# Causality and Mechanisms of Change in Party Europeanization Research

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

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

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## INTRODUCTION

Research on the subject of the European Union and domestic political party change under the rubric of Europeanization, has engaged two types of change, direct and indirect. In both cases, the European Union is understood to be external to the domestic political system onto which certain dynamics – pressures, policies, etc. – impact the behaviour and organization of political parties. Researchers recognise that 'something in national political systems is affected by something European' (Mair 2007: 156) and have set about collecting evidence for the impact of the EU. The search for evidence of party change, though, has overshadowed efforts at theorizing the primary issue of causality and specifying the exact mechanisms leading to party change. This chapter focuses on exactly these questions, and in so doing, contributes to a hopefully more rigorous and transferable framework for analysis. The first part of the chapter presents a brief background as to the research agenda on parties and Europeanization. The next section engages with the issue of direct and indirect change and considers the appropriate mechanisms that propagate both types of changes. Finally, a summary of the insights proffered at this stage is assembled into a framework for future analyses of parties more attentive to causal mechanisms.

## THE PARTY EUROPEANIZATION AGENDA

The interaction of political party activity and the European Union occurs in many different facets. Political parties are primarily analysed in their domestic setting, that is, as organizations competing in national party systems. The Europeanization research agenda therefore seeks to understand if the EU impacts or 'hits' domestic parties in some measurable way and how it does so. This understanding of the direction of change follows the 'top-down' conceptualization of Europeanization dynamics. However, there is also the phenomenon of political party activity at the European level, represented by the activities of transnational party federations and parliamentary party groups in the European Parliament. Generally speaking, the two levels have been kept methodologically distinct, both in standard party research as well as in Europeanization studies, following the distinction between top-down

and bottom-up directions of change. However, if the European level activity of party actors is evaluated in light of a principle-agent perspective, then developments at this level ultimately represent decisions made by national political parties, even allowing for some degree of principle-agent loss. In this chapter, it will be argued that among the types of change in domestic party behaviour and organization one should include developments at the supranational level (an inter-governmental perspective applied to national political parties).

Research published on the subject of Europeanization and political parties has concentrated primarily on illustrating evidence of EU-influenced national party change, whether focusing on Western or Eastern Europe. If one were to advance a summary conclusion about the nature of the overall findings to date, limited to mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties of government, the verdict would be change at the margins, but core organization and functions remain intact. There are certainly differences between Europeanization effects in established parties and party systems in Western Europe and post-communist parties, but even in the case of the latter, two recent comparative studies seem to present a similar verdict as with Western European parties.[1] What has been given less attention, if much at all, is explaining exactly how the EU influences national political parties such that some type of change is generated. A good portion of party Europeanization studies have employed the framework set out by Ladrech (2002)[2] that proposed five areas for investigating EU-related party change; the problem is that the dependent variable may have been given some thought, but the independent variable – the EU and/or its *influence* – was never really adequately theorized. In other words, it is still an open question as to exactly how the EU 'hits' national parties. What links supranational decision-making and legislation to party organizational change? One may go further and ask if the five areas mapped by Ladrech are themselves sufficient to represent party change, or might there be additional dynamics not caught by a focus on changes in rules, internal power relations, and so forth? The intent of this paper is to engage with these

[1] See the special issue of *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 'Does EU Membership Matter?' 25 (4), December 2009, and *The European Union and Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, Lewis and Mansfeldová, eds. (Palgrave 2006).

[2] Robert Ladrech (2002) 'Europeanization and Political Parties: Towards a Framework for Analysis', *Party Politics* 8 (4): 334349.

fundamental issues, and in so doing perhaps re-focus the direction of party Europeanization studies.

One reason why little attention has been directed to the issue of *causality* is the fact that political party research and Europeanization studies have not overlapped to any great degree. Ladrech's 2002 *Party Politics* article gave only passing attention to the issue of causality in party Europeanization, instead setting out and justifying five areas for investigation, namely organization, programme, party-government relations, patterns of party competition and relations beyond the national political system. If that article has been taken as a template for subsequent research, it is then not surprising that more effort has been expended in the search for evidence of change rather than adequately explaining *how* the EU is responsible. Instead, the EU – which is evidently a cause of domestic institutional and policy Europeanization – has been assumed to wield a corresponding significance in those areas of the domestic political system that have consequences for parties. Simple counterfactual reasoning would reasonably lead one to assume a link between the EU and parties in the creation of a Europe Secretary, or rules governing the rights of MEPs in national party conferences, or the establishment of a national party liaison to an affiliated European transnational party federation. The task is to explain how the mere presence of the EU triggers party change. Europeanization studies have only recently emerged as a comparative politics-related division of European integration studies, and party research has its own traditions and methodologies in general and in party change in particular (see Harmel 2002), and this may explain why a more explicit Europeanization approach to explaining causality in party change has not (yet) developed. This paper aims to strengthen the theoretical basis of a party Europeanization approach by addressing the issue of causality and the mechanism of change. In so doing, it engages the Europeanization literature by way establishing how the EU influences parties.

