

This timely book explores EU impacts during the first four years of membership in the leading accession countries and traces their significance in a series of well-researched country studies. A further chapter explores the impact of EU entry on issue stances and programmatic coherence on a comparative basis. This is essential reading for those interested in the growing field of Europeanisation studies and the problematic development of party politics in Central and Eastern Europe.

Professor Paul G Lewis, Open University, UK

This is a nuanced and sophisticated account of the impact of the European Union on post-communist, democratic, party politics. Both the comparative analyses and the in-depth country chapters show where, how, and why the EU influences domestic party politics—and why it so often does not, even in new member countries. This innovative volume undermines the common assumption that the EU is a powerful player in domestic politics and, as such, is a must read for scholars and policymakers alike.

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Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

Does EU Membership Matter?

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The Dog that Did Not Bark? Assessing the Impact of the EU on Party Politics in Hungary

AGNES BATORY

The literature on the impact of the EU on parties and party systems has not resolved the debate on how we should measure the scale or significance of changes in domestic politics, and indeed what sort of changes should be seen as EU-induced. Applied to the Hungarian case, existing indicators suggest that while, given the need to contest European elections, some inevitable adaptation occurred on the level of the parties, on the level of the party system the impact of European integration has been rather limited. Although an EU connection is detectable in a number of important political developments in recent times, these EU-related factors at most added to the cumulative impact of a range of other influences. A broader implication is that research strategies that start from an assumption of the existence of a link between changes in domestic politics and European integration may well overstate the case for Europeanization.

Introduction

In Arthur Conan Doyle's story, *Silver Blaze*, Dr Watson recalls the following conversation between an impatient client prompting Holmes for a clue and the great detective, who characteristically chooses to remain enigmatic:

'Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?'

'To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.'

'The dog did nothing in the night-time.'

'That was the curious incident,' remarked Sherlock Holmes.¹

The relevance of the story for this study is that the subject is similarly the curious absence, or at least limited occurrence, of something that is widely expected to be taking place: the Europeanization of parties and party systems.² The analogy with the dog that did not bark, however, is otherwise relatively limited, as, unlike in the case Holmes was investigating, there is

some conceptual controversy as to what the dog is and what would constitute a bark. Where exactly should EU-induced changes occur? And how would we measure and benchmark change so that we can distinguish a bark from a whimper? An additional difficulty is that the subject can be approached with very different expectations,³ which causes analysts to evaluate the same findings in possibly opposed ways. If one assumes that the EU will induce fundamental changes in the parties and party systems of its member states, then the piecemeal adaptation that may be observable falls short of expectations. For those with more modest assumptions, the same empirical developments may qualify as significant change.

This study considers these questions through the example of Hungary, a new member state, also exploring whether EU accession can be linked to particular events or patterns in domestic politics – that is, whether the impact of European integration on the parties and party system was stronger following, rather than prior to, the country's formal accession to the Union. This case suggests that, while some adaptation – perhaps inevitable, given the need to contest European elections – occurred on the level of the *parties*, on the level of the *party system* the impact of European integration has been rather limited. Although an EU connection is detectable in a number of important political developments in recent times, these EU-related factors at most added to the cumulative impact of a range of other influences. A broader implication is that research strategies that start from an assumption of the existence of a link between changes in domestic politics and European integration may well overstate the case for Europeanization. An alternative strategy is to look for EU-related effects only when 'regular' domestic political factors fail to explain empirical developments satisfactorily. While it is admittedly difficult to extrapolate from a single case, looking at a new member state constitutes a rather stringent test, since, given the enhanced conditions applied upon accession and the very newness of these party systems, the EU is, if anything, more likely to have an impact in the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) than in the older member states.⁴

The following section starts from a review of available impact indicators and the thorny issue of causality. The next section provides some background on the country chosen for study. The following two sections look at the level of the parties and the level of the party system, respectively, to gauge whether and what kind of EU-induced changes can be observed with respect to the identified indicators of impact. The last section is a brief conclusion.

Detecting the EU's Impact

Only a few years ago studies dealing with the impact of the EU on party politics often started by lamenting the scarcity of scholarship on the subject. Such

complaints can hardly be justified today. There is a significant body of literature addressing the Europeanization of party politics, referring broadly to EU- or European integration-induced changes affecting political parties and party systems. Opinion continues to be divided, however, first regarding what sort of changes should be seen as constituting the Europeanization of party politics and how we should measure their scale, and second, what precise role European integration played in bringing these changes about (which may be best described as the causality controversy).

In terms of the nature of impact, the literature distinguishes between direct and indirect impacts; and, regarding the level of impact, between changes affecting individual parties and those impinging on party systems. Peter Mair's influential study applies strict criteria, accepting as evidence of the direct impact of European integration on a party system only the emergence of new parties directly linked with European issues and of a new pro- or anti-integration dimension of competition.⁵ Such a development would clearly imply that the issue of the EU – traditionally seen as a second-order concern for the electorate – gains in salience in determining party choice.⁶ Mair does however recognize that indirect effects, such as the constriction of the range of policy options available to governing parties and the consequent 'hollowing out' of competition among mainstream parties, may be as important as those that are directly attributable to integration, or even more so.

