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Differential Impact of EU Enlargement on First and Second Wave Applicants: Europeanizing Political Parties in Poland and Bulgaria

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**Differential Impact of EU Enlargement on First and Second Wave Applicants:
Europeanizing Political Parties in Poland and Bulgaria**

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In addition to domestic political and economic restructuring, most of the former state-socialist countries opted to establish political and economic relations with “the West” as a step to make the transition to liberal democracy and a market economy irreversible in the immediate term, and to acquire a new “home” in the international system in the long run.¹ Consequently, they sought membership in almost all “Western” international organizations and, most important, in the European Union (EU), which made an explicit link between membership and the adoption of a certain set of norms and values. Accordingly, the EU began to play an important role in the transitions of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) by helping these countries meet its membership criteria. Important, then, becomes the question about the effects of this international cooperation on the democratization process in CEE. This paper focuses on the impact the EU has had on CEE applicant parties.

Theoretical approaches developed to explain Europeanization in the West seem to be well suited to account for the Europeanization patterns in the East, even in the pre-accession process² with the caveat that Europeanization in the East is also associated with broader processes of democratization, marketization, and liberalization.³ Europeanization studies on CEE confirm that the institutional and policy effects of the EU have been more immediate and comprehensive than in the old member states.⁴ And even though, new party systems in Eastern Europe have been more open to international influences than those in established Western democracies,⁵ like in the old member states, the impact on policy has been generally much stronger than on polity and politics.⁶

Theoretical Framework: Defining Europeanization

Radaelli argues that the concept of Europeanization refers to a set of processes through which the EU political, social, and economic dynamics become “incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies.”⁷ This definition presents an opportunity to systematically analyze political parties as organizations responding to the effects of European integration upon their primary operating arena – the national political system. Thus studying Europeanization of national parties or party systems entails understanding “the direction and change in the logic of

¹ Frank Schimmelfennig, “NATO Enlargement: a Constructivist Explanation,” *Security Studies*, 8.2–3 (1998–1999): 198–234.

² Tanja Börzel. “Deep Impact? Europeanization and Eastern Enlargement” Prepared for Amelie Kutter and Vera Trappmann (eds.), *Das Erbe des Beitritts: Mittel- und osteuropäische Gesellschaften nach dem Beitritt* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2006).

³ Klaus H. Goetz, “The New Member States and the EU: Responding to Europe,” in Bulmer and Lequesne (eds.) *The Member States of the European Union* (Oxford, 2005): 254–280.

⁴ Heather Grabbe, “How does Europeanization affect CEE Governance? Conditionality, Diffusion and Diversity” *Journal of European Public Policy* 8: 6 (2001) 1013–1031 and K. H. Goetz, “Making Sense of Post-Communist Central Administration: Modernization, Europeanization or Latinization,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 8: 6 (2001): 1032–1051.

⁵ Paul Lewis, “EU Enlargement and Party Systems in Central Europe” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 21.2 (June 2005): 171–199.

⁶ Börzel. “Deep Impact?”

⁷ Radaelli, Claudio (2000) ‘Whither Europeanization?: Concept Stretching and Substantive Change’, European Integration online Papers (EioP), 4 (8) : 4. Available at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-008a.htm>.

behavior of institutions and policy entrepreneurs stimulated by advancements in the EU institutional and policy competences.”⁸ In other words, studying the Europeanization of party systems entails outlining the institutional environmental changes introduced by EU institutions and secondly, party policy and/or organizational responses to them.

According to Ladrech, there are five areas of investigation for evidence of party adaptation: (1) policy/programmatic content; (2) organizational changes; (3) patterns of party competition; (4) party–government relations; and (5) relations beyond the national party system.⁹ Those five dimensions of party Europeanization, however, fail to account for the process of transforming party relations with their constituency and with civil society, which this paper considers as the 6th dimension of party adaptation to the EU.

Ladrech’s approach to the Europeanization of national parties operates within the “rational institutionalist approach.”¹⁰ From this perspective, the domestic impact of the EU is conceptualized as a process of redistributing resources among domestic actors with the European arena conceived as an emerging political opportunity structure, which offers some actors additional legal, informational, and political resources to exert influence, while severely constraining the ability of others to pursue their goals.¹¹ It should be noted, however, that in this paper increased participation in European structures is also understood to have had some socializing effects on CEE parties, resulting in their incorporation of new rules, norms, practices, and meanings through a diffuse sense of following European models of party development.

Institutional Environmental Changes Introduced by the EU

Studying the impact of the EU on national party systems in Western Europe, Mair points out that “European integration increasingly operates to constrain the freedom of movement of national governments, and hence encourages a hollowing out of competition among those parties with a governing aspiration. As such, it promotes a degree of consensus across the mainstream and an inevitable reduction in the range of policy alternatives available to voters.”¹²

These processes are even more pronounced in CEE. The Cold War “victory” of the West affirmed the superiority of the “Western ways” and ignited the East’s aspiration to “return to Europe”. The West had come to symbolize mainly consumer prosperity and personal freedoms, but also democracy, security, and human rights, which the suppressed socialist societies had for so long desired. Thus the Eastern “transition” / “transformation” – a means by which CEECs pursue their interests, by articulating their identification with whom they belong and to whom they would like to belong and be like – became a surrender of Eastern identity to the Western project. Aspiring to membership

⁸ Robert Ladrech, “Europeanization and Political Parties: Towards a Framework for Analysis” *Party Politics* 8. 4 (2002): 389–403.

⁹ *Ibid.* It should be noted that these dimensions of party adaptation are not exclusive and exhaustive but allow for some overlap between the six areas of investigation.

¹⁰ Tanya Börzel and Thomas Risse, “When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change” *European Integration Online Papers* 4. 15. (2000) Accessed on March 21, 2005. Available online at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-015a.htm>

¹¹ Simon Hix and Karl Goetz. “Introduction: European Integration and National Political Systems.” *West European Politics* 23 (2000): 1–26.

¹² Peter Mair, “The Limited Impact of Europe on National Party Systems” *West European Politics* 23 (2000): 27–51.

in the EU as a national priority altered the nature of domestic political life in CEE countries by solidifying European integration as an unusually consensual issue in East Europe, which in turn substituted electoral for political accountability and weakened parliamentary oversight over the executive in charge of the colossal obligations of accession.

