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Factors of Party System Europeanisation: A Comparison of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro

Danica Fink-Hafner

Abstract: *For the former Yugoslav republics involved in the 1991–1995 War, the EU's demands are not only defined by the relationship of these EU-aspiring countries to EU political criteria and harmonization with the *acquis communautaire*, but primarily, and very importantly, in relation to maintaining peace and developing security in the region. Our primary research interest is to find an explanation for the variations seen between Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro in their responses to very similar EU demands. While the three analysed countries share some common characteristics (former communist rule, involvement in the War in former Yugoslavia, postponed transition to democracy and Europeanization pressures), their relations with the EU as well as their national party system competitions regarding EU matters have differed quite significantly. Variations in the three countries' national party system mechanics in the field of EU matters are explained by the three following variables: institutionalization of the national party system; the European socialization of national party élites and voters' attitudes to their country's integration into the EU.*

Key words: *Europeanization, party system institutionalization, European party socialization, voters' attitudes to EU integration, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro*

Introduction

Most post-socialist countries have been confronted with the challenges associated with transformation (social, economic, politico-institutional). Some have not only had to face problems of building the institutions and developing the practices of a democratic political system and a market economy, but also those of building an independent state, including the establishment of institutions previously set up in the political centres of the former multinational states they used to belong to (such as Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia and the former Yugoslav republics).

The Central and Eastern European post-socialist countries (including Slovenia), as well as Romania and Bulgaria, and more recently the countries of former Yugoslavia, have also been exposed to adaptations to Europeanization processes. Unlike in the case of the recent post-socialist EU newcomers, in the former Yugoslav Republics (except Slovenia) Europeanization pressures have not been primarily focused on the institutional adaptation or harmonization of national law with the *acquis*, but on issues and policy adaptations closely linked to the 1991–1995 War and its implications for this region bordering the EU.

Like the older member states and EU newcomers (Lippert, Umbach and Wessels 2001), potential EU candidates have also been passing through several stages of “EU Europeanization”. Even in the early stages the integration of post-socialist countries into the EU started to interfere with their national political systems. The EU’s indirect influence on national political systems and their practices took place through its evaluation and estimation of the level of democracy achieved (first in the applicant countries and then the candidate countries). It was also possible to see institutional adaptation in the EU post-socialist countries, and this was partly the result of the coordinating EU affairs and implementing policies of the EU in response to its demands made during the negotiating process, and partly an expression of the economic, political and security interests of those states seeking full EU membership. While the development of the coordination of EU matters could have been observed in all the post-socialist EU members of the 2004 membership wave, only in Slovakia did the EU interfere in internal political matters and influenced the party system’s mechanics.

In this article we will focus on several countries that emerged from the former Yugoslav republics, where EU demands are strong not only in the relationship of these EU aspiring countries to EU political criteria and the *acquis*, but primarily, and very importantly, in relation to maintaining peace and developing security in the region. Our primary research interest is not the changing role of the EU but finding an explanation for the variations seen between Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro in their responses to very similar EU demands. Building further on the example of the Slovak path to the EU, we will look at factors that influence the party system’s mechanics in a particular field – the inclusion of a particular country in EU integration processes.

We are searching for an explanation of these variations by taking into account controlled variables (common characteristics), common Europeanization (European Union) pressures and several hypothetically explanatory variables. The controlled variables include: former communist rule, involvement in a war and a postponed transition to democracy. We hypothesize that possible explanatory variables that have led to the very different characteristics of party system mechanics in Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro are: a) institutionalization of the party system; b) European socialization of national parties; and c) characteristics of voters’ attitudes to their country’s integration into the EU.

After presenting the theoretical framework we describe some common characteristics of the analysed countries in order to take account of the “controlled” variables. A closer look at national variations in EU integration processes is followed by an analysis of the factors that, in our opinion, can explain these variations. For the analysis we used data gathered as part of the following research projects financed by the Slovenian Research Agency: Political Science Research Programme (P5-0136), the project Politics in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia (J5-6154-0582-15) and the project involving visiting professor Robert Ladrech (contract no. 1000-06-780001-6). The research findings are summarized in the conclusion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Europeanization and National Party Systems

The Europeanization concept is understood in many different ways (e.g. Bulmer and Burch 1998; Hix and Goetz 2001; Olsen 2002a). Some commentators also include a clarification of its direction: “top-down”, “bottom-up” or a combination of both (e.g. Ladrech 1994; Bulmer and Burch 1998; Knill 2001; Goetz 2001; Demmke 2002; Radaelli 2003). In clarifying our understanding of Europeanization we start with Radaelli (2003: 30) who defines Europeanization as “the processes of: a) construction; b) diffusion; and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated within the logic of domestic (national and sub-national) discourse, identities, political structures and public policies.” Our research interest is restricted to the top-down Europeanization of certain aspects of party system adaptation.

The pioneers of the framework of research into the Europeanization of political parties and party systems (Mair 2000 and Ladrech 2002) defined three areas of political party Europeanization: national political parties, the national party system and the transnational party level of organization and functioning. In this paper we are focusing only on the national party system. This includes an aspect that Ladrech (2002) calls “patterns of party competition”, whereas Mair (2000) uses the term “mechanics of party competition”. Ladrech’s more thorough explanation of the term “patterns of party competition” includes the politicization of the EU in national politics, a change in the tactics and strategies by parties designed to capitalize on the “EU issue”, the presence of a strongly pro- or anti-EU party and the nature of a party’s “dominant coalition” in Panebianco’s terms (Ladrech 2002). On the contrary, Mair’s definition (2000) is a little simpler – it includes competition at the pro- versus anti-European integration level. In this article we are focusing on the mechanics of party competition only in terms of the (re)creation of competition between pro-European versus anti-European integration-oriented parties.