An additional system-level impact is the constraint placed on coalition formation by the expectation of negative reactions from the European level should anti-democratic or hard Eurosceptic parties – or both – be allowed to join the group of governing parties.⁷ (Hard Eurosceptics tend to be extreme parties.⁸) This hardens the dividing line between 'coalitionable' and non-coalitionable parties, or between the core and the periphery of the party system. This sort of impact is likely to be stronger in candidates than in member states, where the EU's leverage over national governments decreases, but has been observed in member states, too – for instance, in relation to Austria.⁹ In some cases, such as Slovakia's anti-Mečiar coalition, common positions on the European issue and expected reactions from the European level may have constituted a major source of influence on the choice of coalition partners.¹⁰

On the level of individual parties, the same correlation between attitudes to European integration and access to executive power is manifested in increasing or decreasing coalition potential, with hard Euroscepticism demarcating a 'no go' area in coalition politics.¹¹ Attention devoted to European issues in party programmes, organizational changes to integrate cohorts of MEPs into national decision-making structures, and changing power relations between the party in office and central office, or between EU-specialists and others, have also been identified as directly attributable to Europeanization.¹²

Finally, trans-national party co-operation is an important source of influence.¹³ Parties unable to secure membership of a European party organization are disadvantaged on the EU level, which provides incentives for adopting features that make them more like their European sister parties. Opportunities for increased interaction provided by trans-national party co-operation also have socialization effects.¹⁴ These influences in turn may lead to the standardization of party ideologies and at times a shift towards more moderate views.¹⁵

Trans-national party co-operation also changes the strategic context by providing lobbying opportunities, in particular for major parties in opposition. Affiliation to and strong positions within the federations and EP groups create direct links to EU-level policy making for parties outside government, which may be a useful asset in domestic political strife. The federations can become involved in the debate or back up the position of the sister party, thereby elevating what has been national-level confrontation between government and opposition to the EU level, where governing parties otherwise have decisive influence. Trans-national party co-operation thus helps to level the playing field for major parties in and out of government.

Table 1 provides an inventory of some of the indicators identified in the literature. However, the significance of the changes that each of the indicators may signal is open to interpretation. While there seems to be a consensus that Mair's party system indicators¹⁶ would indeed suggest fundamental changes to have taken place, what is the relevance, for instance, of the number of

TABLE 1
AN OVERVIEW OF COMMONLY USED IMPACT INDICATORS

Level	Direct impact	Indirect impact
Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy/programmatic content (references to European issues in general) (Ladrech) • Party organisational/internal change (Ladrech; Poguntke et al.) • Internal party divisions on European integration (Taggart) • Party-government relations (Ladrech) • Transnational party co-operation (Ladrech) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard Euroscepticism decreases coalition potential (Taggart and Szczerbiak) • Standardization of party ideologies due to transnational party co-operation (Lewis and Enyedi)
Party systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Format: emergence of new parties directly linked with integration (Mair) • Mechanics: competition along pro/anti-EU dimension (Mair; Ladrech) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Indirect impact on format not possible) • Mechanics: 'Hollowing out of competition'; consensus promotion across core of party systems (Mair); options restricted in coalition formation (Lewis; Lewis and Enyedi)

references parties make to sometimes only very vaguely 'European' issues in election manifestos? They may well signal programmatic change, but this can hardly be considered as significant in the absence of any indication that the manifestos (and the references) had a discernible impact on the discourse, party competition, public opinion or party choice. A further complication, as Szczerbiak and Taggart point out, is that it is not uncommon for parties to hold a broad underlying Eurosceptic position without giving this any prominence, or even deliberately downplaying it, in their discourse or programmatic statements.¹⁷ Similarly, the fact that party X co-opted its MEPs into various national decision-making structures whereas party Y decided to leave them alone is an interesting finding of organizational change; but how much does it have to do with – and what does it actually say about – European integration or the EU, as opposed to the party's organizational culture, degree of centralization, or size?

This neatly leads to the second major issue at the core of the theoretical debate: causality.¹⁸ The key questions in this respect are as follows: are the observed changes, whichever way one observes and benchmarks them, on the level of party systems and party organizations, due to European integration or EU membership or to something else? Was Europeanization the driver of change or merely one factor that contributed to processes already under way, or, conversely, did it make no difference at all?

An example of when such questions arise is Paul Lewis's description of the 'early impact of EU enlargement on CEE politics and patterns of party government' as 'negative and . . . often destabilizing in its effects', an assertion substantiated by listing the resignation in 2004 of prime ministers Leszek Miller of Poland, Peter Medgyessy of Hungary, and later, owing to the weak showing of his party in the European elections, Jühan Parts of Estonia.¹⁹ However, as Lewis and others point out in the same volume, these developments had as much, or indeed more, to do with weak coalitions, electoral defeats (whether in national or European elections), or internal party strife – in other words, the reasons for which prime ministers normally leave office – than EU accession.²⁰ Indeed, had the resignations happened any other time, most observers probably would not have looked for any explanation other than those listed above. In other words, it is unclear how far a causal link with European integration can be stretched, and where the point is when it must be concluded that the impact is not indirect but simply non-existent.

As a general rule, one should not necessarily look for EU influence unless 'regular' domestic political factors fail to explain empirical developments satisfactorily. At the same time, the suggestion of no impact from EU membership would also invite legitimate criticism in the context of the study of party politics in CEE in particular, and there are good reasons for this. Before the enlargement of 2004, EU membership was the single most important policy

objective for reform-minded governments in the region. Integration into the EU was generally seen as the only chance for catching up with what was – from the post-communist perspective – the more fortunate Western part of the continent. The very sizeable ‘carrot’ of membership, and the ‘stick’ provided to the Union by the possibility of withholding it, made candidate countries particularly open and receptive towards influences coming from Brussels. And influences from the EU were plentiful: through the detailed requirements of membership and mechanisms of conditionality, the Union played a more active and interventionist role in refashioning the candidates’ politics than had been the case in any previous round of enlargement.