Given the complexity of the democratization problems, the short political deadlines for meeting the membership criteria with limited resources, and the constitutional “near-monopoly” of the executive in foreign policy, legislation adopting the EU *acquis communautaire* passed through CEE parliament with special priority, that is without much modification or discussion thus depriving EE parties of “the most important school of democracy – the necessity to hamper a coherent policy out of a cacophony of domestic interests and opinions.”¹³ The spectrum of the political debate in CEE was additionally constrained by the international and domestic consensus for neo-liberal market reforms as promoted by the EU. The narrowing of the set of legitimate policies left CEE parties little competitive leeway but to dispute each other’s competence in achieving the desired EU-promoted reforms rather than the constitution of the desired reforms; parties went in and out of office but their policies did not.¹⁴ Even though, the EU publicized its opinion on the government’s progress in the reform process, which reinvigorated competition,¹⁵ parties were questioning mainly their opponents’ identity and credibility to carry out the country’s return to Europe.

Party Responses to the Opportunities and Constraints Introduced by Enlargement

The successful competitive strategies have been those of technocracy and Euro-skeptical populism/ nationalism – and the two were sometimes combined.¹⁶ A majority of parties continued to subscribe to, operate within, and reinforce the European integration consensus. In advertising that their party is the better manager and the more efficient administrator of the accession reform agenda, party elites sought European level legitimation for their efforts and/or credentials. Since relevant European Parliament (EP) party groups and transnational party federations around the EP were looking for future members from CEE, the development of links to these groups was a preferred, cheap and readily available, strategy for some.

The pro-integration consensus became more problematic as the evolving integration process revealed problem areas as well as the benefits of accession. Public opinion began to shift only in the late 1990s, and while still predominantly pro-EU, an evident decline in public supports for the integration project began to appear in several CEE states.¹⁷ As concerns penetrated the public domain and reverberated among the citizenry, the issue began to resonate in the political space and afforded party leaders the

¹³ Stephen Holmes, “A European Doppelstaat?” *East European Politics and Societies*, 17.1 (Winter 2003): 107-118.

¹⁴ Anna Grzymala-Busse and Abby Innes, “The Great Expectations: The EU and Domestic Political Competition in East- Central Europe.” *Eastern European Politics and Societies* (2003) 17: 64–73.

¹⁵ Milada Anna Vachudova, “The Leverage of the European Union on Reform in Postcommunist Europe,” Paper presented at ECPR Joint session Workshops, Turin, 22–27 March, 2002.

¹⁶ Grzymala-Busse and Innes, “The Great Expectations.”

¹⁷ European Commission, *Applicant Countries Eurobarometer 2001*. December 2001 and European Commission, *Eurobarometer: Public Opinion in the Acceding and Candidate Countries First Results*. Autumn 2003.

opportunity to challenge the dominant consensus by formulating a more principled response to integration in seeking to safeguard the nationalist interests of the state or to protect social groups threatened by entry into the EU.¹⁸

Research Design of the Paper

The empirical basis of this paper is a comparison of Bulgarian and Polish party responses to Europeanization during the accession process of each country. The competitive strategies of mainstream parties are examined in the hope of teasing out some tentative conclusions about party adaptation to EU structures along the six dimensions outlined above, i.e. the dependent variable. To ensure variation in the independent variable – the extent to which countries are exposed to a greater alteration of the structure of incentives resulting from European integration, the paper differentiates between countries that were identified very early on as “first wave” candidate countries and current applicant countries, which have had markedly less pressures to Europeanize.¹⁹ Bulgaria and Poland were selected because they both.

The Europeanization of CEE parties has resulted in the further centralization of party organizations; the general reproduction of the Social and Christian Democratic Western European party values in the East (if somewhat superficially and artificially in most cases); the establishment of a tradition of identity and image development through transnational party linkages; the politicization of integration; and a convergence of government programs around the reform agenda of the EU *acquis communautaire*. Such a structuring of party competition and CEE ideological spaces combined with overinvestment of party resources in forging transnational link at the expense of building party roots in civil society seems to have contributed to the consolidation of many parties’ tendency towards elite control, their limited ability of rendering social divisions into salient political identities, and their weak organizational links with the public, that is, the alienation of parties and voters. In this sense, the paper confirms Mair’s argument about the Europeanization of West European parties: “by taking Europe itself out of national competition, and by working within a supranational structure that clearly lacks democratic accountability, party and political leaderships do little to counteract the notion of the irrelevance of conventional politics.”²⁰

Some words of caution concerning the interpretation of the evidence are necessary. The impact of Western actors should not be overestimated: it is important but analytically difficult to distinguish EU influence from other powerful exogenous and endogenous processes such as globalization (for example, the role of other actors such as IMF) and the domestic constraints and opportunities with which parties are faced and which have remained decisive in shaping the democratization and Europeanization prospects of CEE parties. Moreover, some of the consequences are not so much a result of deliberate norms

¹⁸ Jack Bielasiak, “Party Systems and EU Accession: Euroscepticism in East Europe” Paper prepared for the Conference on Public Opinion about the EU in Post-Communist Eastern Europe, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, April 2-3, 2004.

¹⁹ Following John Ishiyama, “Europeanization and the Communist Successor Parties in Post-Communist Politics” *Politics & Policy* 34. 1 (March 2006).

²⁰ Mair, “The Limited Impact of Europe on National Party Systems.”

and models but rather a product of the incentives and interests created by transnational cooperation and the institutionalization of the EU. Also, even if the European party federations and groups are party-like organizations, the domestic parties, which compose them, are characterized by an important degree of heterogeneity of ideologies and domestic political context and strategies. Lastly, it is as of yet difficult to speak definitively about the effects of the EU on CEE parties, given the dynamic nature of the process, which is still developing.

A final cautionary note concerns the subject matter itself: party politics in East Central Europe immediately after 1989 developed overwhelmingly from within the parliamentary arena and not from grassroots constituencies.²¹ For the most part, these new parties were professional, personalized, and closely linked with the state.²² The consequence was a weakly institutionalized party system characterized by multiple, evolving social cleavages that surface through the splintering or reconfiguration of political parties and the entry of political entrepreneurs seeking to mobilize new cleavages as currencies of competition.²³ Therefore, the impact of Europeanization could only be in cementing and facilitating these trends rather than causing them.

