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*Double Democratization.
The Impact of European Integration upon National Parliaments in
Central Europe.*

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Introduction

The research focused on the Europeanization of Central European politics in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Europeanization is meant in two dimensions, that is democratization on the one hand and joining European institutions on the other. Generally, the research has been political science oriented, sometimes even practical, placing institutions and policies in the focus. More concretely - as the title of the project indicates - double democratization has been targeted in two processes: first, how the challenges of Europeanization have an impact on the development of Central European politics, political institutions, particularly parliaments, and second how the parliaments responded to this challenge.

The research findings are interesting: in the process of examining concrete events, procedures etc. it has turned out that major institutional and constitutional developments have been stabilized in this period. All this cannot be separated from the fact that recently these countries have entered a new phase in their political history, the phase of consolidation. That is - and not surprisingly - double democratization both in terms of achieving democratic stability and learning European institutions have been taking place successfully in these countries. This seems a common political science understanding, which has become strengthened and demonstrated by the research findings themselves.

This „preliminary conclusion” does not indicate, however, that the processes of double democratization/Europeanization are without difficulties. We shall see that parliaments - with several ups and downs - could not always live up to their potentials in this process. Moreover, since after these countries have entered the negotiation phase and the „institutional transfer” of the EU’s 80 thousand-page *aquis communautaire* has become the formal target for aspirant member states the detailed revelation of problems, difficulties and needs have come much

more to the surface than before.¹ The closer we are to actual EU enlargement, the more complex and more difficult the problems seem to be.

The research findings will be summarized in three broad chapters. First, in an introduction I will present those theoretical concerns (with substantial practical consequences, as we shall see) that have implications on the integration process itself and haunt not only the political elite but wide social groups in Central Europe. Within this framework, the connections between integration, globalization and national sovereignty will be put in the focus. Still in the introduction I will clarify how the EU is evaluated by the public in these countries - in addition to the concrete economic and political map of the widening connections between the EU on the one hand and the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland on the other hand. In the second chapter I will introduce the constitutional and political environment of the three countries. This will help our understanding the institutional and political responses regarding the EU and EU enlargement. In the third chapter, largely based on and connected to the previous chapter, I will examine two important variables concerning the EU, namely the elites (first of all parliamentary elites) and second the institutional choices in the parliamentary arena (including parliament-government connections). Finally, in the conclusion I will seek to answer the question how successful these countries have been in their Europeanization/democratization programmes.

I. Understanding the EU - a post-Maastricht View from Central Europe

Nation-state or rather national sovereignty and globalization have been the two 'contenders' of European integration both in academic and political debate. The introduction will consist of three parts. First, an attempt will be made to clarify the connection between globalization, integration and the nation state. Second, an interpretation of the European integration will follow. Thirdly, I will examine what controversial effects follow from the mainstream interpretation of European integration for Central European countries.

1./ Globalization, integration, national sovereignty

a) Although it is widely admitted that globalization is understood differently by different area experts, globalization inspite its multi-disciplinary approach mainly remains the area of

¹ Jacoby, Wade 'Priest and Penitent: The European Union as a Force in the Domestic Politics of Eastern Europe' East European Constitutional Review 1999(8) nos 1-2, pp 62-67.

economists, international relations people, and culture sociologists or philosophers. Integration research is also multi-disciplinary, but political science, economy, philosophy and sociology approaches, lately even a political anthropology approach appear in a more balanced way - and this is telling about the state of the research fields.

b) While global change is not 'out of fashion' it is a topic less often targeted nowadays than integration. Experts in the field emphasize that 'Characteristic for the 1990s seems to be its interim position in global change. A major structural pattern of world politics gradually devolves with no new paradigm pattern in sight...'² An explanation might be that although the internationalization of the economy remains an undoubted fact the world has not got over the post-Soviet period full of uncertainties.

c) The nature of globalization and integration is different. In globalization spontaneity prevails while in integration planned and conscious actions and intentions dominate. As a result, the main actors of the two processes are different: less visible economic and financial actors in globalization as opposed to concrete personalities (like Monnet, or Schumann or later Delors) who were the engines of European integration.

d) The targets of the two processes are also different - the entire globe in one case and a smaller unit, a continent in the other, although 'understanding Europe' or rather how Europe is to be understood remains the topic of intensive controversy today. Indeed, European integration is not a European issue in the widest (continental) sense of the word.

e) The background of the processes are different. Economic and technological demands and possibilities brought globalization to light while integration followed from political motivations in Europe after World War II. Naturally, economic motivations were not missing in the integration process either and when we proceed closer to the present time, economic motivations are becoming more explicit. In addition, these differences imply different emphases: economy and ideology concerning globalization and politics and institution-building concerning integration.

² Werner Weidenfeld- Josef Janning, 'Introduction' in Weidenfeld-Janning eds. Europe in Global Change. Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers, 1994. p. 14.

f) At first glance both globalization and integration are concerned with a new coordination of single units into a larger unit. But is it that simple? Are the starting units self-evident in both processes? What are indeed the starting units? Paradoxically, both for globalization and integration to succeed some previous ties had to get unfolded : the British, Dutch, Belgian, French and Portuguese empires had to disappear to give way to globalization. In some cases globalization inhibited integration, that is the integration of the old colonial frameworks into more sensible regionally integrated units. For the 'mother-countries', however, the new set-up gave the opportunity and also the impetus to 'integrate' themselves in a purely European framework.

g) This paradox also draws our attention to differences in outcomes of the two processes, at least, as they look like now: in spite of impressive developments particularly with respect to the economy, globalization has not produced a new quality of globality, 'the crystallization of the entire world as a single place'³ or a cosmopolitan democracy as it was assumed. Globalization fell short of the expectations of cultural theorists who thought it would proceed on the levels of ethnicity, technology, finance, media and ideas.⁴ As far as integration is concerned now real issues of quality (that exactly distinguish it from globalization) got on the agenda, namely, how to build even if not a cosmopolitan democracy but a European democracy. Globalization has not fulfilled its original promises: it remains on the level of the development of world politics, a restructuring of the old setup while a new quality and entity evolves as a result of European integration.

From this comparative effort, some lessons can be drawn about integration. Some aspects of the globalization literature and approaches can be applied to the topic of integration. Particularly four 'lessons' might deserve special attention. Namely, 1/ the importance of cycles as opposed to trends, 2/ a new understanding of the state 3/ a new understanding of diversity as opposed to old dichotomies, and 4/ the ability to place issues according to their face values, that is the ability to mark their significance.

The first lesson drawn from globalization literature is that we should not deal with the issue as if it were a new phenomenon. We should give merit to those experts of globalization

³ Robertson, R. 'Globalization and Societal Modernization' *Sociological Analysis* 1987(47):38 quoted by Arnason, J.P. 'Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity' in M. Featherstone ed. *Global Culture. Nationalism, globalization and modernity*. Sage, 1990.

who argue that globalization started already in the third part of the last century, and then ups and downs followed. This warns us when examining European processes not to forget that concentration only on trends might inhibit our thinking and make us forget about cycles, potential failures or setbacks, and recurring phenomena. Unfortunately, most of the literature analyzes European integration as if there were only linear trends in this process. The importance of historical cycles, the effects of new experiences, and indeed the changes in these experiences should not be neglected.

Another lesson drawn from the globalization literature, however controversial it is, is that we should not `exaggerate the erosion of state power in face of globalizing pressures `and that the modern state endures to prevail both as an idea and an institutional complex in determining the direction of domestic and international politics.’⁵ This approach goes beyond the false dichotomy of the nation-state versus globalization. This conclusion is all the more convincing because it comes and is asserted from two different directions. First, it is argued by some economists⁶ who say that although economic relations are becoming more international we cannot talk of a global economy in the sense of a new quality. (Of course, they rightly emphasize that `the opposite of a globalized economy is thus not a nationally inward-looking one, but an open world market based on trading nations and regulated to a greater or lesser degree both by the public policies of nation states and by supra-national agencies (:16). And second, the argument comes from sociologists-philosophers⁷ who mainly oppose the so called transformationist literature⁸, which while attempting to place the nation state in new global developments eventually advocated or signalled the death of the nation-state (in contrast to the old `realist’ school for which the nation state was the starting point).

Thirdly, globalization studies convince us that diversity will prevail not only with respect to the state. We cannot assume, at least there is no evidence for that, that global processes will diminish diversity. Virtually, some experts of globalization state the opposite: cultural theorists argue that different groups or localities consume global `culture’ in particular

⁴ A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

⁵ Held, David: *Democracy and the Global Order*. Stanford UP, 1995:26

⁶ see for example Paul Hirst - Graham Thompson: *Globalization in Question. The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*. Polity Press, 1996.

⁷ like David Held, quoted above

⁸ like James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*. Princeton University press, 1990.

ways, that is the outcomes are also particular. In so far as international developments help to assert or to reassert self-identities so we can assume that the integration process in Europe does not diminish the importance of identities either. Indeed, the opposite was demonstrated by a recent and extensive survey of Spanish citizens. It was found that Europe appeared 'as a resource for Spanish national identity....as if Spain's joining Europe ma(de) Spaniards become better Spaniards'⁹. Similar findings about other communities will certainly follow.

Finally, a lesson is provided by mere figures - to be able to place Europe, our region or our country in a wider context. For example, we can learn that 'In 1996 the total worldwide amount of foreign direct investment was estimated at US \$ 3.200 billion, of which Eastern European countries get less than 2%. The share of estimated US \$ 320 billion of new investments was a mere 6%. Globality does not seem to be global at all even in terms of sheer economic figures.

What is clearly missing from or at least rarely appears in the globalization literature is its connection with integration - or to put it in another way but the similar effect: the issues of European integration are almost exclusively considered and analyzed within Europe and this integration literature is not tied to the theme of globalization.