Scholarly analyses focusing on European integration (that is, rooted in the disciplines of European studies and international relations rather than comparative politics) thus generally started from the assumption that Europeanization was taking place, even though it was not always obvious how it might be manifested. What this literature traditionally looked at was policy making and formal institutions of government, and in some ways the main question was whether the same logic of domestic adaptation would apply to party politics. The scale of EU-induced changes in the strategic environment of political parties, from EP elections to the transfer of traditionally core national policy competences to the European level and the weakening of member state governments’ capacity to act as gatekeepers, do lead to the expectation that a massive realignment of the political processes of the member states should be taking place. For this school of thought Europeanization was thus – to borrow from Klaus Goetz’s study of CEE executives – a cause in search of an effect.²¹ An example of this line of thinking is an influential article by Robert Ladrech, who posits that

[t]he particular task for the analyst is *to trace changes back to an EU source*, or else to recognize an intended use 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.²²

In terms of effects of Europeanization on party politics, rather than on policies or institutions, party positioning on European issues, and specifically Euroscepticism and its manifestations, has emerged as perhaps the dominant field of inquiry, going back to the 1990s and in particular to an influential article by Paul Taggart.²³ Unlike earlier analyses, which predominantly addressed party positions as constraints for EU-level policy making (namely, from the perspective of whether these would help or hinder further integration), comparative politics-based ‘Euroscepticism studies’ focused on European integration – or rather, opposition to it – as a way of mapping domestic party systems. Taggart’s 1998 study found – and this was subsequently corroborated by large-scale comparative studies by himself and

Szczerbiak – that a party’s position in the core or at the periphery of the national party system largely determines the way in which Euroscepticism is manifested; and moreover that even clearly Eurosceptic parties tend to use opposition to integration as merely ‘another string to their bow’.²⁴ In other words, party positions on European integration – the indicator that is treated elsewhere in the literature²⁵ as a measure of the impact of Europeanization (assuming that parties *have* a position, whether for or against) – emerge as an effect of domestic politics.

The third important strand in the literature is also rooted in the comparative politics tradition, and follows the logic of Rokkanian cleavage theory. Analyses along these lines have in common with the scholarship that identifies Euroscepticism as a marker of party systems, the idea that reactions to challenges and opportunities presented by European integration are structured by domestic political constellations and alignments.²⁶ On the other hand, they also share with the classic Europeanization literature the expectation that integration as a critical juncture *will* produce fundamental changes on the level of domestic politics. However, unlike the traditional Europeanization literature, which is sometimes so focused on European integration as an independent variable as to disregard any other variable that may be at play, in cleavage theory it is merely one, albeit possibly the most important, factor in a complex web of interrelationships. The question is how EU-induced changes interact with pre-existing cleavages. The somewhat unsatisfactory conclusion to be drawn so far is that, at times, the literature may interpret the same empirical developments as both cause and effect, and there is no consensus on what may constitute reasonable benchmarks to identify ‘significant’ change.

For the purposes of this article, another key question emerging is whether one should expect any systematic change in terms of how the indicators behave after, rather than before, a country joins the EU. In other words, should one expect European integration to have a different impact on post- than on pre-accession party politics, and if yes how is this change manifested? There are several reasons for expecting Europeanization to gain in influence after accession. Once a country becomes a member of the club, engagement with various EU structures becomes more intensive. Governing parties and national administrations’ tasks increase in manifold ways in Council decision-making, with a corresponding increase in parliaments’ scrutiny activities, which could have decisive influence on government–party relations, or on relations among the parliamentary party, central office, and the party on the ground, for instance. European elections provide an additional arena for competition and political confrontation, and may put European issues in the public eye. With the possibility of shaping rather than merely observing the direction that European integration takes, and with parties

forced to publish EP election manifestos, accession may result in programmatic change, at least in quantitative terms (with more attention paid to EU issues in manifestos). Parties also need to make arrangements for electing and integrating MEPs in national organizations, and parties that have not found allies on the European level are provided with strong incentives to join transnational party federations so that their MEPs can sit with an EP group. These developments may well have implications for the internal power relations of the party, or act as drivers of ideological change.

On the other hand, there are also reasons to suggest that if European integration were to leave a mark on CEE party systems, it should have appeared before accession took place. First, it was the 1990s when party systems in the region went through their formative period, and although in some countries the process continues, in others (such as the Czech Republic, Hungary or Slovenia) party systems have more or less stabilized along well-defined ideological dimensions.²⁷ This leaves little room for the emergence of new parties (in Mair's terms, format change) or a significant realignment of patterns of competition (mechanics change). Second, the EU's leverage also weakened in keeping domestic actors in line. Finally, it was far more likely for the European issue to lead to a political realignment before accession, when EU membership represented a historical and 'civilizational' choice, than following accession, when it acquired the character of a series of largely technical questions routinely dealt with by the administration.

In short, while it seems reasonable to hypothesize significant post-accession adaptation to occur on the level of individual parties, any change attributable to European integration on the level of the party system was more likely to take place before than after accession. This is also to say that in countries with relatively stable party systems Europeanization at the party system level is not likely, because other, more salient issues structure party competition, and positions on European integration are either absorbed in these or simply do not feature much in the domestic debate. The following sections consider these propositions with respect to Hungarian party politics.

The Context: The Hungarian Parties and Party System

Hungary's party system is generally considered to be one of the most stable in CEE. All the parliamentary parties elected in 2006 gained representation in the first free elections in 1990, and only one party not represented in 1990 has so far crossed the 5 per cent electoral threshold, and that for a single term. So far, all government coalitions have completed a full term in office (although prime ministers were replaced twice by ruling parties), apart from the Socialist-Free Democrat coalition, which entered office in 2006, and the latter partner quit in spring 2008. In the first four years following accession there was no significant

political force outside parliament, with the possible exception of the extreme right and the unreformed communists, neither of which however have a realistic chance of election to the national assembly in the foreseeable future.

Patterns of coalition formation have been fairly predictable since the 1994 elections, structured by two main ideological dimensions. The first and more important one is a cultural dimension normally referred to as the conservative-liberal split, which includes attitudes to nationalism (ethnic or civic), and religious or secular and also traditional or progressive ideas on social issues. This dimension clearly separated the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats and the Socialist Party on the left from the Democratic Forum, the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union, and the Christian Democratic People's Party (a small Fidesz satellite) on the right. The second dimension is rooted in socio-economic policy, pitting pro-market attitudes against protectionism and interventionism, but here differences among parties were more blurred. The Free Democrats were clearly supporters of the free market, and perhaps unexpectedly the Socialist Party was no more – or possibly even less – likely to favour direct government intervention in the economy than the otherwise rightist Fidesz. In recent years, the Democratic Forum shifted from economic populism to pro-market positions, becoming more like West European conservative parties in this respect.

