

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY AND THE PARADOXES OF EUROPEANIZATION

Flexibility, Competition and Collusion

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ABSTRACT

Europeanization is seen as a two-way interaction between developments at European Union (EU) and national levels. Applied to the European People's Party (EPP), it is discussed with reference to ideological/programmatic and organizational changes. Ideologically, EPP has kept its perennial federalism, but on the left/right axis, has shifted towards liberal economics at the expense of traditional Christian Democrat values. Organizationally, this shift has been complemented by moves to incorporate liberal-conservative parties, especially in areas where Christian democracy has been historically weak, including EU candidate states. This flexible approach has nevertheless encountered limits and also created tension between purists and realists concerned with number rather than quality. Europeanization appears as a dynamic, unruly and sometimes contradictory process.

KEY WORDS ■ Christian democracy ■ Europeanization ■ federation ■ transnational party

We begin with Robert Ladrech's definition of Europeanization, viz. 'a process by which individuals and organizational actors and institutions respond to the altered condition of their operating environment due to the changes wrought by the development of the European Union' (2000). This definition stresses the adaptive response of organizations. Ladrech suggests several axes along which one might measure party response or, if one prefers, the degree of parties' Europeanization. Programmatic change is the most visible, followed by organizational change. Ladrech also highlights possible changes to the nature of party competition or party-government relationships and, lastly, changes to relations beyond national party systems. Some of these categories are very broad, and one cannot treat them all in a

single article; nor can one take a bottom-up approach focusing on all the individual Christian Democratic (CD) parties in order to assess their degree of Europeanization, for obvious reasons of space.

We therefore limit our analysis of Europeanization mainly to the European People's Party EPP (which does not exclude reference to specific national cases where necessary); moreover, we concentrate on the dimensions of programmatic and organizational change at the expense of other indicators. The two axes are inextricably linked, as will become apparent. We do not conceive of Europeanization as some 'black box', mention of which suffices to explain the behaviour of actors said to be subjected to it. On the contrary, it is a dynamic process. Therefore, it does not, as Featherstone and Kazamias remark (2001: 6), 'fit easily the language of dependent and independent variables and the logic of regression analysis.' Rather, it is 'a two-way process, between the domestic and EU levels, involving both top-down and bottom-up pressures.' In other words, Europeanization is a dialectic and must be understood as such. Thus, while we stress the adaptive capacities of EPP in response to Europeanizing pressures, we also seek to show that in some cases its own actions have helped shape those very pressures in the first place and that they might have further consequences.

Programmes and Ideologies

Programmes often provide the most concise expression of party ideology. Programmatic change can be usefully apprehended along two axes, the left/right polarity and the integration/sovereignist one (Hix and Lord, 1997). Generally, EPP has had least difficulty with the latter. Most CD parties have been integrationist, if not since inception (one thinks of the hesitations of the early MRP in France – Letamendia, 1995), then since well before the renewed wave of integration unleashed by the Single European Act (SEA) and Maastricht. Christian Democratic ideology has always been supple on questions of national identity; the personalist philosophy underpinning CD thought postulates not sovereign individuals competing in a marketplace (national or global), as liberal theory tends to assume, but rounded persons who are members of various communities within which they have relationships of solidarity with others (EPP, 1992: para. 202 ff.). The national community is just one among others – locality, workplace, religion – and not fundamentally different from a supranational community (Dierickx, 1994). Such assumptions do not rule out defence of national interests when that is thought necessary, but they may well make it easier to argue that such interests are best defended in transnational frameworks of bargaining and compromise.

Therefore, we find that recent programmatic change on integration matters within EPP is a matter of degree rather than kind. The endpoint of integrationist measures, viz. a federal Europe, is accepted by all; it figures in

the party programme (EPP, 1992: paras. 125–30). As new processes arise (enlargement, weighting, increase of qualified majority voting (QMV), etc.), EPP will respond positively and endorse such measures in its official documentation. We might say then that this dimension of Europeanization has always been with EPP and that there has been no qualitative change. The original bottom-up pressures from member parties helped create integrated structures, and these in turn provided a rationale for further integrationist policies to be assumed by the parties. The dialectical nature of Europeanization is clearly illustrated.

