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Europeanization and Political Parties: Towards a Framework for Analysis

Robert Ladrech

Keele European Parties Research Unit
(KEPRU)

Working Paper 7

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ISSN 1475-1569
ISBN 1-899488-39-1

KEPRU Working Papers are published by:

School of Politics, International Relations and the Environment (SPIRE)
Keele University
Staffs
ST5 5BG, UK

tel +44 (0)1782 58 4177/3088/3452
fax +44 (0)1782 58 3592
www.keele.ac.uk/depts/spire/

Editor: Professor Thomas Poguntke (t.poguntke@keele.ac.uk)

KEPRU Working Papers are available via SPIRE's website.

Launched in September 2000, the Keele European Parties Research Unit (KEPRU) was the first research grouping of its kind in the UK. It brings together the hitherto largely independent work of Keele researchers focusing on European political parties, and aims:

- to facilitate its members' engagement in high-quality academic research, individually, collectively in the Unit and in collaboration with cognate research groups and individuals in the UK and abroad;
- to hold regular conferences, workshops, seminars and guest lectures on topics related to European political parties;
- to publish a series of parties-related research papers by scholars from Keele and elsewhere;
- to expand postgraduate training in the study of political parties, principally through Keele's MA in Parties and Elections and the multinational PhD summer school, with which its members are closely involved;
- to constitute a source of expertise on European parties and party politics for media and other interests.

The Unit shares the broader aims of the Keele European Research Centre, of which it is a part. KERC comprises staff and postgraduates at Keele who are actively conducting research into the politics of remaking and integrating Europe.

Convenor KEPRU: Dr Kurt Richard Luther (r.luther@keele.ac.uk)

Dr Robert Ladrech is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Politics, International Relations and the Environment (SPIRE) Keele University.

Introduction¹

Europeanization is a term that has increasingly insinuated itself into the literature on European Union policy-making. In its broadest meaning, it refers to responses by actors - institutional and otherwise - to the impact of European integration. The responses may themselves influence the direction of European integration. Although more precise meanings vary (see below), a common denominator in most uses of the term is the identification of a national-supranational nexus regarding authoritative policy decisions. Consequently, most efforts involve the identification of appropriate levels of analysis, key institutional actors, and policy competence ownership; employing network analogies, etc., all as part of the attempt to label a process of change and adaptation which is understood to be a consequence of the development of the European Union. Within this growing literature, there is practically no mention made of the role of political parties as actors in the integration process, either caught up in this phenomenon, or else as key actors possibly influencing the very nature and direction of change and adaptation by institutions, etc.

On the other hand, political party analysis has only recently begun to acknowledge the European Union as an environment that holds potentially significant consequences for political parties. To date, this literature can be divided into two camps. The first explores attempts to recreate party activity outside the national political system, that is, a focus on party groups in the European Parliament (EP) and the development of transnational party federations. This literature dates from the end of the 1970's, when direct elections to the EP began (e.g. Henig, 1979; Pridham and Pridham, 1981; see Hix and Lord, 1997). The development of the European Union 'system' has often been the implicit dependent variable in this analytical tradition. The second camp focuses on the European policy orientation of individual political parties (e.g., Gaffney, 1996). Whether organised by party family or national political system, this orientation has been characterised by a pronounced descriptive dimension. Domestic determinants of party positions have prevented the generation of truly comparative analyses. In neither of these two approaches are national political parties viewed as actors in the European integration and/or policy process nor as actors affected by this process, apart from instances when the EU has itself become politicized in elections.