The largest and arguably most successful party of the post-communist period is the Socialist Party, the successor of the reform wing of the communist-era ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, refashioned in the 1990s as a social-democratic party appealing to the economic losers of regime change, and in the present decade as a 'third way' type of social-liberal party. It formed governments in 1994, 2002 and 2006, each time with the Free Democrats as coalition partners. The latter is a standard European liberal party with a predominantly urban electoral base. The Socialists' main competitor is Fidesz, an erstwhile liberal youth organization that turned into a conservative catch-all party, which has dominated the right of centre political ground since the second half of the 1990s. The Christian Democrats had all but disappeared until Fidesz helped them to parliamentary representation by running a joint list with them in 2006. The Democratic Forum was in a similar position in 2002, entering parliament on the back of a joint list with Fidesz, following four years as a coalition partner in the Fidesz government of Viktor Orbán of 1998–2002, but has in recent years sought to separate itself from the larger conservative party.

In terms of electoral support in the last three elections, the Socialists and Fidesz were giants in comparison with the Free Democrats and the Democratic Forum, which tended to hover around the 5 per cent electoral threshold. Nonetheless, the two smaller parties' political significance is far greater than the figures suggest, as they split the vote on their respective

sides of the ideological spectrum and, depending on which of the major parties wins, are likely to be indispensable for a parliamentary majority and government formation.

EU Impact on Parties

Hungary's parties have traditionally been supportive of EU membership, to varying extents and on varying bases, but relatively solidly. The only clear exceptions are the extreme left and right, both outside parliament and with negligible electoral support. Among the mainstream parties the Free Democrats, the Socialists, and since the departure of its radical nationalist wing the Democratic Forum are strongly pro-EU, while Fidesz has a history of national-interest Eurosceptic rhetoric, which however was not expressed in policy while Fidesz was in government.

In terms of policy positions and the prominence of the European issue, perhaps the main, and rather self-evident, development brought by EU membership was the need for the parties to take sides in the 2003 membership referendum and contest the 2004 EP elections. Fidesz's position is perhaps the most interesting, and also the one that changed most visibly between 2002 and 2006, with attention paid to European integration peaking at the end of 2002 and first half of 2003, levelling off afterwards for the issue essentially to disappear from the agenda by 2006. This rough 'attention curve' applies to the whole of the political scene as Fidesz was the only party that approached the issue with a view to its strategic use, and therefore largely dictated the pace.²⁸ A good indicator of the salience of the issue in the party's rhetoric – reflected in the higher-than-average range scored on Whitefield and Rohrschneider's measure of 'salience attached by parties to stances on integration issues'²⁹ – is the change of attitudes to the EU among its supporters. In January 2000, with the party in office, 81 per cent of self-professed Fidesz voters said they would vote for EU membership, but by October 2002 this proportion dropped to 74 per cent and reached a low of 53 and 54 per cent in February and March 2003, respectively.³⁰ Attitudes among the other parties' voters changed much less than this.

While the party never explicitly objected to accession, already before the 2002 elections the Fidesz leader Viktor Orbán introduced a distinction between 'bad' and 'good' membership.³¹ Existing soft-Eurosceptic tendencies took a decisive EU-critical turn following Fidesz's departure from office in the wake of the 2002 elections. The conclusion of the accession negotiations in 2002, with less advantageous positions for Hungary than expected, exposed the new government to criticism. Fidesz seized the opportunity: this was the period when EU membership became a hot issue for the party for a while, with at least one detailed policy document produced on the subject, first

published as a discussion paper of over 60 pages in 2002 and adopted in 2003 as the party's 'European re-unification programme'.³²

The document, 'Europe is our future, Hungary is our home', partly served to criticize the new Socialist–Free Democrat government's 'servile' policies towards Brussels, and partly to outline Fidesz's own vision for Europe and Hungary's relations with the EU. Fidesz insisted that the new government should implement part of the Fidesz programme as a condition of its approval of the constitutional amendments that were necessary for accession and for holding the referendum (eventually the amendments were adopted). The Fidesz position in the 2003 referendum was a perhaps intentionally ambiguous 'yes, but', which is likely to have played an important part in suppressing turnout. While an overwhelming majority (84 per cent) endorsed membership, only 45 per cent bothered to vote, with Fidesz voters overrepresented among those staying at home.

In spite of the major opposition party's well-developed European programme, both in the referendum campaign and in the 2004 European elections, the core of the Fidesz strategy was to turn the vote into a referendum on the government's record.³³ One reason for this may have been that, while support for the EU among Fidesz voters plunged, pro-EU views remained dominant both among them and among active voters. Bread-and-butter issues were simply a safer bet for mounting a campaign. The party collected about one million signatures for its so-called 'National Petition', which called for price controls in the energy and pharmaceutical sectors, halting privatization in health care, and increasing welfare spending – a heady cocktail of economic populism with no mention of Europe.

Instead of trying to shift the debate to European issues, the Socialists responded by trying to defend their record in office, and then with a negative campaign targeting Fidesz. This did not pay off and, in the best traditions of mid-term second-order elections, the major government party duly lost the battle. Among the other parties, the Free Democrats attempted a campaign on European issues (partly to distance themselves from the unpopular government of which they were part), but their message was quickly sidelined in the bi-polar domestic confrontation of Fidesz and the Socialists. The Democratic Forum, for its part, talked mainly about corruption and sleaze. In short, the EU referendum and the EP election, the two events that could have been mostly about European integration or the EU, remained predominantly national contests with domestic issues taking centre-stage.