The same is not true, however, of the left/right dimension and the socio-economic stances at its heart. It seems clear that, over the past decade, EPP has moved to the right on these issues (Hanley and Ysmal, 2000; Jansen, 1998: 101–20). Whereas CD parties were long perceived as standing for a distinct socio-economic model that they were proud to distinguish from liberal capitalism (Kersbergen, 1995), they have recently, as was sarcastically remarked of the French FD party, ‘discovered liberalism’.

To illustrate this, we may compare EPP positions for the 1999 elections with those of ‘unattached’ conservatives (centre-right parties not officially members of EPP), many of which belong to the European Democratic Union EDU (EDU, 1998; EPP, 1999); for good measure, the European Liberal Democratic Reform Party (ELDR) manifesto can also be compared (ELDR, 1998). The measure of agreement between Christian democracy and its conservative or liberal allies is high. On high policy, all support a more active Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), including the defence dimension; reactivation of the Western European Union (WEU) and its incorporation into the structure of the EU is recommended, especially as such an arrangement is flexible enough to reconcile the Atlanticists of all parties with those who favour a more autonomous European posture. There is agreement on a wider European judicial space to fight organized crime, and generally enlargement is accepted with few reservations (albeit for different reasons in some cases).

On socio-economic issues, there is general consensus on the primacy of the market and the need to roll back the state (particularly its welfare functions), reduce tax burdens and encourage enterprise. This is best done by supply-side measures, particularly deregulation and use of training to provide a skilled, flexible labour force. The disciplines of the single currency and European Central Bank are vital. Other parts of the manifestos reveal hints of differences but little more. Thus, talking of EPP’s ideological foundations, the party text situates individuals within different communities, notably the family; this contrasts with EDU positions which can fairly be described as ‘rugged individualism’, where individual success is singled out as the basis of social development, implying some kind of trickle-down effect. EDU does see the family as the ‘natural social unit’ and source of values and declares that it has a ‘social responsibility towards the weak and less fortunate’; but this merely implies that the state therefore has no such responsibility.

On employment, EPP still aspires to full employment, though it nowadays relies on liberal economic measures and competition to achieve this goal; EDU makes no promises other than to insist on labour flexibility and rule out Keynesian measures. EPP is silent here, but its general retreat from state intervention in the economy says enough. On wider matters of social integration, EPP stresses the need to integrate the worst off; EDU has no specific reference to such categories, save to regret the obstacles placed by state intervention in the way of individual success. On refugees, EPP argues for generous help; EDU says nothing. On social security, EPP reminds us that the welfare state exists to aid those in greatest need, but EDU complains about the negative effect which social charges have on employment and wants more private insurance schemes. On employer/employee relationships, EPP still talks of dialogue between 'social partners', the sole reference to the neocorporatist practices that long held sway in the 'consensual democracies' where its members were prominent in government (Lijphardt, 1968, 1997). Finally, EDU still has a marked anti-left tone, whereas EPP keeps quiet about these adversaries who are sometimes necessary partners in coalition governments, not to mention the European Parliament (EP).

There are thus some nuances between the two discourses, but they do not amount to a fundamental breach. EPP has gone much further towards the conservatives than the other way round. Its move towards economic liberalism is clear. It opposes regulation and intervention except in (undefined) cases of necessity; it accepts that as a rule 'the state worsens social problems rather than curing them'. It criticizes the 'forests of rules' produced by EU bureaucracies before crying pathetically that it supports large public projects but not the large-scale administration that usually goes with them. The residual traces of old CD thinking – refusal of rugged individualism, desire for inclusion, nostalgia for social dialogue and attachment to the welfare state – are just residues, crowded out by acceptance of a neoliberalism designed to reassure conservative voters that there will be no radical or expensive reforms under EPP aegis. Defenders of the 'social market compromise' or 'Rhineland capitalism' might struggle to find traces of these concepts. One respected commentator accuses EPP of opening its walls to the 'Trojan horse of neo-liberalism' (Fogarty, 1999).

Only on the crucial issue of integration is there 'clear blue water' between EPP and the moderate right. Differences thus surface unavoidably with regard to the workings of the EU. If EPP and Liberals wish to see the EU become a more coordinated political organism (the word 'federalism' is avoided in deference to British and Nordic susceptibilities), then EDU simply observes silence on this question. It does not mention QMV and only speaks once of subsidiarity, and this in a context where the need to weaken government intervention is flagged up. This is EDU's way of refusing federalism. The EPP manifesto is much less prolix on federalism than, say, the Athens declaration, which is still the basic party programme (EPP, 1992);

that is as far as EPP dare go on what is plainly the major sticking point between it and much of the classical right.