¹ This paper will appear in a special issue of *Party Politics* in 2002. An earlier version was presented at Queens University, Belfast, Seminar on Europeanisation in March 2000

National governments are organised on partisan bases, with parties operating at several levels of activity in government and opposition, and national executives, even within the context of inter-governmental bargaining remain party politicians. Consequently, some systematic² framework for the inclusion of party politics into the study of EU policy-making should be able to be constructed. Similarly, political parties have been affected by European integration, not the least of which their operating environments, national political systems, have themselves been transformed by the development and impact of EU policy-making (the 'Europeanization' of domestic politics and policy-making). There is therefore a connection between the two phenomenon, that is, the change and adaptation of national institutions and styles of policy-making and issue agendas by virtue of EU inputs, and the ability of political parties to pursue their traditional functions of representation, legislation and government formation. A rigorous definition of the concept of Europeanization does present an opportunity to systematically analyse political parties as organisations responding to the effects of European integration upon their primary operating arena, the national political system. The aim of this paper is therefore to advance political party analysis by incorporating the impact of the EU on national political systems, and by extension on the behaviour, internal and external, of political parties.

The paper is divided as follows. I will first briefly review the 'Europeanization' terminology before adopting a working definition. I will then attempt to link Europeanization with political party activity. Next, I will proceed to a consideration of the Europeanization of political parties by evaluating the potential impact upon the function of parties, and then onto innovative responses, or empirical evidence of change, by parties. I will conclude by summarising my findings in a framework for the comparative analysis of the Europeanization of political parties.

Europeanization

Europeanization is a term that has become increasingly employed to label or describe a process of transformation, but whether of domestic dynamics as a result of European integration, or of EU institutions themselves, consensus remains unachieved, as witnessed by the sample of definitions below:

- *de jure* transfer of sovereignty to the EU level (Lawton, 1999: 92);
 - sharing of power between national governments and the EU (also labelled by
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- some 'europeification', Andersen & Eliassen, 1993);
- a process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making (Börzel, 1999: 574);
- the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures . . . that formalize interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules (Cowles, Caporaso and Risse, 2001: 4);
- extending the boundaries of the relevant political space beyond the member states (Kohler-Koch, 1999: 15).

Some use interchangeably in the same study terms such as 'impact of Europe', 'impact of Europeanisation' and the impact of European integration (Mair, 2000).

As these excerpts demonstrate, the definition of Europeanization requires further precision in order to be useful as a tool for analysis. One could also say, following Morisi and Morlino (1999), that there are different forms of Europeanization operating at different levels at different times. Nonetheless, one would think that Europeanization has something to do with the penetration of the European dimension into national arenas of politics and policy-making. Hix and Goetz (2000) set out to link the two dimensions, namely that of domestic actors mobilising at the European level and the effect of European integration on domestic systems. Regarding potential change at the domestic level, they suggest 'the other half of the story is how a new institutional arena at the European level impacts on domestic political systems by providing a new 'structure of opportunities' for domestic actors' (12). They elaborate three different types of opportunities for domestic actors, a) exit from the domestic arena by virtue of predicting helpful EU outcomes, b) veto on domestic actions otherwise insurmountable caused by EU outcomes, and c) informational advantage due to links and relationships with European level actors and institutions. This 'opportunity structure is likely to have particular effects on the institutional and input processes in domestic political systems (14). The basic logic articulated by Hix and Goetz does indeed help to frame and systematically analyze the domestic variant of Europeanization, especially in comprehending the strategies of domestic actors in response to EU inputs.

Europeanization has elsewhere been defined as 'an incremental process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making' (Ladrech, 1994). By 'organizational logic' is meant the 'adaptive processes of organisations to a changed or

changing environment'. The emphasis is on the role of organizational adaptation, learning and policy change. Drawing upon this definition, Radaelli (2000) argues that the concept of Europeanization refers to 'a set of processes through which the EU political, social and economic dynamics become part of the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies'. His definition stresses the importance of change in the logic of behaviour, but does not mention organisations *per se*. Nevertheless, the definition accommodates both organisations and individuals. It seems 'sufficiently broad to cover the major interests of political scientists, such as political structure, public policy, identities and the cognitive dimension of politics'. Radaelli further argues what Europeanization is not. It is not convergence – policy or otherwise, although convergence may be one dimension of Europeanization, but it may also produce divergence; it is not harmonisation, as Europeanization may result in regulatory competition, for example; and it is not political integration, as Europeanization is a consequence of European integration. The central insight in the Ladrech/Radaelli definition of Europeanization is the focus on the adaptive response by actors to a changed or changing environment, in particular, the primary environment or arena which has most direct impact on resources, system or organisation maintenance, etc.