In terms of programmatic content, a look at the election manifestos published for the 2002 and 2006 Hungarian parliamentary elections reinforces the impression that EU policy was not considered by any of the parties as an issue worth politicizing too much. The 2002 manifesto of Fidesz, campaigning for re-election to office, included a section on 'Hungary in the

heart of Europe' (number 37 of the 48 sections), which is, as one might expect from a governing party, largely devoted to listing the achievements of the 1998–2002 term, such as closing three-quarters of the negotiation chapters, and securing a ban on land ownership by foreigners (in reality, a transition period) and the possibility for Hungarians to work 'in most current member states'.³⁴ The 2006 manifesto paid even less attention to the issue than that of four years earlier, with only the short concluding paragraphs devoted to EU policy, in the most general terms, in the 40-page document.³⁵

The Socialists' 2006 election manifesto stated that the party 'firmly rejected Euroscepticism' (in an obvious reference to Fidesz), mentioned EU-related achievements, such as 'securing resources from the EU that would allow Hungary to flourish',³⁶ and pledged support for unspecified 'deep reforms' of the Union.³⁷ But other than the commitment to introduce the euro there was no discussion of substantive EU-related issues. The same goes for the Democratic Forum's 2006 programme, which also discusses the single currency and the use of EU resources in the economic policy section – that is, the domestic side of EU membership, but not the issues that loomed large on the Union's agenda.³⁸ The exception to this pattern is the Free Democrats' manifesto, which takes a firm stand on a range of questions, calling for a 'more federal EU', more powers for the European Commission and the European Parliament (EP), the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, further enlargement, and more transparency in decision-making on the European level.³⁹

In short, at least in terms of official election manifestos, the prominence of European issues in party programmes did not increase from 2002 to 2006. To the extent that the EU was mentioned at all after accession, it tended to be on the level of a general commitment to defending the national interest, or related to the sliver of European issues that have direct domestic relevance, namely the euro and financial resources coming from the Union. This should not be unexpected: the situation is hardly different in the older member states. Nonetheless, at least two parties, the Free Democrats and Fidesz, engaged with substantive European issues at some point. While the first incorporated its EU policies into its election programme, Fidesz obviously judged the salience of these issues too low to attempt to sell them to a broader audience in the context of a national election.

Moving on from programmatic content to trans-national party co-operation, the parliamentary parties all have long-standing affiliations with European party federations or Europarties: the Socialists with the Party of European Socialists, the Free Democrats with the European Liberal Democrats, and the Democratic Forum and Fidesz with the European People's Party–European Democrats (EPP–ED, formerly EPP). The latter is the only significant change, since previously Fidesz was affiliated with the liberal

groupings. The switch in 2000 from liberals to conservatives simply aligned the party's ideological position on the European level with that on the national level. It is fairly evident that the decision was primarily driven by domestic political factors: an uneasiness arising from the fact of being forced to share European affiliations with the Free Democrats, rather than the natural allies and coalition partners in its own right-wing camp. Indeed, as Pridham points out, the predominance of domestic politics in determining trans-national links is striking in the Hungarian case in general.⁴⁰ EU membership brought no changes to the trans-national party co-operation picture, apart from the natural development of sending MEPs to the EP to sit with the corresponding EP party groups in the wake of the 2004 European elections. This seems to have taken place without any controversy.

Interestingly, pro-EU or pro-integration attitudes appear to have little or no bearing on the strength of trans-national affiliations and the degree to which organizational changes integrated EU policy-making expertise and the group of MEPs into national decision-making structures. In terms of unelected party officials in Budapest, the parties relied on a small number of staff, with even the largest opposition party Fidesz working with only a handful of experts in EU-related roles either for the party's parliamentary group or for central office.⁴¹ The general tendency seems to have been to leave 'EU business' largely to the parties' MPs (members of the national parliament's European Affairs Committee), to MEPs, or to both groups.

Concerning the latter group, the traditionally most Europhile and, in programmatic terms, perhaps most 'Europeanized' Free Democrats' statute (most recently amended in April 2008) barely makes reference to the party's MEPs, and only provides for inviting the MEP who has led the Free Democrats' list to the Operative Body's meetings, and then without voting rights.⁴² The Free Democrats were alone in not having a dedicated website for showing off their activities in the EP, as all other parliamentary parties do, including regular newsletters published online. At the same time, the party has strong links with all the major liberal groupings in Europe and internationally.

The Socialist Party statute declares the party's trans-national and EP party group membership among the first provisions.⁴³ The statute also provides for the automatic membership of either all or a representative of the Socialist MEPs in the Congress and the Bureau, and allows the head of the MEP delegation to be present at the Presidium's meetings. Each member of the Presidium is responsible for the policies of the party in a particular policy area, including a member (who in 2008 was also an MEP) in charge of EU policy. The party's group in the national parliament has a working group on foreign affairs and European integration, headed by an MP.⁴⁴ Fidesz has done no less, and possibly more, to integrate its MEPs into national decision-making structures, with the head of the party's EP delegation

automatically becoming a full member of the Presidium, according to the latest (25 November 2006) version of the party statute. This party, too, has dedicated internal structures for EU expertise, notably an EU cabinet in the framework of the cabinet system organized around the party leader's office. Fidesz is well integrated into and influential in European conservative circles: in 2002, the party president, Viktor Orbán, was elected as a vice-chairman of the EPP, and a Fidesz MEP is a vice-chairman of the EPP-ED group in the EP. Thus, the EU-critical language often adopted by Fidesz towards a domestic audience coincided with a high degree of Europeanization in organizational terms.