Programmatically, then, EPP has shifted a long way on major socio-economic issues. It has not moved at all on integration but chosen to downplay or even conceal its line. How do these contrasting approaches relate to Europeanization?

The second aspect, integration, has arguably more to do with Europeanizing pressures than the first. The shift to a neoliberal socio-economic line is visible across a range of parties operating outside the EU. Members of the Socialist International (SI), for example, have trimmed their interventionist line. Few offer, nowadays, the ambitious structural transformation promised in, say, the British Labour manifesto of 1983 or Mitterrand's 110 Propositions of 1981. All sense the difficulty of regulating, never mind transforming, advanced market economies. These attitude changes owe more to shifts in the global economy than developments at regional level. If one wanted to argue that EPP's move towards economic liberalism was a function of Europeanization, the most that one could claim would be that the political economy of the EU was simply a condensation of pressures in the wider world economy.

The attitude to European integration is a different case, however. Integration is central to EPP's political project, yet the party has chosen to downplay it, particularly when it is high on the agenda. Arguably, this behaviour is a function of Europeanization, but in ways not immediately apparent. The rationale is organizational; party-political developments at EU level have produced a dilemma which requires a tactical response from EPP. Its tactic is to downplay integration today in the hope of organizational gains tomorrow, as now illustrated.

Europeanization and Organizational Change

If EPP's move towards market liberalism was intended to facilitate a rapprochement with centre-right parties, the results have been impressive. Hix and Lord (1997) remark that between 1973 and 1987 EPP, or its predecessor, only picked up the Irish Fine Gael and Greek Nea Demokratia. Since then, recruits have accrued from all new EU entrants.

If some of these are classic CD parties, often members of the Christian Democratic International CDI (Austrian ÖVP; UDC and PNV from Spain; or a Swedish epigone like KDS (Karvonen, 1994)), most of them originate from the centre-right. The Spanish PP is an obvious case, but so are the Swedish MS, Danish KFP or Finnish KK; some even come from the liberal camp, such as the French *Démocratie Libérale* deputies who now sit in the EP group or the Portuguese PSD, which actually belonged to ELDR and was admitted into EPP simply because the CDS had to be expelled for opposing Maastricht, and there was no other alternative if EPP was to cover this

Table 1: National Parties' Dates of Joining EPP

| | <i>Full membership</i> | <i>MEPs join group</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Austria | | |
| ÖVP (Conservative Christian Democrats) | 1995 | 1995 |
| Belgium | | |
| CVP and PSC (Christian Democrats) | 1976 | 1976 |
| Denmark | | |
| KFP (Christian Democrats) | 1995 | 1992 |
| Finland | | |
| KK (Conservatives) | 1995 | 1995 |
| France | | |
| CDS/FD (Christian Democrats) | 1976 | 1976 |
| RI/DL (Liberals) | | 1994 |
| Germany | | |
| CDU/CSU(Christian Democrats) | 1976 | 1976 |
| Greece | | |
| ND (Conservatives) | 1981 | 1981 |
| Ireland | | |
| FG (Christian Democrats) | 1976 | 1976 |
| Italy | | |
| DC (PPI,CDU, CCD,RI) (Christian Democrats) | 1976 | 1976 |
| FI (Liberals) | 1999 | 1998 |
| Luxembourg | | |
| CSV(Christian Democrats) | 1976 | 1976 |
| Netherlands | | |
| CDA (Christian Democrats) | 1976 | 1976 |
| Portugal | | |
| PSD (Liberals) | 1996 | 1996 |
| Spain | | |
| UDC (Christian Democrats) | 1986 | 1986 |
| PNV (Christian Democrats) | 1986 | 1986 |
| PP (Conservatives) | 1991 | 1989 |
| Sweden | | |
| KDS (Christian Democrats) | 1995 | 1995 |
| MS (Conservatives) | 1995 | 1995 |
| United Kingdom | | |
| Conservatives | – | 1992 |

important state (Hix and Lord, 1997: 101). Though it is said that the rationalist/secularist bias underpinning modern liberal parties should hinder their merging with CD formations (Portelli, 1995), the above examples show CD flexibility on this issue. Yet, to thinkers like Emmanuel Mounier, known to have inspired CD movements, liberalism was arguably as big an enemy as Marxism.