In particular, it is argued in this paper that political parties do not easily fit into the established Europeanization understanding of causality – specifically the *misfit* hypothesis – nor is evidence of change readily observable, thus complicating research methodologies such as process tracing as well as leading to conclusions that the EU does not have much of an impact on parties (Ladrech 2007). Change related to the EU, such as it occurs in mainstream political parties in western Europe, is actor-oriented and tactical rather than structural; efforts expended by party leaderships in relation to the EU are more often aimed at *preventing* organizational and programmatic developments rather than facilitating them; pressure, such

as it is recognized by party leaderships, does not emanate from a misfit with EU 'ways of doing things', but internally as dissent based on perceptions of politicized threats to the integrity of the party itself and its electoral strategy. These aspects of the relationship of national parties to the EU are explored in more depth and also reviewed in the context of Ladrech's 2002 article. The paper is organised into three sections. In the section one, the asserted incompatibility of the misfit hypothesis with national parties is developed. In section two, defining EU-related change in parties is presented. In section three, avenues for party research are proposed.

## MECHANISMS OF CHANGE AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Top-down Europeanization studies, as Exadaktylos and Radaelli concisely summarise, 'starts from the presence of integration, controls the level of fit/misfit of the EU-level policy *vis-à-vis* the Member State and then explains the presence or absence of domestic change' (2009: 4). The europeanization and party politics approach, launched by Ladrech's 2002 article, assumed a generalised impact of the EU on domestic political systems by pointing to changes in the dimensions of institutions and policies, and inferring that consequences or implications of these changes would impact political parties. This 'top-down' approach did not, however, control for the level of goodness of fit or misfit; rather, left undeveloped was the notion that party leaderships would 'respond' to these systemic changes with appropriate individual party adjustments. The systemic changes that were identified, namely 'increased government policy constraint' and 'the public perception of growing irrelevance of conventional politics' (Ladrech 2002: 395) were given as contextual or environmental variables more than as triggers or precise mechanisms of change. The article then went on to map the areas of party organization and activity where research would 'uncover' such adjustments (evidence of Europeanization): organization, programme, party-government relations, patterns of party competition, and relations beyond the national political system. To put the case more bluntly, the article left un-theorised the manner in which domestic institutional and policy change spills over into party change, whether structural or behavioural. The aim in this paper is to correct for this lacunae by focusing discussion on the mechanism(s) of change appropriate for parties. As stated at the outset, the misfit hypothesis is not effective in explaining party change (which itself requires further consideration, see below), and so an appropriate mechanism must be identified.

Europeanization studies have developed over the past ten years such that one might argue that a 'standard' approach has developed. One of the key concepts in what is often labelled 'top-down' Europeanization – distinguishing the direction of causal influence from the EU to domestic actors and institutions – is the 'goodness of fit' or misfit (Risse, Cowles and Caporaso 2001). The EU generates pressure on domestic institutions and policies the greater the difference is between the domestic practice and that of the EU. Change occurs in the domestic institution for a variety of reasons, from a recognised need to make domestic decision-making more efficient in order to enhance inter-governmental bargaining, e.g. creating an inter-ministerial co-ordination mechanism, to re-balancing national and sub-national relations due to regional actors' activities resources by the EU's Cohesion policy. Europeanization and policy change is said to occur not in the form of compliance with EU directives and regulations, but in managing the consequences of compliance and implementation, for example in creating new policy instruments or withdrawing state action in liberalised sectors of the economy. In all of these examples, the pressure bearing on the domestic institution or policy area is created by the cost of maintaining standard domestic practices that are viewed as sub-optimal in achieving specific or national interests, and/or unable to achieve compliance with the legal responsibility to implement EU legislation. Börzel (2005) has suggested a spectrum of change, ranging from initial resistance, then absorption, to more definitive adaptation and even transformation (the latter usually reserved for post-communist experiences). Misfit as a mechanism of change is employed to explain institutional and policy Europeanization, especially where the relationship between the EU and the member state in policy areas is characterised as hierarchical; in policy areas where the legal mandate of the EU (or more exact, the European Commission) is weaker, scholars have posited different mechanisms to explain why certain innovations are adopted or copied from other member states (the so-called open Method of Co-ordination is often given as an example of how practices are emulated among member states). Pressure arising from a misfit, then, is advanced as a mechanism to explain how the EU causes change in domestic institutions and policy areas. Though not elaborated to any substantial degree, Ladrech (2002) clearly invoked misfit as the mechanism by which pressure is generated in the domestic political system and therefore leads to changes or adjustments in parties. What was not fully developed was an explanation of exactly how institutional and/or policy Europeanization 'spills over' onto party activities such that a pressure' on parties is created.