Fidesz also showed some evidence of a European 'mainstreaming' effect. The changing of the party's name from Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance to Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union seems to indicate an aspiration to follow the model of the German centre-right Union parties; but this sort of 'borrowing' also occurred with less respectable foreign models such as Berlusconi's Forza Italia. The 2006 election manifesto and Viktor Orbán's website bore the banner, 'Go Hungary, Go Hungarians'. The Democratic Forum has become more like West European conservative parties in that in recent years it shifted from advocating a 'caring' state and generous social services to a more pro-market position, portraying itself as the party of the middle class. In both cases, the changes seem to be due less to trans-national co-operation or membership of the party federation and more to attempts to adopt electoral formulas that proved successful for conservative parties in other EU countries or simply party positioning as dictated by the logic of domestic electoral competition.

In other respects, Hungarian parties showed little evidence of EU-induced changes. As of 2008, there were no notable internal divisions connected with European integration issues in any of the parties, and there was nothing to suggest that the relationship between the government (parliamentary party) and the respective parties (central office) would have shifted as a result of EU membership. In short, none of the party-level indicators outlined above shows a stronger or qualitatively different impact of the EU following, compared with before, EU accession, with the exception of accommodating MEPs in national party structures, which simply was not applicable before EP elections took place.

EU Impact on the Party System

Perhaps the most important political developments in the period, apart from the elections and EU referendum discussed above, were the departure of Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy from office in 2004, the decision of the Democratic Forum to split off from the Fidesz camp, the riots of 2006, and

the Free Democrats' departure from the coalition in 2008. All, apart from the last, have some connection with the EU, but in none of the cases does anything to do with the EU appear to be an essential condition.

The link in the first case is that the Socialists' weak performance in the European elections gave an important argument to those within the party critical of Medgyessy's premiership to oust him and replace him with the young and more dynamic Ferenc Gyurcsány. This had an important consequence for the 2006 elections, in that the Socialists became more re-electable with a new leader less closely associated with the party's record in office. But the outcome still had as much – or even more – to do with shifting power relations among competing groups within the Socialist Party and the demands of the junior partner (the Free Democrats) as with the EP elections. Although the latter probably further weakened Medgyessy's internal power base and acted as a catalyst of his downfall, in retrospect it seems reasonable to assume that the majority of influential Socialists simply did not want to fight the 2006 campaign with him at the helm, and sooner or later one of his opponents would have succeeded in taking over.

For much of its recent history, the Democratic Forum was internally divided over the party's relations with Fidesz, pitting those favouring close co-operation with (and perhaps even absorption into) the larger conservative party against those wanting to keep or increase the party's independence. The first group clearly considered the Forum incapable of securing sufficient electoral support alone, whereas the party leader and the leadership around her increasingly seemed to judge Fidesz's support as a deadly embrace. The second camp's strategy was to shift the Forum to the centre, splitting off chunks of both the Socialists' moderate leftist and Fidesz's moderate rightist electoral base, by becoming fiercely critical of Fidesz. The European elections were the first real test of this strategy, and given that contrary to all expectations the Forum managed to pass the electoral threshold with an independent list, it was widely considered to be vindicated. The Forum repeated the act in the 2006 elections, with similar results – scraping over the threshold with the tiniest margin, but securing parliamentary representation nonetheless without allowing any of the bigger parties to meddle in its affairs. Again, it is difficult to say whether the Forum would have chosen to go it alone in the absence of the relatively low-risk opportunity presented by the European elections to test the theory first, but the EP election outcome certainly reinforced party leader Ibolya Dávid's position.

The riots and demonstrations in autumn 2006, a few months after the re-election of the Socialist-Free Democrat government, followed the announcement of an austerity package and reports that in a speech at a party meeting Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány admitted to his colleagues that he had lied to the electorate. (The speech in its entirety also included a call for the

lies to stop and a plea for party support for politically costly and constantly postponed policy measures, the price of which was likely wipe-out in the autumn local government elections.) The leak of the 'lies speech' was the spark to ignite radical discontentment, but the large-scale demonstrations (compared with the early riots and violent attack on the public TV channels' building) seemed as much a reaction to the news of tax increases as moral condemnation of the prime minister's behaviour. The timing of the fiscal austerity package probably had something to do with EU pressure: the enormous public deficit had to be brought down, the informal grace period enjoyed by the government thanks to the elections had come to an end, and a stabilization plan had to be presented in Brussels. This is an interesting example of the constriction of policy options available to governments, and therefore of an indirect EU impact, but in this case, too, it is plausible that even in the absence of EU pressure the government would have followed a similar course of action. Finally, in the last case, involving the collapse of the coalition, there is no discernible link to the EU or European issues at all.

Moving from the murky waters of indirect effects to direct impact measures, the picture is far clearer. No new party of any significance emerged in the period under discussion (or indeed since 1990), and the same ideological dimensions structure party competition. Consequently, EU membership clearly did not cause a change in either format or mechanics. The only slight movement in ideological positioning is the Democratic Forum realigning itself on the socio-economic policy dimension (toning down the social welfare rhetoric, and turning up neo-liberalism), and the Free Democrats' recent attempt to put some distance between themselves and the Socialists. Both of these developments, however, have left the dimensions themselves intact.

The lack of a change in format is not particularly surprising – after all, the existing parliamentary parties have huge advantages over any new party starting up in terms of financial resources, well-developed national organizations, name recognition, expertise, core groups of loyal voters, and so on. The electoral system, with its strong majoritarian features (including single-member districts with run-off second rounds) and the high electoral threshold, also raises very high barriers to entry. The absence of any visible change in party competition perhaps requires more explanation. Most of the parties do not communicate their positions on substantive EU issues to the voters, and in fact, if the manifestos are anything to judge by, some parties may not even *have* positions on substantive issues. As Enyedi observes, the rare examples of some controversy have tended to occur on issues that resonate with the conservative–liberal split, such as the planned reference to Europe's Christian roots in the now scrapped Constitutional Treaty, as they offer opportunities for the parties to emphasize their ideological differences.⁴⁵

In other words, anything that is potentially salient in matters concerning the EU or European integration, identity politics and cultural aspects, has already been absorbed into, and swallowed up by, the main party division. With the big question – whether the country is in or out – already settled, the likelihood that European integration would redefine ideological dimensions or restructure the main lines of party competition is very small indeed.