Europeanization of Parties Working within the EU Integration Paradigm EU Party Federation Cooperation

The dissolution of the Soviet Block and the subsequent political and economic liberalization of CEE made European political parties, anticipating EU enlargement, seek interlocutors and potential partners in the East. Party Internationals, European party federations, and national parties multiplied delegations in the region, closely following political developments in CEE but also testing the grounds for future cooperation. Searching for international recognition, many CEE parties looked for and were eager to accept contacts abroad. With the first signs of stabilization of the CEE party landscapes and the consolidation of the reforms process in the second half of 1990s, the formal association of new CEE members to EU party federations began.²⁴ It has been in the latter half of the 1990s onwards that transnational party cooperation (TPC) has

²¹ Abby Innes, "Party Competition in Postcommunist Europe: The Great Electoral Lottery," *Comparative Politics*, 35 (October 2002): 85–104.

²² Grigorii Golosov, "Who Survives? Who Doesn't?" *Party Politics* (1998) 4: 511–36.; Lewis, Paul (ed.) *Party Structure and Organization in East-Central Europe* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996): 14–15; James Toole, "Straddling the East–West Divide: Party Organization and Communist Legacies in East Central Europe" *Europe-Asia Studies* 55 (2003): 101–18, 112; Ingrid van Biezen, *Political Parties in New Democracies: Party Organization in Southern and East-Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

²³ Paul G. Lewis, *Political Parties in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2000) and Richard Rose and Neil Munro, *Elections and Parties in New European Democracies* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2003).

²⁴ Dorota Dakowska, "The Mechanisms of EU Enlargement Impact on Polish Parties: The Case of NewMembers' Association to European Party Federations and the Transnational Activity of German Political Foundations," Paper prepared for the ECPR Joint Session Workshops, Turin, Italy, 22–27 March 2002, pg.10. Association and membership with EU party federations includes socialization between countries in the party groups in the European Parliament (EP) as well as in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the different EU party federations related to these party groups such as the Party of European Socialists (PES), the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR), the (Christian Democratic) European People's Party (EPP) and the conservative European Democratic Union (EDU), the traditional party internationals such as the Socialist and the Liberal but also bilateral links between parties in different countries.

increasingly been regarded and utilized as a channel for furthering accession chances as well as party-political networking.²⁵

Parties from CEE democracies interested in joining transnational party formations had to declare an adherence to one or another conventional ideological tendency and were subject to strict conditionality demands. These concerned both democratic conditions, relating to party outlook and structures, but also commitment to European integration.²⁶ The application process often entailed some ideological adjustment or certainly a sharpening of party identity at presumably a formative stage of individual party development. Once parties joined, they have been subject to various pressures to conform to transnational party programs and policy positions, which, however, have rarely been transmitted into policy action. The influence of TPC has been through election training as well as policy and organizational advice and has sometimes included financial support. It has been mainly party leaders and senior officials who were most directly concerned with TPC but they themselves have often been well-positioned to mould their own parties given these were often top-down in their structural life.²⁷ In sum, the party foundations and institutes have been a powerful means of supporting the very establishment of party pluralism in CEE.²⁸

Poland

With Solidarity's victory in the partially free elections of 1989, the Polish "Left" was discredited but the former communist elite took advantage of the organizational and financial resources of the Polish United Workers' Party to repackage itself into a "social democratic" Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). The reformed Polish communists looked consciously to European models and the domestic motivation was evident in their desire for legitimation, with recognition by the Socialist International (SI) being the most obvious external accolade.²⁹ The SLD became a catch-all formation of social democrats, trade unionists, and business interests of former communist cadres, which embraced traditional socialist pledges for higher wages and better welfare as much as pro-market policies. The former Communist Party satellite, the United Peasant Party, reorganized into the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), became essentially a small-holders' party seeking protective measures and financial support for farmers; its leaders were therefore more suspicious of market-oriented reforms and more patriotic but far less anti-clericalist than

²⁵ TPC has given CEE Party elites a relatively easy access - on the basis of ideological fraternity - to top politicians in EU member states, some of them holding influential positions in government. Even political bonds established with opposition politicians have tended to be useful in propelling them into office and after their elevation to national office as a possibility to affect EU enlargement decisions.

²⁶ The application process included a review of party programs, public statements by leaders, confidential reports by West European embassies in the country of the candidate party, "missions" by transnational organizations to the party headquarters and often invitations to party delegations to come and visit the transnational party offices, usually in Brussels, for detailed discussions of policy matters.

²⁷ Geoffrey Pridham, "Patterns of Europeanization and Transnational Party Cooperation: Party Development in Central and Eastern Europe," Paper for Workshop on *European Aspects of Post-Communist Party Development*, ECPR Sessions, University of Mannheim, 26-31 March 1999.

²⁸ Antony Todorov, *The Role of Political Parties in the Bulgaria's Accession to the EU* (Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy, 1999).

²⁹ Pridham, "Patterns of Europeanization."

their SLD counterparts.³⁰ In 1992 a new labor party – the Labor Union (UP) – was created under the auspices of veteran Solidarity activists as an opposition to the “neo-liberal dogmas” of the post-Solidarity governments. Espousing strong anti-clericalism and a pragmatic approach to economic problems, the UP provided a non-communist conservative alternative to the SLD. Despite the emergence of the UP, however, in the 1993 election, the SLD and the PSL won the largest bloc of seats.³¹

In the meantime, the SI had undergone numerous internal debates on how to respond to former Communist regime parties in general and the SDL in Poland in particular. Even though the SDL adopted a pro-capitalist democracy and pro-EU integration stance early on, continuities remained: some more negative – at the level of party activists, the somewhat corrupt image, and certain ideological crisis of credibility – than others – electoral support, strong organization, and material and technical resources. The initial response of the SI, at the time of the 1990 elections, was to favor the pre-WWII reconstituted Social Democratic parties but these did not perform impressively. The important victory of the SDL in 1993 (followed by the parallel cases of Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia) convinced the SI to systematically recognize the ex-communist parties as the only viable sister parties but only after a long and assiduous process of vetting candidate parties (including the way these parties handled their own past).³²

The SDL was a fervent applicant to the SI and regular visits were paid to Brussels. The SDL had chosen to lean in particular on the Italian PDS to press its case because of close leadership links that had developed between the two parties. However, the SI remained hesitant for a time owing to internal divisions in the SDL and the crisis, which hit the party after its serious loss of support after the 1994 election. PES was also concerned over an interest by some SDL leaders in a deal with the Meciar government, which raised doubts about the party's firm democratic commitment. This phase passed and by the mid-1990s, observer status was offered to the SLD (as well as the UP).³³

Party foundations associated with the European left were crucial in creating access of Polish social democratic leaders to EU institutions. At the same time, such contacts had important domestic repercussions within Polish politics, media, and eventually the public opinion. Such foundations as the European Forum were also crucial in securing material assistance to Polish social democrats, while TPC were specializing in policy assistance as their pre-elections support for the Polish social democratic parties.³⁴

With the fall of communism in Poland, the once powerful Solidarity movement rapidly fell apart and split into a whole range of post-Solidarity groupings, torn apart by ideological differences and personal animosities. The movement had developed many

³⁰ Kenneth Ka-Lok Chan, “Strands of Conservatism in Post-Communist Democracies,” ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Mannheim 26-31 March 1999.

