the disintegration of communist federations, the left parties from the federal ‘periphery’ generally supported local autonomy, often breaking with the federal communist party in favor of more reformist policies. Given their ethnic affinity, these left parties became *the* organizational platform for nationals from the federal center, which suddenly turned

into ethnic minorities in a newly formed state. On the other hand, while the local ethnic elites of these left-wing parties generally favored national autonomy, or even independence from the federation, their secessionism was generally motivated by cultural liberalization and political reform, rather than by ethnic nationalism. Consequently, many of the left-wing parties from countries where the main ethnic minority is made up of nationals originating from the old communist federal center espouse left-wing economic platforms together with multi-ethnic, pro-minority social liberalism.

This is the opposite in countries where the main ethnic minorities belong to other nationalities. In these cases, the minorities often originate from countries which dominated or threatened the local majority nation in the pre-communist past. Simultaneously, these minorities do not have any particular connection to the local left-wing parties. Facing the stigmatization of left-wing ideology after the collapse of communism, while not having an ethnic minority whose support could be a liberalizing source, these left parties embrace left-wing nationalism and authoritarianism as a new political strategy.

H1 : Left parties in countries where the main ethnic minority originates from the center of a communist federation are more supportive of ethnic minorities as ethnic fragmentation increases. Left parties from countries with other ethnic minorities are, on the contrary, less supportive of ethnic minorities as ethnic fragmentation increases.

This dynamic is system-defining. Where left-wing parties take up the cause of ethnic minorities from dissolved communist federations, the right-wing parties tend to espouse social conservatism in the form of nationalism, aimed at ethno-linguistic preservation of the local nation (see Hanley 2004: 14). In countries with other minorities, where the left adopts nationalist social conservatism, the right-wing forms the pro-market, pluralist opposition, embracing social liberalism and – to a limited degree – support for ethnic minority rights. In these countries, the issue of ethnic minority rights may be additionally taken up by explicitly ethnic minority parties, which tend to hold center-right economic positions (see Ishiyama and Breuning 1998).

H2 : In countries where the main ethnic minority originates from the center of a communist federation, left parties tend to support ethnic minorities, while right parties tend to be less supportive. In countries with other ethnic minorities the relationship is the opposite: left parties tend to be less supportive of ethnic minorities than right-wing parties.

This ultimately shapes the main conflict line in each country, determining the competition axis. The position on ethnic minority issues is closely associated with general liberal-authoritarian outlooks of political parties. Parties that support ethnic minorities tend to be socially liberal, while parties less committed to ethnic minority rights tend to be socially conservative. Consequently, the relative differences in left- versus right-wing ethnic minority support thus determine the structure of party competition, on the systemic level, as measured by the competition axis.

H3 : The relative differences in left- versus right-wing ethnic minority support determine the axis of competition.

Analyses and Results

This section tests the above theoretical claims using quantitative indicators of party positioning from the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys. It demonstrates that the structure of party competition, measured by the slope of the competition axis, is determined by the relative support for ethnic minorities across left- and right-wing parties. Left party minority support is in turn determined by the interaction between ethnic fragmentation and the origins of minorities in the country. The section first presents descriptive statistics on the dependent and key independent variables before turning to inferential analyses.

Table 1 summarizes the key determinants of the competition axis. The table highlights the expected relationships between the variables. In countries where the main minority comes from the federal center of a communist federations, left parties are more supportive of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, in these countries the competition axis tends to be negative – connecting left-wing economic views with social liberalism. On the contrary, in

Table 1: Summary of the Determinants of Competition Axis Slope

Country	Ethnic Fragmentation	Main Minority from Communist Federation	Left-wing Ethnic Minority Support	Right-wing Ethnic Minority Support	Major Left Ethnic Minority Support	Major Right Ethnic Minority Support	Competition Axis Slope
Czech Rep	0.32	0	4.68	4.17	5.00	3.88	0.16
Slovakia	0.25	0	3.88	5.15	3.70	5.13	0.20
Total	0.28 (0.03)	0 (0)	4.28 (0.78) <i>N</i> = 8	4.66 (0.92) <i>N</i> = 14	4.35 (0.99) <i>N</i> = 4	4.50 (1.17) <i>N</i> = 4	0.18 (0.24)
Hungary	0.10	0	6.12	5.09	6.12	4.60	2.35
Lithuania	0.35	0	6.45	5.59	6.12	4.67	0.57
Poland	0.03	0	6.71	5.19	6.63	4.52	0.76
Total	0.18 (0.15)	0 (0)	6.49 (0.36) <i>N</i> = 9	5.30 (0.46) <i>N</i> = 22	6.29 (0.44) <i>N</i> = 6	4.58 (0.48) <i>N</i> = 8	1.05 (0.91)
Estonia	0.52	1	6.51	4.31	6.51	3.54	-0.34
Latvia	0.61	1	8.74	3.98	8.89	4.79	-0.13
Total	0.58 (0.04)	1 (0)	7.99 (1.15) <i>N</i> = 6	4.13 (0.19) <i>N</i> = 13	7.70 (1.38) <i>N</i> = 4	4.29 (1.22) <i>N</i> = 5	-0.20 (0.25)
Bosnia	0.70	1	9.17	3.54	9.17	5.17	-0.72
Croatia	0.33	1	8.20	6.74	8.20	4.28	0.05
Macedonia	0.51	0	4.80	4.00	4.80	3.00	-1.13
Slovenia	0.09	1	7.48	4.34	7.48	3.40	-0.80
Total	0.30 (0.21)	0.88 (0.32)	7.56 (1.49) <i>N</i> = 6	5.09 (1.34) <i>N</i> = 27	7.56 (1.49) <i>N</i> = 6	3.92 (0.84) <i>N</i> = 6	-0.52 (1.15)
Bulgaria	0.22	0	5.07	5.80	5.07	4.81	0.48
Romania	0.25	0	4.32	4.57	4.32	5.24	0.67
Serbia	0.42	0	5.00	7.52	5.00	4.89	1.33
Total	0.27 (0.07)	0 (0)	4.76 (0.46) <i>N</i> = 5	5.78 (1.05) <i>N</i> = 20	4.76 (0.46) <i>N</i> = 5	5.00 (0.42) <i>N</i> = 5	0.70 (0.35)
Total	0.29 (0.18)	0.32 (0.47)	6.17 (1.70) <i>N</i> = 34	5.09 (1.07) <i>N</i> = 96	6.20 (1.66) <i>N</i> = 25	4.45 (0.85) <i>N</i> = 28	0.32 (0.97)

Means measures. Standard deviations in parentheses.

countries with other ethnic minorities, left parties are less supportive. In these countries the competition axis tends to be positive, connecting left-wing economics with social conservatism.