Impact of Europeanization on national party system mechanics

So far, research in the West has shown no significant European Union impact on national party systems (Mair 2000; Ladrech 2002; Pennings 2006; Poguntke, Aylott, Carter, Ladrech and Luther, eds. 2007), while studies of the post-socialist 2004 EU member states has mostly shown that there has been little direct impact of the EU on national party politics (Lewis and Mansfeldová, eds. 2006). Some Europarty impacts on national party political orientation (“bringing them closer to the standard European families”) can be found in several parties in the CEE countries (Enyedi and Lewis 2006). The only real exception among the 2004 post-socialist EU newcomers was Slovakia, which had serious difficulties in building democracy during the

1990s¹ and was the only applicant country to have been negatively assessed according to the EU political criteria in the 1997 screening carried out by the European Commission. However, it met the criteria after the change brought about by the 1998 elections (Rybář and Malova 2004; Henderson 2005; Rybář 2005). Recently, Slovakia again raised questions of EU policy regarding national political developments that led to a decline of some important aspects of democracy².

When looking at the possible explanatory variables for Slovakia's exceptional status among the 2004 new EU member countries, the relationship between the fulfilment of the EU political criteria on behalf of a particular country and the number of EU impacts on the national party system competition was considered (Fink-Hafner and Krašovec 2006). Slovakia stood out as a case where the gap between the EU's prescribed political criteria and Slovakia's fulfilment of them was considered to be quite large. The EU criticism especially stressed problems in respecting the rights of the parliamentary opposition, the protection of minority rights and stability of state institutions (for more information, see Rybář and Malova, 2004). As the party in government was electorally successful, it played a two-level game: it made statements supporting pro-European policies, but at the same time it did not change activities in the national arena that had been criticized on behalf of the European Commission. Among the 2004 post-socialist new members of the EU Slovakia was the only country where EU actors decided to become directly involved in a national party system's mechanics. Since the mechanics were determined by three factors (the leading party in government, the opposition party and voters), the EU actors focused their activities on the opposition party and voters in order to change the course of the national party competition. The EU's "social influence" (Rybář 2005) brought about the holding of free and fair parliamentary elections in Slovakia: a strategy of distinguishing between the Slovak government of the day and the Slovak voters, and bringing together EU and non-EU states in donating substantial sums of money to Slovak non-governmental organizations for their pre-election activities. This encouraged a strong voter turnout (beneficial for the opposition) and let Slovak citizens know that they should choose their political representatives carefully in the 1998 parliamentary elections because "Slovakia had its destiny in its hands". The new ruling coalition gave high priority to EU accession and demonstrated its policy to catch up with the enlargement wave

¹ See the report *Nations in Transit 2007* at

http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh_galleries/NIT2007/nt-slovakia.pdf.

² In the aforementioned report it is noted that the installation of the new (the Fico-led) government in 2006, comprised of coalition partners from the pre-1998 era (nationalist and populist forces which were linked with an authoritarian system/non-liberal democracy), means that the democratic reform gains made in the past eight years might be challenged to some extent. The list of the new government's faults, which are causing the worsening of Slovakia's democracy score, includes its overtly partisan tendencies in concentrating power through a number of key political appointments and by adopting measures to curb independent regulatory institutions; its statements and actions curbing the independence of courts, attempts to abolish the Special Court and the Special Attorney's Office (which had been successfully investigating corruption and organized crime); and the new government's efforts to increase government regulation in certain sectors threatened to increase corruption.

(Houghton and Malová 2007). This is how Slovakia became case D, as shown in Table 1. All the other 2004 post-socialist new EU countries fit into box A in Table 1.

Table 1: The EU’s impacts on the national party system

The EU’s impacts on national party system competition	NO / MINOR	BIG
Fulfilment of the EU’s political criteria?		
MINOR GAPS	A a candidate /accession country with little/no EU impact on national party competition (national political consensus)	B /
SIGNIFICANT GAPS	C a country has not expressed any interest in integrating with the EU	D significant EU impact on national party competition (a two-level game)

Note: adapted from Fink-Hafner and Krašovec (2006)

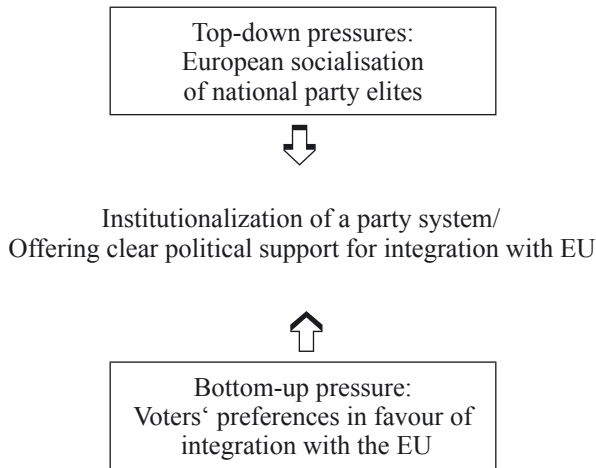
While Table 1 could be useful in helping us understand other more recently accepted EU post-socialist countries, it is not simply applicable to countries in former Yugoslavia, apart from Slovenia (case A in Table 1). The cause of the large difference between the new EU countries and all the republics of former Yugoslavia except Slovenia is the direct or indirect involvement of the latter in a war between 1991 and 1995, i.e. the war and its consequences made the whole region a special security and foreign affairs matter for the EU (Tzifakis 2007). However, the three countries included in our comparative analysis have had varying levels of success so far in meeting EU preconditions (in addition to the Copenhagen political criteria) and becoming involved in EU integration processes.

Europeanization in terms of European pressure (setting preconditions and conditions for integration into the EU, political pressures on potential candidate states to fulfil the EU’s expectations) is included in our analysis as a common factor. The variables that in our expectation may explain variations in the three cases include: a) national party system institutionalization; b) the European socialization of national party élites (links of national party élites with European party federations); and c) voters’ attitudes to their country’s integration into the EU. With the last variable there should be a distinction between “abstract” voter support for integration into the EU (general support, which is not necessarily based on information about all EU preconditions) and “informed” support for integration into the EU (support that includes awareness of the preconditions defined by the EU).

We believe the model in Figure 1 explains the party system mechanics in the three analysed countries (Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro) to an important extent. It includes

the following three variables: a) voters' preferences that put pressure on the party system (bottom-up pressure); b) the achieved level of party system institutionalization offers voters a party choice; and c) party élite linkages and socialization through European networking with their parties' European counterparts influence the institutionalization of parties and party system (top-down pressures).