³¹ Kenneth Ka-Lok Chan, “Poland at the Crossroads: the 1993 General Election”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47:1 (1995): 123-145.

³² Delsoldato, “Eastward Enlargement.”

³³ The cross-national differentiation in the SI approach should be noted: the parties in Hungary and Slovakia (HSP and SDL) were recommended for membership and doubts were expressed over the Slovak party and, more seriously, over the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). Pridham, “Patterns of Europeanization.”

³⁴ Dakowska, “The Mechanisms of EU Enlargement Impact on Polish Parties.”

transnational party contacts since 1981 especially in France, West Germany, and Sweden and had gotten much assistance from the Swedish trade union federation.³⁵ As early as 1989-90, Solidarity also made contacts with all the main internationals - Socialist, Christian Democratic, and Liberal. The post-Solidarity elite found in Thatcherite conservatism and Christian Democracy ready-made models of advancing its ideals of free market and democracy without undermining its notions of national or religious traditions. The leading grouping amongst the traditionalists, the Christian National Union (ZChN), manifested a continuing belief in the appropriateness for politics of traditional political values such as nation, family, and religion. The ZChN rejected the values of individualism and free market advocated by the neo-conservatives from the post-Solidarity Democratic Union (UD) and the Congress of Liberal Democrats (KLD). In 1994, the Freedom Union (UW) was established with a merger between the centrist UD and the neo-liberal KLD. The UW portrayed itself as a principal supporter of market reforms and the sole representative of the moderate centre.³⁶

For the Western Christian Democrats, choosing Eastern sister parties appeared in principle to be more straightforward but in reality the centre-right of the political spectrum in Eastern Europe often proved confused and certainly overpopulated. Very often applicant parties maintained contacts with the European Christian Democrats, the EDU (European Democratic Union) and the European liberal family at the same time, profiting from the expansive ambitions of Western transnational party actors.³⁷ In addition, the different parties, which emerged from Solidarity's ranks, did not always start cultivating transnational links. In the case of the UD, internal debate about whether it should follow a centre-left or centre-right direction continued and the party bureau took a formal decision not to pursue transnational links as there was a fragile balance between the Liberal and Christian Democrat element in the UD that might have been disturbed by any priority over such links. Having merged with the KLD, which had already joined the conservative EDU and maintained good links with European Democrats, the UD now a part of the UW joined the Christian Democratic European People's Party (EPP).

In general, the party scene in Poland was fragmented, complicated and was slow to crystallize making it difficult for transnational actors to settle on firm partners there. In addition, the European right was hesitant to engage Christian parties in Poland, which were rather right-wing and at times even anti-semitic. Human rights and treatment of minorities were generally major issues in keeping certain parties at a distance from transnational organizations.³⁸

After two consecutive electoral setbacks, the post-Solidarity elite was finally shocked into re-building the movement through the formation of the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) in the summer of 1996. Having won the 1997 election, the AWS had to transform itself from what was primarily an extra-parliamentary electoral alliance without a coherent organization and program of its own into a governing bloc. According to the KAS in Warsaw, its cooperation with organizations close to political parties "has

³⁵ Pridham, "Patterns of Europeanization."

³⁶ In the face of party system proliferation, the Solidarity trade union sought to gain parliamentary representation as an anti-Communist, anti-SLD trade union and acted as a mediating force between the feuding post-Solidarity parties. Chan, "Strands of Conservatism."

³⁷ Giorgia Delsoldato, "Eastward Enlargement by the European Union and Transnational Parties," *International Political Science Review*, 23. 3 (2002): 269-289

³⁸ Pridham, "Patterns of Europeanization."

positively influenced the development of the Centre-Rights parties.”³⁹ The EPP- ED group in the EP has actively involved itself in debates of Polish national elites. Through its arm – the Schuman Foundation – the EPP-ED has sponsored publications and conferences often joining in with local institutions and think tanks.⁴⁰ Especially, while composing their party manifestos and programs, Polish conservative party leaders based them on the declarations of the European Peoples’ Party and even in stressing their attachment to European values; still, translating those discourses into political decisions has proven more complicated.⁴¹

Bulgaria:

Already at the outset of the transition, the common goal, which raised no objections or debates, was described as the “return to Europe”. After the collapse of the Soviet block, the Bulgarian communists underwent a superficial and purely tactical re-modeling of the party, which left it internally divided into a reformist and a conservative camp. The party renamed as the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) barely won the first post-communist elections in 1990 but could not hold on to power for long. After being forced into opposition, the BSP sought to achieve an at-least temporary consolidation with the election of Zhan Videnov as party leader set on presenting a dynamic and competent image to the electorate. The socialist won a majority in the 1994 parliament but the following three years saw a repetition of deep internal strains in the BSP over economic reform policies, presided over by a weak cabinet by Videnov. The government fell amidst protests against the reversal of economic reforms and the escalating macro-economic crisis, which was resolved after the adoption of Currency Board under the IMF in early 1997.

In the first half of the 1990s, the BSP pursued informal links with the SI and its member parties. In 1992 BSP filed an official application for SI membership and but it was not until 1994 that the SI was prepared to deal openly with the BSP, when the party’s electoral success helped to legitimate it. In December 1994 BSP received a “standing invitation” to the SI but the Bulgarian transition remained in doubt not least as a result of the BSP’s own questionable policies while in government during 1994-97. As a result, the SI was split between the British and Swedish who were opposed to a link with the BSP and Greece, Austria, and Germany who were willing to keep open contact with the BSP and to involve it in/ reform it through policy discussions. But the BSP proved difficult to handle as it was deeply divided.⁴²

There were factions in the BSP (such as the Alliance for Social Democracy), which sought international contacts as well as recognition and legitimization of the whole BSP by its counterparts in Europe because they wanted to “restore socialism, its new value and new respect” domestically and internationally through the BSP’s membership

³⁹ Dakowska, “The Mechanisms of EU Enlargement Impact on Polish Parties.”