Conclusion

On the level of individual parties, the Hungarian case shows a mixed picture, with some parties scoring high on some indicators of impact but low on others. For instance, in organizational and programmatic terms, Fidesz is a strongly Europeanized party – but one that is noticeably more critical towards the EU than its major domestic competitors. In contrast, the adaptation of the most Europhile Free Democrats' national organization seems to have been relatively limited. These examples suggest that substantive policy positions (not the mere fact that parties make reference to an issue in a manifesto) are driven by different dynamics than organizational change or trans-national co-operation. Soft Eurosceptic rhetoric, or conversely Europhilia, says little or nothing about a party's willingness and ability to make use of opportunities offered by the European level of the political game.

Hungary's first four years as a member also suggest that the impact of the EU on parties is not stronger after accession than before. The only significant change brought by membership was European elections and parties acquiring cohorts of MEPs – changes that could not have occurred earlier. The presence of MEPs and, in the case of governing parties, participation in EU-level policy making did not, however, seem to change power relations within the parties, or relations between governments and coalition parties. In terms of programme content in elections, too, a comparison of the 2002 and 2006 elections does not show increased attention paid by the parties to European issues, either in manifestos or in campaigns, but rather the opposite.

On the level of the party system, European integration has not created either new parties or new dimensions of competition. Those aspects of integration related to national identity fit into the existing conservative–liberal split, which decreases its potential to restructure the party system or realign individual parties with different blocs. The promise of EU membership did have an indirect but important impact in essentially ruling out coalitions with anti-democratic parties prior to accession. However, in the absence of elections when coalition formation was in question, it is not possible to say whether the situation has changed since accession. An EU connection is detectable in a number of important events: in the mid-term replacement of the prime minister in the wake of a defeat in the European elections; in

good EP election performance vindicating the electoral strategy of a small opposition party; and in forcing (or helping to force) the hand of the government in economic policy following the 2006 elections. But while these EU-related factors added to the cumulative impact of a range of other influences, it is questionable whether they were essential for bringing about the development in question.

How should these findings, most of which are negative, be interpreted? A common method in the literature for identifying indicators is to look at changes in the party politics of the member states, then decide which may be due to Europeanization. This is a fruitful approach; however, it may overstate Europeanization in some respects while overlooking factors that are conspicuous only by their absence. Is there a dog that did not bark, or can we really conclude that the direct impact of European integration on party politics is relatively limited? In many ways, the latter finding still feels rather counter-intuitive. Future research on how the EU affects parties and party systems may need to start with a search for alternative, or at least additional, indicators of change.

NOTES

1. Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes: Selected Stories* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege-Oxford University Press World Classics, 1951), p.25.
2. Europeanization carries multiple meanings in the literature. Here it simply refers to the impact of European integration on domestic politics; that is, as Poguntke et al. suggest, the European level is taken as a possible explanatory factor for changes at the national level: see generally Thomas Poguntke, Nicholas Aylott, Robert Ladrech and Kurt Richard Luther, 'The Europeanization of National Party Organizations: A Conceptual Analysis', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.46, No.6 (2007), pp.747-71.
3. See Whitefield and Rohrschneider's contribution to this volume.
4. See, for example, Karen Henderson, 'Exceptionalism or Convergence? Euroscepticism and Party Systems in Central and Eastern Europe', in Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart (eds.), *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.103-25; Robert Ladrech, 'Europeanization and the Variable Influence of the EU: National Parties and Party Systems in Western and Eastern Europe', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol.10, No.2 (2008), pp.139-50.
5. Peter Mair, 'The Limited Impact of Europe on National Party Systems', *West European Politics*, Vol.23, No.4 (2000), pp.27-51.
6. Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt, 'Nine Second Order National Elections: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.8, No.1 (1980), pp.3-44.
7. Paul Lewis, 'The EU and Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Questions and Issues', in Paul Lewis and Zdenka Mansfeldová (eds.), *The European Union and Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006), pp.1-16; Zsolt Enyedi and Paul Lewis, 'The Impact of the European Union on Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe', in Lewis and Mansfeldová (eds.), *The European Union and Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, pp.231-49; Agnes Batory, *The Politics of EU Accession: Ideology, Party Strategy and the European Question in Hungary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).
8. Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, 'Europeanization, Euroscepticism and Party Systems: Party-based Euroscepticism in the EU Candidate Countries of Central and Eastern Europe', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol.3, No.1 (2002), pp.23-41; Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, 'Contemporary Euroscepticism in the Party System of the EU Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.43, No.1 (2004), pp.1-27.
9. Michael Merlingen, Cas Mudde and Ulrich Sedelmeier, 'The Right and the Righteous? European Norms, Domestic Politics and the Sanctions against Austria', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.39, No.1 (2001), pp.59-77.
10. There is some scholarly controversy over how much the EU really mattered. See, for instance, Geoffrey Pridham, 'Coalition Behaviour in New Democracies of Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Slovakia', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol.18, No.2 (2002), pp.75-102; and Tim Haughton, 'What Does the Case of Slovakia Tell Us about the EU's Active Leverage?', paper presented to the BUSA Biennial Conference, Montreal, 17-19 May 2007.
11. Taggart and Szczerbiak, 'Europeanization, Euroscepticism'; Pridham, 'Coalition Behaviour'.
12. Robert Ladrech, 'Europeanization and Political Parties: A Framework for Analysis', *Party Politics*, Vol.8, No.4 (2002), pp.389-403; Poguntke et al., 'The Europeanization of National Party Organizations'.
13. Ladrech, 'Europeanization and Political Parties'.
14. Poguntke et al., 'The Europeanization of National Party Organizations', p.749.
15. Enyedi and Lewis, 'The Impact of the European Union'.
16. Mair, 'The Limited Impact'.
17. Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart, 'Theorizing Party-based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality', in Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart (eds.), *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism: Vol. II: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.238-63 (p.256).
18. Lewis, 'The EU and Party Politics'.
19. *Ibid.*, p.2.
20. Enyedi and Lewis, 'The Impact of the European Union'.
21. Klaus Goetz, 'European Integration and National Executives: A Cause in Search of an Effect?', in Klaus Goetz and Simon Hix (eds.), *Europeanised Politics? European Integration and National Political Systems* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp.211-31.
22. Ladrech, 'Europeanization and Political Parties', p.396, emphasis added.
23. Paul Taggart, 'A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary Western European Party Systems', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.33, No.3 (1998), pp.363-88.
24. Taggart and Szczerbiak, 'Europeanization, Euroscepticism'; and Taggart and Szczerbiak, 'Contemporary Euroscepticism'.
25. For example, in Ladrech, 'Europeanization and Political Parties'.
26. For example, Gary Marks and Carole Wilson, 'The Past in the Present: A Cleavage Theory of Party Response to European Integration', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.30, No.3 (2000), pp.433-59; Gary Marks, Liesbet Hooghe, Moira Nelson and Erica Edwards, 'Party Competition and European Integration: Different Structure, Same Causality', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.39, No.2 (2006), pp.155-75; Nick Sitter, 'The Politics of Opposition and European Integration in Scandinavia: Is Euro-scepticism a Government-Opposition Dynamic?', *West European Politics*, Vol.24, No.4 (2001), pp.22-39.
27. Lewis, 'The EU and Party Politics'.
28. For more on the strategic use of European issues see Haughton and Rybář in this collection.
29. See Stephen Whitefield and Robert Rohrschneider's contribution to this collection.
30. Szonda Ipsos poll quoted in Brigid Fowler, 'Hungary: Unpicking the Permissive Consensus', *West European Politics*, Vol.27, No.4 (2004), pp.624-51 (p.642).
31. Brigid Fowler, 'The Hungarian EU Membership Referendum, 12 April 2003', *EPERN Referendum Briefing No.4* (Falmer, Brighton: Sussex European Institute, 2003).
32. 'Europe is Our Future, Hungary is Our Home: Discussion Paper on European Reunification', Fidesz Hungarian Civic Party, 2002.