Figure 1: A model of party system mechanics in the Europeanisation process



Institutionalization in politics means “that political actors have clear and stable expectations about the behaviour of other actors” (Mainwearing and Torcal 2006: 206). From a party system mechanics point of view, we start with the assumption that when a party system is institutionalized voters can make reasonable choices and are thereby also in a position to put pressure on party orientations. The institutionalization of a party system is best understood as a continuum of party system characteristics expressed in several aspects: stability of the main parties in the party system; strong party roots in society and according political legitimacy to parties on behalf of political actors³ (ibid.) as well as party organizations not being subordinated to the interests of leaders or external centres of power, such as a sponsor organization or coterie (Janda 1980; Panebianco 1988; Mainwearing 1999; Mainwearing and Torcal 2006). In a weakly institutionalized party system, parties often appear in and disappear from the party arena, patterns of party support are unstable (including support for established parties in the party system), parties have difficulty structuring and articulating popular preferences, voters have difficulty identifying with particular parties, and there is a lack of autonomous party organizations which go beyond being an extension of individual leaders or coterie. Weak party system institutionalization is even linked to problematic democratic consolidation, as parties in such circumstances are unsure of their survival

³ Parties are accepted as a necessary part of democratic politics.

or stability in terms of electoral support and may opt to prevent democratization (Birch 2001; Thames 2007). What may be of a special importance in the process of Europeanization is the finding that in otherwise generally weakly institutionalized party systems relatively institutionalized individual political parties can be found (Thames 2007).

The European socialization of national party élites is understood in terms of social constructivism theory (see e.g. Diez 1999; Risse 2004), which explains European integration processes as the creation of shared conceptions of an identity or role. One of its main theses is that interaction with other states or individuals leads to shared conceptions of identity or role, which further influences the creation of preferences of further cooperation and integration. National party élites joining with their counterpart European party federations do interact with their counterparts from EU member and candidate states. The expectation that these interactions have an impact on national party élites of the new EU member states has so far received inconclusive empirical support. According to the quite limited research on post-socialist countries' parties' linkages with European party federations (e.g. Lajh and Krašovec 2004; Krašovec and Lajh 2004; Lewis and Mansfeldová, eds. 2006), European party linkages could lead to minor and sometimes modest national party changes. However, Enyedi and Lewis (2006: 236) point out Europarties' impacts on the political orientations of some existing EU member parties as a result of the parties of the new EU member states moving towards membership of one of the standard European families, including a party name change, or a rethink of existing EU member parties' relationship with other national parties. Although Europarties sometimes encourage collaboration or even the merging of national parties, so far there has been no clear evidence of the direct impact of Europarties on national parties' ideological or behavioural change. Since political parties in the analysed (potential) candidates for EU integration have been largely based on the extreme politicization of ethnic feelings (unlike in the partially already studied Central and Eastern European countries) we expect that the European socialization of national parties may be a relatively important factor in the recreating of party-system institutionalization. Although so far (in the cases of Central and Eastern European countries) it only seems to have been the Polish party system that has internalized a pro/anti-European cleavage (Lewis 2006: 13), we can probably expect that the phenomena will be more evident in those countries with potential losers in the approaching process of European integration – both in society (voters from the losing sectors of society) as well as in the élite (especially in those parts of élites with war-related responsibilities and/or illegally gained wealth).

Common characteristics and relationships of the analysed countries with the EU

The three analysed countries share many important common characteristics: former communist rule, involvement in the 1991–1995 War, strong nationalist party

orientations and intensive electoral engineering during the 1990s prolonging the power position of parties that won the first multi-party elections in the respective countries – and by so doing – also postponing the transition to a democracy by a decade. Due to these characteristics as well as other EU security and regional interests (Tzifakis 2007), a special new set of similar preconditions was established for all three countries – including the joint demand to hand over alleged criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia as a result of the Civil War in the first half of the 1990s (Pridham 2006; Tzifakis 2007).

Table 2: Brief presentation of countries' relations with the EU with respect to EU pre-conditions and political conditions

State	EU pre-conditions	Content of other problematic issues/ emphasised EU political conditions beside the Copenhagen political criteria	Status of the integration with the EU
Slovakia* during accession negotiations	No special pre-conditions in 2000	no	In 1997 negative EU evaluation, but positive after 1998 elections; Full EU membership on 1 May 2004
Croatia	co-operation with the ICTY (the reason for the interruption of negotiations)	Minorities; return of refugees; bilateral problems with neighbours fight against corruption	Stabilisation and association agreement signed in October 2001; Application for EU membership in March 2003; EU accession negotiations started in June 2004, but postponed in March 2005; continuing since 3 October 2005
Serbia	co-operation with the ICTY (the reason for the interruption of negotiations)	human rights and minorities; civilian control over the military, constructive approach as regards Kosovo	EU negotiations on stabilisation and association agreement started on 10 October 2005, but called off on 3 May 2006; de-frozen again on 13 June 2007
Montenegro	co-operation with the ICTY (the reason for the interruption of negotiations)	fight against corruption and organised crime	EU negotiations on stabilisation and association agreement started on 10 October 2005, but called off on 3 May 2006 (S+MG); (re)started 26 September 2006; Stability and Association agreement initialled on 16 March 2007

ICTY... International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

Since the Croatian government started an official policy of integration into the EU earlier (the strategic political initiative started with the change in government in 2000; Croatia officially applied for EU membership on 21 February 2003) and has to some extent been reacting more in accordance with the EU's expectations than the other two analysed politico-territorial units (a short postponement of accession negotiations in 2005 due to Zagreb's failure to arrest war crimes suspect General Ante Gotovina), it has been catching up with the path that Slovakia took to the EU⁴. While Serbia is clearly a laggard, Montenegro is becoming an "in between" case due to the relatively strong interests of part of the economic and political élite in maintaining the status quo (independence from Serbia, but non-compliance with EU standards in certain critical condition policy fields other than collaboration with the ICTY). At the time of writing (early July 2007), Croatia was in the process of accession negotiations, Montenegro had just signed the Stability and Association agreement with the EU, while Serbia was just about to restart negotiations on a stability and association agreement with the EU, which had been frozen due to its failure to hand over major war criminals (Table 1).

