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National Political Parties and European Governance:

The Consequences of 'Missing in Action'

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This article first summarizes the findings of a three-year research project on the Europeanization of national party organization, then proceeds to a critical analysis of the consequences for national as well as EU governance. Beginning with the general finding that mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties have not created new procedures to make their leaderships more accountable for their actions in EU decision-making, nor expanded to any appreciable degree the number and/or influence of party personnel responsible in the area of EU matters, the article identifies three clusters of impact: a) public opinion and partisan discourse; b) the legitimacy of both MEP's and transnational party federations; and c) the dynamics of party government at the national level. The article ends with discussion of the 'democratic deficit' inside parties and the merits of politicising the EU without taking into consideration the role of national parties.

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Studies regarding the europeanization of party politics[1] have recently begun to focus on national parties.[2] After a period in which most research has been aimed at the development and activities of parties at the European level, i.e. transnational party federations, and the party groups and putative party system in the European Parliament, attention is being drawn to national actors, very often under the analytical rubric of 'top-down' europeanization. To date, most studies in this vein have focused on a) manifesto and programmatic/ideological change; b) the emergence of new euro-sceptic parties; c) internal division or factionalism in established parties; and d) patterns of party competition. In most cases, apart from studies on internal division, parties are treated as undifferentiated or singular objects. Thus there are studies that purport to place parties at certain points in political space, or state that the position of a party is anti or pro EU. Ladrech (2002) argued that research on Europeanization and political parties may pursue at least five areas of investigation, and one of these, organizational change, i.e., internal adaptation of party structures as a response to the influence of the EU, offers the possibility of looking 'inside' parties in order to evaluate how they *actually* operate in a europeanized political and institutional environment. It offers the benefit of 'unpacking' a political party, and may thus be able to provide a more substantial basis with which to analyse the degree to which national parties respond to or influence EU issues in domestic politics.

This article discusses the implications of the findings of a three-year long research project (2003-2006) on the Europeanization of National Political Parties,[3] whose research question explicitly asked if national party organization has been altered in response to EU 'top-down' influences, especially since the late 1980's. This

period corresponds to the increase in the role of the EU in the political systems of its member states by virtue of the establishment of monetary union, the greater use of co-decision between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, and the wider policy competences of the European Commission. Assuming that parties respond to changes in their operating environments, the project hypothesized that organizational change may be reflected in 1) greater power for party elites who engage with EU decision-making arenas, and 2) greater power and numbers for those directly working on EU issues within parties. This article summarizes the findings[4], and then proceeds to a critical analysis of their possible implications. The issues discussed are not intended to include the experiences of parties in post-communist EU member states.

Findings of the project

The Europeanization of National Political Parties project, hereafter referred to as the ENPP, hypothesized that the privileged position of party elites in government vis-à-vis EU decision-making bodies such as the Council of Ministers and the European Council, plus the resources of their national bureaucracy as well as their delegation in the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) in Brussels, would translate into greater power. An increase in power was understood to mean greater autonomy in decision-making *from* and less accountability *to* the rest of their party. This 'greater autonomy/less accountability' equation was also employed in relation to what the ENPP labelled 'EU-specialists', that is, those individuals for whom EU affairs was their sole or major brief. This category included Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) as well as other elected and appointed individuals in the national

party, for example the liaison between the national party and its respective transnational party federation (in this case, assuming the party was a member of such a transnational body, e.g. the Party of European Socialists, the European People's Party, etc.) or a parliamentary or extra-parliamentary party spokesperson on Europe. It was reasoned that as the EU looms ever larger in its significance in domestic politics and policy-making, parties would need to generate greater specialization in this area, and these newly created posts would acquire enhanced prestige and power. The ENPP project also recognized that there were additional or competing exogenous factors that could explain greater power for party leaderships, for example 'presidentialization' (Poguntke and Webb, 2006). Taking such competing explanations into account, the ENPP methodology rested on collection of party statutes and in-depth interviews with party personnel who were either EU specialists and/or current or former members of party leaderships. The line of questioning explicitly tried to extract from the interviewees their own estimation of the 'political worth' of such positions as well as to isolate the 'EU' factor in evaluating whether or not an increase in power or prestige had occurred.