To test H1, concerning left party ethnic minority support, I conduct a regression analysis predicting left party minority support with an interaction between ethnic fragmentation and the origin of the main ethnic minority. The model controls for left party strategies as defined by Ishiyama (2006)⁴, and employs cluster corrected standard errors in order to adjust for party clustering within national party systems. Figure 2 summarizes the main results of the model graphically, while the details are available in Table 2 in the appendix.

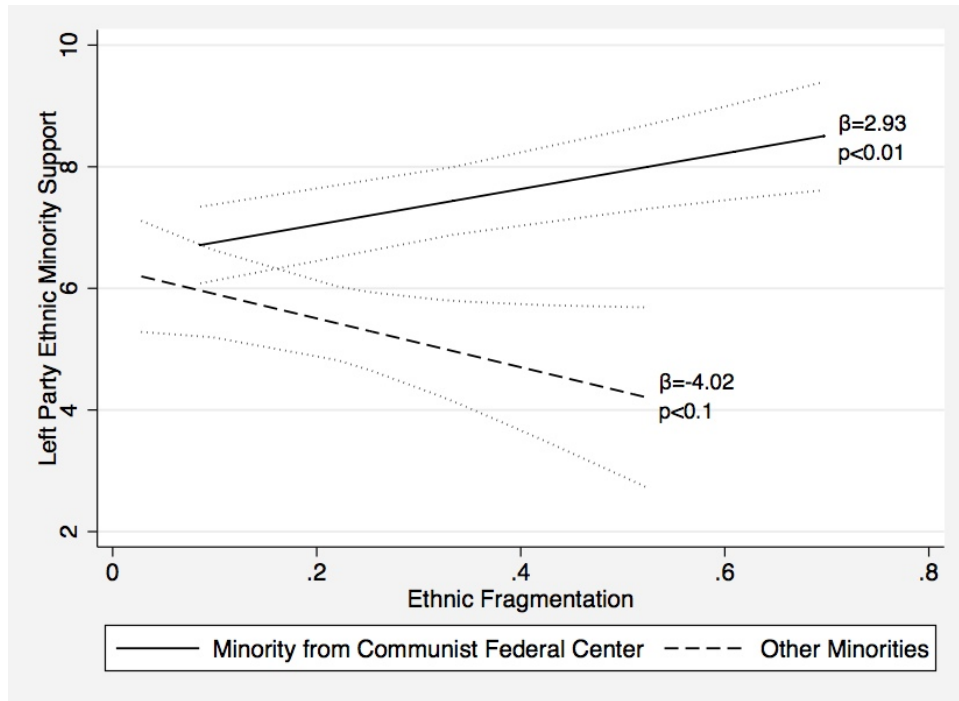


Figure 2: Predicting Left Party Ethnic Minority Support

Figure 2 provides evidence supporting H1. Left parties from countries

⁴These are dummy variables that capture whether a party followed a ‘liberal’, ‘reformist’ or ‘standpatter’ strategy or whether it is not a communist successor party.

with ethnic minorities originating from communist federal centers are overall more supportive of ethnic minorities than left parties from countries with other minorities. In addition, left parties from countries with ethnic minorities from communist federal centers significantly increase their support for ethnic minorities with ethnic fragmentation. Thus in highly fragmented societies with minorities from communist federal centers, left parties become champions of ethnic minority rights. This is the opposite in countries with other ethnic minorities. As fragmentation increases, these parties become less supportive of ethnic minorities, rather using the ethnic card for strategic courting of the majority population.⁵

To test H2, concerning the relative support for ethnic minorities between left- and right-wing, I conduct a regression analysis predicting party minority support with an interaction between economic left-right positioning and the origin of the main ethnic minority. Since this model is not dealing with only left parties, it controls for different types of communist regime as defined by Kitschelt (1995) and Kitschelt et al. (1999)⁶. Additionally, the model controls for the speed of transition from communism, modeled as the year the country was rated ‘free’ by Freedom House. The model again employs cluster corrected standard errors in order to adjust for party clustering within national party systems. Figure 3 summarizes the main results of the model graphically, while the details are available in Table 3 in the appendix.

Figure 3 supports H2 by demonstrating that in countries with ethnic minorities originating from communist federal centers, economically left-wing parties are significantly more supportive of minority rights than right-wing parties. The inverse is true in countries with other minorities. Furthermore, the figure shows that left-wing parties in countries with ethnic minorities originating from communist federal centers champion minority rights significantly more than left-wing parties from countries with other minorities. Similarly, right-wing parties from countries with ethnic minorities originat-

⁵ Although the latter partial slope is significant only at the 0.1 level, this result is likely caused by the limited number of cases in the analysis ($N = 34$).

⁶ The communist regime types are either bureaucratic-authoritarian, national or patrimonial.