The Spanish PP was *prima facie* an awkward case, as some of its founders (Fraga Iribarne) had been active *franquistas*. But perhaps its acceptance into EPP was small beer compared with two more recent cases, the UK Conservatives and Berlusconi's FI. EPP devised a subtle tactic for potentially controversial incorporations, which would prove successful. First, the candidate party's MEPs would be invited to sit in the EP group. They would become familiar with EPP culture and working methods, networks would be developed; at the same time, to many outsiders they would seem part of EPP. In due course, the party could gain full membership provided it accepted EPP principles and had shown this by its parliamentary work and voting record. Despite initial controversy over the PP, leading to the withdrawal of the PNV member, the tactic worked seamlessly; now, after two election victories and a successful term in office, no-one questions Aznar's party's membership of EPP. His nominee Agag is now EPP secretary-general. This could be presented as one unforeseen consequence of Europeanization; EPP has had to learn creative methods of absorbing partners presenting certain difficulties.

UK Conservatives have proved more troublesome. The position is still that their MEPs are in the EPP group (now EPP-ED (European Democrats), in deference to its wider membership), for which they have to seek re-admission at the start of every new parliament. But the party is still no closer to full membership, as it has never been able to satisfy EPP about its commitment to a federal Europe, one of the original litmus tests laid down for it in 1992 (Hanley, 1994: 193; Johansson, 1997: 93); since 1992 its general anti-integrationist posture has increased. The Conservatives' voting record with EPP was very positive, and during the 1994–9 parliament they are said to have had only one major dispute (Hix and Lord, 1997: 101). They fulfilled then the important role of reinforcing EPP numbers in parliament. But their absence from the party *per se* remains a running sore which will last for the foreseeable future. Clearly, there are limits to EPP's flexibility and capacity for adaptation; if the Conservatives want to enter the party they will have to adapt their position on federalism. Their voting record in the EP elected in 1999 suggests that this is unlikely to happen. In a random sample of some 60 votes taken over the first year of the new parliament, we discovered that EPP deputies split in 44 percent of cases, with a hard core of 30 or 40 going against the party line. These were inevitably the UK Conservatives and a few Nordic allies; the issues on which this dissent was manifested usually involved integrationist measures. There seems presently to be a higher convergence of voting between EPP as a whole and the party of European Socialists PES than between different sections of EPP.

Europeanization is undeniably a two-way street; the Europarty can be as flexible as it likes, but national parties will not automatically follow. They may decide that at national level pursuit of a countervailing strategy (here, a naked bid for Europhobic votes) is a better gambit.

FI was also difficult, despite Berlusconi's claim to have taken over the electorate and (some of) the principles of the ex-DC (interview, EPP News 02/2000). Refused admission to EPP (and also to ELDR) in 1994, Forza's MEPs were let into the EPP group in 1998, having signed an endorsement of the party's values, including the words 'Christian democracy'. Part of the EPP group (MEPs from the Benelux countries, the Italian PPI and Irish FG) opposed this entry, which was strongly backed by the German CDU/CSU. In other words, supporters of a classic view of Christian democracy lined up against no-nonsense, centre-right politicians more concerned with increasing numbers so as to beat the socialists than with, as they saw it, ideological niceties. CD purists did insist on questioning FI deputies and voting on each one separately, but were unable to delay admission any further. (On average, 90 to 96 MEPs voted for admission, 34 to 38 against. The latter came particularly from the Benelux countries and Ireland, plus the Italian PPI. But two-thirds of the Italian delegation as a whole, drawn from CDU and CCD, voted in favour – EPP News 150, 1998.) After the 1999 elections, 35 FI deputies joined the new EPP group, making them the second biggest delegation after the Germans; it remained only to give the party full membership, which was duly granted in December 1999. There were 18 votes against and 4 abstentions, but 73 votes in favour (EPP News, 18 December 1999).

As a result of these additions, EPP contained at the start of 2001 some 42 parties, including 16 associates; its parliamentary group had been pushed up to 201 by the end of the 1994–9 parliament, and electoral gains in 1999 now make it the biggest with 233 MEPs.

This organizational expansion tells us more about Europeanization as a dialectic. From the top-down, so to speak, the need for a majority within the EP has led EPP to recruit widely and be quite politically inventive; but a consequence of this has been the need to hide a part of its message. Another, less welcome, consequence has been the growth of a rift within the movement. From the bottom-up, it has clearly suited parties like the FI or PP, short of legitimacy in their own states, to enjoy the democratic stamp of approval afforded by EPP acceptance. To that extent, two-way pressures work in harmony.