33. Agnes Batory and Dóra Husz, 'The First European Elections in Hungary', in István Hegedűs (ed.), *Hungary's Accession: A New Member State of the Expanding European Union* (Budapest: Hungarian Center for Democracy Research – Szazadvég Press, 2007), pp.155–81.
34. 'The Future Has Started', Fidesz and Hungarian Democratic Forum election programme 2002, p.23.
35. 'Go Hungary', Fidesz election programme 2006, p.38.
36. A theme echoed in the appeals of many parties in the region: see the other contributions in this volume.
37. 'Strong Republic, Successful Hungary', Hungarian Socialist Party programme 2006.
38. 'For a Normal Hungary', Hungarian Democratic Forum programme 2006.
39. 'Freedom, Competition, Solidarity', Alliance of Free Democrats programme 2006, p.181.
40. Geoffrey Pridham, 'European Party Co-operation and Post-communist Politics: Euroscepticism in Transnational Perspective', in Szczerbiak and Taggart (eds.), *Opposing Europe?*, Vol. 2, pp.76–103 (p.88).
41. Interview with Fidesz official, 26 May 2008. This is not at all surprising as particularly the smaller parties employ few paid permanent staff members. For instance, the Democratic Forum's website listed 12 names in total in its staff directory for the party's central office, including the party's single MEP: see the Hungarian Democratic Forum website available at: <http://part.mdf.hu/index.php?akt_menu=462&PHPSESSID=ccb918a64ce1ccf92aa35be7f516f2>, accessed 25 July 2008.
42. This may have to do with the fact that only two Free Democrat MEPs were elected in 2004, one of whom, a founding member of the party, was a member of various bodies of the party regardless of his status as an MEP.
43. Hungarian Socialist Party Statute, adopted 24 Feb. 2008.
44. See the party's website available at: <<http://www.mszo.hu/index.php?gcPage=public/szervezetek/mutatSzervezet&fnId=4350>>, accessed 23 July 2008.
45. Zsolt Enyedi, 'Playing with Europe: The Impact of European Integration on the Hungarian Party System', in Lewis and Mansfeldová (eds.), *The European Union and Party Politics*, pp.64–85.

When in Doubt, (Re-)Turn to Domestic Politics? The (Non-)Impact of the EU on Party Politics in Poland

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If one seeks it out, one can find limited evidence of EU influences, but in general terms EU accession has had little significant direct impact on Polish party politics. Moreover, there is no obvious linear relationship between party positions on European integration and the extent to which the EU impinged upon a party and the nature of that impact, although it appears to have been greatest in those parties that were members of the large European party federations and EP groupings. In many ways, 'Europe' appears to have been assimilated successfully into the logic of Polish domestic party politics.

Until recently, the impact of the EU on domestic party politics was something of a Cinderella topic and there has certainly been very little empirically grounded, theoretically informed comparative research that has attempted to analyse this phenomenon in a comprehensive and holistic way.¹ This study contributes to the emerging literature by examining the impact – or rather lack of it – of the EU on party politics in Poland, focusing primarily on the post-accession period. The main, empirical section of the essay considers the impact of the EU on six parties and political groupings in four specific dimensions. The six political groupings examined are those that, as Table 1 shows, won the most votes in the 2001, 2005 and 2007 parliamentary elections. Four of them secured election to the Polish parliament in all three elections: Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska: PO); the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: PiS); the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej: SLD), which contested the 2007 election as part