⁴⁰ Interestingly, the EPP-ED picked up the local agenda and tended to promote the 1950s style Christian Democracy with strong ties to the Church rather than the EPP practice in the EP in an effort to cement its organization on the new grounds of CEE local political scene while at the same time neutralizing the Eurosceptic EP vote in the upcoming EP elections. Lori Thorlakson, “Constructing a European party system: congruence and linkage in the national and EP party systems,” Paper for the POLIS 2005 plenary conference 17-18 June, 2005, Paris.

⁴¹ Thorlakson, “Constructing a European party system.”

⁴² Pridham, “Patterns of Europeanization.”

in the SI.⁴³ The more conservative strands within the party, however, feared committing the BSP to the Western socialist ideals and also wanted to avoid criticisms by Western parties. Furthermore, the BSP is also a successor to the Communist regime party in a country known for its traditional Russophilia. Finally, in 1997 the BSP split on both internal and EU-integration accounts, with the Social Democrats leaving to form the Euro-Left, which was a hard blow for the BSP, related among other things to the passing over to the new formation of a number of its leaders who had up to then been involved in maintaining the party's international contacts with the SI and the Party of European Socialists (PES).⁴⁴

Since 1998, a new BSP leadership resumed pursuing relations with the SI, taking advantage of some Western parties adopting a more positive line as well as the marginalization of the conservatives within the BSP.⁴⁵ Moreover, Bulgaria opened negotiation for EU membership since early 2000, which influenced the BSP's evolution and its clearer pursuit of transnational links. In March 2000, the BSP formed a council of European integration under Georgi Parvanov, the party chairman, to foster public discussion, liaise with NGOs, and advise the BSP on the EU chapters in the negotiations with Brussels. As of this moment, the PES is putting pressure on the BSP to unite with the other left parties as a condition for membership and has mediated several meetings to that end.⁴⁶

The BSP is still seeking its clear ideological profile struggling between socialism and social democracy. Though not a member, BSP also participates in some initiatives of the Forum of the New European Left, including left-wing parties such as the United Left of Spain, the Citizens' Movement of Chevenement in France, the Party of Democratic Socialism in Germany, and others positioned further "to the left" of social democracy. This duality of the BSP's identity impedes its "recognition" by the Western social democrats despite the BSP's efforts to be legitimized as social democracy of a European type. That is also why BSP is trying to achieve such acknowledgment through partial steps, through the mediation of individual influential parties from the SI and PES and through "mutual legitimization" with other successor parties.⁴⁷

After the Bulgarian roundtable in 1989, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) began the process of transforming itself from a coalition of disparate civic groups into an organized political force. The leadership concentrated on establishing the coalition as the anti-communist opposition by adopting an increasingly stringent ideological tone (rather than on displaying competence and responsibility), however, was unable to create a unified and effective organizational structure so that the internal conflicts continued to

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Pridham, "Patterns of Europeanization."

⁴⁵ Todorov, *The Role of Political Parties*.

⁴⁶ Pridham, "Patterns of Europeanization."

⁴⁷ BSP has also already established good working relations with "party foundations" like the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity (a foundation close to PES), the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (of the GSDP), the Institute for International Relations close to PASOK (Greek social democrats). Equally active in this respect are certain foundations associated with BSP, such as "A Society of Solidarity" or "European Social Values", which have international contacts of their own. In a number of cases, however, BSP-related foundations are more often an instrument of internal party struggle, rather than a means of strengthening the party's international relations. (Todorov, *The Role of Political Parties*.)

surface during elections and important policy debates. Although in 1991 the party split up into three groups, leaving the UDF successor a more ideologically cohesive organization leaning rightwards, which could more forcefully act against the Socialists and even win 1992 election, internal conflicts and ideological radicalism continued to plague the party and brought the UDF (Filip Dimitrov) government down shortly after it assumed power.⁴⁸

After losing the 1994 elections, Filip Dimitrov resigned as a chairman of the UDF Party Council and was succeeded by Ivan Kostov – a leadership change, which ended the era of the “radical idealists” in the UDF. At the recommendation of right parties from the US and Germany, Kostov worked on building a party bureaucracy and on turning the coalition into a modern Christian Democratic party. The choice of a Christian-democratic label even translated into an increased concern with matters of faith and Christian values reflected in the party’s charter. In addition, instead of attacking the BSP for what its ancestors had done, Kostov attempted to build a pragmatic opposition to the socialists’ mistakes while in power; instead of trying to unite the UDF’s composing parties and movements through ideological radicalism, Kostov attempted to give UDF factions stakes in working together in order to assume power: following the BSP example, the UDF leadership opted for its own clientelist model adapting it to the interests of its own party nomenclatura.

Initially, owing to the ideological indeterminacy of the UDF, its international contacts were left up to the individual parties. By 1992-1993, through its various components, UDF was associated with several different international party associations. After the first rounds of splits in the party in 1992, it seemed that most parties from UDF were seeking membership in the Liberal International, partially as a result of the liberal self-identification of a number of intellectuals (like Zhelju Zhelev) who occupies leading positions in UDF at the time and of the activity of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation of the German Free Democratic Party. Observer status was initially granted to the National Club for Democracy and the Radical-Democratic Party (RDP). Subsequently, with the strengthening of the positions of RDP, it was affiliated as a full member of the Liberal International.⁴⁹

By 1995-1996 the Democratic Party (DP) and the United Christian-Democratic Center (UCDC), affiliated as associate members of the European Democratic Union (EDU) since 1992, remained most politically and ideologically influential within the UDF. In 1995 the DP, together with its new partner in the Agrarian People’s Union – BANU, were granted full member status in EDU, which in October 1996 decided to merge with the European Popular Party (EPP), initially a parliamentary fraction of the Christian Democrats in the European Parliament. This practically coincided with, and was possibly one of the reasons for, the definitive adoption of a Christian Democratic profile by UDF, which was beginning the process of party integration and building at the time. This ideological and political crystallization allowed European parties to “recognize” the UDF as a right-centrist party. In 1997-1998 UDF, already as a unified party, became affiliated with the European People’s Party.

The affiliation of the Bulgarian right with European conservative parties was very much aided and sped up by the UDF challenges to the Videnov government. German

⁴⁸ Vesselin Dimitrov, *Bulgaria: the Uneven Transition* (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁴⁹ Todorov, *The Role of Political Parties*.