VARIATIONS IN INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF NATIONAL PARTY SYSTEMS

National variations

Although national party systems have some common characteristics, they also differ. They have responded to European integration issues differently. In Croatia, democratization and Europeanization have been linked together. In Montenegro, Europeanization was primarily linked with winning the country's independence from Serbia, and it currently seems to be in a stalemate position; while in Serbia democratization and Europeanization have been delayed.

A specific feature of Croatian politics is that the HDZ (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*) opposition party won the first multiparty elections in 1990, contrary to the expectations of the reformed Communist Party, which had led the transition. The HDZ prevailed in a context of the War by the successful manipulation of ethnic feeling and political institutions up until 2000. The predominant party (HDZ) was the key cause of totalitarian tendencies in the Croatian state (Lalović, 2000). In spite of the fact that during the 1990s Croatia was considered a "delegated" democracy, a non-liberal, parliamentary democracy, a defective democracy or even an authoritarian, populist, nationalist populist régime (Kasapović 2000: 47), there were peaceful electoral cycles even against the background of war, and voters did accept the parliamentary rules of the game. On the one hand, we could say that the Croatian party system did become institutionalized during the 1990s in some aspects, such as the continuous presence of

⁴ It should be stressed that the Croatian path to the EU has been partly influenced by the context of EU decision-making concerning Turkey's candidacy (see e.g. Sošić 2006; Pridham 2006).

a core of political parties in the party system, the net volatility (according to Kasapović (2001: 34) it was 17.4 percent between 1990 and 1995) and party identification was 56 percent in 1995⁵, (but dropped to 36 percent in 2003) (Čular 2005: 140). On the other hand, the predominant party in the party system (the party in power) was the HDZ – a charismatic organization (Kasapović 2001: 22). The president of the HDZ was also the President of Croatia between 1990 and 2000, which was at that time a semi-presidential system. Croatian politics in the 1990s were not democratic and may be described as the “institutionalization of nationalist discourse and authoritarian democracy”, the “delayed consolidation of democracy” (Čular 2000) or “democratic despotism” Vejvoda (2000). In the struggle to maintain its ruling position, the HDZ (*the Croatian Democratic Community*), the party of both the president and the parliamentary majority, even succeeded in broadening its electoral support to include not only the Croatian diaspora, but also Croats living in Bosnia-Herzegovina (then already formally an independent state). Croat voters from Bosnia-Herzegovina benefited from financial help from the Croatian national budget (Kasapović 2001; Cvrtila 2001) and behaved like a “clientelistic group” (Kasapović 2001: 23). Some HDZ voters preferred a strong leader more than voters of other parties (Čular 2005: 157). As early as the 1990s political parties attracted very low levels of trust. According to public opinion polls in 1990 and 1999, only about 12 percent of voters substantially or fully trusted political parties, while at the end of 1999 46 percent did not trust the parties at all (Čular 2005: 124). Party identification in Croatia decreased immediately after the defreezing of the transition to democracy (ibid.: 167–168).

After the Civil War and the death of the charismatic leader Franjo Tuđman, Croatia moved towards a democratic system, including institutional reforms introducing a parliamentary system and a democratic electoral process. Čular estimates that institutional socialization after the 2000 elections brought about the socialization of the party élite and led to a shift in party politics away from extreme political positions (ibid.: 156). However, the overall picture of the party system shows that party preferences and the level of democratic legitimacy in 2003 are a little lower than in the previous period (ibid.: 152). In spite of the fact that more democratically-oriented voters left the HDZ (ibid.: 157), only the HDZ did not lose its principal democratic support among the electorate (ibid.: 152). The watershed elections of 2000 did bring about a shift towards a more fragmented party system, with a prevailing conflict between centre-left and centre-right parties, but the HDZ still received the relatively stable support of part of the electorate (ibid.: 152). The 2000 elections saw a shift from the predominant cleavage of the 1990s (a territorial-cultural versus an ideological-cultural cleavage) towards

⁵ In 1995 voters with a quite strong party identification showed support for considerably stronger authoritarian tendencies (Čular 2005: 143). These voters were primarily supporters of the HDZ, which was consistently more authoritarian in its tendencies than the other main parties (ibid.: 152). As it was revealed that party identification was related to satisfaction with democracy, it could be understood why in the period between 1990 and 2000 mainly non-democrats were satisfied with democracy in Croatia (ibid.: 144).

ideological-cultural cleavages characteristic of the divisions between traditionalism and modernism. The Croatian party system shifted away from predominant nationalism and ethnocentrism towards socio-economic divisions marked by a cleavage between the beneficiaries and losers of the 1990s (Zakošek 2001). There were stable opposition voters who mostly felt their economic position was worse in 2000 than in 1990⁶. The Social Democratic Party (*SDP*) (a successor of the reformed Communist Party), the main representative of opposition parties, became the party of the prime minister after the 2000 watershed elections and started a policy of Croatian joining the European integration processes. Other parties adopted a pro-European orientation, at least in their discourse, with a delay.

Although up until early June 2006 *Serbia and Montenegro* were the two former Yugoslav republics that had remained in the framework of the common state after the independence of all the other former Yugoslav republics, their party system developments differed in some important ways. While in both former republics there were old élites which were able to freeze the transition to a democracy (see e.g. Goati, ed. 1998; Ramet 2006), the question of Montenegrin independence made political developments in this republic somewhat idiosyncratic.

The logic of party system development in Serbia and Montenegro cannot be understood without taking into account the broader picture of conflicts in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Probably the most plausible explanation is linked to the thesis that it had been a centre-periphery conflict that had so far been decisive for the party system logic in the two units. In the transition from 1980 to the 1990s political engagement on an ethnic basis became predominant in the nationally heterogeneous former Yugoslav republics (Serbia and Montenegro as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia). Political élites in the former republics played nationalist cards in their political conflicts and added to the ethnic homogenization within “their own” republics (Goati 2000b: 179). In each ethnically heterogeneous republic the parties of the majority ethnic group (apart from Bosnia-Herzegovina, which had three major ethnically-based parties) strove for a quite broadly defined “ethnic territory” and more or less minimized rights of other ethnic groups. In these terms the centre/periphery cleavage in the framework of former Yugoslavia was expressed in the range of independent states that were created (at the beginning of the 1990s the creation of the independent states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and, at a later date, in 2006, Montenegro. Thus, Serbia was left on its own). Even in July 2007 Kosovo remains to be “a question of all questions”⁷ for the Serbian government.