In line with other studies,[5] the ENPP confirmed that party elites, especially when in government, have increased their power in relation to the rest of the party organization, whether it was the party in central office or the parliamentary party, according to the ENPP 'greater autonomy/less accountability' equation. Other non-statutory variable may certainly influence or constrain party leaderships decision-making, such as public opinion or intra-party factionalism, but in strictly organizational terms, the grater salience of the EU has not prompted more scrutiny of leaders' actions within parties on any regular basis. An apparent exception is the case of the French Socialist Party, where an internal referendum on the EU Constitutional

Treaty was supposed to determine the Party's official position for the later national referendum. In this case, though, the resort to the party statute activating the internal referendum was not EU-specific, but dealt with matters relating to internal party democracy (see ft 10). However, the ENPP also concluded that there was no substantial increase in the number of EU-specialists, nor were these individuals the recipients of any increase in power within their respective national parties. Although the full findings are addressed in Poguntke et al. (2007), the striking similarity of the findings allows a brief generalization, and will help provide background for the subsequent discussion.

- Party leaderships in government are not accountable to their national parties in the course of EU policy and decision-making, whether in an *ex ante* or *ex post* manner;

- The parliamentary party in general is unaware of policy preferences 'uploaded' to the EU level because it is absent from policy development, which primarily consists of policy advisors, COREPER, etc. This is despite the creation of parliamentary European affairs committees;

- Manifesto formulation on EU matters is narrow in terms of the drafting personnel, and the proposals themselves are generally vague on proposals;

- MEP's are still, by and large, marginal within their national parties in terms of influence and recognition, even though delegation leaders, in most cases, sit on leadership bodies of their extra-parliamentary party organization;

- Party staff with responsibility for liaising with European party federations are generally detached from the rest of the party (these are primarily international secretaries);

- MP's on European affairs committees are, in general, inclined to support their party in the executive, that is, government-opposition dynamics are at play;

- Party members and elected officials continue to view EU affairs as foreign policy, thus continuing to defer to party leaders in its orientation and operation.

Despite the reality reflected in the growing literature of the impact of the EU on national governance, it appears that intra-party organizational dynamics have remained essentially static, barring the further distancing of the party leadership when in government from the rest of the party. For almost all of the parties under review in the ENPP, it would appear that the EU has not induced an organizational adaptation of any substantial merit. This may be explained by the simple fact that national parties' electoral concerns - or more exactly vote-maximization and office-seeking (Müller and Strøm, 1999) – are mostly untouched by EU policy debates and struggles. National parties, therefore, have not changed their internal rules and structures in order to hold their leaders accountable for decisions made in EU bodies in the same fashion as in exclusively domestic settings, nor have EU policy concerns stimulated any substantial organizational innovations. The ENPP research strengthens the general finding that is elites who have 'built Europe'. This is important, as this common assumption situates elites in distinction to the masses, or public opinion, and elite actions have thereby been justified in terms of a permissive consensus. What the ENPP research uncovers is that, with few exceptions, the permissive consensus also exists *within* political parties, including rank and file party members, as well as mid-level elites and parliamentarians. The research has, in other

words, 'unpacked' parties in the sense that references to parties – whether singular or plural - acting in a particular manner because of 'Europe' will require closer inspection.

What are the consequences?

If the absence of internal organizational change in national parties is explained by the fact that the core goals of vote-maximization and office-seeking have been relatively untouched by the influence of the EU on domestic policy-making, we then must acknowledge a situation in which parties have essentially isolated the EU within the broad range of their activities and in effect have 'outsourced' EU-related policy and decision-making to unelected advisors and experts, whose actions are legitimated only by party elites in government, who themselves are generally unaccountable to their parties in this policy-political area. Further, as Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004: 48) argue, party leaderships have no incentive to change this state of affairs because it contributes to their management of internal party dynamics: 'European issues have as a matter of fact proved easier to manage than other new issues in most European countries . . . [because] . . . all party leaders understand from long experience the danger to them of an issue that is not already integrated into the left/right spectrum of concerns'. This means party leaders, as gatekeepers between the national and the supranational arenas, tend to avoid situations that they cannot control. What consequences, if any, derive from these circumstances? I identify six consequences, all of which impact in a general sense the relationship between parties and public opinion, their European-level representatives, and the concept, however loosely defined, of party government.

Below are brief summaries of these considered points, all of which may open new avenues for further research.