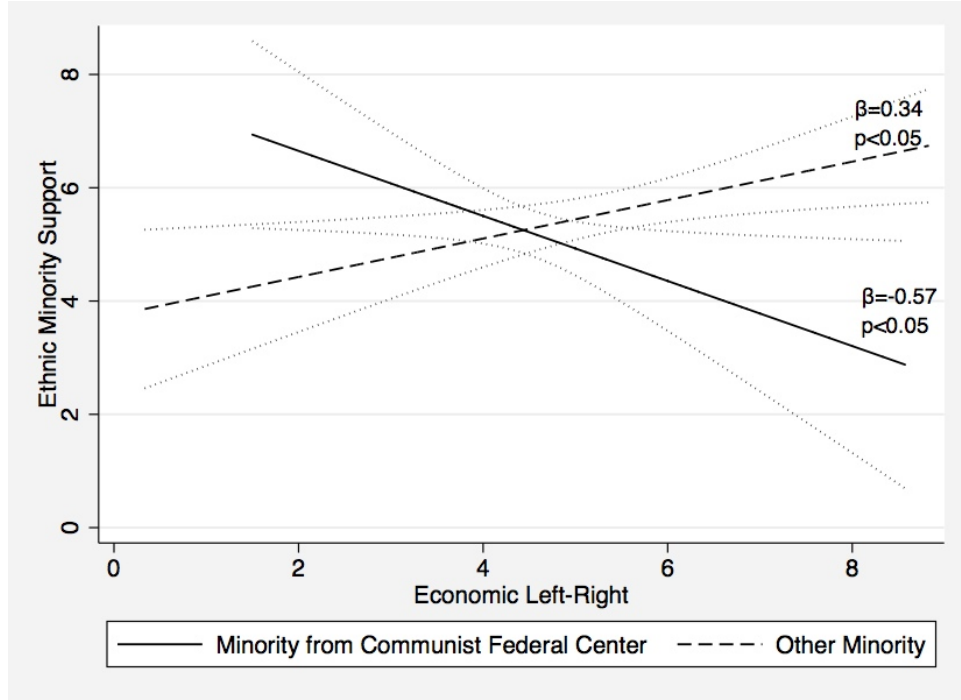


Figure 3: Predicting Left- and Right-Wing Ethnic Minority Support

ing from communist federal centers support ethnic minority rights significantly less than right-wing parties from countries with other ethnic minorities. The ethnic minority issue thus spans the political spectrum in predictable patterns, depending on the origin of the main ethnic minority.

Finally, to test the determinants of the structure of political competition as posited by H3, I turn to assess the impact of the differential levels of ethnic minority support across left- and right-wing parties. I conduct a regression analysis predicting the slope of the competition axis with the difference between left- and right-wing party support for ethnic minorities. This difference is calculated by subtracting left party ethnic minority support scores from right party ethnic minority support scores. The model controls for different communist regime types, as well as the speed of post-communist transition, while employing cluster corrected standard errors in order to adjust for party clustering within national party systems. Figure 4

summarizes the main results of the model graphically, while the details are available in Table 4 in the appendix.

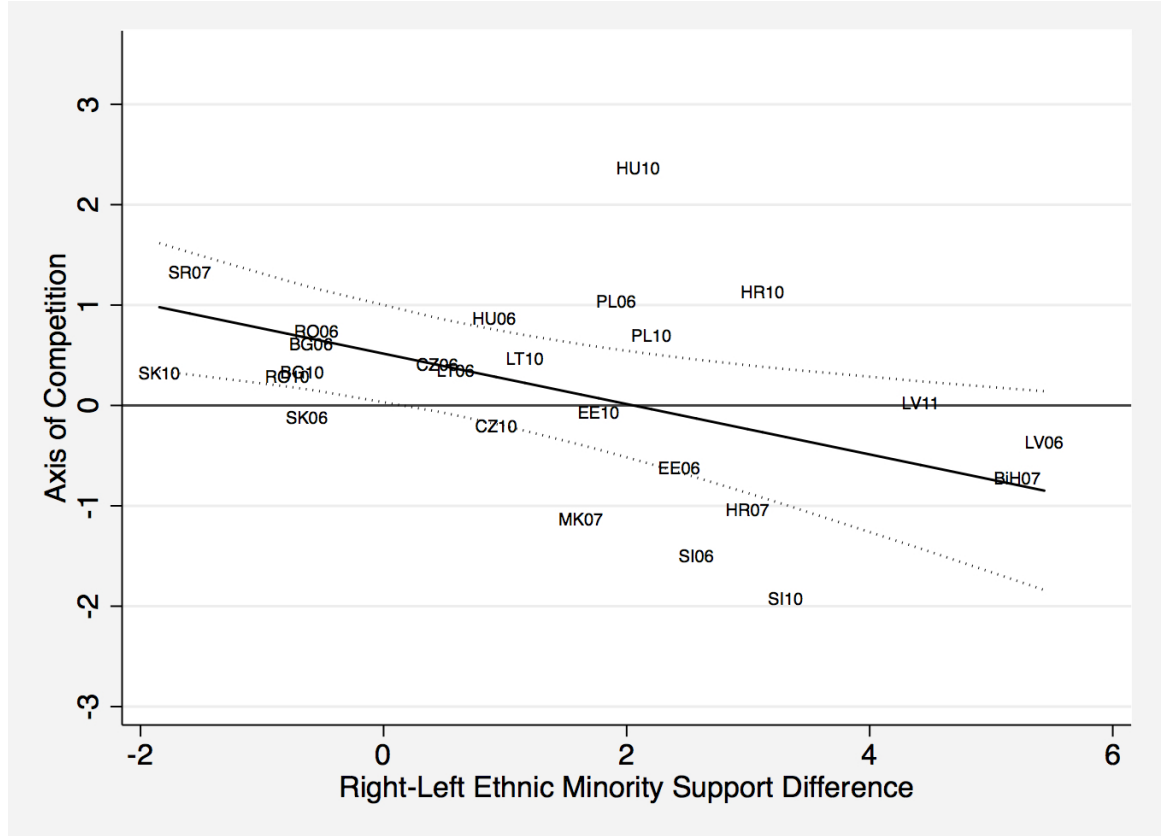


Figure 4: Predicting the Axis of Party Competition

The model summarized in Figure 4 supports H3. Where right-wing parties are more supportive of ethnic minority rights than left-wing parties (lower values on the x-axis), the slope of the party competition axis is greater. In these countries, right-wing parties espouse social liberalism while left-wing parties are socially conservative. Where left-wing parties are more supportive of ethnic minorities than right-wing parties (higher values on the x-axis), the slope of the party competition axis is smaller, often negative. Here left-wing parties embrace social liberalism while right-wing parties tend to be socially conservative. In the aggregate, partisan approaches to ethnic

minority rights consequently frame the structure of political competition in eastern Europe. The following section illustrates these general findings with specific examples from different countries of the region.

Ethnic Minorities and Patterns of Party Competition

1) The Czech Republic and Slovakia

In the Czech Republic, ethnic minority issues play minimal role in political competition. Although the communist successor party (KSCM) adopted some nationalist chauvinism in the 1990s (Hanley 2002: 153), as my theoretical model would expect, the party was replaced as the major left-wing alternative in the 1992 elections by the social-democratic CSSD. CSSD has traditionally held more socially liberal positions in line with western social-democratic parties. Ethnic minority rights are, nonetheless, peripheral to its profile. It competes with the right-wing parties primarily over economic issues, resulting in a flat competition axis.