As mentioned in the introduction, most academic work in which the term Europeanization is employed involves institutional and policy analysis with a primary focus on domestic political structures. Items for which analysis is aimed include the role of parliaments, strengthened executives, new policy networks and coalitions, administrative innovation, and the effects of European Court of Justice rulings on national legal systems. Bearing in mind our operating definition of Europeanization, it seems clear that what most analysts have been engaged in is precisely to understand the direction and change in the logic of behaviour of institutions and policy entrepreneurs stimulated by advancements in the EU institutional and policy competences. Kohler-Koch's definition specifically draws attention to the extra-national dimension of changed behaviour and new strategies for goal attainment. The Ladrech/Radaelli definition suggests that change may be an incremental process, but in some cases, especially where a dramatic EU input into domestic political systems has occurred, for instance the launch of the single currency, changed or altered patterns of behaviour may be more rapid. Europeanization may be understood much more as a response to a type of challenge, whether of a marginal degree such as developing or building relationships with recently introduced actors and institutions, or more significantly to the relevance of an existing organisation and its ability to attain certain indispensable goals. If we understand Europeanization as the

process by which individuals and organisational actors and institutions respond to the altered conditions generated by the development of the European Union since the launch of the Single European Act, then a single or linear line of response is virtually impossible. Rather, variable responses, even within single national political systems, are most likely. Thus, as Radaelli has noted, Europeanization is not to be confused with convergence or harmonisation, although these may be manifestations of the response. Unitary or federal territorial designs; the mix of public and private components of the economy; longstanding political cultural traditions; patterns of party competition, etc., all of these factors condition the response of actors to the penetration of EU inputs into their operating environments. Although it is not the focus of this paper, one may also understand that the response of national actors to EU inputs may influence the supranational level as well, thereby suggesting that in some cases we may identify a reflexive relationship. When we turn to political parties, it becomes clear that additional constraints exist that influence the ‘direction and shape’ of party organisational change.

Europeanization and political parties

Specific analyses of Europeanization and parties and party systems are a rather recent feature of the academic debate. To date, the development of a potential European dimension of party systems has dominated the field, such as it is, and unsurprisingly regarding parties, this is tied in most cases to the organisation of and elections to the European Parliament (see, e.g., Hix and Lord, 1997, and Pedersen, 1996). In addition, the term Europeanization has been used by some, e.g. Moxon-Browne (1999) and Daniels (1998), to denote a policy and strategic change by certain parties involving movement from a negative to a positive position regarding EU membership. Turning to national party systems, Mair (2000) finds very little impact of European integration on national party systems. ‘Indeed, I suggest that of the many areas of domestic politics which may have experienced an impact from Europe, it is party systems in particular that have perhaps proved to be most impervious to change’ (p. 4). By this statement Mair means party systems have experienced little or no *direct* change to the format and mechanics of party systems. However, he makes a significant qualification when addressing a potential *indirect* impact arising from the European integration process:

In the first place, European integration increasingly operates to constrain the freedom of movement of national governments, and hence encourages a hollowing out of competition among those parties with a governing aspiration. As such, it promotes a degree of consensus across the mainstream and an inevitable reduction in the range of policy alternatives available to

voters. Second, by taking Europe itself out of national competition, and by working within a supranational structure that clearly lacks democratic accountability, party and political leaderships do little to counteract the notion of the irrelevance of conventional politics (pp. 48-49).