This is so even if we are aware of the fact that the three major actors on the international economic scene, the USA, Japan and the European Union play a kind of common game on the level of international economics. What's more, it is generally agreed that the intensification of European integration is partly due to Europe's growing inability to compete with its rivals overseas. The interconnections between these two processes would need much more elaboration than I can provide, or I think the literature on the two respective fields provides. The advent of a new, more intensive period of European integration cannot be separated from the fact for example that real economic growth between 1978 and 1987 was 4.1% in Japan, 2.6% in the USA and only 2% in the then EC. And growth rates further increased in Japan in the beginning of the '90s while went down in Europe (and also in the USA).¹⁰

⁹ A. Rosa- F. Blanco - F. Diaz - R. De Castro 'Europe as a Discursive Resource for Spanish National Identity' in Ulf Hedetoft ed. *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics. European identities in transformation.* Ashgate, 1998. p. 127

¹⁰ Jurgen Turek 'Global Competitiveness and Emerging Technologies: Europe in the World Economy' in Weidenfeld-Jannin eds. *Europe in Global Change.* 1994:69

European integration was not only enforced by economic factors but by sociological-cultural factors of global processes as well, as a quotation makes it explicit ‘.global pressures...are particularly acute in Europe...(and) the results have been paradoxical. They have produced not the “global culture” and cosmopolitan outlook that are so often predicted,..., but a vague sense of “Europe” and “European culture”’¹¹. Thus, paradoxically, European integration is helped a lot by the internationalization processes, but the intricate connection has not been systematically explored. Indeed, the integration process in Europe has been accelerated both due to economic competition and challenges on the global scene, and European identification was helped by global processes. The processes of globalization and European integration are closely intertwined.

The other main topic, the challenge against the nation-state, or some go as far as advocating the death of the state also seems controversial because it does not distinguish between two things: namely the mythology of the nation-state and the reality of the nation-state. The mythology might be over, but the reality is not over at all. The controversy between ‘Europeanizers’ and ‘nationalizers’ reflects a false dichotomy and sometimes the neglect of differentiating between conceptions and real processes. We should not cry for the isolationism of the nation state, suffering from superiority or inferiority complexes, but we should notice that as the organizational and administrative power of the state diminishes and the decisions are made above the state level, this implies less control by the the civil society.¹²

Moreover, it is doubtful to assume that the powers (in this sense the decision-making capacities) of the nation-state transferred to a European polity are well under control. Just the contrary, some argue that the power was transferred from the state to market, meaning that the gap between state and market is growing, the economic forces becoming more European and (also international, or global for that matter).¹³

At the same time the reality of the nation-state prevails in several areas: political affairs are concentrated on the level of the nation-state, there is no European party system, or

¹¹ Anthony Smith, ‘The Nations of Europe after the Cold War’ in Hayward-Page eds. *Governing the New Europe*. Duke, 1995.

¹² Nick Rengger ‘Beyond Liberal Politics? European Modernity and the Nation-State’ in: Rhodes - Heywood - Wrights. eds. *Developments in West European Politics*. Macmillan, 1997. 247-262 pp.

¹³ L. Tsoulakis - M.Rhodes ‘Economic Integration and the Nation-State’ in: Rhodes - Heywood - Wright as above 1997:29 p.

European media. The old way of thinking about integration, which assumed that the national interests will create state preferences which then will appear in international negotiations, and as a result of this bargaining process an outcome will develop, is obviously over. All the more so because the initiator of different policies is generally not the national state any longer but a supranational organization or interest group. Nevertheless, it does not at all seem obvious (and the previous remarks only draw attention to some of the several areas in this issue) that a developing complexity of governance will eliminate the need to think about how to establish representation, scrutiny, and as a result authority and legitimacy patterns, that is clearcut government in the European Union, at the level of the European Union.

Probably the questioning of the 'state'-debate and the identity-debate also look different through East Central European eyes. The end of the state might be a misleading message. The political class in some new democracies seems to hear only the de-statization point, and does not listen to more careful analyses in this respect. As a result, in these countries the role of the state has become even more uncertain than it would be anyway under the conditions when the privatization process and the need to demolish the post-communist state have been on the agenda. It seems that only part of the truth became digested by the new political classes: the state's role is diminishing in the EU, other actors take over. But the other half of the truth, namely that the state retreated only externally (was eroded by the internationalization, Europeanization, multinationalization and technological change), but internally only its redefinition occurred does not seem clear. De-nationalization slogans seem to hide the facts that the role of state was not at all challenged in sectors like education or pensions, in state services, actually the role of state grew in the sphere of regulation (for example, privatization requires the state to be more active in regulation; in several new areas the state is actually more active (in civil rights issues, immigration, crime-prevention) than it used to be. These facts are often overlooked in new democracies, and one sided propaganda on European integration also enforces the false image that the state is not important in policies.¹⁴ Also, it is overlooked that state institutions can and provide efficient mechanisms of democratic control.

2./ European integration. An interpretation

For potential new entrants it is crucial to understand what is going on on the European scene. And this is not as simple as to find out the answers to pure economic questions, but political processes, policy style, negotiating capacities and issues of governance in general indicate the perspectives and challenges East Central European countries are going to face. All the more because it seems that the past decade brought about at least as dramatic changes in broad European integration as in the new democracies.

The way we talk about Europe now, is not a historically given legacy. For hundreds of years Europe was not at all a reality, then it became one only to disappear or at least hide her face, and now emerge again but showing some disturbing characteristics and features. Paradoxically, the birth of Europe went in parallel with the growth of the nation-state, and Bismarck's saying notifying Europe as a simple 'geographical notion' had some justification in the given time and space. In the same track, but with an entirely different inclination and intention, Jean Monnet, one of the fathers of European integration could have said 'Europe has never existed, one has genuinely to create Europe'¹⁵.

In the understanding of EU the intergovernmental approach prevailed for a long time. According to this approach the states are responsible for the institutional changes in the EU, and also states are motivated solely by national interests.

As opposed to intergovernmentalism so called neofunctionalism asserts that the state is dependent on different actors, either domestic or transnational, and consequently sees EU institution-building as the outcome of the interplay of these diverse functional actors. More recently, the literature in this respect emphasizes the impact of transnational interest groups and constitutional decisions. Both approaches are identical, however, in neglecting the importance of ideas in the formation of the EU.¹⁶

Throughout the '50s, '60s and '70s European integration served political and economic aims and words like 'Euro-polity' (meaning or assuming the existence of a European political system as such) or Euro-demos (meaning a European public) were unknown.

¹⁴ for a West European interpretation see Wolfgang C. Müller-Vincent Wright, 'Reshaping the State in Western Europe' in: Müller-Wright eds. *The State in Western Europe. Retreat or Redefinition*. Frank Cass, 1994. 1-11.pp)

¹⁵ Norman Davies, *Europe*. 1998. HarperPerennial, p. 10

¹⁶ this latter statement comes from Markus Jachtenfuchs, Thomas Diez, Sabine Jung 'Ideas and Integration. Conflicting Models of a Legitimate European Political Order' Manuscript, 1997. August

The original idea of making Europe¹⁷ was pure functionalism - transferring a growing number of functions from the national to European level. Then, under the leadership of Jacques Delors, a Euro-fundamentalist, as his opponents called him, the reality of integration has changed: first the Single European Act in 1987 and then the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 brought about new institutional solutions as well as a new way of thinking among large groups of the political class about Europe. These institutional changes can be described as attempts to build up a real Euro-polity in place of 'l'Europe des patries', as originally envisaged by DeGaulle and advocated by some member-states as well..

The SEA virtually abolished the barriers before trade and mobility thus creating a single market, which paved the way for further integration, making it both necessary and possible. Then at Maastricht, the Union was agreed upon, with common foreign and security policy, with common citizenship, and economic and monetary union. At Maastricht, however, and this should be mentioned here, there was no word about enlargement - deepening was given a preference, according to Delors' own argument: deepen first, enlarge later.

As the previous description illustrates, European changes have become more concrete and also more institution-oriented. Why is it so?

First of all, in parallel with growing complexities the old 'European spirit' or the common value assumptions of the EU-elite diminished. Indeed, some commentators argue that new institutional solutions (how to establish the democratic authority of the Commission or to increase the authority of the European Parliament etc.) are sought in face of diminishing common values which are replaced in the hope to stabilize the European Union via institutional solutions.¹⁸

The other reason for the institutional focus could be that the institutional framework of the EU (its bureaucratic-administrative apparatuses and working mechanisms) has reached its boundaries. Are they effective? Are they acceptable for the public? This is exactly what the democratic deficit debate covers. This democratic deficit appears on three levels: between institutions of the EU itself (that is between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council), between EU institutions and national institutions (this mainly concerned the European Parliament and the national parliaments) and finally between Europe and its citizens, that is how representation and control can be achieved. In spite of the changes (for example a

¹⁷ for the sake of easiness the term European Union will be used for the entire period, although the word is justified only after Maastricht

¹⁸ Jack Hayward 'Has European Unification by Stealth a Future?' in: J. Hayward ed. *Elitism...*1996. 252-257 pp.

growing role provided to the European Parliament in relation to Commission, or forums of discussion between the national parliaments and the European Parliament etc.) the questions regarding efficiency and democracy (in term of representation and scrutiny) remain open. The challenge is clear in both respects. We are at a turning point, but indeed the nature of the turn is unclear.

In addition to these two internal factors two external factors should also be mentioned: global competition, as it was discussed above, which enforced the European Union to implement new target, and -at least at the time of the preparation of the Maastricht Treaty - the collapse of communism. We shall return to this point later, but obviously the fears from immediate external pressures at a time when the 'new government' of the Union is not ready, filled the Euro-elite with uncertainty.

Under these internal and external pressures while building a potential Euro-polity, a new understanding of government and state became the two main issues. In the following, first I seek to demonstrate how possibly unfinished, probably cyclical and not linear these developments are, and second my more positive intention is to see how Central Europe can benefit from and what it is supposed to adopt in the integration process.

As the argument goes, the politics or government of the EU is becoming less important while governance is gathering ground. By governance, the literature means that thousands of new actors do emerge on the European political scene, and the interaction of these functionally or territorially aggregated interests, their influence on the Euro-institutions together with the European, national and subnational focus of these organizations and decisions provides a complexity which gives the basis of a first of all regulatory and distributive public policy (as opposed to constitutive public policies or politically constituted public policies).¹⁹

Talk about governance cannot hide the fact, however, that the government of the EU has not settled, that is the connection between large institutions are still unclear. For example, it is telling that the 1996-1997 intergovernmental conference and then the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 could not make decisions in some very important areas (the size of the Commission, changes in the distribution of votes in the Council, the definition of issues requiring majority vote). This is a clear sign that enlargement raises serious organizational-institutional problems.