In Slovakia, the ethnic minority issue is significantly more salient. Although Slovakia separated from the Czechoslovak federation, its main ethnic minority does not come from the Czech federal center, but is Hungarian. The dynamic of separation allowed the Slovak ex-communist SDL to break with communism, and adopt socially liberal leanings. This ideological development, leading the SDL to cooperate with the liberal right-wing opposition (Fisher 2002), however, created frictions within the party, fomenting the party's split. The breakaway Smer party eclipsed its social-democratic parent through nationalist scapegoating of the Hungarian minority, combining left-wing economics with anti-Hungarian rhetoric, while coalescing with radical nationalist parties. Center-right ethnic Hungarian parties are the supporters of minority rights in cooperation with the Slovak right-wing mainstream. Consequently, the Slovak pattern of party competition has been defined by nationalist left and socially liberal right.

2) Poland and Hungary

Poland and Hungary are among the most ethnically homogeneous countries considered in this study. Consequently, the question of domestic ethnic mi-

norities is very low on the political agenda.⁷ In the absence of significant ethnic minorities, the pattern of political competition in these two countries is primarily framed by a historical tradition of Christian nationalism. While the Polish and Hungarian ex-communist parties espoused reformism (Bozoki 2002, Markowski 2002, Ziolo 2009), the communist opposition opted for traditionalist social conservatism and populism. This places the ‘right’-wing to the economic left of the communist successor parties, but on the conservative side of the socio-cultural divide. Given the minimal role that the domestic ethnic minority issue plays in Poland and Hungary, these two cases are not well captured by my theoretical model. The model is insufficient in explaining why some right-wing parties adopt left-leaning populist economic platforms.

3) *Estonia and Latvia*

Ethnic minority issues have dominated the political life in Estonia and Latvia since these countries regained independence from the Soviet Union. The Soviet era saw a significant increase in the Russian ethnics arriving to these republics from the federal center, making the countries among the most ethnically heterogenous. The collapse of the Soviet federation critically formed the left-wing parties in these countries. The opening of the Soviet regime through Perestroika and Glasnost in the late 1980s loosened Moscow’s grip over local communists, while also allowing the formation of autonomist Popular Fronts in both countries. Strikingly, many of the members of these movements were also members of the communist party (Taagepera 1993: 135). This liberalizing impetus in the local communist parties eventually propelled a split between pro- and anti-Moscow factions (Ishiyama and Breuning 1998: 86). In Latvia, the party split was more strictly along ethnic lines, with Russian nationals supporting a hardline pro-Moscow stance, embodied in the Latvian Communist Party (ibid.: 87). Although banned after the 1991 Moscow coup, the party regrouped as the Latvian Socialist Party, which eventually joined the Harmony Center (SC) party – the major left-

⁷The question of extra-territorial Hungarian minorities is, on the other hand, a major political topic in Hungary.

wing pro-Russian minority party in Latvia today. The right has conversely defended Latvian as the only state language while promoting a strict definition of Latvian citizenship, frequently viewed as discriminatory. Only later successes of neo-liberal right-wing parties have reduced the pugnancy of the ethnic tensions (Zake 2002). Unlike its Latvian counterpart, the Estonian Communist Party inherited a reformist outlook, establishing more of a multi-ethnic profile with a reconciliatory stance towards Estonian independence (Ishiyama and Breuning 1998: 87). Although rendered electorally marginal, the party infused Estonian left-wing politics with a multi-ethnic character – a stance taken up by the Estonian Social Democrats today (SDE website). With the left supportive of ethnic minority rights while the right asserts Baltic ethno-linguistic primacy, the axis of party competition in Estonia and Latvia tends to be negative.

4) Croatia and Slovenia

The Yugoslav federation was dominated by the Serbs, who also constituted the conservative vanguard of the communist regime, practically blocking all reform proposals. This eventually led the Slovenes to walk out of a Communist party congress in 1990, precipitating the federal breakdown (Bebler 1993). The separation process produces two consequences. First, the left-wing parties are able to detach themselves from the communist legacy, associated with the Serbian federal center. As these Balkan countries descend into ethnic war, the left retains a multi-ethnic character. In 1990, only 52% of the Croatian SDP members are ethnic Croats, and during the war, the SDP provides a social democratic option for an electorate which does not prioritize ethnicity or religion (Pickering and Baskin 2008). In Slovenia, the left begins to cooperate with the Socialist International and swiftly emulates the ideological positions of the Party of European Socialists (Krasovec and Lajh 2009). In both Slovenia and Croatia, the left is supported by the young, educated and urban populations (Jou 2010). Second, the major right in these countries combines anti-communism with separatist nationalism. This is particularly pronounced in Croatia where the right-wing HDZ became “defined by ethnic nationalism and struggle for the nation,” before

it reformed into a more mainstream conservative party (Vachudova 2008b: 399). The intensity of ethnic conflict in the region frames political competition along the socio-cultural dimension, effectively between two blocks of parties divided by their views on ethnicity and nationhood. The left parties are invariably on the pro-ethnic socially liberal side, producing a negatively sloping competition axis.

5) Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia

Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia exemplify the eastern pattern of political competition expected by the literature. With weak and fragmented communist opposition, local communist parties manage to cling to power past 1989, without severing old-time patronage networks (Ziblatt and Biziouras 2002). To legitimize their continued rule and rejuvenate their ideological profiles, left-wing ex-communists rekindle ethnic nationalism, turning against the local ethnic minorities (Turks, Hungarians, Albanians) that originate from countries which dominated the region in the pre-communist past (Ishiyama 1998, Ishiyama and Bozoki 2002, Brankovic 2002, Vachudova 2005, Pop-Eleches 2008). The left thus remains weighed down by authoritarian nationalist outlooks, while the right opposes these positions, resulting in a positively sloped competition axis.

Conclusion

Eastern European parties have been expected to combine ideological views in opposite ways than the party systems in the West. While in the west left-wing parties espouse social liberalism, right-wing parties tend to be socially conservative, resulting in a negative competition axis. In the east, the experience of communist left-wing authoritarianism was expected to combine left-wing economics with social conservatism while the right joins market-oriented economics with pro-democratic social liberalism. Empirical evidence, however, suggests that eastern European patterns of party competition are much more varied. While some left-wing parties remain socially conservative, others have adopted strikingly liberal socio-cultural views, resulting in party competition structure akin to the west.

This paper explains this variance in eastern patterns of party competition by studying partisan responses to the issue of ethnic minority rights. Ethnicity is a critical social cleavage in eastern Europe, one that survived through the communist era, and resurfaced in the 1990s to importantly frame eastern party systems. The paper demonstrates that in countries where the main ethnic minority originated from the center of a communist federation, there the local left-wing parties have an affinity with the ethnic minority, and consequently adopt political positions favoring minority rights. These left parties become either ethnic defenders of the minority, or they adopt multi-ethnic profiles. Where the main ethnic minority is of other origins, there left-wing parties do not have any specific ethnic affinity that would provide a liberalizing impetus. On the contrary, they have strategic incentives to utilize ethnic nationalism and chauvinism to legitimize and resuscitate their compromised left-wing ideology.