So, how does Europe hit political parties? For purposes of this paper, attention will focus on

mainstream centre-left and centre-right political parties in the pre-2004 EU member states. It has already been established that the EU does not directly impact political parties, as there is an absence of a link or channel transmitting EU authority into areas of party organization or activities. The case, such as it exists, of an indirect impact, is based on an assumption of party leadership perceptions of constraints and possibilities generated by the EU on the domestic political system that impacts the achievement of party goals. Both a rational and sociological institutionalist approach is therefore indirectly invoked. Pressure resulting from changes in areas of the political system that can be explained by the misfit mechanism, somehow elicits a response by party leaderships. But how can this be the case? Let us begin with the argument that the narrowing of government policy manoeuvrability can also manifest itself as a problem for parties by reducing the options available for party competition (and thereby undermining aspects of party government legitimacy). Beyond the fact that globalization dynamics may also contribute to such a state of affairs (a methodological issue to be treated in section three), for some states, liberalization of the economy has led to a 'retreat of the state' and thus removed certain policy areas from party government control, for example monetary policy in eurozone member states. But let us consider some party-specific factors. First, mainstream centre-left and centre-right political parties are generally pro-EU (an obvious exception is the British Conservative party). This means, at least on a very general level (i.e. support for the European integration project), there is, by definition, no pressure as such. Second, many of the policy areas transferred to the EU, whether in whole or in part, have not resonated in terms of party competition or general politicisation. Even in the case of EU Competition Policy, where member states with pronounced public sector government involvement have witnessed reductions in state aid and liberalisation of public utilities, party policy responses have not challenged the legitimacy of the EU (even in centre-left parties). More narrowly focused, one can say that disagreement with the policy orientation of the EU – a perceived neo-liberal economic policy threatening left-wing parties' goals, and immigration policy for right-wing parties – may generate a form of supranational/national partisan competitive pressure. But what can an individual national party do about this that does not undermine its support for the European integration process itself? Consequently, even if party leaderships and members perceive a policy misfit between their stated goals and the EU, drawing attention a) undermines general support for a pro-EU stance and sends mixed cues to voters (Gabel and Scheve 2007), and b) does not result in any domestic gain in terms of party goals (this applies both to government and opposition parties, whose default position would be to avoid contestation on issues they themselves cannot control).

Another manner in which pressure by a misfit between EU policies and/or decision-making styles and national parties might be generated is if parties are responding to public opinion on such matters. Two issues immediately arise: first, the constraints on parties by public attitudes towards the EU, which if negative are portrayed in the literature as euro-sceptic (and there are varieties of such positions); and second, actual knowledge of EU policy positions. In the first case, in EU member states that have been identified as possessing relatively high percentages of euro-sceptic attitudes (as measured by Eurobarometre surveys, for example), to the extent one can argue that a constraint on parties' actions are apparent, for example in inter-party competition, it may be that parties avoid any mention of EU positions, apart from euro-sceptic parties (Steenbergen and Scott 2004; Van der Brug, Van der Eijk and Franklin 2007). The constraint may manifest itself in very public inter-governmental negotiations, such as at an IGC or summit in which major budgetary allocation decisions are to be made. But as for national government negotiations in more routine Council of Minister deliberations and relations with the European Parliament in inter-governmental decision-making, such constraints disappear. This is explained by the second case, that of knowledge of EU policies themselves. Public knowledge of EU policies and Commission proposals (and even own government positions on routine Commission legislative proposals) is near zero, unless domestic media outlets make a point of politicising a specific Commission proposal. A 'permissive consensus' does in fact continue to exist for non-historic EU measures, due to the factual ignorance of domestic public opinion. Therefore, to suggest that domestic public opinion disagreement with EU policies and proposed legislation creates a misfit which impacts national parties, simply does not stand up under scrutiny.

So far I have defined policy misfit between national parties and the EU policy orientation and suggested that where this might be the case, it does not generate a form of pressure that results in party change, whether constraining government actions in the routine EU policy and decision-making process nor in terms actions that national parties are able to capitalise upon for domestic partisan advantage. A final word, though, on policy misfit. In the top-down approach, the misfit arises after the bargaining process has produced authoritative legislative outputs. But as organizations for which a competitive environment is the norm, parties in government – which means essentially party leaderships – do try and assert national if not partisan preferences in inter-governmental and inter-institutional bargaining, but this is a 'bottom-up' dynamic and we are concerned with the top-down approach.