The emphasis on governance will not necessarily solve the uncertainties and deficits in the realm of politics, for example the lack of clear authority lines. Doubts about the real values of governance as opposed to government might emerge in concrete and in more general terms alike. For example, there is no proof at all (indeed, the opposite is proven) that on the European scene the European interest groups or organizations replace national interest groups. Moreover, the connections between diverse groups and the EU institutions are less stable, and more uncertain than representation forms on the national level.²⁰

This implies lack of control as well. It took centuries to establish and develop efficient scrutiny techniques within the framework of liberal democracy on the level of the nation state. In contrast, many agree now that decision-making procedures in the European Union are more opaque, and rules are unclear. For new entrants these unclear rules of the game might develop into serious obstacles.

This ambiguity about the value or the contents of governance can be demonstrated by the fact that large groups within the EU countries could not at all identify themselves with this new face of Europe: for example, electoral turnout at EU elections is constantly on the decrease, or national party politics is not structured regarding the connections to the EU (with the possible exception of Denmark where the division is obvious even for an outsider).

3./ The state of affairs - economic realities, political concerns

The European polity is at the crossroads. From this perspective, what the European Union needs the least is new entrants. Functional, organizational, institutional difficulties support this viewpoint. On the other hand, the EU cannot do anything else but accept the enlargement, and slow it down until its own internal developments become settled. But why to accept the enlargement at all?

The collapse of communism enforced further integration - for several reasons. Sometimes it is put bluntly that this might be the only way for the present EU to defend itself

¹⁹ among several others see: Schmitter, Ph. C. : Some alternative futures for the European polity and their implications for European public policy. in: Meny-Muller-Quermonne eds. *Adjusting to Europe* Routledge,1996. 25-40 pp.

²⁰ Meny-Muller-Quermonne, 'Introduction' in :as above 1-22 pp

from immigration influx, the primary reason of which is different levels of economic development between the two parts of Europe. The end of communism raised issues on European identity altogether. What is Europe? For some, Europe became equal with the European Union, and European identity was reinforced in face of the ethnic and religious 'threats' and dangers from the East (the post-communist countries) and the South (Muslim Africa).²¹

Enlargement would give a possibility to get new markets and increase the economic potentials for Western countries in Eastern Europe. In some comments this even gets a global dimension '...the successful integration of Eastern Europe can be regarded an absolutely necessary precondition for the success of the European Union in global competition.'²² While both remarks deserve attention, in face of current figures they might be too optimistic. First, the economic potentials of Eastern Europe as compared to the EU warn us against taking this too seriously. 'In 1996, the economic performance of the 5 new potential members was only 6.1% of the EU GDP at purchasing power parity. If the GDP is counted at current exchange rates, the figure is less than half this.'(43). And in 1996 about 65-70% of all trade of the five potential entrants was realized with the EU anyway. And second, enlargement in terms of globalization (or in the competition in global terms, a controversy in itself) might only matter when the big countries (first of all Russia and Ukraine) are consolidated and able to enter trade in a sensible way.

The history of the enlargement process concerning post-communist countries is widely known. The EU signed Europe Agreements (or association agreements) with 10 post-communist countries (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia). Subsequently, the European Council Copenhagen meeting decided that associated members could ask accession if they fulfill the requirements. All of the above countries applied, but the intergovernmental conference invited only 5 countries to start negotiations with.

The process is slow, and will remain so. The reason lies not with Central Europe but with the present state of the EU itself - as the argument tried to prove above. Nevertheless, different requirements are formulated towards these countries

²¹ for a critique see Adam Burgess 'European Identity and the Challenge from South and East' in: Ulf Hedetoft ed. *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics*, as above 209-225 pp

Stability of the new entrants is a requirement, we often hear. Stability in the sense of national stability, democratic stability and also in economic performance. But how far can be this argument justified? No one would doubt that the first five potential entrants are not stable in their national identities. Similarly, it is doubtful that reference to stable democracy makes any real sense. We all know (at least this is what we can read from Freedom House reports) that these countries have an impressive 1.5 index (out of the worst 7) on political rights and civil liberties.

At the same time, enlargement is not an economic issue either. If we look at figures, we can see, how -unhappily - insignificant these countries's economic performance is in comparison to the EU member-states. Politicians from East Central Europe are often proud to mention that in these countries direct investments in relation to the GDP are higher than in Austria both in terms of new investments and overall investments. In Hungary, for example, which attracts most foreign capital, foreign investment is three to four times higher than in Austria. But, if we compare foreign investments not to GDP but per capita, it turns out that new investments in Austria amount to US \$ 470 per capita, total investments come to US \$ 2.265 per capita - a rate to three to four times higher than those of the five new members.²³

One must also note that some ambiguity prevails within the EU itself regarding the enlargement process. It was not the task of this research project to reveal these ambiguities and different strategies of the member states in this respect, so it is suffice to mention that a survey among the Members of the European Parliament in 1996 showed that 72.6% of MEPs maintained the view that Poland should join the EU at least within the next 10 years, and the same figure was 80.2% both with respect to the Czech Republic and Hungary. Huge variations prevail, however, among the different member-states. For example, neighbouring Austrians think more positively about Hungarian entry within the next ten years (approval rate is 89%), but a generally more cautious attitude prevails towards the neighbouring Czech Republic and Poland (78% and 69 % respectively).²⁴

Despite the previous critical views, the message of the integration process is very positive in several prosepcts, and certainly so for East Central European countries.

Its largest achievement is that for more than 50 years there has been no war on the continent between states. In addition, the EU has placed size in a different context. What for

²² Stankovsky- Plasser - Ulram, On the Eve of EU Enlargement. Wien: SignumVerlag, 1998:98. p.

²³ Stankovsky et als. as above: 47 p.

long was for example a phobia of smallness in Hungary is changing into an understanding that size does not matter that much or if it does, small might be more beautiful. Certainly it is more beautiful if we think about the bargaining or voting potentials of smaller countries in the new Europe. It is a fact that in the Council their strength has been growing. This issue about war and size would necessarily lead us back to the differences between globalization and European integration: globalization serves the large the most, while integration not necessarily does so. Integration will stabilize peace while stability is a prerequisite of successful globalization, and globalization does not seem to solve the problems and conflicts on the global level. Another advantage of the integration that the mythology of the nation-state was challenged. This is all the more important because this has always been a sensitive issue in Central and Eastern Europe.

here is a lot to learn in the Europeanization or integration process. These lessons can be mainly connected to how democracy is understood, and what qualifications it gets. The post-communist countries are short of horizontal accountability and extended accountability structures, the two features that recently receive much attention in writings about third wave democracies. Both structures would imply patterns and processes that exceed pure electoral democracy frameworks. They mean accountability between large governmental institutions (that is constraints on government by parliament or by other large institutions in addition to vertical accountability, that is by the electorate) on the one hand and a whole network of representative linkages exceeding representation built on sheer party lines on the other.²⁵

The new entrants need to learn new policy styles techniques of cooperation within the EU (the increase in the number of the member-states decreases the voting strength of the individual countries in the Council of Ministers, as it was mentioned already, that is coalitions and blocks acquire significance - although a diminishing role of regional blocks according to data and figures, but probably in the beginning the post-communist block will work that way. They must learn to distinguish between government and governance, which would simply translate as to be less concerned about political conflicts than about doing good policies; This is even so if I think that the distinction between the two is somewhat exaggerated on the EU level, as I tried to prove. In parallel with this a more multi-actor politics should develop in new

²⁴ Wessels, Bernhard, Members of the European Parliament: Motivations, Role Orientations and Attitudes Towards Enlargement of the European Union. Budapest Papers on Democratic Transition 1997/213

democracies. It is a commonplace in political science literature that initially only a few actors participated on the scene (large government institutions and parties, basically); in the process of democratization and learning Europe the mezo-sphere of politics should be filled, and first of all should be allowed to be filled. The political class should learn a lot, maybe more than the general public. 'Perhaps no form of government needs great leaders as much as democracy does.'²⁶

On the other hand for the new entrants the adjustment process will be more difficult than it had been for the original members. First of all they are facing a EU in flux while - despite consolidation - in some areas the transformation (social provisions, the nature of state distributive systems etc.) has not at all been finished in these democracies. It is not surprising that an ambiguity prevails toward the EU. Tables 1 and 2 show that large groups of citizens in these countries have ambiguous feelings towards the European Union. A constantly decreasing number of Czechs and Hungarians feel positively about the EU while the pattern is different in Poland, where there is increase among those who feel positively. Poland is generally different in other attitudinal aspects as well. One reason might be that Poland was able to manage its post-transition economic difficulties the most successfully, and positive achievements are clearcut. In contrast, the Czech Republic has been facing difficulties particularly in the past 3 years, and the Hungarian situation can be characterized by ups and downs with an obvious dissatisfaction of large societal groups. Thus, we can argue that positive attitudes and orientations (rooted partially but not exclusively in economic achievements) contribute to a more advantageous evaluation of the EU as well.

In addition to attitudes potential referendum behaviour is reflected in Table 2. Attitudes, as it is well-known are not automatically converted to electoral/referendum behaviour. While the Czechs follow their hesitation the most, Hungarians would pragmatically vote for EU entry in larger numbers, and the Poles - in spite their positive attitudes in face of the fact that it will be particularly difficult for the Polish agriculture to handle the entry - show some decrease, although still a substantial majority, in their prospective referendum behaviour. The evaluation of Immerfall and Sobisch about the Czech Republic seems valid about the other two countries as well. They argue that there have been three periods in the development of the attitudes toward the EU: an idealization phase, then the development of a more realistic

²⁵ See particularly Larry Diamond, *The end of the third Wave and the global future of democracy*. Wien: Institute fur Hohere Studien No. 56. 1997.