Left-wing response to the ethnic issue is system-forming. Where left-wing parties adopt pro-ethnic minority stances, right-wing parties advocate nationalist positions and *vice versa*. Simultaneously, the ethnic minority issue is closely associated with general socio-cultural outlooks. Parties that support ethnic minorities tend to be socially liberal, while parties less committed to ethnic minority rights tend to be socially conservative. Consequently, the relative commitment to ethnic minority support across the left and the right determines the structure of party competition on the systemic level.

These results suggest that the political consequences of ethnic cleavages in eastern Europe are not solely negative, as suggested by much of the research. In some cases, the presence of significant ethnic minorities can have a liberalizing effect on left-wing parties, leading them to become socially liberal poles of political competition.

While this model provides a powerful explanation of the relative positioning of parties on the socio-cultural dimension, its weakness lies in not being able to predict the economic left-right placement of ‘right’-wing parties. The cases of Poland and Hungary, where the major right-wing parties stand on the economic left of the left-wing, highlight this shortcoming. On

the one hand, these results point to the significance and tenacity of non-economic socio-cultural cleavages in eastern Europe, such as ethnicity, as these divides more easily predict party placement. Economic positions, on the other hand, are much harder to pinpoint, as some nominally right-wing parties espouse economic populism. To complete our understanding on the structure of party competition in eastern Europe, further research should focus on the determinants of economic placements of political parties – particularly those belonging to right-wing party families.

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Appendix

Table 2: Predicting Left Party Ethnic Minority Support
Ethnic Minority Support

Ethnic Fragmentation	-4.017* (1.911)
Minority from Communist Federal Center	0.151 (0.370)
Ethnic Fragmentation * Minority	6.949*** (1.758)
Liberal Strategy	-0.800 (0.817)
Reformist Strategy	-0.964 (0.642)
‘Standpatter’ Strategy	0.360 (0.625)
Constant	6.610*** (0.849)
Observations	34
R^2	0.751

Cluster corrected standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Communist successor strategies defined by Ishiyama (2006).

Baseline is that party is not a communist successor.

Chapel Hill Expert Surveys.

Table 3: Predicting Left- and Right-Wing Party Ethnic Minority Support

	Ethnic Minority Support
Left-Right Placement	0.339** (0.125)
Minority from Communist Federal Center	4.053** (1.351)
Left-Right * Minority	-0.914*** (0.274)
National Communism	1.194*** (0.325)
Patrimonial Communism	0.145 (0.221)
Year Free	0.043 (0.028)
Constant	-83.018 (55.212)
Observations	195
R^2	0.137