But the UK Conservatives show a different aspect of Europeanization. In terms of their own national politics, far from needing extra legitimacy from membership of a Europe-wide grouping, they have decided that more is to be gained from playing the national card. This they show to their electors by refusing to sign up to any integrationist charter à la EPP. This bottom-up pressure has forced EPP to devise the unhappy compromise of the ante-chamber, whereby the Conservatives seem to be in the EPP without really being so. Thus supranational logic (the need for a majority in the EP) is modified by the needs of a national component. Europeanization does work both ways, but the pressures can go in different directions.

The Logic of Expansion: Competition and Collusion

EPP expansion might plausibly be related to the desire to maximize influence, but this hypothesis needs to be tested in the competitive context of the EP, where the party mainly functions. It has long been clear that the two main EP protagonists were the socialists and the Christian Democrats. They have had a steady symbiotic relationship, more collusive than competitive, leading to accusations of 'duopoly' (Hix and Lord, 1997: 102) or 'co-management' of the EP (see below). This suited both sides so long as there remained much to do in strengthening the powers and influence of the EP within Union decision-making (and clearly this still holds good to a large extent). This does not eliminate the underlying rivalry between these mainstream currents, however. The socialists tended (until 1999 at least) to have predominance, partly owing to a movement of opinion in favour of the left and partly because, as Hix and Lord (1997) remark, the socialist family tends to be more homogeneous anyway; certainly the incoming socialist party of any new EU state has joined PES (formerly CSPEC) immediately, having usually been a member of the SI anyway. For the Christian Democrats the picture was more problematic. In Northern Europe there was (and is) little by way of organized CD politics, unsurprisingly given the mainly catholic nature of the movement; yet the Scandinavian enlargement would bring in a number of new states with moderate centre-right parties. The socialists would not have recruitment problems with the strong social-democratic parties in Scandinavia. But even southern states like Greece and Spain had never developed CD movements worthy of the name. There was then a likely shortfall of partners as enlargements took place.

At the same time, there were still conservative groups in the EP big enough to cast a shadow, particularly the European Democratic Group in its various manifestations (Gaullists and Fianna Fail), not to mention the UK Conservatives, sometimes constituting a separate group. As new parties entered, they could conceivably be recruited by the conservative groups, which might then move closer to the liberals, never a negligible quantity; theoretically, EPP might become a minority in the non-socialist part of parliament. Better then to seize the bull by the horns and hegemonize the newcomers. If this were done early enough, it could also be made much more attractive to them to take the CD label. The Spanish case has been discussed; it was in the PP's interest to obtain democratic legitimacy from a supranational source. But the Greek case is relevant also; ND was happy to come into a significant group, so as to pursue issues closest to its heart (agriculture and Mediterranean policy generally), which had a high profile in the group thanks to the presence of the Italian DC. In short, the configuration of competition in the EP put strategic pressure on the EPP to *râtisser large* ('never mind the quality, feel the width').

Yet expansion could only be pursued so far without revealing stress lines

within EPP. We suggested that successive incorporations provoked difficulty, but that the majority of EPP accepted the general expansionist strategy. At most, we may identify a hard core of purists who put up a resistance which they may have felt to be symbolic. It is significant that the line in the sand was drawn in front of the British Conservatives, not for excessive neo-liberalism, but for their explicit anti-federalism. The recent fracas about the participation of the Austrian FPÖ in Schlüssel's ÖVP government reveals similar tendencies. Although some parties (PPI, Belgian PSC and, in a rare display of conviction politics, Bayrou's UDF) called for expulsion of the ÖVP, it smartly volunteered for temporary suspension while the whole Austrian dossier was entrusted to a three-man committee of experts under the chairmanship of veteran fixer Wim van Velzen. These duly reported that Austrian democracy was safe and that nothing was being done in Vienna which contravened EPP policy; in particular, nothing was being done to hinder enlargement, which had been the FPÖ's major threat. The report praised the coalition's positive work in integrating immigrants and paying compensation for World War II crimes and recommended the dropping of bilateral sanctions against Austria. Much of the document is devoted to criticizing the social-democratic SPÖ's hypocrisy on the issue of collaboration with Haider's party (at regional government level within Austria). Once again, what worries EPP is integration; if this is respected, then collaboration with very rightist forces is tolerable. Interestingly, paragraph 7 of the bureau text 'reiterates that rejection of political alliances with extremes is one of the fundamental principles of the EPP' (EPP News, 6 June 2000). One can only conclude from this that the FPÖ is not extreme. When the ÖVP was duly readmitted to the fold after the acceptance of the expert report, only 2 out of some 60 in the bureau voted against it – both francophone Belgians and both women. The least that one can say after such an episode is that there are no signs of EPP's flexibility diminishing. Arguably the party was angrier at the kite flown by EU commissioner Verheugen about holding referenda on enlargement than it was about Haider (EPP News, 8 September 2000).