²⁶ Lord Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*. 1959:432. id. Sartori: *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*. Chatham House, 1987:163

picture after the association agreements were signed and currently we can witness the „rule of falling abstractions”.²⁷

Europe or belonging to Europe is not at all issue, that is it is not questioned, however. Virtually, this - that is the European identity - is a self-reflection of the majority of the population - as well as that of the elites. Table 3 also shows that large groups of citizens think that their country's future is most closely tied to the European Union. As a national variant, Russia appeared in the Polish responses, while Germany (spontaneously) mostly in the Hungarian responses.

In this self-reflection, although Europe is the reference point, European integration is full of questions or doubts. Political leadership mainly focuses on the practical side of the process: the EU should be 'liked' for the regional funds and the cohesion funds. Of course this is part of the truth. But there is less talk on how the democratic potential can be increased or how as a result of the integration identities (including national identities) can be reconstituted and get new meanings. It is difficult to tell whether something really new will develop, a new quality of the integration will eventually settle on the European level. or the project will eventually diminish and fail. The project might fail for two reasons at least: either because the unsuccessful competition of Europe in the globalization game, or because of internal, institutional shortcomings, embodied first of all in the lack of legitimacy. Thus, in order to succeed it seems essential to establish a genuine European polity. Nevertheless I cannot agree with those who argue that Europe and the European identity can only be constituted politically, and cannot be constituted culturally or based on tradition.²⁸ It is exactly the challenge of globalization that might contribute to a more substantial cultural identification in Europe. Consequently we can argue that although the game of European integration is not over, it will be under the impact of both globalization and national developments.

²⁷ Immerfal, S. - A. Sobisch, Europäische Integration und europäische Identität. Die Europäische Union im Bewusstsein ihrer Bürger. Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, B 10/97 :28 quoted in Z. Mansfeldova - L. Brokl 'Public Opinion and Parliamentary Political Parties Attitudes in the Czech republic towards the EU Membership in: The Role of the Central European Parliaments in the Process of European Integration. Conference proceeding 1997. September Prague

²⁸ Gerard Delanty 'Redefining Political Culture in Europe Today: from ideology to the politics of identity and beyond' in: Ulf Hedetoft ed. as above 24-43 pp.

II. Constitutional and Political Environment

It is necessary to introduce the general institutional - as opposed to the approach of the previous chapter that is theoretical and political cultural - environment because it has an impact on how the European dimension is being handled. First of all, the constitutional framework provides the opportunities or bottlenecks with respect to democracy and the general working of the system; secondly, party and follow-up government strategies obviously determine political decisions in this respect; and finally, the electoral changes and cycles reveal public preferences and directions of change.

Thus, in the second chapter I will first focus on the constitutional, then on the party and finally on the electoral dimension. We shall see that these will influence the European developments a lot.

In accordance with the above mentioned intentions first the broad constitutional framework will be examined. This will provide an insight on how are the connections between the major institutions 'ideally' defined. Then, on a more concrete level, the political background of the constitutional developments will be presented so that through the political context we understand the logic and behaviour of actors. Finally, all the actors will be introduced that have had an impact on legislative performance. We shall see that the very similar constitutional frameworks and even the relatively similar political configurations might produce different outcomes, although in advance I can argue that these three countries have become more similar to each other in the past decade.

1./ Constitutional framework

Constitutionally speaking the countries covered are not particularly specific about integration. A recent and only exception is Poland, where the new (1997) constitution includes a paragraph that makes a voluntary transfer of sovereignty to an international organization possible. The other two countries do not handle sovereignty issues on the constitutional level at all.

Studying the constitutions our major concern is the relationship between parliament, executive and president. Thus in this way we can examine the relative strength of parliament, which has been the major concern of the research project. In advance we can argue that the significance of parliaments has been transformed, and as a result, their importance in Europeanization or integration process has been transformed. We shall look into this process

in details. It is a general understanding that '...the new East European Constitutions tend to favour parliament more than other recent European constitutions.'²⁹ One reason lies in the fact that in the bargaining process of institution making the constituent assemblies involved - quite understandably - favoured their 'own' prospective institution. This is at least the case in the Czech Republic and in Poland, while in Hungary constitutional changes were made by the last communist legislature built on agreements by the old and new elites. The 'respectable' position of legislatures is also due to the general assumption at that time prevalent among the new political elites that a real democracy should be related to people's sovereignty, embedded in parliamentary sovereignty. These stipulations, which then became formulated in the new institutions, while naturally became modified under daily pressures and policy making needs, at least initially provided a framework in which powers were assumed to reside in parliament with respect to legislation. One must add that this was the assumption among the public and the first group of parliamentary elites as well, because the newcomer amateurs in the parliamentary arena also cherished the view that they were independent of party and other political interests and first of all had to perform a mission in this respect. It is not hard to tell that these original assumptions (both the institutional and the personal or public ones) began to change soon but at least initially the role of parliament was highly esteemed, including its functions in legislation and legislative agenda setting.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic's Constitution was accepted on December 16, 1992 under very peculiar circumstances, which had an impact on the relationship between parliament and the executive. At that time the 'old' Czechoslovakia still existed but after the elections in June 1992 when in the two constituent republics of the country diverse political trends gathered ground it became obvious that the split would be in the interest if not the people (who were never asked in a referendum) but of the political elites - although for different reasons (the attraction of the nation-state in one case and speeding up the Europeanization of the economy and the polity in the other). Since Slovakia produced its own constitution some months earlier, in a way Czech developments were belated.

The Czech constitution preserved the bicameral legislature of Czechoslovakia, causing debate and controversy ever since. Some argue that the second chamber was kept only for

²⁹ Elster, John 'The Role of Institutional Interests in East European Constitution-Making' East European Constitutional Review 1996 Winter

practical reasons: because the 1992 elections were held on a bicameral basis in the then federal state. Due to this institutional inertia the new constitution ruled that a Temporary Senate would sit until a properly elected Senate came into existence according to the regulations of the constitution - to be specified later by law. Legislation would be a combined job of the two chambers, and the Chamber of Deputies can only override the Senate's proposition with an absolute majority vote of all its members. More importantly, the Senate fulfils legislative tasks in case the Chamber of Deputies is dissolved (excluding matters regarding the constitutions, state budget, electoral law and international treaties). Eventually, the Senate was only elected in November 1996, a fact that had major consequences on legislative agenda setting and the powers of the main actors.

The Chamber of Representatives (lower house) consists of 200 members elected by a proportional list system while the Senate consists of 81 members elected for 6 years with one-third of the members elected by a majority system in every second year. According to the constitution the President is elected by the joint sessions of the two chambers (with an absolute majority of all members) and similarly to presidents in other parliamentary regimes he has several honorary duties (representing the state internally and also in foreign relations) in addition to some more concrete functions (commander in chief of the armed forces, has a right to initiate legislation and veto legislation, convene and dissolve parliament and nominate persons to several important positions). In legislation the President may return a bill to the Chamber of Deputies - with the exception of a constitutional act - within 15 days and the Chamber can override it with a new vote by the majority of all deputies. In addition to parliament and President the Constitutional Court has important legislative authority. Its members are nominated for 15 years by the President with the agreement of the Senate. If the CC find a law 'unconstitutional' that is running against the principles of the constitution, that law should not be implemented and there is no power to override this decision.

Hungary

The Constitution of Hungary also outlines a parliamentary system of government. We shall see that in addition to the seemingly minor 'constitutional differences' several variations do occur. The Hungarian Constitution is still not the kind of new text that was produced in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia in 1992. Formally, it is rather a radical amendment of the 1949 Stalinist constitution enacted first in 1989 with some later additional regulations acquiring constitutional importance. Although the new government after the second free elections in

1994 promised an entirely new constitution during its term (what's more, on a consensual basis that is with the agreement of all the parliamentary parties) the new constitution was not accepted.

Hungary is one of the few post-communist countries that established a unicameral legislature. The 386-member parliament is elected by a mixed electoral system combining list and single-member constituency elements with a tendency towards majoritarianism. The President is elected by a vote in parliament for five years and although he is entitled to propose legislation and send back legislation to parliament (or have it considered by the Constitutional Court for constitutional reasons) similarly to his Czech counterpart, there are no override regulations, that is a rejected law may be passed by the House under similar regulations than before. The members of the Constitutional Court are elected by the Parliament for 9 years following previous discussions by a special commission comprising delegates from each parliamentary party group. The CC has substantial rights to reconsider each legislation referred to it by any citizen or organization (of course including the President, the Prime Minister, parliament etc.) and its decisions are binding. A most peculiar constitutional provision (which eventually got into the text concluding from an agreement between the two largest parties after the first democratic election in 1990) is the constructive no confidence vote. This cements the sitting government in power because the government can only be removed if parliament agrees upon the new Prime Minister in advance. In return for this stability measure, the opposition party's presidential candidate was accepted for the post, and for the sake of easier governance the number of laws that require a 2/3rd majority vote was substantially decreased as compared to the original constitution.

In addition to the constructive confidence motion the relative weakness of the parliament is reflected in the fact that the prime minister and the government programme are accepted by parliament at the same time, and lack of ministerial responsibility (ministers are only responsible to the prime minister but not to parliament).

Poland

The most recent Polish Constitution was accepted by the National Assembly (a combined sitting of the Sejm and the Senate) in April 1997 and then confirmed by a referendum in May. This constitution has introduced some changes as compared to the previous one, the Little Constitution, as it was called.