Cluster corrected standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

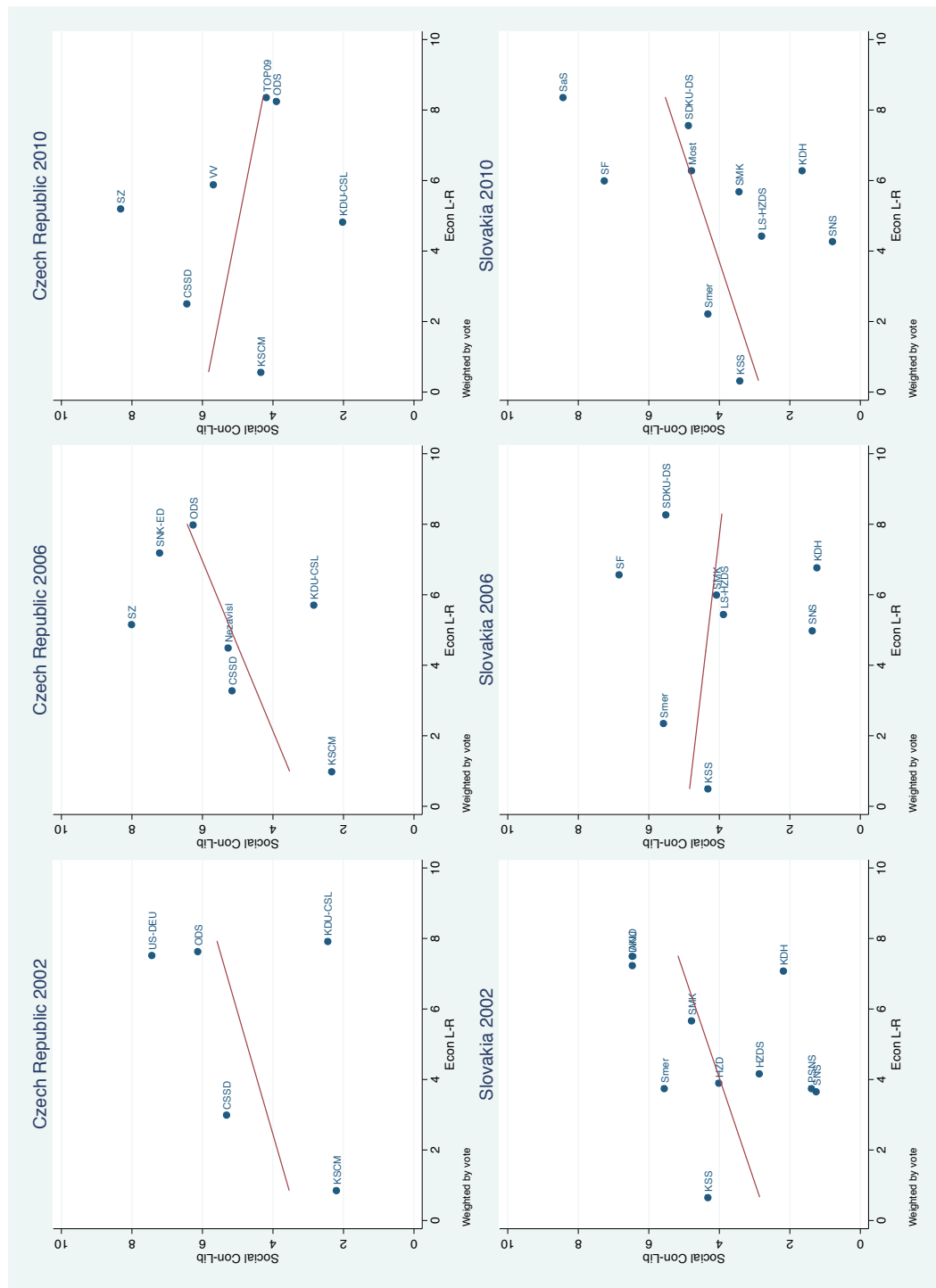