⁶ Zakošek (2001: 120) states that the share of “losers” of the 1990s among stable opposition voters was 72.9 percent, while among the stable HDZ voters the share of losers was 27.2 percent and among former HDZ voters who transferred their votes to opposition parties it was 64.5 percent (data are from the *Izbori 2000* survey conducted by the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb).

⁷ *Pitanje svih pitanja* (an estimation on behalf of the Serbian foreign minister during his visit in Ljubljana; TV news at 7 p.m. on Slovenian TV station POP-TV and national RTV Slovenia on 16 July 2007).

The phenomena of segmented pluralism within the republics led to the political homogenization of ethnic minorities and in some cases led to their demands for self-determination (as with the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohia). Although party systems in both units were marked by the “ethnification of the political sphere” (predominant party organization and functioning on an ethnic basis), this happened to a larger extent in Serbia (Goati 2000b: 180). Among the indicators of the range of party system ethnification phenomena is the fact that Albanian parties refused to even participate in the party system of the Republic of Serbia and created an illegal party system of their own, while in Montenegro the parties of ethnic minorities (Muslim, Albanian) participated in a Montenegrin party system from the beginning of its development and, beside the parties in favour of ethnic homogenization, there were also some which opposed it (ibid.: 179).

In addition, the cleavage between parties of the national majority and the parties of national minorities in Montenegro was accompanied by the cleavage between pro-independence and pro-common state supporters. In the context of war, the politicization of ethnic feelings and intensive institutional engineering in favour of the parties in power, it was impossible to talk about democracy and reasonable voter choices. Yet in Serbia the polarized pluralism anti-democratically-oriented SPS and JUL were able to occupy the central position and take advantage of a situation with a double opposition (Goati 2000b: 197). On the contrary, the Montenegrin party system developed in a moderately pluralistic way during the 1990s and became more polarized only in the context of Montenegro distancing itself from Serbia in the 1997–2000 period. The end of Serbian and Montenegrin involvement in the war in other former Yugoslav republics between 1991 and 1995, and the international intervention in Kosovo, Serbia and Yugoslavia in 1998–99 changed the social and political context of both party systems. The first peaceful change in power occurred in Montenegro, with presidential elections in 1997 and parliamentary elections in 1998. A little later, in 2000, change also happened in Serbia (Miller 1997; Goati 2000a; Ramet 2006), although this was achieved with more difficulty than in Montenegro.

Serbian and Montenegrin party systems have not yet been institutionalized (Goati 2000b), although it is possible to identify several continuous parties within each of the two party systems. In both units, the party roots have been quite weak, as reflected in the rather large shifts in party electoral support. Besides a relatively large electoral volatility⁸, the overall large importance of party leaders⁹ can be noticed in

⁸ According to Goati (2000b: 200), the average electoral volatility during the 1990s in Serbia was 34.6 percent and in Montenegro 34 percent (in Montenegro the greatest was in the watershed elections in 1998 – 63.4 percent).

⁹ According to research, support for particular party leaders even has a predictive power for electoral support for parties (see *Rejting lidera i izborne orientacije građana Srbije i Crne gore krajem 2004 godine.* / (Ratings of Leaders and Election Orientations among Serbian and Montenegrin citizens at the end of 2004, *Centar za politikološka istraživanja i javno mnjenje, Institut društvenih nauka, Beograd*, January 2005).

both Serbia and Montenegro (ibid.) and quite significant external centres of power can also be identified. In Serbia in particular there have been cases where the secret services and economic élites have prospered from war profits and illegal activities, and in Montenegro economic élites and some political élites have prospered from illegal economic activities¹⁰. In spite of the fact that after the 2000 political change Milošević lost the army's support and the government arrested him and sent him to The Hague, the assassination of Djindjić, a leader of the more liberal, pro-European Democratic Party in 2003, this had shown the level of external party centres of power influence in Serbia (for more information, see Ramet, 2006).

Contrary to Serbia, the pro-European political stream gained predominance in the Montenegrin parliament after the May 1998 parliamentary victory (Goati 2000b: 182)¹¹. As the Montenegrin political élite was engaged in democratic change, changes in ownership and international linking up, it clashed with opposing interests within Montenegro as well as in Serbia and the federal level of the joint state. Demands for a confederal state and for Montenegrin independence became two expressions of its "reactive confederalism" (Goati 2000b: 183). Due to the high level importance of this kind of centre/periphery cleavage, the centre-right versus centre-left cleavage was secondary. In 2000 pro-confederal (pro-independence) parties won 62 percent of parliamentary seats (49 out of 78) in the national Montenegrin parliament (Goati 2000b: 180).

In 2000 Serbian political conflicts within the cleavage of a pro-European orientation (pro-modernization) versus traditionalism (anti-modernization) traditionalist political options still prevailed, as shown in their parliamentary strength (the three main traditionalistic parties of the SPS, the JUL and the SRS gained 187 (74.8 percent) parliamentary seats) and their black-red coalition government fought for "a continuity of politico-economic development", against the full introduction of democracy, a market economy and links with economically developed Western countries (Goati 2000b: 181). On 12 April 1999, during the NATO bombing (24 March–9 June 1999), the National Assembly went as far as unilaterally deciding to join a federation with Russia and Belarussia.

¹⁰ Montenegro has been very vulnerable to drug trafficking, organized crime, money laundering as well as financial crimes and has a significant market for smuggled goods (see e.g. International Narcotics Control Report 2007, released by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, accessed at <http://podgorica.usembassy.gov/policy/reports/070305.html>, 6.7.2007 and the analysis by Vanja Čalović at [Balkananalysis.com](http://www.balkananalysis.com) on 11 August 2005, accessed at [Balkananalysis.com: http://www.balkananalysis.com/?p=597](http://www.balkananalysis.com/?p=597), 6.7.2007). Even politicians in the highest positions in Montenegro have been accused of being involved in illegal activities. For example, in July 2007 it was reported that at a court in Bari, Italy, Milo Djukanović was accused of being involved in an international mafia gang smuggling cigarettes and benefiting financially from this activity (Slovenian weekly newspaper *Nedelo*, 24 June 2007, p. 3). In the same article it was reported that Djukanović had recently opened his own private university and predicted the setting up of several new enterprises.