1. Public opinion: 'By failing to take the opportunity to present voters with meaningful choices, party leaders also miss the chance to educate them about European affairs' (Franklin, 2006: 241-2). Although party manifestos are not the most vital source of information for voters during election campaigns, references to the EU and EU-related policy significance is not accorded commensurate weight in party programmes. Indeed, 'parties do not seem to assign the weight to Europe that it deserves given its growing impact on national decision-making. European issues are treated as secondary issues in manifestos, just like European elections are perceived of as secondary elections' (Pennings, 2005: 13). Without much else to make a considered judgement, voters are left, almost by default, to form simple 'for' and 'against' opinions of the EU, as feelings of being either a 'winner' or a 'loser' in regards to EU policies have no other structuring dynamics, and this situation is consequently exploited by euro-sceptic parties (Taggart, 1998; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2006). News and other media outlets are only marginally helpful, as they have motivations that do not relate well with lengthy and complex events in EU decision-making (de Vreese, 2001). Thus parties are not playing a linkage function in relation to the EU. Perhaps inadvertently, the absence of clear partisan-influenced information regarding EU policy-making emphasizes 'constitutive' rather than 'isomorphic' issues vis-à-vis the EU (Bartolini, 2006), that is, a focus on institutional questions rather than linking the EU policy sphere with matching domestic policy debates.

2. Political discourse: Mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties have not developed the discourse, much less internal processes, to respond to ideological or policy challenges regarding EU policy decisions, especially from the political far left or far right. This was made very clear from the experience of the French Socialist Party when it was confronted with challenges from its left wing during the referendum campaign to ratify the EU Constitutional Treaty. The general response from the 'yes' camp within the party to charges that the new Treaty would institutionalize neo-liberal practices was to give greater weight to the consequences of a failure to ratify rather than emphasizing the modest improvements in the social dimension the Treaty provided (see Ivaldi, 2006). Regarding more routine decision-making, parties with a governing vocation are unable to defend executive decisions in the Council of Ministers on a partisan basis because they do not have the means for converting the potential ideological complexion of such policy debates into the domestic left versus right political spectrum. Thus electoral or other challenges from the far left and right are countered on a national, not left-right, basis, if at all. Referring to the impact of the so-called 'permissive consensus' on government accountability to their electorates over EU decisions, Franklin (2006: 242) argues that the 'consequences of this permissive consensus has been to free national parties from the need to coherently address and articulate European policy concerns . . . Instead of defending their participation in European regulatory decision-making on the grounds of fulfilling an electoral mandate, ruling parties have consistently defended such actions on the grounds that they have dome their best to protect national interests . . . .'. The absence of a fully formed partisan response to EU policy development leads to what Schmidt (2006) terms 'politics without policy'

at the national level, as partisan debate over europeanized policies are never or rarely transmitted into the traditional national political arena. A further consequence of this 'de-politicization' is an emphasis of the institutional dimension of EU development and consequently opportunities for euro-sceptic parties to set the public agenda regarding EU policy initiatives.

3. Electoral mandates: as EP elections are considered second-order (Schmitt, 2005), no mandate is generated for MEPs to act as *European* representatives.[6] The continued lack of integration of MEPs with their national party,[7] which itself has no developed Euro-policies in particular (as opposed to government positions in inter-governmental bargaining), means that MEPs' voting instructions are in general formed at the European level, not in national policy preference formation processes. Thus a discrepancy between a national party in executive government and its EP party delegation(s) could emerge. MEPs may act with an ideological orientation in Brussels,[8] and this may be influenced by their respective group positions, and herein lays the potential conflict with national government or party. Divergence does not necessarily precipitate a crisis between an EP party delegation and its national party or government, especially when the EP or group vote is a foregone conclusion, but it does highlight the detached nature of the EP party delegation from its national party, and again, its lack of mandate. For if EP elections are indeed second-order, that is, fought as a national elections with predominantly domestic issues at stake, then the ties binding the EP party delegation, one might think, ought to be such that they are *delegates* rather than *trustees* of national voters.

4. Transnational party federations: The legitimacy of transnational party federations (such as it is) may be threatened by any increase in their role or profile in

domestic politics, a development called for by Hix (2006) as part of a general 'politicisation of the EU' argument. The consequences in this regard are two-fold. Firstly, without effective integration among their member national parties, the activities and potential output of transnational party federations is weak, as there is no 'grassroots' mobilization. Secondly, as there is no general national media coverage of these euro-parties' activities, any increase in their profile would highlight their funding basis, a good portion of which derives from EU sources. These 'euro-parties' could be viewed as 'creatures' of Brussels and therefore biased, and this would play into the hands of anti-system parties, who by and large have no equivalent transnational party federation.