The Little Constitution came into force in 1992 after several amendments were made

to the 1952 Stalinist one, and relied heavily on the agreements that had been hammered out at the round table discussions in 1989. For example, the Senate was reestablished, that is a bicameral legislature was formed, similarly to the pre-communist period. The Little Constitution as an admittedly temporary document only regulated the most important elements. First of all the directly elected presidency and more extended presidential rights made the Polish system different from the Czech and Hungarian cases. For example, the Polish President was entitled to nominate three ministers of government (home affairs, foreign affairs and defence) due to an interpretation of the constitution which said that these three areas belong to the special authority of the President. On these grounds and on the activist approach of the President himself Poland was considered as a mixed case between pure parliamentary and pure presidential systems. The Sejm, however, can override the Presidential veto on legislation with a two-thirds majority. Otherwise he can block or delay legislation by conferring bills to the Constitutional Tribunal, which is different in its entitlements from its Hungarian and Czech counterparts, where decisions of the Constitutional Courts are binding. In contrast, in Poland parliament can override the decisions of the Constitutional Tribunal by a 2/3rd majority. This somewhat ambiguous situation is explicable by the fact that while the CCs in Hungary and the Czech Republic were the offsprings of the democratic transition, in Poland the Constitutional Tribunal was reinstated in 1986 as a demonstrative action in the communist period as a concession to democratic demands. Again in contrast to the Czech and Hungarian regulations, ministerial responsibility was defined in the Little Constitution as opposed to the prime ministerial or collective responsibility of the entire cabinet.

The legislative branch consists of two chambers: the Sejm is composed of 460 deputies and the Senate of 100 Senators. They are closely tied in time, that is they commence activities and end activities together. The new constitution curtails presidential powers: he cannot nominate particular ministers but will install changes in the cabinet at the request of the prime minister or as a result of intra-parliamentary developments (e.g. no confidence motions against ministers). The directions of changes, that is curtailed presidential powers, increasing prime ministerial powers and more balanced parliamentary authority became manifest in the new Constitution. The new Constitution rules only about the constructive confidence vote.

This introduction suggests that the legislative scene, as far as the constitutional actors are concerned seems the most complex in Poland, followed by the Czech and then by the Hungarian case: existing bicameralism during the entire period (in contrast to the only virtual bicameralism on the Czech and unicameralism on the Hungarian scene), a specially placed president and individual minister's responsibility to parliament are important factors in this

respect.

We can briefly conclude that in contrast to the original assumption about strong parliaments (and occasionally even stronger presidents) faded away and gradually or by enacting new Constitutions parliaments weakened and governments gathered strength. The consequence of this development on the European integration process is - as we shall see in more details - that parliaments seem to be losers in establishing control and initiator functions in this field with respect to government. We shall also see, however, that the three countries have not been identical and that their developments in this field have not followed automatically the government cycles. The examination of the political setting will reveal the differences.

2./ The Political Setting

Czech Republic

Politically speaking, the Czech political developments can be divided into three periods up to now, one from 1992 to 1996, and another from 1996 up to 1998, and since then we are in a third period. As a result of the 1992 elections the Civic Democratic Party (CDP), the Civic Democratic Alliance (CDA) and the Christian Democratic Union-People's Party (CDU-PP) formed a government with a centre-right political programme. The stability of the coalition was unchallenged (having 105 seats from the 200) .

The Prime Minister, and leader of the largest party, the CDP held a firm grip on his party and coalition partners and, by different measures, on parliament as well. He advocated Thatcherite slogans but policies were far from extensive reforms as it apparently turned out by 1995 when good economic indicators began to deteriorate. Neo-conservative wording only prevailed in social and political terms. This partly explains why the relationship between the Prime Minister and President Havel has never been cloudless. The President always made his opinion explicit in matters of social justice, human rights and general freedoms.

The elections in 1996 May-June demonstrated some of the controversies: although the CDP preserved its position as the largest party (with 68 seats) the governing coalition finished one seat short of the majority- that is 99 seats. Even this result made Prime Minister Klaus somewhat exceptional among the ex-communist countries being the only leader whose party gained twice in a row. In all the other countries there were substantial political and

government changes, with our other two country examples among them. Although the socialdemocrats (CSDP) with 61 seats became the second largest party showing that the left has gained ground the centre-right old coalition formed government again. The minority coalition's government programme was not voted down in a confidence vote only because the opposition socialdemocrats accepted President Havel's appeal to tolerate the coalition otherwise the Republican Party's (RP) radical nationalists and racists gather ground.

Under some strange but from the coalition's perspective fortunate circumstances the minority soon became a majority: in December 1996 two members were expelled from the socialdemocrat ranks because they voted in favour of the government's budget bill and then they joined the governing CDP. The coalition - at least temporarily - was strengthened politically when in November 1996 at the Senate elections their parties got a majority in the Senate. With this event the parliamentary government in the Czech Republic, after some four years' delay was reestablished.

Nevertheless, the government was unsuccessful in moving away from the social-liberal compromise made in the first years of systemic change, and also an increasing number of scandals in banking, corruption cases and party finances made its position unworkable. Prime Minister Klaus had to resign, and was replaced by Josef Tosovsky, the chairman of the Czech National Bank. Early elections had to follow in 1998. Surprisingly, the CDP was able to regain most of its followers despite the scandals but the Social Democrats won a relative majority with 74 seats. They formed a minority government but also signed a so called opposition agreement with the CDP. With this the government received possibilities that - as we shall see in the following part - had an impact on the potential role and functions of parliament regarding the accession process. Table 4 shows the above developments.

Hungary

In Hungary, the political scene provides many paradoxes. First of all, it is Hungary where party formation was possibly the fastest and one could not witness as spectacular and early disintegrations and changes as the Civic Forum's case in the Czech example or Solidarity in the Polish case demonstrate. Consequently, concluding from the three elections in 1990 and 1994 and 1998 almost the same six parties got into parliament, with some minor changes (instead of the Christian Democrats, the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life got into parliament in 1998). The other side of the paradox is that in the first term a centre right coalition with 3 parties, in the second term a centre left coalition with the socialists (Hungarian

Socialist Party) and the liberals (Alliance of Free Democrats) was formed, while in the third term a conservative government is in power again, but the senior member of the present coalition is different, namely the Alliance of Young Democrats- Hungarian People's Party. Extra-parliamentary parties or forces could never challenge this framework, although intra-parliamentarily both in the first and in the second term there was one substantial party split - both affecting the largest party and movement party of the transition, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF).

In addition to these changes, the elasticity of parliamentary party groups was obvious. This can be demonstrated by the fact that 13% of all members changed their parliamentary benches in the first term. While this was a natural phenomenon in Poland and the Czech Republic as well - due to the weak institutionalization of the parties - in Hungary it was also closely related and was in harmony with the intentions of the framers of systemic change, who wanted parliament to have a large share in the formation of policies. Parliamentary activism was supported by the independent professionals who got into the first democratic parliament in large numbers. See Table 5 about these changes.

Poland

The instabilities of the party system make the Polish political landscape - with some euphemism - more flexible than the other two cases. In Poland extra-parliamentary contenders have always been present. For example, elections in the Autumn of 1997 changed the entire parliamentary scene giving a chance (beside the parties of the sitting left coalition) to extra-parliamentary groupings. Some parties behave as a combination of interest groups, others like genuine parties.

Up to now the Polish political and parliamentary cycle have proceeded in three terms (1991-1993, 1993-1997, 1997 to present). The first fully democratic elections were held only in 1991 October and on a strictly proportional basis. As a result, parliament became fragmented - including 18 parliamentary party groups - fragmentation growing further during the term due to the uncrystallised character of the party framework. The centre-right Democratic Union was the largest party group but several post-Solidarity fractions became also important. The government coalition was often in trouble because of the fragmentation, moreover it had to face the challenges of President Walesa (elected by popular vote in the Autumn of 1990) who, without a proper presidential party in the Sej

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Although the President's relationship with the new Prime Minister was better he dissolved parliament and called new elections in 1993 after the government failed to win a confidence vote.

Thanks to the changes in the electoral system, the 1993 elections produced a more straightforward political setting. The post-communist Democratic Left Alliance (DLA) and the Polish Peasant Party formed a coalition with a stable majority (303 from 460 seats). The loser Democratic Union was transformed into Freedom Union. The left coalition in power had at least as many conflicts with the President as its predecessors. Strangely enough, an agreement between the President and the DLA made it possible to remove the first Prime Minister, who was a Polish Peasant Party politician (it happens only rarely that the smaller coalition party gives the Prime Minister). Conflicts arose, similarly to the Czech Republic and Hungary on privatization, social policy, and lustration issues in addition to constitution-making.

The political scene became more homogeneous when in the 1995 presidential elections the candidate of the left DLA won. Nevertheless, President Kwasniewski in the new post soon forgot what as a party politician had advocated and -although tensions have not been as fierce as at the time of President Walesa - conflicts regarding policies and constitutional rights evolved. After the 1997 elections, however, a centre-right coalition got into power with Electoral Action Solidarity as the dominant force, and with this a cohabitation period began, in which the president time and again uses his veto power. (See table 6 about these changes)

This broader evaluation has revealed the constitutional provisions and political opportunities, which in return determine the role and behaviour of political actors in the accession process. It seems that after an initial phase - when parliaments seemed stronger - the role of executives has grown in each country. Members of Parliaments' role was initially determined by the expectations of the new elites and the professional background of the members, particularly in the first cycle. Individual independence and personal freedom were considered to be of high value. Moreover, the first group of members were mainly intellectuals, coming from the social and human sciences. Changes have been obvious already in the second legislative term: one-term amateurs were replaced either by politicians closely related to the party hierarchy and/or by more practically educated MPs. This tendency has continued in the third parliamentary periods.

Liebert and Cotta³⁰ introduced the notion that despite propositions regarding the

³⁰ Liebert, U. - Cotta, M., *Parliament and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe*. Pinter, London, 1990.

decline of parliaments, parliaments had a central role in Southern European democratization processes. Their proposition proves to be valid with respect to East Central Europe as well. Although for different reasons but in all the three countries parliaments had a significant role in systemic change, and then in policy-making in the first phase. Initially, activist assumptions prevailed about parliaments including individual members. More recently, parliamentary party groups dominate the parliamentary arena while committees attempt to broaden their activities. In the final count, however, the executives dominate parliaments. This simple statement can be demonstrated by diverse references. For example, in Hungary plenary sessions in third term are only held every third week (in contrast to the weekly sessions previously), or in Poland the first government initiative after the 1997 elections was to change the Standing orders in favour of government, namely the Speaker got the authority to establish his own order of the plenary sessions and the committees cannot question ministers before a vote of confidence etc. The strengthening of executives is reflected on the possibilities of parliaments in influencing the EU-developments as well.