¹¹ Beside the pro-European coalition "to live a better life" – "*Da živimo bolje*" (composed of the DPS, NS CG, SDP), which gained 49.5 percent of votes and 53 percent of seats in parliament) there were also some additional small parties with mandates (the LS CG, DS and DUA), which together with the coalition won 58.3 percent of votes and 62.8 percent of seats (Goati 2000b: 182).

Since the political change in Serbia in 2000 democratization processes have been linked with Europeanization processes. Two clusters of parties have been created in terms of the pro-European (all the relevant parties) versus anti-European cleavage (Šešelj's Serbian Radical Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia – Milošević's former party). While the general pro-European orientation is not in question, the practical implementation of EU preconditions along with the concrete facing up to the causes and consequences of the war in the first half of the 1990s have remained very problematic (Komšić 2007).

Table 3: National variations in party system changes, 1990–2006

	CROATIA	SERBIA	MONTENEGRO
PREDOMINANT CLEAVAGES IN PARTY COMPETITION	In the 1990s: nationalism, traditionalism vs. modernism Since 2000: C-L vs. C-R	majority national parties vs. minority national parties; traditionalism (nationalism, anti-Europeanism) vs. modernism (civic-mindedness, pro-Europeanism)	majority national parties vs. minority national parties; pro-independence vs. pro-Yugoslav (pro-Serb); C-L, pro-European vs. predominant C-R (anti-European)
LOGIC OF CHANGE IN POWER SINCE UNFREEZING OF THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATISATION	WATERSHED ELECTIONS 2000; alternative C-R and C-L coalitions available	WATERSHED ELECTIONS 2000, fragmented, weak C-L opposition, C-R parties available for coalition governments	WATERSHED ELECTIONS 1997/1998 Djukanović's break up with Milošević – Predominance of C-L pro-independence forces
PREDOMINANT PARTY INFLUENCE IN 1990s	Anti-communist party predominant until 2000	Transformed anti-democratic socialist party predominant until 2000	Transformed communist party predominant until 1998
INSTITUTIONALISATION OF PARTY SYSTEM? A) stability of main parties in a party system B) relevant external centres of power (relative to parties)	YES/NO YES/NO Occasional political pressures on behalf of army veteran's interest organisations	NO YES Secret services, organised crime*	YES/NO YES organised crime*

* economically-based interest in the status quo

European party socialization

In line with our understanding of the European socialization of national party élites (as presented in the theoretical framework of this article) we expect that in the analysed countries national parties' links with the European party federations would lead to the creation of shared European party federations' conceptions of identity or role. We expect that this impact would be expressed also in national parties' ideological positioning in the domestic party arena and in party behaviour.

The main *Croatian* political parties have longer experiences of links to European party federations and other political actors at the EU level when compared with the Montenegrin and Serbian situations. Currently, European party links do not only include the main Croatian political parties, but also party youth organizations¹². The Croatian Social Democrats, the party which initiated a clear policy of Croatian integration into the EU after its parliamentary victory in 2000, has been associated member of the Party of European Socialists since April 2004.

The process of Europeanization can in some aspects at least be seen in the more intensive contacts of leading party élite members (especially prime ministers – Ivica Račan and Ivo Sanader, who have also been presidents of their parties) since the beginning of the accession stage. The President of the HDZ (the prime minister's party, which led the Croatian accession negotiations with the EU)¹³, Ivo Sanader (2006) stresses not only the import of European values into his party through its links with the European party federation European Peoples' Party (EPP) (the HDZ became a member of the EPP in 2002)¹⁴, but also using these links for pursuing his party and his country interests in relation with the EU¹⁵.

A peculiarity of *Montenegrin* party international socialization is that it started by linking with international party organizations, and only recently has it become more oriented towards European parties. As shown in the contribution by Komar and Vujović, parties included a mention of the EU or Europe mainly in their party manifestos, among the general rhetoric, but did not specify any EU-related policies

¹² See information on membership of Croatian party organizations in international party organizations at http://www.hidra.hr/stranke/tab1_10.htm.

¹³ HDZ was accepted into the European Union of Christian parties (EUCD) in 1995.

¹⁴ Sanader (2006) stresses the important role of linking with the European Peoples' Party federation in the period between 2000 and 2003, during which the party was in opposition for the first time since 1990. The party's reorientation under the EPP influence included the intensification of bilateral contacts with EPP members (especially those in the region), emphasizing the party's European orientation in addressing some policy issues, proving that the HDZ shares the values and principles of the EPP (e.g. successful integration of national minorities), and developing a network and regional cooperation with party counterparts in Southeast Europe.

¹⁵ Sanader (2006) also stresses that the EPP party federation helped HDZ interpret Croatia and the whole of South-East Europe to EU institutions and EU member states. In September 2005, on the initiative of EPP President Wilfried Martens, a letter from nine EU Prime Ministers was sent to British Prime Minister and President of the European Council, Tony Blair, asking for the opening of accession negotiations with Croatia.

in Montenegro. There are also no visible organizational adaptations to the processes of Europeanization, although contacts of Montenegrin parties with their counterparts across the Montenegrin borders are noticeable. Due to the internal characteristics of Montenegrin society and politics, the deepening of the pro-European and anti-European cleavages may become more important in future integration processes.