5. The 'partyness' of national government: Katz (2001) has argued that institutionalizing the 'party government/popular sovereignty model' at the level of the EU, in order to ameliorate its democratic deficit, is neither desirable nor likely. Elsewhere, Katz (1986) has elaborated the party government model, though focusing on its application at the national level. Our concern here is not with proposing the party government model for the operation of the EU, but instead with the effects of national parties absence from policy-development that is up-loaded from the national to the European level on national party government. In this context, then, the 'partyness' of national government is diminished by the fact that EU policy choices are not presented to voters at national elections, and most of the party is not included in policy development aimed at the EU level, especially those policies that are later implemented at the domestic level. Thus the position of the party is not known, and thereby violates one of Katz' three conditions of party government (Katz, 1986: 43). This also

has consequences for the 'partisan theory of policy-making' as the conditions of representation and accountability are the two foundations upon which this understanding of party government rests. Furthermore, the two traditions of the representational role of parties – the policy preferences of members and followers (populist) and the inter-party competition (liberal) are *both* negated by the lack of choice given to voters and the lack of internal accountability of elites in EU arenas. This points to or highlights the low partyness of government, if not low party governmentness (Katz, 1986). This also implies an 'inadequacy in terms of (the procedure and substance of) democratic performance' (Keman, 2002: 209).

6. Reinforcing the 'party in government': Katz and Mair (2002) noted that, in regards to the three faces of party – party on the ground, party in central office and the party in public office, that a drift towards the party in public office was underway. This trend is confirmed, and more specifically the drift is towards the party in government (i.e., a growing separation between the parliamentary party and members in the national executive). At the same time, the high autonomy and low accountability of these actors is off-set by the institutional rules of EU bargaining arenas, the complexity of multi-level governance and the sheer number of EU member states post-2004. The resulting paradox is that at the same time national executives are strengthened, their position in inter-governmental bargaining is being diluted.

These six points are not unconnected. The absence of parties playing a linkage and educating role for public opinion regarding EU policies is explained by the lack of a developed partisan discourse or ideological lens with which parties could interpret

and transmit their positions. The weak legitimacy of MEPs' mandates, no doubt a contributing factor to their marginality within their respective national parties, is also shared – even to a greater respect – by transnational party federations, for whom any role in a 'politicized' EU would expose their near total invisibility in most of their member national parties. Lastly, the declining partyness of national government is, paradoxically, one side of a coin in which party elites are strengthened vis-à-vis the rest of their party organization. The implications of the ENPP findings demonstrate that for all the changes the process of European integration has precipitated on national administrations, economic governance, etc, national political parties continue to operate as if the EU is external to their main goals and activities. The rest of this article explores two wider implications of this state of affairs in regards to the effect European integration has had on the internal functioning of political parties and the impact on European governance.

The democratic deficit inside parties

The literature concerning the 'democratic deficit' of the European Union has identified two dimensions, the inter-institutional relationship in Brussels, and the legislative-executive relationship in the member states. Although debate continues regarding whether or not the actual institutional dynamics are indeed democratic or not,[9] what is not in doubt is that the norms developed over time in national political systems governing the proper influence of citizens, through their representatives, over executive government, are not equalled at the European level and are under strain at the national level (Lord and Harris, 2006; Scharpf, 1999). The acknowledged response to this situation has been, since the late 1980's, a

reinforcement of parliamentary input into EU decision-making, at both the European and national levels. This has been executed, in part, by the strengthening of the European Parliament's role vis-à-vis the Council of Ministers through the creation and expansion over time of co-decision, and at the national level through the establishment of European affairs committees, practicing varying degrees of scrutiny over their respective executives. These two 'fixes' to the stated problem have been institutional in nature. The main aim in both has been to legitimate executive decisions by making the decision-makers more accountable to their appropriate representative (i.e. elected) body. But this edifice rests on shaky ground. Never mind for the moment the argument that EP elections are second order, thus undermining the mandate of MEPs. Nor, for that matter, the fact that most national elections are devoid of proposals regarding the policy orientation of the EU. The key actors, that is organizations, which national politicians and MEPs are members of, are political parties, and the findings of the ENPP clearly demonstrate that there exists a lack of accountability of party elites/executives to the rest of their party in relation to EU decision-making, whether they are executing these decisions in Brussels or their national capital. We can, therefore, identify an additional dimension of the democratic deficit, one that is *inside* political parties.