Christian Democratic party elites (such as the Bundestag president at the time, Rita Zussmuth and the German Ambassador in Sofia) were particularly active in offering limited financial assistance but mostly advice and official endorsement to the Bulgarian right in an attempt to legitimize it as a credible alternative to the BSP anti-reformist governance as well as a “Western party” invested in making Bulgaria part of the Western world.⁵⁰ Partly as a result of these efforts, the UDF assumed office in 1997 and continued utilizing its transnational party connections in lobbying politicians responsible for decisions to be taken with respect to enlargement.⁵¹

In the 2001 election, it was a completely new formation, the National Movement Simeon II, which won and formed a government with the DPS. Despite Western backing and financial, electoral, and policy support,⁵² the clientelistic foundations of the UDF cracked after it lost the 2001 elections. The Union of Free Democrats (SSD) is one of the smaller rightist parties in Bulgaria. It was founded by Stefan Sofiyanski in December 2001 as a split off of the Union of Democratic Forces. Ivan Kostov stepped down after the party lost in the 2001 parliamentary elections and was succeeded by his former Foreign Minister Nadezhda Mikhailova in June 2002. However, despite the party losing the 2003 local elections, Mihailova was re-elected as SDS chairwoman. In response, in February 2004, Ivan Kostov together with about 2,000 party members, among them 29 members of parliament, left the party. In May 2004, the group around Kostov established a new right-wing party named Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB), which vows to work for a country with strong democracy, capable state institutions, and wealthy society. All three parties gained representation in the 2005 elections by barely crossing the 5% threshold. They also took their disputes to the European level by attempting to use their transnational connections to outbid each other for representing the conservative vote in Bulgaria.

Euroskepticism Responses:

The strong pro-European consensus combined with the peculiarities of Eastern European parties and party systems make categorizing Euroskepticism in the East difficult.⁵³ Szczerbiak and Taggart distinguish between “hard” and “soft” Euroskepticism – hard Euroskepticism being a principled opposition to the EU and European integration whereas soft Euroskepticism being a sense that “national interest” is currently at odds with the EU’s trajectory.⁵⁴ For these authors Euroskepticism exists at the phenomenological level as rhetoric or discourse of political contestation of the European project and is a product of strategic competitive considerations.⁵⁵ However, not only do

⁵⁰ Ilcho Dimitrov, *Edin Dobro Kamufliiran Durzhaven Prevrat* (Sofia: Obrazovanie i Nauka, 1997): 16-17)

⁵¹ Pridham, “Patterns of Europeanization.”

⁵² Since the mid-1990s, the UDF has relied on support from the German Christian Democrats and from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (of the German CDU), Robert Shuman Foundation (close to the French Union for French Democracy), and the Westminster Foundation (close to the British conservatives). Lastly, internationally active were also foundations close to the UDF such as the Democracy Foundation aimed at supporting the development of UDF and “Victory 2” whose activity in the mid-1990s was largely centered around elections and internal party activities.

⁵³ Additionally, as Henderson points out CEECs have a dynamic relationship with the EU, which is linked to the current stage of development both of the EU “moving train” and their own domestic ones.

⁵⁴ Taggart and Szczerbiak, “Parties, Positions and Europe: Euroscepticism in the EU Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe,” Sussex: Sussex European Institute (SEI) Working Paper Nr. 46.

⁵⁵ See also Sitter, “Opposing Europe: Euro-Scepticism, Opposition and Party Competition,” Sussex,

many (Euroskeptic) parties still demonstrate the communist-era tendency of saying one thing and doing another.⁵⁶ Szczerbiak and Taggart's work has been contested by others like Kopecky and Mudde, who stress ideology as the main source for parties' stance on EU integration.⁵⁷ Kopecky and Mudde lean on Easton's distinction between "diffuse" and "specific" support for European integration as the axes in their two-by-two typology with the former dimension understood as "support for the general ideas of European integration" and the latter – as "support for the general practice of European integration."⁵⁸ However, if a party dislikes the idea of Europe, liking the actual practice of European integration is not a very coherent option.

Therefore, Euroskepticism in post-socialist EU accession countries seems best understood as a program, which is directed against either the idea or the practice of European integration with the caveat that if a party supports the idea of European integration, it could like or dislike the way this idea is put into practice.⁵⁹ In other words, if a party – either in its rhetoric or program – opposes the underlying principles of European integration and/or their realization within the EU, it should be classified accordingly as Euro-skeptic and EU-skeptic. These principles are the rejection of sovereignty transfer, hostility to economic integration or the denial of democratic principles like equality or self-determination. Still, this paper considers that both ideology and party strategy are needed to explain Euroskepticism in the new member states because European integration has remained a "second order" issue in the competitive politics of East Europe, which sometimes allows political leaders of established parties to embrace dissenting positions on integration without undermining their core identity or constituency ties.⁶⁰

Many have noted that the strong pro-European integration consensus of early post-communist era has led to ideological convergence among leading parties in Eastern Europe. Yet, Euro-skepticism and EU-skepticism are "a relatively costless stance" for peripheral parties and with accession secured, the cost of EU-skepticism to leading parties has diminished as well. Even so, there remains great variation between CEE countries in support for parties expressing Euro-skepticism or EU-skepticism.⁶¹ In Bulgaria, for example, there was no anti-European party until a few months before the 2005 parliamentary elections, when an ultra-nationalist coalition, Attack (Ataka), emerged and managed to secure the fourth highest number of seats in the National

Sussex European Institute (SEI) Working Paper Nr. 56.

⁵⁶ Karen Henderson, "Exceptionalism or convergence? Euroscepticism and party systems in Central and Eastern Europe," Paper presented to ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Turin, 22-27 March 2002.

⁵⁷ Gary Marks & Carole J. Wilson, 'The Past in the Present: A Cleavage Theory of Party Response to European Integration', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 30 (2000) and Kopecky and Mudde, "Two sides of Euroscepticism. Party positions on European integration in East Central Europe" *European Union Politics* 3(3) (2002): 297–326.

⁵⁸ Kopecky and Mudde, "Two sides of Euroscepticism."

⁵⁹ Timm Beichelt, "Euro-Skepticism in the EU Accession Countries," *Comparative European Politics*, 2004, 2, (29–50).

⁶⁰ It should also be noted that across CEE, the opportunities seized by political entrepreneurs to express concern with the agenda of integration do not appear to be facilitated by the structural format of party systems, either in terms of the number of relevant actors or changing voter preferences across election cycles. Bielasiak, "Party Systems and EU Accession."