In *Serbia*, even after 15 years since the first multi-party elections, the political and economic élites have problems with inconsistent values – a persistent mixture of liberal and collectivist patterns (Lazić 2007). Sociological analysis (Vuletić 2007) has shown that political and economic élites have established close mutual links (members of the political élite are connected with the economic élite through friendship, marriages and other social ties, making the whole élite quite cohesive and powerful). Structurally, they do not have a real interest in integration into the EU – quite the opposite: the more this goal becomes realistic the more they will probably resist it (Vuletić 2007: 99). Rhetorical general talk about integration into the EU could serve as a legitimizing source in relation to voters, but it has its limitations. While voter support for integration into the EU is uninformed and confused, there is still also a lack of the European socialization of Serbian party élites. Milivojević (2007) note the scarce close contacts with European institutions involving various actors. Just a few political parties have official links with Europarties starting with 2005 and 2006 (Milivojević 2007; Orlović 2007). Although the Democratic Party (Djindjić's former party) moved from the centre towards a social-democratic orientation by establishing closer links first with the Socialist International and later with the Party of European Socialists, the DSS came closer to the people's parties (it can be characterized as a conservative-ethnic party), and G17 is close to the liberal European party grouping, the impact of Europarties should not be overestimated (Orlović 2007: 139–141), especially not in relation to domestic variables.

Voter preferences

Voters' attitudes to their country's integration into the EU vary considerably among the three countries. While in Croatia they are informed of the EU's preconditions, they also support European integration processes. Although a more detailed look at public opinion polls shows changes in the amount of support, it has been revealed that the majority of the two main parties in the party system representing the centre left (SDP) and the centre right (HDZ) do support European integration and the majority of several other parties' voters (HSS, HSLs-LS, HSP, HSU) as well as the undecided are somewhat more doubtful¹⁶. The swings seen in public opinion polls are probably to some extent influenced by informed journalists' contributions to European debates in Croatia. As shown in the analysis of commentary in leading Croatian newspapers

¹⁶ Crobarometar – Travanj 2006, izveštaj, Puls, Zagreb, p. 9.

in 2004, Croatian journalists expressed argued criticism of the government's decisions and the "insincerity" of Croatian politics *vis-à-vis* the Hague tribunal and the possible consequences of these politics for the postponement of negotiations with the EU – which indeed happened (Vilović 2005).

In Serbia voters generally support Serbia's integration into the EU, but the majority of them are unaware of the EU's preconditions. Blagosavljević (2007:51) suggests they are confused due to both a lack of information and inconsistent political messages about the EU (over the years it has sometimes been praised and sometimes criticized according to political parties' needs). This also results in a low level of trust in the EU¹⁷. A large proportion of voters believe that the EU brings about the free movement of people (50 percent), an open market (43 percent), democracy (39 percent), human and minority rights (27 percent) (Bogosavljević 2007: 56). As many as 50 percent believe the reason for Serbia's lagging behind in the integration processes is the constantly adding new conditions and blackmailing of Serbia, 23 percent believe that it is due to the incapability of the domestic leadership and 15 percent the mentality of people who are not ready for change (only 12 percent believe there are objective obstacles and a need for major reforms in all fields) (Bogosavljević 2007: 61). In fact, voters of all parties (pro-European and anti-European) have problems understanding the preconditions of integration into the EU, and the majority believes that once Serbia fulfils the Hague precondition the EU will invent new additional criteria that Serbia needs to meet in order to move forward in the integration process (Bogosavljević 2007: 62). Voters' general pro-European orientation is also to a certain extent misleading, as in 2006 the majority of citizens still felt a personal link to their nation, and around one-third of voters of the main political parties in the party system (except the Serbian Radical Party and the Democratic Party) as well as the population of the non-decided is characterized by very high ethnocentrism. This is true of even 51 percent of Serbian Radical Party voters and less (18 percent) of Democratic Party voters¹⁸.

¹⁷ According to a survey conducted by the *Centar za politikološka istraživanja i javno mnenje Institut društvenih nauka* in Belgrade in 2004 (*Stavovi građana o međunarodnoj zajednici i odnosima Srbije i Crne gore krajem 2004. godine, Beograd, januar 2005*), 34 percent of Serbian citizens did not trust the EU and 46 percent did, at the same time the proportion of distrust in the UN was even lower (48 percent did not trust it; 33 percent did trust it) and the international organizations with the lowest trust were the Hague Tribunal and NATO, with the same proportions of distrust (70 percent) and trust (13 percent).

¹⁸ Low ethnocentrism is characteristic of 34 percent of the non-decided; of 27 percent of those who did not want to disclose their voting intentions; 40 percent of non-voters; of 13 percent of the Serbian Radical Party voters; 35 percent of the Democratic Party of Serbia (*DSS*) voters and as much as for 52 percent of Democratic Party voters (*Istraživanje javnog mnenja Srbije, leto 2006. godine, CeSID*, Center for Free Elections and Democracy, Belgrade, September 2006, p. 26).

Table 4: EU strategy and public opinion support for integration with the EU in Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro

	CROATIA	SERBIA	MONTENEGRO
EU STRATEGY	pressures on governments primarily to meet EU preconditions	pressures on governments primarily to meet EU preconditions	pressures on governments primarily to meet EU preconditions; support for the reformed, liberal bloc / with a time-lag also for MG's independence
GENERAL PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE COUNTRY'S INTEGRATION WITH THE EU	Y	Y	Y
PUBLIC AWARENESS OF WAR CRIMINAL PRE-CONDITIONALITY?	Y	50 % NOT aware	Y

Public opinion results as reported by *Slobodna Evropa* 6.11.2006 (Internet)

A pro-European orientation clearly prevailed in Montenegro by the end of the 1990s. In a public opinion survey in April 2000, 80.7 percent of Montenegrin voters were clearly in favour of Montenegrin integration into the EU, but only 23.9 percent of integration with Russia and Belarussia (contrary to Montenegrin MPs)¹⁹. The main reason for a pro-European orientation was that Montenegrins expected a better standard of living, closer to that of the EU²⁰. A survey at the end of 1999 also showed a shift in public opinion towards a change in the status of Montenegro. The public opinion data were interpreted as a gradual shift towards pro-independence, autonomistic ideas, while the still quite strong federalism was becoming “a minority idea, supported by the Belgrade régime” (Goati 2000: 180–181). In spite of the relatively strong distrust of international organizations, including the EU, held by Montenegrin citizens²¹,

¹⁹ Source: *Javno mnenje Crne gore*, 2000, CEDEM 2: 45 as quoted by Goati, 2000: 182).

²⁰ Among the reasons for joining the EU the highest proportion (45 percent of those surveyed in December 2004) answered it was an improvement of the economic situation and citizens' standard of living (Position regarding statehood issue and key socio-economic problems, CEDEM, Department of Empirical Studies, December 2004, available at www.cedem.cg.yu).