But what type of deficit is this? In other words, where do the impulses or motivations to maintain these arrangements originate? In the institutional-based deficits, EU treaty and/or national constitutional change would be required to make the EU-level more 'parliamentary', and to some extent this was partially accomplished in the Amsterdam and Nice treaties. On national levels, national executives respond to requests for more accountability, especially changes that are *ex ante* in nature, with arguments about the need for flexibility in inter-governmental

bargaining, where having one's hands tied would result in sub-optimal outcomes. Chryssochoou (2000) argues that the institutional nature of the democratic deficit is not the only dimension, and that a socio-psychological perspective, stressing the absence of a demos, is at the heart of the EU's underdeveloped democracy. In both of these perspectives, the role of political parties is absent, although transnational party federations are mentioned when arguing for the election of the Commission president (Hix, 2002). National political parties would necessarily have to play a critical role in either perspective, as transnational party federations have no 'grassroots' organization for electoral mobilization, and even the creation of a European demos would still require channels of representation between national and EU actors and institutions. So national parties have a role in any reform, at the national or European levels, aimed at democratizing the EU. But as we have seen in the finding of the ENPP, parties are themselves, with few exceptions, seemingly uninterested in questions relating to the EU in general, or engaging EU policy-making with a frame of reference intelligible to domestic electorates. In fact, the ENPP project did not detect any evidence of efforts within the parties under investigation, especially the main centre-left and centre-right parties, to change the status quo to any appreciable degree. Is there an internal party dynamic that reinforces this situation, that is, the democratic deficit within parties? In both levels of the institutional based deficits, change would involve party leaders in government agreeing to compromise their privileged position vis-à-vis other actors. For parties that regularly occupy government, opposition status would not make much of a difference, as party leaders expect to occupy national governmental executive positions.

The deficit within parties is more intriguing. The noted lack of interest inside parties to make their leaders more accountable has two possible and linked explanations. The first, and more prosaic of the two, is that opportunities of a technical nature presented by internal party rules or parliamentary procedures, do not exist.[10] The second explanation is that party leaderships themselves do not want to engage with a potentially divisive issue, and so the European issue is 'managed' in such a manner so that it does not threaten internal stability. Indeed, as Van der Eijk and Franklin argue, party elites themselves maintain the status quo by not allowing the EU to be integrated in domestic internal and external politics: 'European issues have as a matter of fact proved easier to manage than other new issues in most European countries . . . no doubt mainly because the EU has in most countries successfully been presented as a matter of foreign policy, which is in all European countries a branch of policy-making traditionally left in the hands of governments' (2004: 48). The 2005 EU Constitutional Treaty ratification experience is again instructive. Although the French PS leadership was obliged to hold their internal referendum due to the exploitation of new rules establishing a 'direct consultation of members', some of the same misgivings on the part of left-wing factions in other social democratic parties did exist (*Le Monde*, 2005; *Libération*, 2005 ; Saliou, 2005). Yet, in no case did a party leadership allow an open debate within their respective parties on the merits or demerits of the proposed Constitutional Treaty.

The democratic deficit inside parties is then a phenomenon brought about by a convergence or combination of several factors: a) efforts by party leaderships to avoid direct engagement with the EU as a politicized issue for reasons relating to internal organizational stability – and by extension electoral competition dynamics; b) internal party rules and statutes which prevent or make very difficult for ordinary

members to force issues to the fore, for example at party congresses; and, c) a continued belief among party members, elected or not, that issues relating to the EU is a matter of foreign policy, thus inducing a deference towards party elites handling of such matters.

Do parties matter?