Figure 5: Structure of Party Competition #1

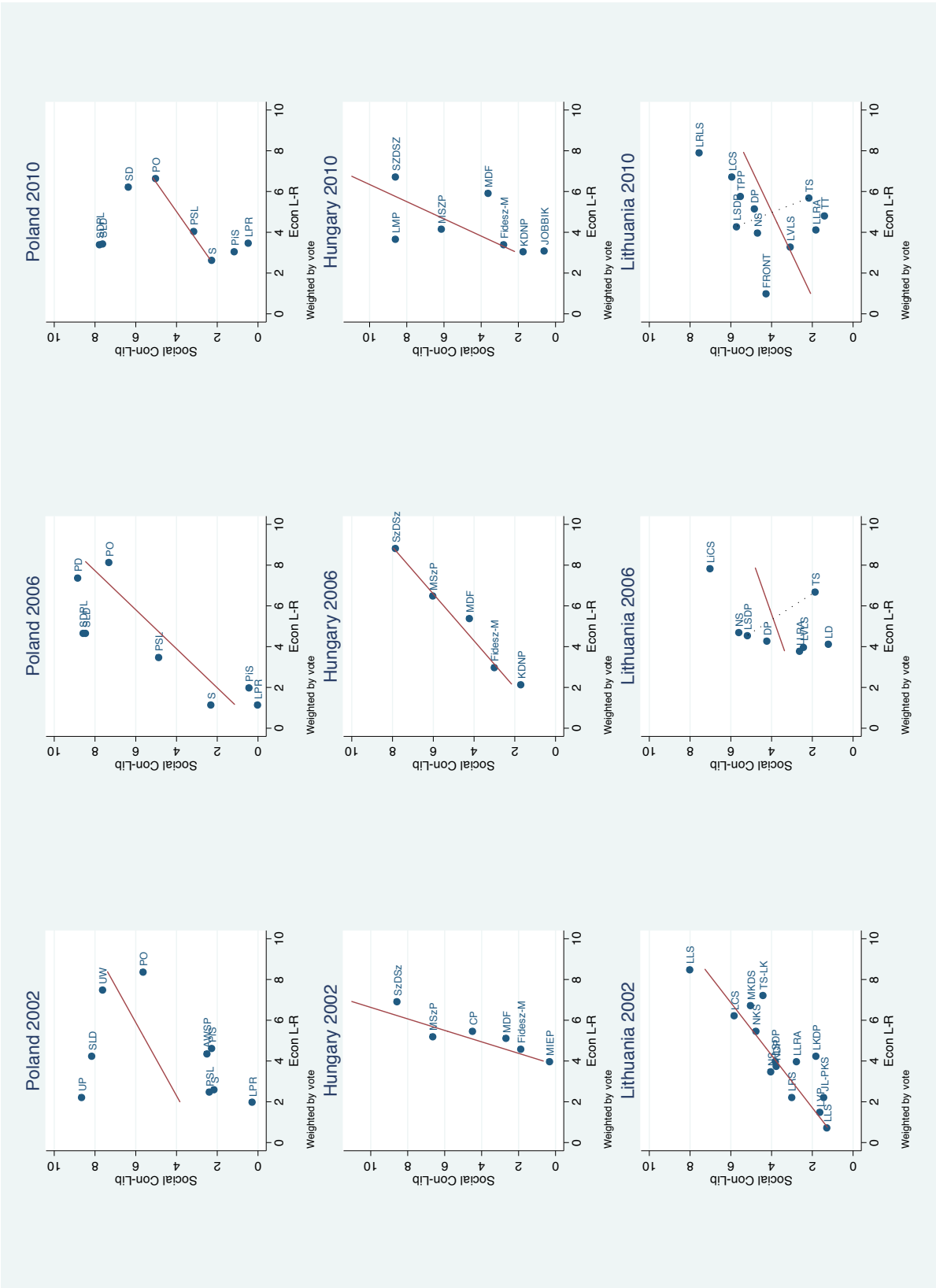
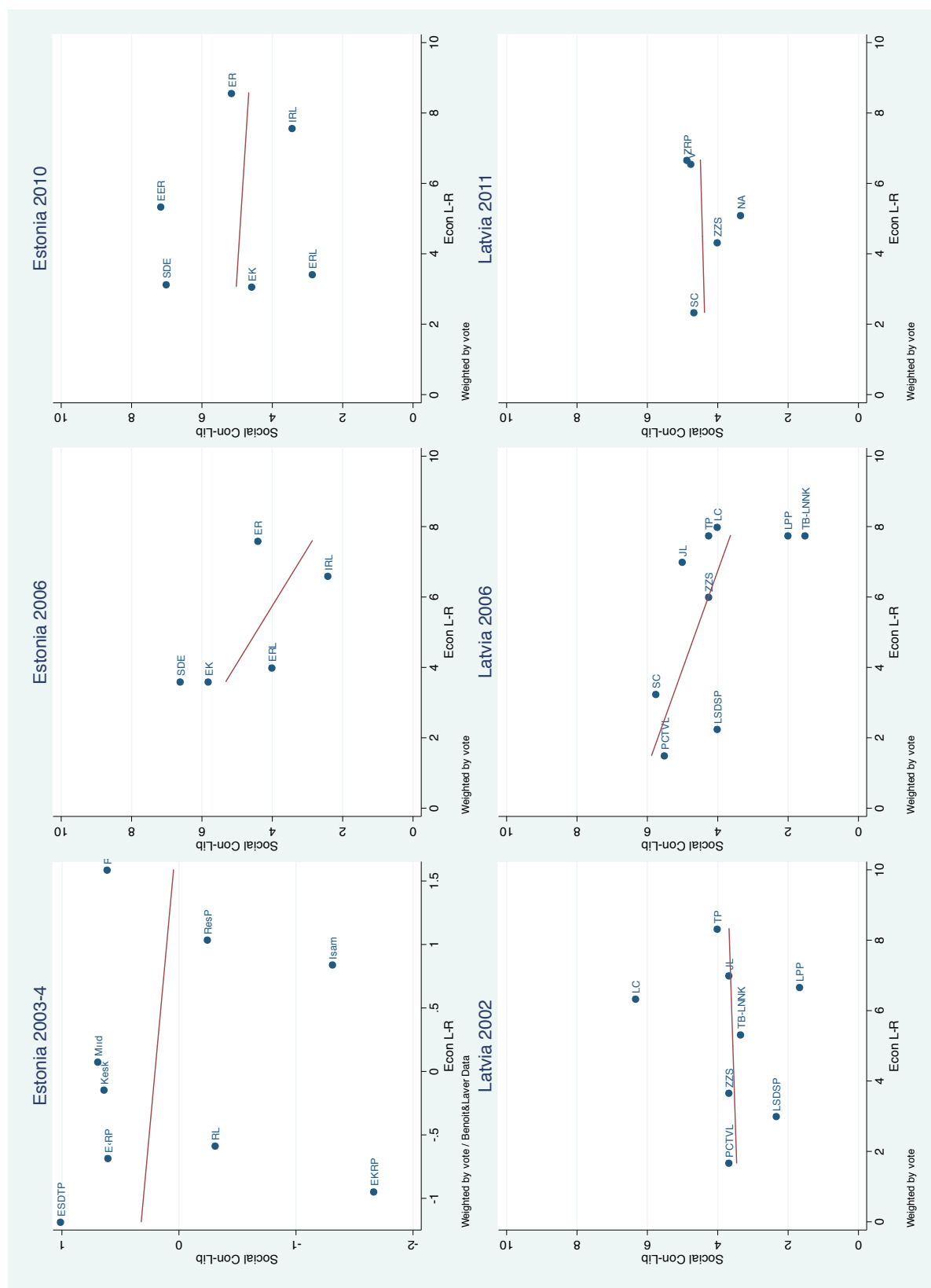