Policy misfit would, at first glance, seem to be the mechanism of change most likely to generate pressure on or within parties. The discussion so far discounts this possibility due to a lack of domestic pressure on parties that increases the costs of complying with EU legislation. Institutional misfit could also be advanced, especially in the area of national parliamentary dynamics. In this case, as mainstream national parties are almost always present in national parliaments, the Europeanization of national parliaments literature might warrant investigation (see, e.g., O'Brennan and Raunio 2007). In this literature, national parliaments are considered to be ceding jurisdiction over domestic policy in proportion to the areas transferred to the EU (in which national executives continue to play a part). Again, where would pressure arise? National parliamentarians may indeed acknowledge that areas of domestic policy are increasingly having authoritative decisions taken beyond their control (especially as *ex ante* control over national executives is rarely exercised in EU member states). Yet pressure on parties to correct this does not emanate from national party leaderships, as they occupy, when in power, the national executive that is part of the EU policy and decision-making process. Parliamentary parties in some member states also develop informal relations with their executive to be kept informed about significant EU policy issues (Auel and Benz 2007). Pressure does not arise from public opinion aghast at the diminution of national parliamentary democracy, because these issues are not widely perceived by the general public. Consequently, as national parties operate within the national parliamentary arena, the reduced policy parameters have not generated any pressure to change (barring essentially cosmetic arrangements such as advisory EU affairs committees).

Finally, as regard indirect pressure on parties, there is evidence that national party elites/leaderships are strengthened vis-à-vis the rest of their party organization by virtue of EU decision-making. The argument is that as members of national executives, they have privileged information on policy negotiations through COREPER and Council of Minister bargaining, a resource unavailable to the rest of the party. In terms of democratic procedures within parties, party leaderships are said to gain autonomy from the rest of the party as well as to deliberate and affect policy decisions outside of 'regular' party channels. As Carter and Poguntke (2010: 321) summarise, 'the logic of international negotiations and the growth of European integration have led party elites gaining power at the expense of party bodies such as party executives, parliamentary parties and party congresses'. However, they point to the fact that parties are 'caught between a rock and a hard place', that is, the need for elites in

government to negotiate effectively but also to abide by the principle of accountability to the party. They point to some uses of *ex ante* and *ex post* procedures intended to correct for the accountability issue, but recognise that these are, in the main, ineffective (see also Raunio 2002 and Poguntke et al. 2007). In this case, it would seem that a misfit exists between the need for involvement in supranational and inter-governmental bargaining by party elites versus party traditions of accountability. Evidence of organizational adaptation is seen in some weak efforts at obliging these elites to report their positions before or (mostly) after Council meetings. An increase in parties' own democratic deficit is the consequence of this two-level activity. Several issues are raised that require attention from this case of misfit and institutional or organizational change. The first is again a methodological issue, that of separating multiple sources and attributing causal weight. Certainly EU decision-making involves party elites/government ministers, but so do other international organizations, and in fact the rise of global venues of inter-governmental bargaining has been on the rise since the Second World War and involves most countries around the world; EU member states are not the exception. Second, there are also a variety of causes put forward explaining the 'presidentialization' of national executives, in particular that of prime ministers, that precedes the increase in activity in EU policy-making from the mid-1980s onwards (Poguntke and Webb 2005). These methodological concerns aside, the issue of concern for us is the presence of a misfit pressure. To be caught between a rock and a hard place would suggest that internal pressure is apparent, and the tension exists due to the acknowledgement of allowing party elites a free hand in international negotiations at the expense of party democracy. But is there indeed a 'pressure' as such? Evidence collected and reported in Poguntke et al. (2007) point to a clear *disinterest* by most party officials in EU policy-making. Further, surprising as it may seem, many MPs were content to see party elites act autonomously in international forums as this was expected in *foreign policy making* (despite the domestic consequences). The disinterest may also be explained by the fact that many of the policy issues that party elites/government ministers are obliged to negotiate upon are not politicised and are left to COREPER or junior ministers to develop a national position. In cases where a national position is required from a minister without prior cues, it appears that a default position is the party ideology, suggesting that though procedurally suspect, the outcome is not opposed to what a party position might be (Aspinwall, 2002, 2007). Unless there is clear evidence of frustration at this state of affairs, it is not clear that there is in fact any internal pressure for change, and the relatively innocuous mechanisms of ministerial reporting to a party body is symbolic and cost-free for the leadership.