It has been often argued that centralized and strong executive power is essential to perform those vast changes that are required for systemic change. Indeed, procedures and frameworks were often subordinated to this demand. The question whether to conduct politics on a consensual or a majoritarian way has been obviously raised in these countries. The choice between the majority principle and the consensus principle has become concrete reality in the legislative setting. These choices then do not only have an impact on legislation itself but will establish tradition in the broadest sense of the term.

In the Czech Republic, for long, the majority principle prevailed - thanks to the Prime Minister's intention who was not seriously challenged (due to lack of Senate, Standing Orders, strong opposition parties, and with faint committees and parliamentary party groups). As of now, paradoxically, although in a minority government environment still a majoritarian principle prevails due to the opposition agreement mentioned above. In Hungary, the majority principle was also strong initially, although the well institutionalized framework did not let it develop to the degree as in the Czech Republic. Gradually, however, strong consensual momentums developed in the Hungarian case: from the agreements regarding intra-parliamentary posts and positions to minority reports in committees (the latter introduced after the modification of the Standing Orders in 1994). Particularly in the second term, conscious efforts were made to develop consensus in several areas, but lack of efficiency still forced the government to step back in some areas. More recently, in the third term, the government openly advocates majoritarianism, however. In Poland, due to the larger number of actors in the legislative

process bargaining among them has been more common, that is actors are forced to find ways and means to achieve consensus. In the Polish case still the relative instability of the electoral linkage might hinder consensual developments, similarly to strong prime ministerial powers.

Finally, with respect to the direction of changes in the wider political framework party system changes are important. In each country there is a tendency to move away from polarized pluralism to a system where two major political directions dominate the scene. This does not imply a two-party system - indeed, there are more than two parties in each country and coalition-like party formats are popular. Nevertheless, everywhere a strong left party and a conservative party dominate the scene with a decreasing number and decreasing significance of other parties.

On this background in the following section we shall examine the attitudes and responses of parliamentary elites and parliaments themselves to the accession process.

III. Elite Views and Institutional Responses to the Accession

The findings of the previous description will assert the view that the role of the national parliaments in the accession process largely depend on the position of the parliament in the given national polity, that is a greater potential influence can be expected in active parliaments where organisational or compositional features allow the opposition a role in the policy-making process.³¹

Virtually this is just another way of repeating the old finding that committees (in this case committees dealing with EU issues) are generally stronger when party government is weaker.³² In the first part of this section it will be introduced what routes the three countries followed in this respect and how are these routes connected to the changing connections between governments and parliaments, and the consolidation process in general. Secondly, the parliamentary parties', and parliamentary elites' views will be examined with respect to the European dimension.

1/ Institutional responses

A paradox in terms of the parliaments in these countries - at least in Poland and in Hungary - was that due to the circumstances of the transition parliaments initially became relatively strong institutions, on the other hand however in the consolidation process governments became stronger and did not want the parliaments to interfere too much. This is naturally true in the EU dimension as well. We shall see the ups and downs in the parliaments' functions in this respect and we shall also see the differences between the three examined countries. Without bringing the conclusion too much ahead, basically we shall find that these parliaments - eventually, and as of now - have become more similar to each other in this dimension (similarly to other dimensions), and in addition to this they could not establish a framework or a structure that would make them similar to the Finnish or the Danish cases, that is the examples where parliaments (through diverse methods) seem to be the most active regarding EU issues in the fields of government scrutiny or sometimes even legislation. For

³¹ Hans Hegeland and Ingvar Mattson 'To Have a Voice in the Matter: a Comparative Study of the Swedish and Danish European Committees' in *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 1996(2) no 3. Autumn pp. 198-215

³² Malcolm Shaw, *Committees in Legislatures. An Introduction.* in: Lees, John D. and Malcolm Shaw eds. *Committees in Legislatures: A Comparative Analysis.* Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 1979.

example, although the Speaker of the Hungarian parliament suggested in 1996 July to establish a grand committee based on the Finnish example the idea was left unresponded.

In the three parliaments plenary sessions have never dealt with European affairs. Even initially, it was only Hungary that accepted a parliamentary decision regarding the application. None of the parliaments gave a mandate to start the negotiation process. It is the committee system that most openly reveals different approaches to the integration process.

In each country joint committees were formed - since after 1993 - to keep contact with the EP. These however had only two meetings a year, and it is a widely accepted view in these countries that they were somewhat one-sided: continuity of membership, interest among the members on the EP side was very low as compared to the national delegations - so they were not rewarding enough from the potential entrants' perspective. The national parliaments' connections with the EP in the form of common joint committees is a very important means a) to help to understand the working of the EP but also b) to help MEPs to understand specific countries. Some criticism is often formulated against the EP, however. In case of Hungary there is a complete overlap between the Integration Committee in parliament and the mixed committee members, in the Polish case there is some overlap

The Hungarian Parliament and the Polish Sejm were the first parliaments in the post-communist countries that formed committees for the affairs of European integration - in both cases this happened in 1992. We shall see that the Czech case was somewhat different.

The Hungarian committee of European integration was similar in its working and competencies to the other standing committees in the Hungarian parliament. To some degree it has also reflected the characteristics and problems of parliament in general. For example, the members of the committee were highly educated but in the second term it was dominated by engineers and less by lawyers and economists than in the first term, while in the third term there are more economists in it again. Turnover rate was high between the terms (14 out of 15 were new in the committee after the 1994 elections while 18 out of 26 after the 1998 elections). During the term fluctuation was also high. Language abilities are still not on the required level, but slow improvement can be seen. Between 1994-98 32 MPs were members of the committee for some period - 8 among them did not speak foreign languages at all. In the current committee all speak at least one language and 62% (16) among them can properly communicate in a foreign language. Most often the largest (governing) party send the most

new MPs to the committee - that is the instability of the committee reflects the instability of the electoral and party framework that was discussed in the previous part of the research.

Leadership has always been important in the committee. In the second parliamentary term the opposition Fidesz leader (and current prime minister) gave a high profile to the committee, and it was not incidental that after the 1998 elections the leadership post was highly debated (the now opposition Socialists hoped to receive the post but eventually it was kept by the largest governing party).

The strength of the Hungarian committee - at least from a regional perspective - was demonstrated by the fact that it got the questionnaire that had been sent by the Commission to the Hungarian government and later the answers as well, although it did not get a role in filling the questionnaire.

The Polish committee was set up in 1992 under the name of European Agreement Committee. In addition to this the Polish Senate also established a committee to monitor EU affairs. This was the joint subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Affairs Committees (in 1993). The standing committee was to supervise the implementation of the European Agreement provisions, advising the government in the negotiations with the EU, and formulating recommendations for the government. This also implies that the committee did not have any legislative role (this is also true about the above-mentioned Hungarian integration committee although it could have had played that role - the difference being that in the second government term in the Hungarian parliament each committee had to set up an integration subcommittee with the aim to monitor each possible policy field from this perspective. We must add however, that these subcommittees did not fulfill the tasks and functions originally ascribed to them.) It was certainly true about the Polish committee that it did not investigate whether bills met the EU standards or not. The committee was not overworked as compared to other standing committees. Moreover, the leadership of the committee between 1993 and 1996 was in the hands of Eurorealists, one from the Polish Peasant Party and the other from the Christian National Union³³, which did not help it in gaining a higher profile.

After the 1997 elections the Sejm committee was strengthened, got a new name: Committee of European Integration while the Senate subcommittee was disbanded and integration affairs were placed under the auspices of the Foreign Affairs Committee, called

³³ Irena Jackiewicz: Institutions and People in Context of European Integration. The Case of Poland. Budapest Papers on Democratic Transition, 1998. No. 224.

now the Committee of Foreign and European Integration Affairs. Under the new circumstances (political and EU-wise as well) government domination has not diminished whatsoever.

The Czech Republic was different. In the Czech Republic the first real committee dealing with the affairs of European integration was established only after the 1998 elections, which indeed represented a substantial change in the political environment of the country. The lack of the significance of a European committee Hungarian or Polish style (that is with at least limited powers but with some potentials and recurring struggles to have a say in the matter) was due to the relative strength of the Czech government and the relative weakness of the parliament already in the first term from a comparative perspective and due to the general conditions of systemic change. Before the 1998 changes at least two plans had prevailed about how to „insert” the EU affairs in the committee system. According to the first, the Senate would have been solely and entirely responsible for EU affairs while the other suggested a joint committee between the two houses. In reality, the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives and the Foreign, Defence and Security Committee in the Senate had been responsible for the EU affairs. In addition to this, before 1996 there was only a so called Standing Delegation in the Czech Parliament. It functioned as a kind of subcommittee under the auspices of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Its meetings were not frequent, met only twice a year. Its members came from diverse standing committees and also reflected the distribution of the House. The Standing Delegation’s special function was that when the Joint Parliamentary Committee between national parliaments and the European Parliament was formed in the Czech Republic the Standing Delegation constituted the Czech segment of the Joint Parliamentary Committee. The low profile of the Standing Delegation can be demonstrated by the fact that for example its recommendations did not require a vote in the parliament - as opposed to ‘normal’ standing committees.³⁴

Moreover, the parliament dealt with the activities of the Standing Delegation only once a year in the form of a discussion of its annual report. The personnel composition of the Delegation is also revealing. The chairman of the Delegation was also the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, or rather put it in another way the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee monopolized the delegation’s leadership as well. A low level of personnel continuity (only three members of parliament remained members of the Delegation uninterrupted) is also a sign of low prestige.

³⁴ Michal Klima: The Role of the Standing Delegation. The Czech-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee. Budapest Papers on Democratic Transition, 1997. No. 215.

This situation somewhat changed after the 1996 elections.³⁵ First of all, chairmanship overlap disappeared between the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Standing Delegation, moreover the two chairmen even belonged to different parties. Secondly, the minority government (although later it acquired a tiny majority in the parliament, as we have seen) and other institutional and political changes did not make it possible any longer for the executive to hold such a strong grip on parliament as before. And finally, even Senators have joined the Standing Delegation (after the Senate elections were eventually held) and they seemed to strengthen its position. This period lasted until 1998, when after the elections the 'normal' Central European pattern was finally adopted in this matter.