European expansion revealed, then, political and ideological tension within the CD movement; a relatively small part of it, in traditional bastions, resisted the rightwards move, fearing a loss of CD identity. (Deputies from this tendency form the core of the Schumann group, whose effect on EPP remains to be seen.) But the majority of the movement went along with this process. Yet if the movement as a whole could not behave in a united way as regards its relationship with conservatism, then it did unite in refusing to incorporate those not fully committed to federalism. This might be seen as some kind of trade-off.

Our examination of the competitive context shows again the varying effects of Europeanization. Successive enlargements meant a bigger EP, hence the need for EPP to keep growing in order to aspire to a majority. But few incoming parties were 'natural' Christian Democrats. Worse, they might

even be incorporated into rival conservative or liberal groupings, making majority status even more remote for EPP. The way out of this competitive dilemma was to drive vigorously to integrate the incomers, paying the ideological price demanded. The CDU/CSU, as Jansen attests, was the main force behind such arguments. EPP showed therefore a powerful capacity for adaptation, but part of the price was a potential split in the movement, especially when collaboration with 'extreme' parties became an issue. Yet internal *rapports de force* were such that the objectors were marginalized. One aim that could not be met, however, was full incorporation of the UK Conservatives; anti-federalist parties proved harder to stomach than 'extreme' ones. In short, the competitive dilemmas posed by Europeanization led not just to the adoption of new alliances but to internal adjustments within EPP. However, it has not yet been possible for EPP leaders to exploit the need to recruit more widely in order to take anti-federalist conservatives on board; here is one clear limit to the effects of Europeanization.

Expansion on the Margins of the Union

Hitherto, we have concentrated strictly on the EU, but Europeanization of EPP has proceeded just as rapidly in the rest of Europe. The evolution of the European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD) is crucial here. As a regional arm of the CDI, EUCD's function was to group CD parties beyond the Union as such. EUCD was busy recruiting in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), as democratic life re-emerged after the Stalinist era and Western political entrepreneurs strove to build like-minded organizations in the new political space (Delwit and De Waele, 1998). Much as membership of the parliamentary group could be an antechamber for non-CD parties from within the EU seeking full EPP membership, so membership of EUCD came to fill the same role for parties from outside the EU. Increasingly, EPP and EUCD were moved closer together. Thus two parties from the next wave of EU candidates were given associated membership of EPP (Hungarian KDNP and MDF), before the EPP bureau of July 1996 decided simply to merge the two organizations. Seven criteria for harmonization were prescribed, some of them financial or concerned with checking that the parties really represented something (they had to have scored a 10 percent minimum in the last national election, or 5 percent in the last two; to have elected deputies; and to have undergone no splits over the last two years); but others had strategic or ideological content. Thus, ideologically, parties had to sign up to European federalism, personalism (as a gesture against pure market liberalism) and subsidiarity; but these principles were to be applied according to 'a very broad definition of Christian democracy'. The 1997 EPP congress decided to admit into EPP/EUCD parties not just from countries engaged in negotiations with the EU, but from countries which had simply asked to join. This inclusive approach brought in

7 observer parties in 1996 and 3 in 1997; 3 full members, 7 associates and 3 observers in 1998; and 2 associates and 2 observers in 1999. The fusion process was managed by the ubiquitous van Velzen, EUCD president, who duly persuaded EUCD to accept the merger, in the presence of numerous heavyweights and party leaders from Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia at its October 1996 congress in Slovenia. The congress accepted all major EU orientations, including the CFSP with its Atlanticist underpinning, clearly attractive to parties from states seeking to join NATO as well as the EU.