Mair does not intentionally analyse the impact of European integration on individual parties. Accordingly, in the end, the absence of a genuine European level party system explains the insularity of national party systems from the impact of European integration.

In terms of format and mechanics (other than in the context of a European Parliament election), national party systems appear to exhibit very little in the way of Europeanization. Mair does not consider new party formation and party splits as very salient, in the sense of having an impact upon the relevant parties in a party system. However, the two points raised by Mair regarding an indirect impact are precisely the areas of investigation for evidence of the Europeanization of political parties, for they both draw attention to altered conditions of parties' primary operating environments as well as crucial associated factors. Let us focus on his two points, namely the constraints on government policy maneuverability which 'hollow out' competition among parties with a governing aspiration, and the growing notion of the irrelevance of conventional politics, both traceable as much as possible to effects emanating from EU processes. Increasing constraints on the prerogatives of government action, or even more importantly, the perception thereof, may influence over time the classic functions of political parties, e.g. recruitment, election campaigning, interest aggregation, interest articulation, party government roles, etc. If we accept this assumption, then it follows that those parties with a governing aspiration have an incentive to influence this phenomenon. 'Influence' may take the form of finding new 'zones of penetration' available for party goal attainment, e.g., the supranational dimension. Furthermore, a consequence of designing strategies to influence institutions or actors beyond the national arena may be the creation of new internal organizational patterns better able to engage this dimension or else to enhance party management, or both. An even more significant incentive for parties to adapt to these changed circumstances, though long-term in its manifestation, is growing irrelevance, defined as a diminishing capability to alter existing macroeconomic policies and a shrinking scope of issues for which resolution can be promised in election campaigns.

Bearing in mind that as I have defined Europeanization there is an emphasis upon adaptation and policy change, and further, that Europeanization does not mean either convergence or

harmonization, the evidence of Europeanization will vary across and within political systems. Consequently, we should view European integration as an independent variable and increased government policy constraints and the public perception of growing irrelevance of conventional politics as dependent variables. European integration influences the operating arenas, or environments, of national political parties, and the Europeanization of parties is consequently a dependent variable. We should search for evidence of party adaptation to this changed environment, be it policy change and/or organisational change. In other words, the Europeanization of political parties will be reflected in their response to the changes in their environments. The response can be identified in new and sometimes innovative relationships, policies or structures.

National political parties, unlike government bureaucracies, individual politicians, and interest groups, do not have the ability or opportunity to develop privileged or intimate relationships with authoritative EU actors. Interest groups may independently approach similar organisations in other EU member states in order to create European level associations, or respond to entreaties by the European Commission itself. Government agencies and bureaucracies come into contact with EU institutions, or else are obliged to develop new administrative means with which to translate EU regulations, directives, etc. into corresponding national ones. National government politicians may come to develop personal relations with their counterpart in other EU member states in order to ally on particular issues in Council of Minister meetings, European Council, etc. All of these actors have a certain amount of latitude in their adaptation to EU inputs, or else have little choice, as in the case of government agencies, and must therefore liaise as quickly as possible in order to avoid negative repercussions later. Political parties, as I assume, have the incentive and motivation to 'come to terms' with the changes in their environment as it impacts their fortunes, but unlike the examples just given, they are constrained in a number of ways. The most basic dilemma, though perhaps not so obvious, is that there is little if anything in the way of resources that the EU possesses that can be translated into a positive gain for a political party. New and explicit rules forbid a transfer of EU funds to national parties: 'The funding for political parties at European level provided out of the Community budget may not be used to fund, either directly or indirectly, political parties at national level' (Article 191 amendment in Treaty of Nice). Furthermore, political parties do not have an extra-national space or environment of consequence to operate within. The European Parliament is of course a European institution, and although we may state that the problem of irrelevance is common to

all parties with a governing aspiration, the European parliament has neither the mandate nor the composition to intrude upon national circumstances. The benefits of participating in the EP are therefore indirect at best for national parties, inasmuch as legislation can refocus the impact of European integration on those areas that affect party fortunes most.