One major conclusion is that the process of systemic change and the role of parliament in this process in the first (one or rather two) electoral - government cycles determined the role of parliaments in European integration. It seems that after consolidation (after the third democratic elections) the comparative advantage of the Hungarian, and to some extent the Polish parliament disappeared, what also had an impact on the influence of parliaments on integration affairs. More concretely, I would argue that the following stages can be distinguished in the role of parliaments in the three countries with respect to the integration process.

In the Czech Republic between 1992 and 1996 we can witness an obvious weakness (the reasons for this were clarified in the first and second parts of the essay), then between 1996-1998 new hopes were raised, the position of the committee was generally strengthened, and it seemed that parliament will have a larger say in the EU dimension as well. After 1998, however, the parliament's positions weakened again among the conditions of 'agreement majoritarianism'.

In Poland the first period lasted between 1992-1997 (we should notice that there is an overlap of electoral cycles, indicating that the political orientation of governments did not substantially transform governmental position concerning the role of parliament in the integration process). Committee leadership for some time during this period did not help to raise the profile of the committee. After 1997 up to now in the second period, tendencies are controversial: on the one hand we can witness the strengthening of the committee in addition to some new initiatives to improve the parliament's work in this area, but on the other hand there is much emphasis on government and prime ministerial powers.

³⁵ see as above

In Hungary, the three periods are 1992-1994, that is the period of early preparations, then 1994-1998 performing much activity (not only with success, of course) and since after 1998 with decreasing profile of the committee and parliament in general.

It was already mentioned that to some degree these parliaments are more similar now to each other than they had been. Now we can add that they have also become more similar to some general (broad) European pattern. Some increase in the functions in the Czech case, a somewhat diminishing role in the Hungarian case and stagnation/stability in the Polish case constitute to a general pattern. While democratization has been the behind the scene agenda in all the three countries I would argue that we can witness an institutional learning process and a process of functional clarification as well. This will not challenge the view that these countries 1) become more democratic (just to the contrary, they have managed to consolidate their democracies) or 2) that the spill-over effects of the EU contribute to these democratization process - but they will not follow the Danish model in the parliament-EU connections.

2./ Elite views and responses

In the first chapter we have seen public support results towards European integration. Data suggested decrease or stagnation in the Czech Republic and Hungary while public support does not seem to deteriorate in Poland. Public support is important since in each country, eventually, a referendum will decide about the entry (although a concrete referendum proposal was defeated in the Czech parliament at the end of 199). Currently, however, the elite views are more important, not only because the elites's views will determine the trends of events but also because the elites might influence public attitudes as well. It is a widely accepted fact and can be easily demonstrated by data that elites are more in favour of the European Union than the general public. With a few exceptions, members of parliamentary parties unequivocally advocate European integration. Internal divisions, what's more splits are difficult to identify among different political elite groups. In this respect we know most about Poland and least about the Czech political-party-parliamentary elites. Lack of knowledge or limited knowledge is mainly due to the fact that the issues of integration have not yet (or only rarely) become real issues, thus differences could not become apparent and explicit.

Differences in the attitudes towards the EU can be identified by looking at party programmes, slogans and policies. But EU-questions have only rarely appeared in these fields.

In the three countries we can find only two parties that are explicitly and vehemently anti-EU, on a national basis. It is the Republican Party in the Czech Republic and the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life in Hungary. The former could not meet the threshold in the last elections, consequently is not a parliamentary force any longer, while the latter got into parliament in 1998 just meeting the threshold. They are relatively small - although noisy- actors in national politics. The other parliamentary parties formulate their views (if at all) cautiously about the EU-future. The left-right division, which is often used in the West-European cases to explain certain parties' policies and attitudes towards the EU cannot be applied automatically in the Central European countries. For example, the Polish Peasant Party belongs to the Euro-realists group while the Hungarian Smallholders' Party is more pro-EU. Similarly, on the left Socialist parties are more pro-EU in Poland and Hungary while more Euro-realists in the Czech Republic. On the extreme edges, however, similarities prevail: the right wing Czech Republican Party and the Hungarian Party of Justice and Life were already mentioned; also on the far left, the communist -type parties are anti-Europe in each country, but they do not constitute a parliamentary force with the exception of the Czech Republic. It is an interesting phenomenon, and was found while surveying the Hungarian parliamentary elite that the members of parliament assume that politicians on the other side of the political spectrum are less in favour of the integration process and are less pro-EU. This assumption cannot at all be proven by any hard evidence. Whether the assumption is due to lack of information, lack of confidence or a general (vague) understanding of political correctness regarding the EU issues are difficult to tell. country experts interpret these developments differently.

In the background of a general acceptance of the EU entry by now it is fairly common to attempt to divide political elite groups into a more Euro-enthusiast and a more Euro-realist group. In the Polish case³⁶ the distinction was made on the grounds that by integration some mean a broad modernization process, a part of which are of course internal reforms and advocate activity on the side of Poland, while others mean a zero-sum game where the defense of Polish interests should be placed on the focus. The nature and specifically the behaviour of the two groups will be clarified only when concrete issues are at stake.

Of course, political elites do exist not only in the context of parties. They have personal identities, individual values and preferences (not to mention here the context in the realm of the meso-sphere of politics, the world of interest groups etc. which is outside the focus of our research). Concerning this individual -personal identity we must emphasize that

³⁶ Illasiewicz - Skotnicka, Powrót czy droga w nieznaną. Europejskie dylematy Polaków. Monografie i Studia, Centrum Europejskie UW, Warsaw 1997.

members of parliaments maintain that their respective country is part of Europe, that is European identity and the EU enlargement are intertwined. Nevertheless, while the former is a cultural-historical belonging, the latter is mainly an economic issue. For example, among the members of the Hungarian Parliament 68% agree that Hungary should join the European Union for economic reasons, and less than half of this proportion makes a reference to political reasons.³⁷ This is a shortcoming that often characterizes political behaviour, speeches, arguments etc. as well. The economic-centred views and behaviour of the elites - while understandable considering the economic difficulties in these countries - might become a self-destroying strategy. Since they are closely tied to economic hopes and economic success, the positive message can be quickly rubbed out in case of economic conflicts or disadvantages. Moreover, the democratic assurance is missing, which is as important (if not more important) from a Europeanization perspective as the economic necessities.

Parliamentary elites in the three countries see these countries' positions similarly in comparison to other countries. That is, when asked about the chances of different countries for entry or the time-framework of the entry they respond similarly, placing the three countries much ahead of other post-communist countries. There are some differences in the self-evaluations, however. For example the Poles (63% of MPs) see that Poland will join first, giving a smaller proportion to the Czech republic or Hungary (45% of MPs in both cases).³⁸ On the other hand, 81% of Hungarian parliamentarians think that the Czech Republic will join in the next five years, 74% think the same about Hungary, and 64% think the same about Poland. Whatever these differences, other countries' prospects are way off from this relatively positive evaluation.

Thus far we have concentrated on the parliamentary elite's views on the EU enlargement. We have to raise the issue of the Euro-capacity of the MPs themselves. Euro-capacity is most often understood in the context of national politics in general.³⁹ While this approach is legitimate we have also to put the Euro-capacity of the parliamentarians in the focus. As it was mentioned already in the previous part of this section, members - and more particularly committee members - dealing with the issues of European integration are not well prepared for this role. In each Central European parliament efforts were made to improve the Euro-capacity of MPs (organized conferences, language courses) but no systematic means yet developed. It is doubtful of course, how far MPs would and could cooperate in more

³⁷ J. Simon, *Kifelé integráció, befelé dezintegráció?* Magyarország politikai évkönyve 1998. pp 669-685

³⁸ CBOS, Warsaw, September 1997, *Integration of Poland with the European Union*

concise plans and forms because they are overloaded with different duties and obligations. In addition to this Euro-capacity means the involvement in Euro-affairs, knowledge and information on Euro-issues etc. When asked about working connections, for example 22.6% of Czech MPs reported no connection at all with parliaments of other associated countries, 61.6% reported no connection with the European Parliament, and 22% reported no connection with parliaments of member-states. About another one-third in each category reported only one or two meetings in the course of two years.⁴⁰

In order to improve the Euro-capacity of members in terms of their legislative duties the number and expertise of parliamentary staff should be increased. It is not enough if expertise increases only on the side of the bureaucracy. Indeed, the legitimacy of parliaments can only develop if they will be competent partners of government and state administration in the new EU-affairs as well. On the basis of their knowledge and expertise parliamentarians can provide information to their constituency, what in the final count will be necessary to achieve the acceptance of the EU among the widest social groups.

As a last point we can add that more attention should be placed on the connections between members of parliaments of the potential new entrants, naturally including the three countries that have been in the focus of this research. The Hungarian Parliament organized a meeting in December 1994 with the participation of the integration committees of the Visegrád countries plus Slovenia. The next similar meeting, however, only took place in 1998, autumn in Ljubljana with the participation of the integration committees of countries that have started negotiation. There was a general agreement that the role of national parliaments is essential in the democratic legitimacy of the EU, and the role of the integration committees as well as their cooperation should be increased. We cannot see any conclusive results, however.

³⁹ among others see Ágh, Attila, *The Role of the ECE Parliaments in the Pre-Accession Strategy in: The Role of the Central European Parliaments in the Process of European Integration. Conference Proceedings. 1997*

⁴⁰ Brokl, L. - Z. Mansfeldova - a. Seidlova, *Vybrané problémy související se vstupem ČR do EU ocima poslancu. manuscript*

IV. Conclusion

Although we cannot yet follow long-term trends in Central Europe regarding European integration the research could identify some similarities as well as some diversity in this respect in the three countries. Similarities mainly follow from similar tendencies in the constitutional and political developments (within the frames of an institutional learning process from European democracies) while differences are rooted in the polity idea. That is '...the entire polity-idea in most cases can only be explained by a mixture of national and ideological tradition.'⁴¹ The stability of most polity-ideas over time seems to indicate that we have to do with deep-seated convictions. For example, the Polish views on the Euro-polity will be more concerned with sovereignty issues than Hungarian views. It is interesting that a fear from losing sovereignty as a result of EU integration has not been an important political issue in most countries under consideration. Previous external pressures must have demonstrated the true face of really losing sovereignty - everything is comparative.