Institutional and policy misfit are the two main mechanisms of change posited in europeanization (top-down) research. We have seen that national parties, though operating in political systems in which policy and institutional Europeanization has been documented, have themselves not experienced any spillover from these dimensions. But before turning to a definition and possible causal explanation for EU-related party change, the possibility that the EU may represent a political opportunity structure (POS) for parties must be evaluated. In this understanding of causal mechanisms, the EU presents an attractive resource for a party or parties that can be translated into a competitive edge in domestic politics. For mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties, the EU does not act as a financial resource, and so the manner in which the EU might be seen as a benefit is through identification with its general mission, a conferring of legitimacy, or through benefits accrued from compliance with EU level actors. In general, post-communist parties, especially those that occupy the political space of 'parties of government', have had a relationship with the EU and EU level parties (transnational party federations such as the Party of European Socialists-PES or the European People's Party-EPP) that has provided such resources. The picture is much different in Western Europe. As with the experience of Eastern Europe, parties emerging from an authoritarian regime (e.g. Spain, Portugal and Greece) have sought to identify with select features of the EU, in particular the party federations such as the PES or EPP as a means of establishing their democratic credentials (through external confirmation). In other cases, new parties may also seek this external blessing, for example Forza Italia and membership in the EPP and the former Italian Communist Party and its membership change to the Socialist Group in the European Parliament.[3] These cases are singular episodes of attempting to acquire domestic legitimacy partly through external recognition. As for any other resource that could be employed in the domestic sphere, there is very little that can be observed in the older party systems of Western Europe. Measured against the need to win elections, influence public policy, aid in recruitment, and so forth, parties' need of the EU is close to nil. We can conclude, therefore, that unlike interest groups, the EU does not serve as a very fruitful political opportunity structure, and, as we shall see below, is much more likely to serve as a political *liability* structure.

[3] It is true that new parties winning seats in the European Parliament for the first time have had organizational resources increased, e.g. salaries, access to communication and IT resources, administrative assistance, etc. However, for purposes of this paper, the focus remains on major established parties of government, as these are located in all EU member states.

## DEFINING PART CHANGE AND ITS CAUSAL MECHANISMS

At least in the case of parties in older EU member states, there does exist a relatively recent body of literature pointing to some evidence of change in three of the five areas mapped by Ladrech (2002). Whether organizational, programmatic or relations with EU actors such as party federations, the evidence does not amount to change beyond what Börzel (2005: 59) might term absorption, rather than adaptation (and certainly not transformation): 'Member states incorporate European requirements into their domestic institutions and policies without substantial modifications of existing structures and the logic of political behaviour'. The case of post-communist parties is sufficiently different from those in established party systems to warrant a separate consideration, which space does not allow in this paper. In this section, defining exactly what constitutes party Europeanization (change) is attempted and in so doing re-interprets the evidence of change so far advanced in the literature. Next, it is argued that there exists an indirect EU-related pressure inside political parties, but its manifestation is behavioural rather than structural, thus occulting evidence from most researchers. Finally, addressing this mechanism of change, or rather differentiating the causal mechanism from the 'top-down' misfit mechanism, is developed.

What exactly constitutes change in political parties may seem obvious, yet as Harmel (2002) states, though 'there have now been several attempts at offering and testing explanations for party organizational change, there have been few attempts to explicitly define what "organizational change" actually means or includes' (136). In this paper, party change is defined by materially evident changes such as amended rules and statutes, new references in manifestos and programmes, but also to internal party dynamics represented by party management actions to prevent organizational disequilibrium and electoral setbacks. Party change that can be traced wholly or in part to EU influence is then both structural and behavioural, and the Europeanization approach in this paper proceeds accordingly.

Evidence that the EU impacts political parties has been usually presented in the formats of organizational change, i.e. new party offices such as Europe Secretary, statutory changes allowing MEPs and their delegation leader votes at party congresses and executive bodies, as well as the issue of the strengthening of party elites as discussed above; programmatic change, i.e. an increase in references to the EU and/or specific EU policies in party manifestos and programmes (this may include qualitatively more precise recommendations

for EU change itself); and increased interaction with respective transnational party federations, i.e. participation in leadership bodies and working groups, symbolic gestures such as euro-party symbols in national party literature and links on party web-sites, etc. None of these changes fundamentally impacts the internal balance or distribution of power inside parties, and these changes do not enable parties to achieve their primary goals in any more efficient manner. Can we say, therefore, that they have derived from a misfit between the EU as an international organization or as a policy initiator? It may be more accurate to say that parties, as organizations, make adjustments to changes in their environment for purposes of 'intelligence-gathering' so as to be forewarned of policy developments that may necessitate an expenditure of resources or even threaten the integrity of the organization itself. The organisational changes listed above, while only a sample of those documented in the literature, are nevertheless representative of the minor innovations that almost all mainstream parties whether centrist, centre-left or centre-right, have implemented. These examples of party change are of a type, and to be categorised in the manner just suggested, that is, as means of engaging with a new environmental feature. In this respect, it may be more of a case of institutional isomorphism or normative institutionalism in which the 'logic of appropriateness' (March and Olsen 1998) influences the decisions to create new minor posts and amend statutes. It may also be initiated by a learning process facilitated by meetings of party representatives in their respective party federations. The variation in number and rank of new positions in parties may be explained by party traditions, budgetary considerations, etc. Party programmes and manifestos have an external audience in addition to the internal dynamics that result in policy position adaptation, and have a greater significance for party fortunes, and are therefore different in kind from the organizational changes mentioned above. Changes in programmes and manifestos are treated below.