Bereft of direct channels into authoritative EU decision-making, yet subject to influences upon their own operating environments, the Europeanization of parties is very much a complex phenomenon to identify. This is especially so as when in government, national party leaders are also in most cases national government leaders, and as such may pursue policies and strategies with an appeal beyond the strictly partisan (this is most likely the case in instances of coalition government). Although we may agree with Mair's identification of the two indirect effects upon political parties, neither is so dramatic as to cause immediate and high-profile changes. Nevertheless, it is possible to outline the broad areas where one may recognise changes that reflect a process of Europeanization. The particular task for the analyst is to trace changes back to an EU source, or else to recognise an intended usage of the EU as a possible aid in the resolution of an issue, or to evaluate the problems that the presence of the EU-issue presents for parties. Five areas of investigation for evidence of Europeanization in parties and party activity are proposed: 1) policy/programmatic content; 2) organisational; 3) patterns of party competition; 4) party-government relations; and 5) relations beyond the national party system.

1) Programmatic change: One of the most explicit types of evidence of Europeanization will be modifications in party programmes. This can be measured quantitatively - increased mention of the EU in terms of European policy per se and in references to other policy areas, normally those considered to be domestic policy. Qualitatively, references to the EU as an additional factor in the pursuit of policies traditionally considered domestic, e.g. employment, immigration and asylum, etc., may develop. This will reflect enhanced European policy expertise among party specialists, as well as agreement with the leadership to integrate the European dimension into references to domestic policy. Additionally, references to co-operation with transnational organizations such as party federations, and European level institutions such as the European Parliament, may be made more explicit. Overall, policy and programmatic references to the role of the EU as a factor in domestic policy pursuits will become more sophisticated over time, as recognition of the impact of the EU becomes clearer, and strategies proposed for the EU develop.

Examples:

- In the evolution of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to the Democrats of the Left (DS), explicit and positive references to the EU as a factor in Italian modernization and as an anchor of the supranational commitments of the party were made, thus instrumentalizing the EU as part of party strategy (Marlière, 2001).
- In the French Socialist Party (PS), the appearance of specific recommendations for the direction of EU policy, e.g. in public services, as well as mentions of the need to strengthen the transnational party federation, the Party of European Socialists (PES), have appeared more regularly since the late 1990s (Ladrech, 2000).

2) Organizational change: Explicit statutory change in parties may not be readily evident, although change in practices and power relations may occur (see Raunio, this issue). Nevertheless, affiliation with European level institutions has generated some organizational modifications, and these have themselves evolved over time. Internal party rules and statutes regarding the role and influence of the delegation to the European Parliament, in particular, in party congresses and leadership bodies, may reflect the greater profile of European policy, and the leadership's need to manage it more closely. Organizational links with actors outside of the national territory, for instance transnational party federations, may also stimulate organizational innovation.

Examples:

- Many parties, for instance the British Labour Party, have included the leader of their national delegation to the EP on party leadership bodies, such as the National Executive Committee.
- Increased liaison between national party and EP delegation has also taken place in many parties.
- Some parties, such as the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA), have gone so far as to elect their delegates to the biennial congress of the PES, thus causing party management problems for the national party leadership.
- In Belgium, the EP delegation has full voting rights at Socialist party congresses.
- Many social democratic and christian democratic parties have incorporated references to their respective transnational party federations, the PES and EPP, into party statutes.

3) Patterns of party competition: To the extent the EU itself becomes politicized in national politics, new voters may be targeted in an opportunistic strategy, either in a pro- or anti- EU position. The politicization of the EU may become a concern for party management, even leading to new party formation. Several factors can instigate changing tactics and strategies by parties designed to capitalize on the 'EU issue'. Among them may be existing patterns of competition incorporating the number of parties in a national party system, the presence of a strongly pro- or anti- EU party, and the nature of a party's 'dominant coalition' (Panebianco, 1988) determining whether such a change in party strategy will cause internal dis-equilibrium.