The convictions about the right and proper political organization of Europe are influenced by national and ideological factors which are long-term phenomena extending even the decades long existence of the EU. In other words, the different polity-ideas represent fundamental and persistent cleavages among the actors that are engaged in polity-building. This has two consequences. First the EU will continue to be assessed by domestic actors in the respective national political systems according to highly different normative criteria. This explains the stunning divergence in the reactions towards the EU in the respective national settings. It also follows from this that the EU will continue to arouse these strong reactions in the future and that there is no simple institutional solution to this problem because these reactions do not directly and exclusively follow from the EU's institutional structure but from a comparison with prevailing, highly diverging and stable models of how a legitimate EU should look like....As a consequence, the EU will for a long time have to balance between different basic institutional models without clearly opting for one of them. This also means that technocratic models of 'post-parliamentary democracy'⁴² are at present not considered to be legitimate alternatives by political actors.

⁴¹ Jachtenfuchs, M. - Diez -s. Jung, Ideas and Integration. Conflicting Models of a Legitimate European Political Order. manuscript, 1997. : 29

⁴² Andersen, S. S. -Burns, T. R. 'The European Community and the Erosion of Parliamentary Democracy' in: Andersen-Eliassen, K. A. eds. The European Union: How Democratic Is It? Sage pp. 227-251

This conclusive statement is all the more important from our perspective because it makes the research agenda even more legitimate: while parliaments could not fulfill all their potentials in forming EU-strategies (we have seen the reasons above) they will remain major actors both on domestic and on the European level. Moreover, the 'game is not over' thus they can 'develop', and parliamentary elite responses will be crucial in this respect. Indeed, the Slovak case (which was not included in the research project) is a counter-test to the arguments and conclusions put forward in this analysis: namely that elites and elite-responses did count already in the first phase of the integration process when Slovakia was left out from the first group of countries to begin negotiations with exclusively for political reasons. Indeed the proposition that 'Positions of parliamentary political parties on the role of the nation to a certain extent correspond to their different stances on foreign policy and democracy',⁴³ needs careful testing in the other three ECE countries as well. Parliamentary elites are still the most powerful group in Central Europe.

We can finally argue that we could have assumed three stages in the process of European integration concerning the role of parliaments and parliamentary actors: preparation stage for the negotiation process, the negotiation stage itself, and the period of real membership. The first stage is over. In that period the parliaments should have examined practices in EU memberstates, and should have formed a model for themselves while scrutinizing the adaption activity of the government. In addition to this the Mps should have received more information, parliamentary experts professional and language training, and the parliaments' integration structures should have been formed.

Ideally, in the second, that is the current period the parliament should establish contacts with interest organizations to promote the flow of their opinion and interests to decision-makers, on the bases of member-states experiences the parliament should work out a model to follow in scrutinizing the government and in outlining the parliament's responsibilities, to transform the legislation process to be able to transpose the EU law onto the national scene, to establish a documentation centre for EU materials, to prepare committees for EU integration, to lobby internationally, for example EU memberstates parliaments in the Hungarian interest, to produce information for the public (fair and impartial information). It is not too late to proceed with these tasks of the second stage. It should be emphasized that an active parliament is not necessarily a disadvantage in the negotiation process (or later), rather it is a good reference point for the government to pursue its goals and aims. Parliament and

⁴³ Malova, Darina, Parliamentary Political Parties in Slovakia and the European Integration Process, 1997. manuscript

government are not enemies on the national scene and cannot be enemies on the European scene either.

In the research hypothesis I wanted to test how majoritarian or consensus principles contribute to the strength of parliaments in Euro-affairs. While the position of the three countries has changed in the past years in this respect the hypothesis regarding the consequential relationship between the nature of parliamentary practices and functional responses to the EU challenge seems justified: more majoritarian parliamentary practices and working principles run in parallel with a higher level of government dominance over parliament. A strong government can dominate the European dimension more fully. The three country cases justify this statement.

With respect to the future I would assume that in these countries semi-strong parliaments will functionally evolve in EU affairs. By semi-strong I mean a parliament which is well informed, able to follow EU developments and present its opinion as well as scrutinize the government, but has no mandatory or veto powers. In the Polish case strong anti-EU (agricultural) economic interests might modify this assumption, while in the Czech case a hidden identity-national scenario might increase the possibility of a strong parliament in EU affairs. Overall, however, I would argue that the three countries would rather follow the most common pattern among the member-states themselves. Consolidation and institutional learning seem to conclude with success.

Table 1.

The image of the European Union

% of respondents claiming that their impression is positive, neutral or negative of the impression of the aims and activities of the European Union

	Czech Republic			Hungary			Poland		
	positive	neutral	negative	positive	neutral	negative	positive	neutral	negative
1990	49	23	2	51	27	2	46	24	3
1991	46	29	3	42	28	4	49	32	3
1992	45	36	3	34	34	6	48	31	5
1993	37	40	10	36	32	8	37	32	9
1994	34	40	6	32	28	8	42	23	7
1995	26	36	7	30	28	9	46	19	5
1996	33	42	9	33	32	11	58	24	5
1997	34	38	7	42	30	7	56	25	5

source: Central and Eastern Eurobarometer in: Stankovsky et als On the Eve of the EU enlargement 1998.

Table 2.

Referendum on EU membership

% of respondents claiming that they would vote for or against (or are still undecided) on the question the country's membership in the EU

	1995			1996			1997		
	for	against	undecided	for	against	undecided	for	against	undecided
Czech Republic	43	11	23	43	11	23	49	13	19
Hungary	46	12	19	47	15	16	56	9	20
Poland	668	5	14	70	7	12	63	6	17

source: Central and Eastern Eurobarometer in: Stankovsky et als On the Eve of the EU enlargement, 1998.

Table 3/a

Closeness to EU or other country/countries

% of respondents who see the country's future most closely tied to

	Czech Republic	%
1992	EU	46
	other Western Europe	25
	USA	8
	other E/C Europe	5
1993	EU	46
	other Western Europe	28
	USA	8
	other E/C Europe	6
1994	EU	40
	other Western Europe	27
	USA	9
	other E/C Europe	6
1995	EU	37
	other Western Europe	15
	other E/C Europe	10
	USA	9
	on ourselves*	8
1996	EU	44
	other Western Europe	17
	other E/C Europe	10
	USA	7
1997	EU	38
	other E/C Europe	15
	other Western Europe	10
	USA	10

Table 3/b

	Hungary	%
1992	EU	27
	USA	115
	other Western Europe	14
	Germany*	12
	other E/C Europe	9
1993	EU	24
	other Western Europe	17
	USA	12
	other E/C Europe	11
	Germany*	6
1994	EU	22
	other Western Europe	16
	USA	11
	other E/C Europe	11
	Germany*	9
1995	EU	26
	USA	15
	Germany*	14
	other E/C Europe	13
	on ourselves*	8
1996	EU	27
	USA	22
	Germany*	12
	other E/C Europe	10
1997	EU	42
	USA	20
	Germany*	8
	other E/C Europe	7

Table 3/c

	Poland	%
1992	EU	31
	USA	21
	other E/C Europe	8
	Russia	7
1993	EU	36
	other E/C Europe	14
	USA	12
	Russia	7
1994	other Western Europe	6
	EU	37
	USA	13
	Germany*	7
1995	other E/C Europe	6
	Russia	6
	EU	40
	USA	14
1996	Germany*	9
	other E/C Europe	9
	Russia	8
	EU	46
1997	USA	14
	other E/C Europe	8
	Germany*	8
	EU	45
1997	USA	19
	Germany	9

* are spontaneous answers

source: Central and Eastern Eurobarometers in: Stankovsky et al. 1998

Table 4.

Distribution (number) of seats in the Czech Parliament after three consecutive elections

Name of party	1992	1996	1998
Social Democrats	16	61	74
Civic Democratic Party	76	68	63
Civic Democratic Alliance	14	13	-
Freedom Union	-	-	19
Christian Democratic Union-People's Party	15	18	20
Liberal Social Union	16	-	-
Movement for Self-Governing Democracy- Society for Moravia and Silesia	14	-	-
Communists	35	22	24
Republicans	14	18	0
Pensioners' Party	-	-	0
Other parties	0	0	0

source: Steven Saxonberg: A New Phase in Czech Politics Journal of Democracy 1999(10) 1

bold indicates the parties in government

Table 5.

Division of Seats in the three democratic parliaments in Hungary

name of party	1990	1994	1998
Hungarian Democratic Forum	164	38	17
Alliance of Free Democrats	92	69	24
Independents Smallholders Party	44	26	48
Hungarian Socialist Party	33	209	134
Alliance of Young Democrats - Hungarian People's Party	21	20	147
Christian Democratic People's Party	21	22	-
Party of Hungarian Justice and Life	-	-	14

others	11	1	1
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bold: parties in government

Table 6.

Division of seats in the Polish Sejm

Name of party	1991	1993	1997
Democratic Left Alliance	59	171	164
Polish Peasant Party	50	132	27
Democratic Union/Freedom Union*	62	74	60
Labour Union**	-	41	
Catholic Electoral Committee/Fatherland***	55	-	
Confederation of Independent Poland	51	22	
Non-Party Block for the Support of Reforms		16	
Electoral Action Solidarity****			202
Movement to Rebuild Poland			5
German Minority*****	7	4	2
others	176	0	-
Total	460	460	460

* in 1991 and 1993 the party name was Democratic Union, in 1997 Freedom Union (Balczerowicz)

** contained the Solidarity movement, in 1997 became part of Electoral Action Solidarity

*** consisted of the Catholic Electoral Action and the Party of Christian Democrats. Since it was considered an electoral coalition it could not get any seats in 1993 due to a 8% threshold required from coalition formats

**** combines - among others - large segments of the Labour Union, the Catholic Electoral Committee/Fatherland, Confederation of Independent Poland and the Non-Party Block to Support reforms

***** no threshold requirement for this party