⁶¹ Taggart and Szczerbiak, "Parties, Positions and Europe:

Assembly (a vote of 8.75%). The movement, which lacks a well-defined or coherent program, derives its reserved opposition to Bulgaria's EU integration largely from concerns about "protecting" the "Bulgarian nation" from the Roma and Turkish minorities in the country, whose political rights and freedoms have been increasingly guaranteed by the EU. It should be noted however, that Ataka was consciously and purposefully marginalized by the other parties represented in parliament and soon began to crumble as some of its MP defected to other parties or split up.

Additionally, despite its rhetorical support for Bulgaria's accession to the EU, the platform of the BSP between 1994-1997 was in contradiction to some of the economic requirements for EU-membership. Lastly, Euro-skeptical elements within the party contained in the Open Forum fraction no longer carries much weight in the BSP.

In Poland, as early as 1992, Hanna Suchocka's cabinet included pro-European and liberal parties as well as anti-integrationist groups such as the strongly Catholic and populist the Christian National Union (ZChN), the Christian Democratic Party (PChD) and the Christian People's Party (SLCh).⁶²

In 1993, the first post-socialist left coalition felt an obligation to reaffirm Poland's commitment to EU integration both rhetorically and through its liberalization reform agenda, in part to enhance its democratic credentials and in part because of its belief that EU-integration is a guarantee to economic development accompanied with "a social-market, open and solidarist Europe."⁶³ However, the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) – SDL's coalition partner – was regarded as the party with the strongest doubts about Polish entry to the EU. The PSL, which claims to defend the interests of Polish farmers, was concerned that Polish agricultural practices are incompatible with EU norms and thus criticized the government as well as the EU itself for hammering out a disadvantageous accession conditions for Poland. While the EU-sceptic PSL didn't reject accession publicly, some PSL politicians went further claiming that the European integration constitutes danger to Polish national values such as Catholicism and patriotism.

The election of the Polish right united under the umbrella of Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) back into office in 1997 brought unenthusiastic supporters of EU enlargement, reflecting to some extent the anxieties of some parts of society. The "Polish Gaullists," the Christian National Union (ZChN) and the Confederation for Independent Poland (KNP), as part of the Electoral Action Solidarnosc (AWS) saw EU integration as a threat to Polish sovereignty and independence and economic development⁶⁴ but the party's positions and policies were softened by the creation of a coalition government with the consistently pro-European liberal Freedom Union (UW).⁶⁵

The range of party positions towards Europe was nevertheless decidedly more critical during the 2001 elections, after which Poland was the early accession candidate with the strongest hold of anti-EU parties in parliament. Those most in favor of EU membership were to be found among supporters of Civic Platform and the Democratic Left and the fewest among potential voters for the two EU-skeptical parties – nationalist-

⁶² Karl Cordell, ed., *Poland and the European Union* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000).

⁶³ Teresa Los-Nowak, "Contemporary Government Attitudes towards the European Union," in Karl Cordell, ed., *Poland and the European Union*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000): 8–24, p.18.

⁶⁴ Beichelt, "Euro-Skepticism in the EU Accession Countries."

⁶⁵ Los-Nowak, "Contemporary Government Attitudes towards the European Union."

populist League of Polish Families (LPR) and the peasant party Samoobrona (who together gained about 18% of the electorate).⁶⁶ The LPR combines a strong sense of nationalism with the conviction that EU accession in the current form would ruin the Polish economy, especially the agricultural sector, so a renegotiation of the accession treaty is necessary. Unlike the LPR, Samoobrona concedes that EU accession will bring some advantages that, however, will be outweighed by the negative.⁶⁷ Among the other EU-skeptic parties represented in parliament were the conservative Law and Justice Party (9.5%) and the agrarian Polish Peasant Party (8.98%); the Euro-skeptic nationalist-conservative Christian National Union (still a faction in Solidarity Electoral Action) also won some seats.

Despite the large percentage and number of Euroskeptics in parliament, the salience of European issues and the relative importance of enlargement across the range of policy priorities, however, were not necessarily prominent in the hierarchy of issues identified as important by voters. Before the election, between 4 and 7 per cent of voters identified EU membership as a key determinant of party choice. In terms of issue ranking it came tenth out of 17 or seventh out of seven in another survey.⁶⁸ At the same time, the anti-EU attitudes among population in Poland have oscillated barely above 10% since 2001. The “No” vote in the 2003 accession referendum constituted only 22%.

This implies an indirect relationship between the expression of electoral and public Euroscepticism as well as the fact that parties do not follow the dynamics of popular support but rather lead the electorate by mobilizing support for their preferred stance on the EU. In this sense, high levels of support for such parties are not necessarily indicative of high levels of popular Euroscepticism, they most likely depict the size of the electoral constituencies not put off voting for a party by expressions of Euroscepticism.

Conclusions and Comparisons

There appear to be some general trends in party adaptation to EU structures along the six dimensions outlined above:

(1) Policy/programmatic content: At the beginning of the transition, East European party systems gravitated around a pro-market/libertarian versus anti-market/authoritarian axis, whereas West European party systems in the late twentieth century tend to be oriented toward an anti-market/libertarian versus pro-market/authoritarian axis.⁶⁹ In the mid-2000s, however, CEE party ideologies and policies show a clear West European imprint – a transition to Western left-right orientations that is somewhat unfortunate given the lack of the underlying institutional and social moorings.⁷⁰

Right parties such as AWS in Poland (and its successors) and the UDF (and its successors) in Bulgaria have increasingly absorbed elements of right-wing value orientation such as social conservatism, Catholicism, and nationalism. Western influence has been particularly marked on the left of the party spectrum in relation to the social

⁶⁶ Beichelt, “Euro-Skepticism in the EU Accession Countries.”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Lewis, “EU Enlargement and Party Systems in Central Europe.”

⁶⁹ Herbert Kitschelt, ‘The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe’, *Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1992)

⁷⁰ Abby Innes “Party Competition in Post-Communist Europe. The Great Electoral Lottery.” *Comparative Politics* 35 (2002): 85–104

democratization of former regime parties, which have also been compelled to gradually make their way rightwards to somewhere left of centre and to recognize that the European Union was the “only game in town.”⁷¹ Some of the successor parties such as the SDL have done so eagerly while others such as the BSP were forced to do so only after an electoral restructuring of party competition with Western support for the delegitimation of unreformed socialism. It should also be noted that even in 2005 the BSP is still less socially democratized and less organizationally like other European left parties.