The 12th EPP Congress in November 1997 completed the merger. Three-hundred delegates from the 21 member-parties and 4 associates were present, with observers from 8 'partner-parties' from CEE (EPP News 123, 1997). The real business was done at the EPP summit immediately prior to the congress, in the presence of such prime ministers as Kohl, Dehaene, Prodi and Juncker, as well as deputy prime ministers from Spain, Austria and Finland. Parties from candidate countries were encouraged to apply for associate membership, with the right to vote in various EPP bodies; better integration of EPP groups in various European bodies was promised, with the appointment of a new vice-president with special responsibility for CEE countries. EPP advocated a 'familiarization strategy' for applicant countries by opening up the European conference to heads of government from applicant states and the creation of a special enlargement fund. Clearly, the enlargement process and the strengthening of EPP via new allies were seen as going hand-in-hand. The result of these operations was the increase noted above. Of the parties admitted as observers, seven had become associates by 1999. The EPP could boast of 'a strong presence' in CEE, including in the governments of Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia. As well as expansion, then, Europeanization meant the organizational streamlining of the CD movement across the continent, with a reduction from two apparatus to one.

Parallel to the merger of EUCD and EPP, the Christian Democrats have been pursuing closer relations with EDU. Founded two years after EPP, this regional grouping of the conservative international IDU (International Democratic Union) has always enjoyed close relations with EPP. There has always been a high degree of overlap in membership; indeed the best way of identifying the parties which hold strongest to classic CD values is to look at the absences from the EDU members list (Table 2).

By 1999, few important conservative parties existed only in EDU without organizational links to EPP; the Gaullist RPR is the outstanding example (and in the new EP its MEPs sit in the EPP group). EPP clearly felt that historic differences between the two were shrinking; the main difference highlighted in EPP texts is not any socio-economic gap but the tension between federalists and intergovernmentalists. But, as EDU president Niinistö suggested, such differences could nowadays be brokered, because 'within all our member parties there has been a real convergence of ideas and practical

Table 2. EPP and EDU member parties compared. As at April 2000

| <i>EDU only</i> | <i>EPP and EDU</i> | <i>EPP only</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| DP-ALB | ÖVP - A | CVP-B |
| UCDC - BG | UF-BG (a) | PSC-B |
| DP - BG | DR-CY (a) | People's Union-BG (a) |
| ODA-CZ | CDU-D | EVP-CH (b) |
| ODS-CZ | CSU-D | US-CZ (b) |
| RPR-F (d) | DKF-DK | KrF-DK |
| FPP-Faroe | PP-E | UDC-E |
| SFP-FIN (c) | PPU-EE (b) | Nouvelle UDF-F |
| FBP-FL | KOK-FIN | MKDSZ-H (b) |
| VU-FL | ND-GR | CCD-I |
| CONS - GB (d) | MDF-H (b) | PPI-I |
| FKGP-H | CDu-I (c) | RI-I |
| IP-Iceland | FI-I | FG-IRL |
| CP-LT | SVP-I (b/c) | TP-LV (a) |
| ANAP-TR | CSV-L (c) | LKDP-LT (a) |
| TPP-TR (c) | PN-M (a/c) | KrF-N (b) |
| | HOYRE-N (a) | CDA-NL |
| | PSD-P | RS/AWS-PL (a) |
| | UW-PL (a) | SKL-PL (a) |
| | PNTCD-RO (a) | KD-S |
| | RMDSZ-RO (a) | PDC-SM (b) |
| | KDU/CSL-CZ (a) | DL-F (d) |
| | Moderaterna-S | Pensionati-I (d) |
| | KDH-SK (b) | UdEUR-I (d) |
| | SMK/MKP-SK (b/c) | |
| | SKD-SLO (a) | |
| | CVP/PDC-CH (a/c) | |

a) Associate member of the EPP

b) Observer member

c) Permanent Observer member of the EDU

d) Parties whose MEPs are only members of the EPP/ ED Group in the European Parliament (ie not members of the EPP *qua* party)

N.B. To be read downwards. The left column lists parties that are only in EDU, the right column parties only in EPP. The central column shows overlapping membership.

For each cell, the party initials are followed by the standard abbreviation for that country. Thus DR-CY = Democratic Rally, Cyprus; PP-E = Partido Popular, Spain, etc.