Does the democratic deficit inside parties, and parties lack of engagement with EU policy-making, matter in any substantive way? In other words, when we speak of a Europeanization of domestic politics, does the apparent fact that parties are 'missing in action' make any difference to either the nature of national governance or the output of EU governance? There is of course evidence that partisanship is a factor in the policy output of advanced industrial countries (see, for example, Garrett, 1998), and also that the social dimension of the EU itself is attributable to the efforts of social democrats and others. So we might assert that national parties non-engagement with the EU sphere has not prevented partisan elements from influencing supranational policy-making.[11] It would then seem that there has not been any cost to national parties. On the other hand, there are those who believe that citizen attitudes towards the EU represent a 'sleeping giant' that has the potential, if awakened, 'to impel voters to political behaviour that . . . undercuts the bases for contemporary party mobilization in many, if not most, European polities' (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004: 32-3). This perspective presumes that political parties are not, at present, actively involved in integrating or structuring attitudes towards the EU into existing formats, i.e., the left-right spectrum. The ENPP research and what we know from the programmatic statements of parties at EP and national elections

regarding the content of EU policy proposals (e.g. Pennings, 2006), certainly demonstrates that providing citizens with knowledge of EU policies is not a task with which the main parties of government occupy themselves. The fact that some see a growing left-right polarization in the EP (Hix et al., 2005) has less to do with a greater degree of instruction or attention by national party leaderships (i.e. bottom-up Europeanization) than it does with the developing nature of the policy content of EU legislation itself, which is beginning to resemble contested left versus right positions, e.g. the services liberalization. It then appears, at least up to the present day, that there has not been any cost to parties for their absence in EU matters.

So, apart from the six implications identified above and the democratic deficit inside parties, would parties' greater involvement in EU policy and decision-making at the national level change this state of affairs? I believe the answer is yes, and further, that this scenario would lead to a politicisation of the EU. Some may feel that this is exactly what the EU needs in terms of legitimacy and democracy (Hix, 2006). Others believe that this would impair the consensual nature of EU decision-making, and if this meant a more majoritarian orientation in EU decision-making, a change in the Commission-national government relationship in particular (Dehousse, 1995). How might this politicisation come about? Twin dynamics would be at work, the first more constraints on national actors, primarily government ministers, and second, the 'awakening' of the sleeping giant, i.e. public opinion.

- Politicians would be constrained by more active parliamentary and extra-parliamentary *ex ante* and *ex post* reporting, thus internalising more explicit domestic repercussions into inter-governmental bargaining, making it difficult to 'blame Brussels' for policy outputs;

- Parties involvement in policy development may have electoral competition implications, as other parties are drawn into matching or attacking more defined campaign promises;

- The higher profile of EU policy may add more complexity to national government coalition building negotiations;

- Domestic electoral plus internal party organizational constraints would add to politicians deliberations concerning the public response to the output of EU legislation, reducing elite consensus over the direction of European integration;

- The consensual nature of policy and decision-making in the Council of Ministers and EP inter-institutional relationship will be affected, making it harder to compromise, and perhaps more adversarial.

Thus activating or Europeanising national political parties may lead to the politicisation of the EU, but unlike the Hix proposals, which imply a change at the EU level such as election of the Commission president will spark left/right political activity at the national level (a top-down approach), it is national parties that must first decide that opening an 'EU front' for their activities is necessary (a bottom-up dynamic). National parties active involvement in domestic EU policy and decision-making may indeed awaken the sleeping giant, but at what cost? Schmidt warns that 'repoliticizing may be good in terms of governance *by* and *of* the people, but it could prove a disaster for governance *for* the people, that is, for the EU to move forward in an efficient and effective way' (2006: 270). Parties can therefore matter, but the manner in which they do so is still to be determined.

Conclusion

Political parties are central actors in the workings of national democratic governance. As the European Union is not a parliamentary regime, the absence of party politics in its institutional operation, in a manner that resembles its member state polities, has not raised too much consternation, as further institutional reform would be necessary to put the European Parliament in a position such that elections to it determined the Commission work programme, and thus give prominence to competitive party politics at the European level. This article has been concerned primarily with the absence of party politics inside the member states concerning EU matters, and more specifically, the absence *inside political parties* themselves when addressing policy-making and the activities of their leaderships in EU decision-making arenas.