(2) Organizational changes: This paper corroborates previous work on centralizing tendencies within parties, some of them independent of European integration.⁷² Europeanization is likely to have a profound impact on party organization, concentrating power into the hands of the party leadership because the process of European integration consolidates centralization of power and top-down decision making by providing the party elites (and in particular cabinet ministers and party officials with EU/transnational cooperation responsibilities) with an arena of control over which the party organization exercises little influence. In sum, the uneven participatory rights of national politicians in the EU political system present problems of hidden action and hidden information for national parties. This trend is well illustrated by the devastation that the BSP experienced after its social democratic faction – the home of the leadership maintaining transnational linkages – left the party to form the Euro-left. While the structure of the EU policy process disadvantages national parliaments, leadership autonomy would be greater in countries with weaker parliamentary scrutiny over EU affairs and within parties united behind integration. The weak Bulgarian parliament and party cohesion on integration of the UDF is just such an example. Consequently, the linkage between parties and citizens is further eroded and parties are even more dependent on the state for their collective survival.⁷³

(3) Patterns of party competition: The presence of Eurosceptic political parties across numerous party families and the dispersion of the vote along several party families confirm the lack of a structured competitive environment in the post-communist states that facilitates the positioning of parties along a well defined ideological space.⁷⁴ Not only do most Eurosceptic parties often rely on populism/ nationalism which substitute in lieu of substantial debate over ideology or policy but the discord between popular and party Euroscepticism possibly indicates strategic calculations of party elites that in the long run might serve to prevent accommodation of integration issues within existing cleavages (as some have argued has happened in the West⁷⁵).

⁷¹ Attila Ágh, “The Europeanization of the ECE Social Democracy: The case of HSP in an ECE context,” ECPR 2004 Joint Sessions of Workshops, Uppsala University and Pridham, “Patterns of Europeanization.”

⁷² Raunio, Tapio. “Why European Integration Increases Leadership Autonomy within Political Parties.” *Party Politics* 8 (2002): 405–25 and Ingrid Van Biezen, “On the Internal Balance of Party Power: Party Organizations in New Democracies.” *Party Politics* 6 (2000): 395–418.

⁷³ This is a process analogous to what Innes describes as party “cartelization”: mainstream parties took the appearance of associations of professional politicians engaged in perfunctory competition, but sharing the common goal of controlling the state and spoils of power.

⁷⁴ Bielasiak, “Party Systems and EU Accession.”

⁷⁵ Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks, Carole J. Wilson, ‘Integrating Europe: How Domestic Contestation Frames Party Positions on European Integration’, *Comparative Political Studies*

The expression of cohesive but genuine demands on behalf of the public by parties seems further complicated by the fact that both the Left and the Right have, in part by the exigencies of fulfilling the EU's economic criteria, acquired converging agendas as defined by the EU blueprints and accession obligations (and even sometimes confused party identity⁷⁶). Lastly, such ideological convergence probably facilitates electoral volatility and hinders the entrenchment of a Left-Right competitive spectrum based on societal cleavages imbedded in stable structural divisions.

(4) Party–government relations: The participation of party leaders in EU forums may strain relations within divided parties or make the problems of coalition maintenance so more acute as well as government splits more likely. Fearing such an outcome, the UD in Poland restrained from transnational cooperation. In general, transnational linkages may distance the government/party leaders from party programmatic positions in an unintended fashion. The 1996-97 crisis of the left Videnov government in Bulgaria also illustrates how when European officials openly expressed their disappointment in Videnov's policies and Bulgaria's accession was jeopardized, internal opposition to the cabinet became more vociferous and contributed to the collapse of the government.

(5) Relations beyond the national party system: Given their exclusion from decision- and policy-making in EU institutions during the accession negotiation process, CEE party elites have come to accord TPC a somewhat greater importance than do party elites from EU member states. This paper echoes earlier studies,⁷⁷ which pointed out that transnational party linkages have thus come to matter more and more in CEE party development in terms of identity and image, networking advantages, and securing informal influence in the EU. The greater the possibility of eventual EU membership, the more likely have CEE parties been ready to conform with European party-political patterns, subject to obvious constraints in domestic politics. Obviously, Bulgarian parties are much lagging behind Polish ones in emulating Western party developments as the very recent transformation of the BSP has suggested. In the long run, however, such party trajectories would likely facilitate decision-making in the EP and other EU institutions but would further contribute to the alienation of parties from CEE publics.

(6) Party–constituency relations: Most of the trends described along the first five axes speak to the furthering of the party public divide, already a problem in many post-communist democracies.⁷⁸ Since the essence of effective democracy lies in the clear lines of accountability running from the government to electorate that can use competition among political parties to hold it responsible for policy, the new and increasingly important layer of EU institutions seems to have facilitated the alteration of the principles of representation and accountability – foundations of democracy.

A few final points seem to deserve mentioning. TPC was certainly secondary to domestic factors in party development as is shown by the fate of umbrella movements, which succumbed to the dynamics of political competition in their own countries. The UDF, for instance, couldn't survive after its exit from power despite the

⁷⁶ In Poland, the 'centrists' have been the most persistent advocates of market-oriented reforms, while the left and the right both have in some form or another demanded 'reforms with a human face' (see Goldfrab, 1993).

⁷⁷ Pridham, "Patterns of Europeanization."

⁷⁸ Pridham, "EU Enlargement and Consolidating Democracy," p. 954.

investment of its Western sister parties. Also, comparatively, right parties throughout CEE did receive more help than left ones. Not only were Western actors hesitant to engage the Bulgarian left, which might have set it back but also when having to choose between “true” social democrats and “strong” social democrats, transnational actors were more likely to choose a strong party, a real government alternative rather than a weak, if undoubtedly social democratic party – a practice which casts further doubts TPC’s real impact on rogue socialists. In general, transnational actors were more prepared to invest resources as well as time in countries (like Poland) that had better chances of membership in the near future, just as party leaders from CEE increasingly viewed the transnational organizations as mechanisms for furthering EU entry prospects and would seriously consider complying to transnational pressures when accession was tangible (as the evolution of the BSP demonstrates). Another distinction between Poland and Bulgaria is that the long term impact in Poland is perhaps greater as a result not so much of the longer and more intensive exposure to transnational linkages but rather of the openness of Polish elites to the socialization efforts of the West (compared to the superficial and instrumentally adopted changes by Bulgarian parties). On the other hand, transnational actors did much more handholding in trying to prop up the Bulgarian right compared to the efforts to unite the Polish conservatives.