There is another category of change exhibited by political parties, one that I label behavioural. 'Change' may not be the most accurate term to capture what is essentially an innovative strategy invoked by party leaderships to control 'zones of uncertainty' (Panebianco 1988) that may be generated indirectly by the EU. In response to changes in the operating environment of parties – but not directly impacting party activities – strategies intended to preserve their traditional pursuits and functions are prioritised, which themselves have remained fundamentally unaltered. Institutional actors, from a rational institutionalist perspective, would be expected to resist pressure to change or adapt either by ignoring pressures – if this cost is lower than adaptation – or by seeking to influence the source of

change. In the case of parties, ignoring the increased relevance of the EU as a domestic political issue is growing in cost, and individual national parties are not in a position to influence EU policymaking themselves. Nevertheless, party leaderships are not completely powerless, and *deflection* as an internal strategy for managing internal dissent over EU affairs arises as a rational pursuit. Deflection consists of actively directing attention of party members and voters away from the EU as an issue or a particular EU policy through internal and external means. Internally, this may manifest itself as a party management issue, for example by diluting or keeping certain positions off a party manifesto, or scheduling debate at a congress or other intermediary executive party body such that the central concerns of the leadership are not 'contaminated'. These are strategies of 'muffling' (Parsons and Weber 2010 forthcoming) or compartmentalisation (Aylott 2002), which are intended to avoid (deflect) issues over which party leaderships have no complete control from causing internal turmoil such that it threatens party fortunes or the internal balance of power. Its aim is to reduce organizational and electoral risk when identification with EU changes can become a liability for party leaderships. Externally, deflection may be observed in party leadership support for a referendum (Oppermann 2009), which turns attention away from internal party dynamics and instead nationalises it. Deflection is inherently a conservative strategy, emphasising the desire to preserve the organizational and party system status quo. Deflection should not be equated with complete issue avoidance, especially for parties in power, and so some degree of engagement is necessary, but operated only by key personnel (leadership in or outside government).

There is undoubtedly an EU impact on the dynamics of party management. Can this be conceptualised as a form of change, and if so, what can be posited as the mechanism of change? The impact of the EU in the dimensions of polity and policy may result from misfit pressures, but as Börzel and Risse (2007) remind us, this is only a pre-condition for change. Decisions to enact changes are based on a variety of intervening variables, such as veto players, political capacity, etc. The pressure that the EU exerts such that it impacts internal party management derives not from a misfit but from 'unintended politicisation'. It is this 'unintendedness' or contingent nature of EU actions that creates the uncertainty for party leaderships – inside and outside of government – and leads to strategies of deflection. By politicisation I mean instances when either proposals for a new advance in the European integration process or a policy initiative, or both, ignite internal party dissent and/or public mobilisation. In some member states, recent political turmoil during EU treaty ratifications,

e.g. the 2005 Constitutional treaty and the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, were examples of the politicisation of the integration process. The mobilisation against the 2006 Services directive was an example of politicisation around a policy proposal. These are but the most high profile examples of political mobilisation, and in these cases party leaderships faced internal dissent and challenges as well as voter 'rebellion'. More widespread, though, is developing critical dissent within centre-left and centre-right parties over different aspects of European integration and EU policy direction. Although usually prevented from spilling out publicly from internal party policy debates, EU initiatives and elections, both EP and national, increasingly present instances when EU-politicised issues can threaten party stability. As EU policy competences expand in scope, the possibility increases that they may be domesticated into left-right positions, thus presenting party leaderships with additional challenges to party management. Hooghe and Marks (2008) note that increasingly a EU left-right politicisation can cause divisions inside centre-left and centre-right parties. On the centre-left, the division is between those who are suspicious of EU neo-liberal policy and demand greater regulation and those who, however much they recognise this characterisation, find other reasons for supporting European integration, particularly in support of multicultural progress, environmental regulation, etc. The Services directive was a good example of this division inside social democratic parties. On the centre-right, nationalist sentiment – i.e. the protection of national sovereignty – is pitted against more general support for neo-liberal policies. Immigration policy and its EU connection – free movement of people – is an example of the EU dimension, in addition to straightforward sovereignty issues. A consequence of this state of affairs is a constant level of tension inside these mainstream parties, with EU initiatives and elections offering opportunities or flashpoints for political mobilisation.