Examples:

- British politics provides two examples of changing party strategy focusing on European policy, one positive, the Labour Party, and one negative, the Conservative Party. Although background factors accounting for a new direction regarding the EU may be different – policy evolution in the case of Labour (Daniels, 1998), factionalism in the Conservatives – each leadership has sought to exploit the EU as an issue for electoral purposes.
- In France, the Rassemblement pour la France (RPF), formed by defectors from the neo-Gaullist party RPR at the time of the 1999 EP elections, attempts to represent a mainstream conservative party emphasizing national sovereignty, an important component of party identity seemingly abandoned by the policy evolution of the RPR during the 1990s.
- The positioning of Bavarian CSU party leader Stoiber vis-à-vis the national CDU over the single currency also reflects aspects of party competition, notably the selection of the chancellor-candidate for the elections in 2002.
- The periodic appearance of parties solely constituted to compete in European Parliament elections (Andeweg, 1995), for example in Denmark and the UK, challenges established parties by splintering their electorate, forcing them to adjust tactics normally focused on other traditional parties, and potentially upsetting the internal equilibrium of those parties' leaderships depending on vote outcome, etc.

4) Party-government relations: Participation of government leaders in EU forums may strain relations with the party on particular policies. In other words, inter-governmental bargaining - either in an inter-governmental conference, European Council, or Council of Ministers/COREPER - may distance the government/party leader from party programmatic positions in an unintended fashion. This may set into motion qualitative changes in the nature

of party-government relations over time. Party-government relations on EU matters may become ‘push-pull’ in nature. Government is ‘pushed’ by party to maximalist positions on matters close to party programme, for example in the area of social policy for social democratic parties. Government is ‘pulled’ by party to minimalist positions on institutional change, i.e., deeper integration, that run counter to notions of state sovereignty. This stance may not necessarily represent an ambivalence or hostility towards the EU itself, but may signal a preference towards retention of domestic control over policy areas which involve direct benefits accruing to the party, for instance where interest groups are aggregated within the policy orbit of a party. EU competence in a new policy area triggers a new constellation of interest group strategies, which may imply a de-emphasis on party relations.

Examples:

- Divergence between government and party on EU issues may prompt changes in the manner of party management, i.e., greater control over the party apparatus, as in the case of the British Labour Party, or more flexible or looser relations over EU issues as in the case of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP) (Aylott, 1997).
- Where the party leader is not also head of government, as in the cases of France, Norway, and until recently, Italy, the relative independence of the party leadership from government may result in the party acting more explicitly as the ‘conscience’ of the government, pushing and pulling it in directions closer to purist perspectives on policy.
- The implications of party-government relations subject to Europeanization dynamics may be the development of party programmes more explicitly integrating what is possible, i.e., realistic, in an institutional environment that includes EU decision-making.
- The liaison between party and government on EU matters may take on new forms of interaction, in part by enhancing the role of the party’s EP delegation by linking them more intimately into government policy-making (Raunio, 2000).

5) Relations beyond the national party system: Europeanization may result in new perspectives on transnational co-operation with parties from other EU member states to the extent that new organizational and programmatic activities are promoted. Niedermayer (1983) proposed a model of development for a European level party organization, differentiating between three stages: contact, co-operation, and integration. The four major party families represented in the European Parliament have some form of transnational party organization affiliating member national parties. The social democratic Party of European Socialists and

the christian democratic (and increasingly conservative) European People's Party are the furthest along in the co-operation stage, with a permanent organization and frequent and prepared interaction. The Liberal and Green federations follow (Dietz, 2000).