The EU may be 'run by party politicians' (Hix and Lord, 1997: 1), but what are the consequences when these party politicians are operating essentially divorced from their parties as they 'run' the EU? Although national parties may not have paid a high *direct* cost for their absence from engaging the EU, this article has identified several *indirect* costs or consequences. If one accepts that EU-driven policies are increasingly interwoven with domestic policies, we see that national parties are for the most part uninvolved with almost the entire deliberative process of EU policy-making, specifically as it is both processed by national *party* governments and in turn influenced by up-loaded national policy preference formation. Beyond the acknowledged absence of a EU impact on national western European party systems (Mair, 2000), and the lack of a partisan discourse about the EU policy orientation in the public domain, the consequences for parties and party government can be

grouped into three clusters. The first concerns the relationship of parties to the electorate. By allowing party leaders, especially when in government, to defend their actions by invoking a defence of the national interest and not adding or substituting a clear partisan basis for their actions, parties allow, almost by default, public opinion to structure in 'for' and 'against' positions vis-à-vis European integration. Further, the lack of a party discourse that is partisan-oriented in regards to the EU policy domain also means that euro-sceptic parties are often able to set the terms of debate when the EU does become a salient issue in a member state's political space.

The second set of consequences concerns party actors at the European level, MEPs and transnational party federations. The weak legitimacy of the EP, and its members, has often been attributed, among other factors, to the nature of its elections, second-order and the absence of a common electoral framework. Yet the basis upon which MEPs make most of their decisions, apart from clear national priority issues, are derived from the positions, ideological or otherwise, of their respective EP party groups. Yet if their election were nationally oriented, then one would presume that they ought to be transmitting their national party's position on proposed EU legislation, which is not the case. Transnational party federations, to which most centre-left and centre-right parties belong, are even more weakly attached to their member national parties than MEPs, and any increase in their role or activities may invite accusations of supra-national loyalty, as a good portion of their funding comes from EU sources. Finally, the last set of consequences is concerned with the state of national party government. If party involvement in policy development is one of the hallmarks of party government, following Katz (1986) and others, then the absence of any input by national parties in EU policies that are themselves intimately associated with policies that result in domestic transposition,

undermines the party government model. Further, the strengthening of the party in public office, as opposed to the party on the ground and the party in central office, is made even more noteworthy when we disaggregate the public office into parliamentary and executive office. It is the party occupying executive office that is more precisely empowered by the process of European integration.

Suggestions that a politicization of the EU may be good for democracy must take into account the role of national parties, both in terms of understanding exactly how they are, to date, uninvolved with EU matters, and also in what capacity they would be involved in any politicization. Institutional 'fixes' to the EU's democratic deficit have, by and large, ignored the crucial part played by national parties, and the implications of an awakened 'sleeping giant' of public opinion must also consider the effect that a greater involvement of national parties in EU matters would have on European governance.

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[1] Europeanization in this article is defined as changes in party behaviour and/or structures, traceable to influences emanating from the EU, whether direct or mediated through institutional and policy changes in the national political system member states.

[2] Mair, in Graziano and Vink (2006).

[3] 'The Europeanization of National Political Parties', supported by a grant from the British Economic and Social Research Council (award no. R000 23 9793), and additional funding from the Keele University Research Investment Scheme. In-depth interviews were carried out from 2003 to 2006 with party personnel, both elected and staff, in parties having national parliamentary representation in the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Austria.

[4] The findings are contained in the forthcoming *The Europeanization of National Political Parties: Power and Organizational Change* (2007), edited by Poguntke, Aylott, Carter, Ladrech and Luther.

[5] Especially those that assert that national executives have increased their power vis-à-vis other domestic institutions and actors. Regarding parties in particular, see Raunio (2002).

[6] Koepke and Ringe (2006) and Scmitt (2005) suggest that EP elections in post-communist EU member states are not second-order, so our findings should not be extended to parties in these countries.

[7] The UK Labour Party's 'link-MEP' system links MEPs with government advisors, not the party organization, see Messmer (2003) and Carter and Ladrech (2007). On MEP's relations with their respective national parties, see Raunio (2000).

[8] Hix et al. (2005) on increasingly left vs. right voting in the EP. See also Kreppel (2002) on details of group voting formation.

[9] See the recent exchanges between Moravcsik (2002) and Føllesdal and Hix (2006).

[10] The internal referendum on the EU Constitutional Treaty in the French Socialist Party in December 2004 was made possible by use of a new statute adopted at the Dijon party congress in 2003 that allows a 'consultation des militants', approved by the party's Conseil National (CN), its parliament.

[11] In addition to the EP party groups, party leaderships in national government may also bring their ideological perspective to bear in Council meetings as well as inter-governmental conferences, etc. See Aspinwall (2002).