The argument so far: party leaderships resort to a variety of strategies to deflect attention away from engaging in confrontational EU-related issues expressed as dissent within centre-left and centre-right parties. This phenomenon cannot be explained by a misfit in an institutional, or even policy sense, because a) the expressions of dissent are preferences, not fixed institutions or policies, and b) intra-party mechanisms allow for competition over policy. Let us look more closely at these two points. There are, of course, policy differences between parties, mostly notably the left-right divide, around which a number of specific policy positions can be mapped. Party identity to a large extent is reflected in its overall policy orientation, and for many voters, a cue as to what a policy position is or ought to be can be deduced from its position along the left-right spectrum. However, this does not mean

that within a party there are not various positions on certain policies or the policy direction of the leadership, and so in different intra-party bodies there may be on-going debate, whether highly organised in a factional manner or more orderly around a party calendar for policy deliberation. Consequently, although a party does have policy positions – expressed to a certain degree of detail in party manifestos and programmes – competitive pressures and governing dynamics means that these positions are contingent. In such an internal organizational environment, the proposition of alternatives is the norm, and so different preferences held by individuals or groups is to be expected as part of the definition of a modern mainstream party (as opposed to single issue parties). Differing preferences over EU policy – especially as EU policies cross over into the domestic left-right spectrum – is not surprising. Second, party leaderships have developed mechanisms and rules to channel dissent over previously agreed policies, usually postponing decisions to a party conference or congress or policy forum. Competitive pressure from within the domestic political system is the signal characteristic of a competitive party system; the main difference in regard to the EU is the uncertainty it can produce for party leaderships' management of dissent. This is the 'unintended politicisation' that is activated through conflict with intra-party preferences as well as with social movement preferences (mobilisation outside of parties). The EU 'timescape' (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009) is beyond control of national party leaders, especially those in opposition, and the pace of EU decision-making (Ekengren 2002) adds to the uncertainty for party leaders, i.e. EU policy developments do not operate according to any one national political cycle.

It is clear, however, that not all national political parties are subject to such internal pressures that party leaderships are obliged to resort to deflection tactics. This question of 'variable impact' of the EU 'cause' may be explained by the presence of certain intervening variables. In the case of national, mainstream parties of the centre-left and centre-right, there are two structural variables: a) patterns of party system competition; and b) the organizational position or strength of party leaderships vis-à-vis the rest of the party organization.

Patterns of party system competition: The presence of credible competitor parties to the left of centre-left parties (e.g. Die Linke in Germany to the SPD) and to the right of centre-right parties (e.g. FPÖ in Austria to the ÖVP). Each of the smaller competitor (or alternative) parties has established a specific policy stance/identity in relation to the EU that corresponds to the issues shaping contestation over Europe (Hooghe and Marks 2008). Parties such as Die

Linke exert influence within the left wing of the SPD, forcing the party leadership to justify policy and electoral strategy. Similar dynamics occur in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and to a lesser extent, France. These alternative parties focus their EU critique less on issues of sovereignty on a nationalist basis but more on a critique of the neo-liberal orientation of the Single Market, particularly matters surrounding the EU Competition Policy. On the right, parties such as the FPÖ influence the right wing of the ÖVP, tempting party members and voters with more pronounced anti-immigration policy positions. Notions of national community preservation and a call for greater national border control conflict with EU immigration policy, Single Market freedom of movement, and support for cultural diversity. In both cases, these alternative parties capitalise on the mainstream party's reticence to define in detail their own policy positions for risk of exacerbating internal dissent, thus leading to strategies of internal and external deflection.
[a full list of parties to go here]

Organizational position of party leadership: internal party organization varies, especially in relation to the power dynamics between the party in public office (MPs), central office (party executive, where party rules may allow militants to influence policy and leadership selection) and the party on the ground (party members/constituencies/branches) (Katz and Mair 1993). The trend within most mainstream parties has been a strengthening of the party in public office, both in terms of leadership selection and programme and manifesto drafting as well as the position of publically elected members on the party's executive (Katz and Mair 2002; Heidar, Knut and Koole, Ruud 2000). These triangular relationships do vary to a certain degree, and there are parties that exhibit characteristics at both ends of a spectrum. For example in the British Labour Party, the party in central office – the National Executive Committee (NEC) – has been downgraded in its importance to the political direction of the party at the expense of the party in public office and especially by the elected leader. On the other hand, the French Socialist Party is one of the few major parties in Western Europe in which the party in central office remains the key arena for party decision-making. The relative position of the leadership, that is, the power relations between primarily the leadership in the party in public office and the statutory position of a party's militants, explains the degree of influence the leadership may use to engage in deflection strategies (this assumption invokes May's 'law of curvilinear disparity' (May 1973).