Figure 6: Structure of Party Competition #2



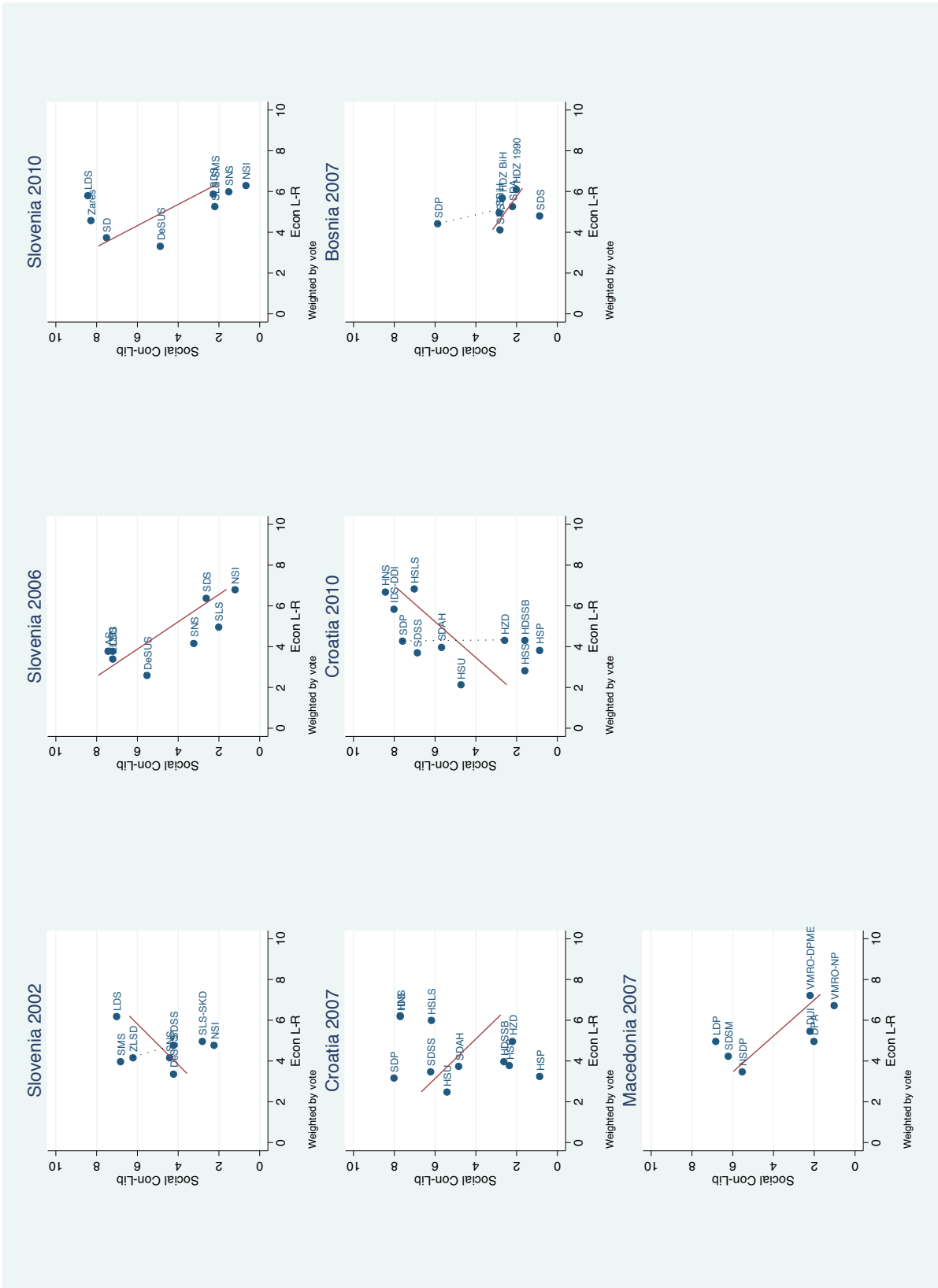


Figure 8: Structure of Party Competition #4

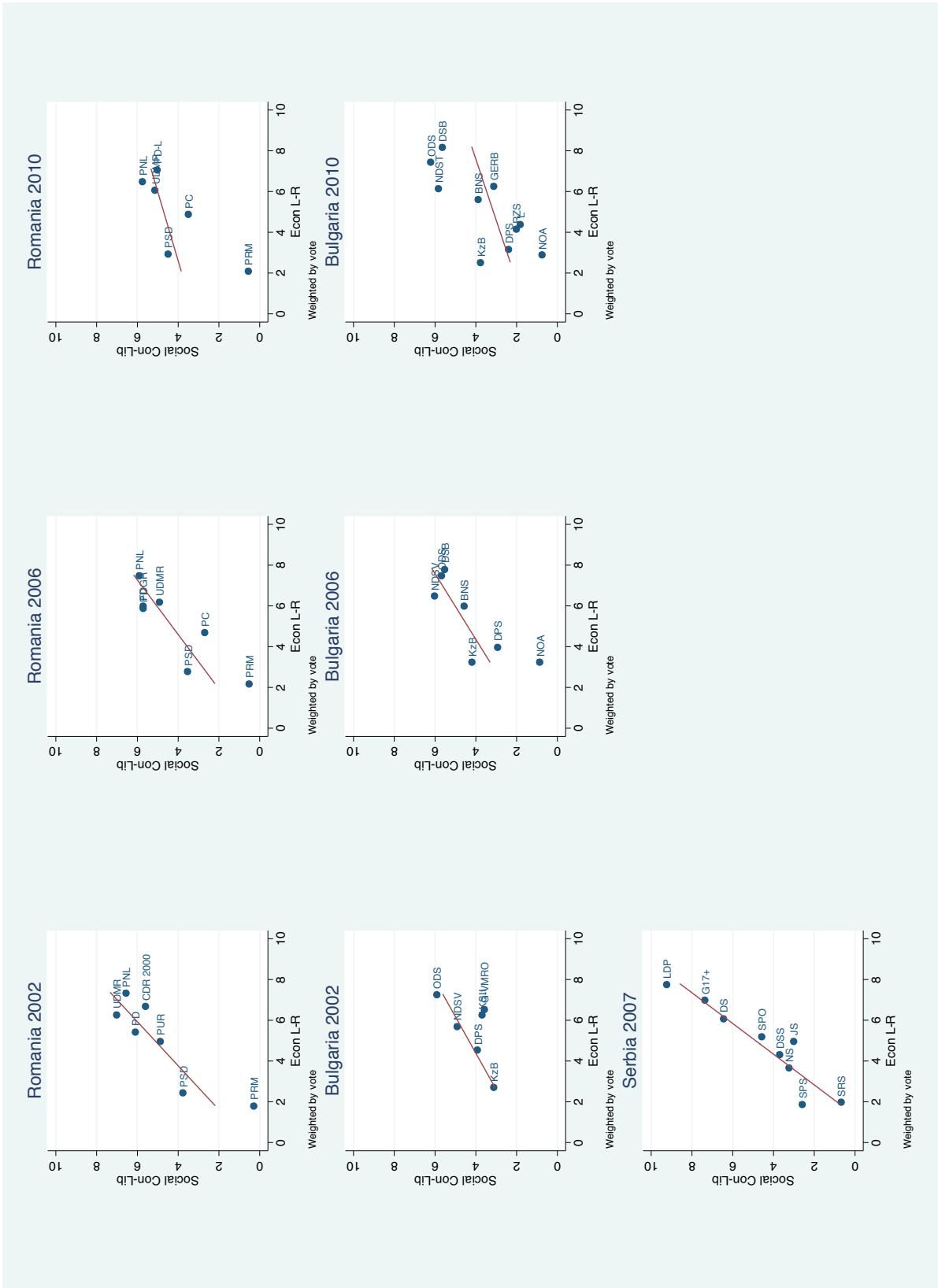


Figure 9: Structure of Party Competition #5

Table 4: Predicting the Axis of Party Competition

	Competition Axis
Right–Left Difference in Ethnic Minority Support	-0.251** (0.083)
National Communism	0.654 (0.378)
Patrimonial Communism	0.391* (0.200)
Year Free	-0.021 (0.028)
Constant	42.055 (54.933)
Observations	25
R^2	0.228

Cluster corrected standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table 5: Party Types

Country	Party	Country	Party
Left-Wing			
Bosnia	SDP*	Lithuania	NDP
Bulgaria	KzB*	Lithuania	FRONT
Croatia	SDP*	Macedonia	SDSM*
Czech Rep	CSSD*	Poland	SLD*
Czech Rep	KSCM	Poland	UP
Estonia	SDE*	Poland	SDPL
Hungary	MSzP*	Romania	PSD*
Latvia	PCTVL*	Serbia	SPS*
Latvia	LSDSP	Slovakia	KSS
Latvia	SC*	Slovakia	Smer*
Lithuania	LSDP*	Slovenia	ZLSD/ SD*
Right-Wing			
Bosnia	HDZ BiH	Lithuania	LiCS
Bosnia	SBiH	Lithuania	LKDP
Bosnia	SDA*	Lithuania	LLS
Bosnia	SDS	Lithuania	MKDS
Bulgaria	DPS	Lithuania	NKS
Bulgaria	DSB	Lithuania	NS
Bulgaria	G-VMRO	Lithuania	TS*
Bulgaria	GERB*	Lithuania	TS-LK*
Bulgaria	NDSV*	Macedonia	LDP
Bulgaria	ODS	Macedonia	VMRO-DPME*
Bulgaria	RZS	Poland	AWSP
Croatia	HNS	Poland	PD
Croatia	HSLs	Poland	PiS*
Croatia	HSS	Poland	PO*
Croatia	HZD*	Poland	SD
Croatia	IDS	Poland	UW
Croatia	IDS-DDI	Romania	CDR 2000
Czech Rep	KDU-CSL	Romania	PC
Czech Rep	ODS*	Romania	PD
Czech Rep	SNK-ED	Romania	PD-L*
Czech Rep	TOP09	Romania	PNL*
Czech Rep	US-DEU	Romania	PUR
Czech Rep	VV	Serbia	DSS*
Estonia	EK	Serbia	G17+
Estonia	ER*	Serbia	LDP
Estonia	IRL	Serbia	SPO
Hungary	Fidesz-M*	Slovenia	LDS
Hungary	KDNP	Slovenia	NSI
Hungary	MDF	Slovenia	SDS*
Hungary	SzDSz	Slovenia	SDSS*
Latvia	LC	Slovenia	SLS
Latvia	LPP	Slovenia	SLS-SKD
Latvia	NA	Slovenia	SLS-SMS
Latvia	TB-LNNK	Slovenia	SNS
Latvia	TP*	Slovenia	Zares
Latvia	V*	Slovakia	ANO
Latvia	ZRP*	Slovakia	KDH
Lithuania	DP	Slovakia	SaS
Lithuania	LCS	Slovakia	SDKU*
Lithuania	LD	Slovakia	SDKU-DS*
		Slovakia	SF