Examples:

- Europeanization implies a challenge and potential response to the policy orientation of party families (Marks and Wilson, 1999). It is therefore unsurprising that the PES has evolved further than other transnational federations in the development of European political-economic policy alternatives (Johansson, 1999; Ladrech, 2000).
- Promotion for a more transparent and permanent form of funding for European level parties from a combination of EU and national sources, an initiative supported by all four party federations. This initiative was introduced into the Nice Treaty in December 2000.
- Parties outside of a transnational party family may seek European-level legitimation through development of links to a relevant EP party group, as in the case of Berlusconi/Forza Italia and the EPP.
- Party personnel, from party leaders and prime ministers to party euro-experts, etc., engage in partisan networks in extra-national forums, thus developing contacts and possible influence aimed at Brussels decision-making.
- Recruitment into EU appointive and elective offices often involves individuals active from national parties in the transnational partisan networks.

The five areas described above have obvious overlaps, yet a careful research design seeking to test for evidence of Europeanization can profitably incorporate two or more of these areas. For instance, although growing EP party group voting discipline has been noted (Attinà, 1990; Hix, 2001), the attention brought by national parties at the time of agreeing a transnational party line (area 5) can be linked to those parties also engaging in programmatic change (area 1). In other words, do parties do more than simply change rhetoric, and actively project their new concern for European level dynamics at potential access points in the EU system? Uncovering a definite link would be persuasive evidence of national parties' multilevel operation.

Conclusion

Organizationally, political parties are limited in their response to the impact of the European Union on national politics and policy-making. Finances, electoral strategies, relations with

government, opposition status, all are based upon national considerations. The increased relevance of the EU for domestic policies impacts parties, but not in such a manner that a policy or institutional response route is clear. EU specialists within individual parties share the same problem as national parliaments namely, there is no one person nor parliamentary committee that can have sole responsibility for EU issues, since strictly speaking the EU is involved in so many policy areas. This emphasises not only the need for co-ordination between party, government and EP delegation, but also transnationally between parties, relevant ministers, and the respective party groups in the EP.

What I have tried to accomplish in this article is to provide a basic framework with which to investigate changes in political parties that result from the challenge presented to their classic functions by the impact of the EU upon their primary operating environments, the national political system. The overarching process of responses by parties is labelled Europeanization, manifested in a variety of possible actions. These responses may include organizational changes repositioning the role of their EP delegation; programmatic developments signalling a more sophisticated attention to the influence of the EU in domestic policy-making; increased factionalism or even new party formation; an additional dimension in party-government relations; or new linkages with European actors beyond the national political system. Parties adapt to their environments, just as most organizations when presented with institutional change. The nature of the environmental change, in this case, external inputs into domestic political systems, provokes a variety of reconfigurations in structure and behavior. These range from allowing national executives less scrutiny from parliaments, sharing responsibility over different policy areas, and relinquishing aspects of economic policy to supranational actors such as the European Central Bank. All of these alter to some extent the terrain upon which political parties operate, though in usually subtle rather than dramatic fashion. Nevertheless, the ‘deepening’ of the EU is increasingly presenting parties with a governmental vocation a challenge in terms of conceptualizing government policy as purely a self-contained national exercise. Mair’s remarks concerning the apparent growing lack of competition between parties may contribute to the overall de-politicization of national politics. So the EU matters in national party politics, although this varies across member state political systems.

Assuming that parties-as-organizations respond to changes in their environments, we should expect to witness varied responses to the impact of the EU on domestic politics, i.e.,

Europeanization. By presenting five areas for investigation, with many of them inextricably linked, one ought to be able to systematically compare party responses across political systems, bearing in mind of course that each political system represents a bundle of national-specific factors that condition party responses. These responses may range from referenda traditions, two-party or multi-party systems, the presence of Euro-sceptic public opinion, the level of economic development of the member state, coalition dynamics, etc. Yet these are the very factors that comparativists must always pay close attention to when engaging in the comparative enterprise. The Europeanization of political parties should not present an insurmountable obstacle in this respect.

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