We can hypothesise: the greater a party has competition on its wings from a credible far left

or far right party, and party statutes allow party militants a medium to high degree of influence over the party leadership, the more the party leadership must resort to various tactics to contain (deflect) the internal pressure from de-stabilizing the party's internal equilibrium and electoral attractiveness.

Together, these variables contribute toward an understanding of the propensity for certain parties to experience EU-related dissent and for party leaderships to resort to deflection tactics in order to preserve party stability. A party such as the French *Parti Socialiste*, where the parliamentary party is subservient to the party in central office (which allows party militants a high degree of influence) witnessed the failure of the leadership to contain dissension over the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2004 and 2005 and suffered challenges to its very legitimacy. This does not mean that there is an absence of similar tension in parties without these two features, simply that the party leadership can afford to ignore internal calls for more radical change. It is therefore correct to state that the EU impacts parties, but the mechanism in which this occurs is not pressure to *conform* to a EU prevailing order; rather, the pressure is manifest in political eruptions in the domestic political sphere. The response is not an adjustment in policy or institutional re-configuration; rather, it is the development of innovative means by which to contain the potentially disruptive effects of EU politicisation within the party organization and its electoral strategy.

## NEW AVENUES FOR THE STUDY OF EUROPEANIZATION AND PARTIES

This paper, while critiquing the Europeanization and parties approach produced by Ladrech (2002), nevertheless does not advocate abandoning the approach, simply refining its scope as well as the theoretical basis, especially with regard to understanding causality and mechanisms of change. Briefly, I would like to indicate some further avenues for party Europeanization research.

1. How does the approach developed in this paper relate to conditions in post-communist EU member states? Do the same EU politicised issues map onto post-communist partisan debates?
2. Do parties indeed experience pressure from politicised EU policy, or are the examples given in the paper so random as to not indicate a more general phenomenon?

3. More attention should be given to internal party decision-making over EU issues in addition to 'structural' change.
4. Refining and defining 'party change', as suggested by Harmel (2002): is the absence of outward change indicative of a party 'cease-fire' for electoral reasons? Again, research on internal party decision-making is required.
5. Methodological issues: separating domestic or other non-EU international factors as causes of party change: how do we identify and attribute causal weight?
6. Do EP elections serve as a channel or safety valve for party leaderships in relation to EU policy-based challenges, especially for party supporters and voters presented with a low-risk (second-order) option?

These are simply some suggestions that could enrich our understanding of how the EU influences parties, mostly by directing attention to the *inside* of the party.

## CONCLUSION

The EU undoubtedly has some effect on national political parties. I have argued in this paper that it is the cause of internal management problems for party leaderships, for which strategies to contain and deflect challenges to the internal equilibrium of the party are developed. The development of innovative methods of organizational resistance to the potentially disruptive effects of the EU and its policies is evidence of Europeanization, as defined in this paper. Anti-EU parties, on the left and the right, are simply reinforced in their core beliefs by EU initiatives, whether of an institutional or policy type. For mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties, however, the EU can engender internal dissent. This internal dissent is magnified in terms of its risk to internal stability by the presence of a competitor party on its 'extreme' wing, which poses dilemmas for electoral strategy as well (in the case of social democratic parties, see Kitschelt 1999). Many such far left and far right parties have positioned themselves in an anti-EU policy stance that resonates within the policy division within the mainstream party. The ability of a party leadership to implement deflection strategies depends on its position of strength within the party, especially in relation to the party in central office, where party militants, according to the rules of internal party democracy, may be able to constrain the leadership in some respects. The EU is thus a *cause* of potential disruption within a particular set of mainstream national parties, though the response is not one of structural or identity change; rather, it is a behavioural response by

leaderships operating within in the decision-rules of the party organization, focusing on removing the specific EU politicised item of controversy before it undermines party internal equilibrium and electoral fortunes. This explains the unexpectedly low amount of references in party manifestos and lack of sustained analysis in most party programmes (Pennings 2006). The EU is therefore, in a manner of speaking, increasingly a political liability structure for certain mainstream political parties. It is also apparent that in the context determining causality in the case of parties, the misfit hypothesis, such as it has been applied in the dimensions of institutions and policy, does not accurately explain how and what kind of pressure is generated on parties. The intent of this paper has been to advance our understanding of this exceptional phenomenon within the framework of Europeanization studies, by reconsidering what the nature of EU influence is, and how it impacts parties. It also addresses the undeveloped assumptions concerning causality in Ladrech's 2002 party Europeanization framework.

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