²¹ According to a survey conducted by *Centar za politikološka istraživanja i javno mnenje Institut društvenih nauka* in Belgrade in 2004 (*Stavovi građana o međunarodnoj zajednici i odnosima Srbije i Crne gore krajem 2004. godine, Beograd, januar 2005*), 21 percent of Montenegrin citizens did not trust the EU and 54 percent did, at the same time the proportion of distrust in the UN was only slightly lower (28 percent did not trust it; 47 percent did trust it) and the lowest among international organizations were the Hague Tribunal (50 percent did not trust it; 27 percent did trust it) and NATO with the same proportions of distrust (50 percent) and slightly different trust (27 percent trusted the Hague Tribunal and 22 percent trusted NATO).

a pro-EU orientation is predominant among voters. In comparison with Serbian voters, Montenegrins are much better informed about the EU's preconditions regarding one of the most sensitive issues in the former union of Serbia and Montenegro – collaboration with the ITCY. According to data from the CEMI of 20 April 2006,²² 42.6 percent of the surveyed supported extradition of war criminals to the ITCY and 42.2 percent were against that. Still, in case if collaboration with The Hague was a precondition of further integration into the EU 53.7 percent of those surveyed would still be in favour of integration and the proportion of opposers to war criminals extradition would decline to 27.2 percent.

Comparisons and tentative conclusions

Comparing the impact of national party system institutionalization, the European socialization of national party élites and voters' attitudes to their country's involvement in European integration processes (Table 5) shows an interesting variety of factors determining the party system mechanics.

Table 5: Comparative view of national party system mechanics, European party socialisation and voters' pro-European pressures

	CROATIA	SERBIA	MONTENEGRO
PARTY SYSTEM INSTITUTIONALISATION?	Y/N	N	Y/N
– stability of main parties in the party system	Y	N	Y
– strong external party power?	Y/N (interest groups)	Y (organised crime, part of a state apparatus)	Y (organised crime)
EUROPEAN SOCIALISATION	Y	N	Y/N
VOTERS' PRO-EU ATTITUDES?			
– general	Y	Y	Y
– informed	Y	N	Y/N

Croatian party élites have been socialized through their links with European party federations (as well as other EU actors) for the longest period (compared with the other two analysed cases) and at the same time they have been pressured by quite a strong pro-European orientation on behalf of voters. National party system mechanics regarding EU matters seem to have become closer to the Slovak case, where the party

²² Accessed at <http://www.cemi.cg.yu/vijesti/vi120.php> on 10th December 2006.

system's mechanics respond to dual pro-European pressures: voters' preferences as well as EU actors' pressures. Croatian European integration processes seem to have been working in a way that is ever more similar to those in Slovakia (from the 1997–2004 period), involving a push-pull relationship and a two-level game, although the latter was largely linked to war-related issues and actors (especially the anti-Hague lobby including war veteran interest groups, and for some time even part of the military leadership).

As in Serbia, voters' support for European integration processes is not predominantly informed about the EU's preconditions, the Serbian national party system is not in a comparable relationship with the electorate as in Croatia or even Montenegro. Still, national party autonomy in Montenegro is endangered by external party power, as in Serbia. While in Montenegro it is concentrated in organized crime and unclear relationships between the party élite members and economic power functioning against European standards, in Serbia the external party power lies not only in war profiteers' economic power but also in segments of the state apparatus still faithful to Milošević's politics (especially the secret services).

So although at first sight Montenegro seems to have been quite a successful Europeanization story, it may in fact not be the case. Despite the fact that voters' support for integration into the EU is informed (voters are largely aware of the EU's preconditions) an important part of Montenegrin party élites has retained general pro-EU rhetoric. It is national party subordination to the economic interests of an important segment of party élites that is preventing Montenegro from fulfilling other special EU preconditions besides cooperation with the ICTY – especially the fight against organized crime.

When looking at comparisons we can notice that in Croatia the (although not quite an institutionalized) party system is now in a position to respond to both Europeanization pressures – from the top and from the bottom. On the contrary, in Serbia, both aspects of party system institutionalization are relatively weak (besides that, the bottom-up pressure is not informed of the EU's preconditions). What is common to Serbia and Montenegro is the strength of nationally influential centres of economic and political power that are outside political parties. In a situation where these centres of power do not see their interests in integration processes with the EU, political parties can only follow general voters' preferences of joining the EU with a general pro-EU discourse – without doing anything significant in relation to fulfilling the EU's preconditions. From this point of view, another aspect of party system institutionalization (stability of the main parties in the party system) is obviously insufficient for the full development of party system mechanics responsive to pressures from the top and from the bottom in the field of EU matters.

All three cases show a close link between democratization and Europeanization processes. It seems that voters' demands do play quite an important role in shaping the party system by offering pro- versus anti-European competition. It also seems that the

European socialization of party élites plays a weaker role in this context. Our analysis has revealed that voters' pro-European orientation needs to be analysed in more detail as its characteristics are important for the impact on party system competition. A general, uninformed pro-European orientation which co-exists with traditionalism and the politicization of ethnic feelings in fact supports merely declaratory pro-EU party politics without providing any concrete steps for meeting the EU's preconditions.

While undertaking this comparative research we noticed several variables that need to be taken into account in further research. Among them is trust in the EU as an international organization, which seems to be an additional factor shaping voters' and party élites' attitudes to integration into the EU. Here EU behaviour (especially its inconsistency: politically determined individual decisions are not always in line with the generally declared policy) as a variable needs to be taken into account. Unlike the previous post-socialist EU candidate (now already member) states, the idiosyncrasies of societies in those countries that were involved in the Yugoslav Civil War need to be explored in more detail – especially due to the distortion of their social structures – as well as the characteristics of their (party) élites, their centres of power as well as due to other consequences of the war (the “ghettoization” of these societies). These additional variables especially come to the fore when we look at Serbia and Montenegro; while in Croatia our preliminary study has also indicated the need to do more thorough research into the role of non-party actors (such as the mass media and non-governmental actors) in shaping the party system's mechanics when it comes to the area of European issues.

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