Source: EPP Website archive.

politics' (EPP News 12, 28 April 2000). More convincingly, he added that in the new EU states CD parties on their own could never hope to better 10 percent of the vote. It is surprising what electoral realities can do for ideological changes of heart. Agag saw the problem as simply one of cultural differences between the two organizations (EPP News, 18 December 1999). On the strength of such justifications, it was inevitable that after the successful 1999 elections, moves towards merger would be speeded up. Thus, on Martens' suggestion, the EDU secretariat in Vienna has been closed down and moved into the EPP/CDI offices in Brussels. As Martens, ever the pragmatist, remarked, such a move would immediately bring a reduction in membership fees! EPP now speaks of a union of centrist parties; even the word 'centre-right' has been discreetly evacuated.

Europeanization is felt on the margins of the EU. In advance of enlargements, EPP pursues the same strategy of integrating parties from the moderate centre-right; emergent forces in candidate countries feel encouraged to position themselves in EPP's wake. Movement from below meshes with pressure from above. One probable consequence of this is the absorption of the regional conservative organization EDU; if this happens, EDU could be said to be a direct casualty of Europeanization.

Paradoxically, expansion of EPP has not hindered greater centralization, at least insofar as decision-making is concerned. Although we are still far from a proper statute for European parties (Bardi, 1994; Johansson and Zervakis, 2000), EPP and its sister parties in the EU have moved from their initial position as a loose confederation of like-minded parties towards more recognizable party forms. Hix and Lord have summarized very usefully the stages in this evolution (1997: 174 ff.). The 1993 statutes are clearly a watershed, with the replacement of the executive committee by the presidency, a heavyweight body involving the president and vice-presidents, the secretary-general and EP group leader, as well as a CD commissioner, the secretary-general of the EP group and the presidents of EUCD and the EPP group in the Council of Europe Assembly. The secretary-general's remit was also expanded to cover cooperation between national parties and the EP group. Most significant of all was the institutionalization of the conference of party leaders and heads of government, which, as Hix and Lord rightly say, is more influential than the congress, notionally the EPP's sovereign body. This meeting of elites now regularly precedes or accompanies European Councils, and clearly EPP leaders operate in the latter with concerted positions, often winning points (Hix and Lord, 1997: 188-94). The presidential style of Martens is an important factor here; a committed federalist, but also a shrewd pragmatist, he is always quick to decide on a position, rally support for it and intervene in the media. Recent examples, such as the Haider case and the Verheugen declaration, attest to these capacities. The process of expansion has thus gone hand-in-hand with an attempt to make EPP into a more efficient party tool. Europeanization has also had a spin-off benefit for the EPP leadership in the form of technical rationalization.

Europeanization, Collusion and the Return of Competition

For EPP, Europeanization has meant expansion and dilution of ideological rigour; we hope to have demonstrated that the two processes are inseparable. But these processes have been linked to a change in the competitive position of EPP. EPP and PES have long been considered willing accomplices in the joint management of the EP (Delwit et al., 1999). This complicity goes beyond the homogenizing cultural pressures identified within the EP by analysts such as Abelès (1992); it has institutional foundations. Both parties have had an interest in strengthening the power of this body, which has partly overridden their differences on ideology or policy. Curiously, the restrictive conditions placed upon the EP if it is to exercise the new powers have increased collaboration between the two major players. Here is a good example of institutional change modifying actors' behaviour, albeit contrary to the wishes of the intergovernmentalists who changed the workings of the institution, as they wanted to make it harder for the EP to use powers which they had felt forced to give it (Garrett, 1995; Tsebelis and Garrett, 1997). Put simply, in order to gain the required majorities, EPP had to team up with PES or, if that proved too difficult, the Liberals could be brought in. Analysts such as Hix and Lord felt that such coalitional behaviour was ostensibly at odds with EPP parties' positions in their own countries, where they might be expected to form the opposition to social democracy.

This argument holds up well for two-party or two-bloc systems like the UK or France; but it could have been countered by evidence from the 'consensual democracies', where until recently Christian Democrats figured regularly in coalitions alongside social democrats and sometimes liberals. Recent trends suggest an end to this collusion, however. Christian Democrats are now in opposition in the Netherlands and Belgium, where social democrats govern with liberals. At national level, there now seems a clearer demarcation between EPP parties and social democracy than for many years. It is not surprising then that with rising EPP numbers in the 1999 EP, the EPP leadership has promised a less cosy relationship with PES (Pöttering interview, EPP News, 16 July 1999). But as EPP, even with the Liberals, cannot command the majorities necessary, then horse-trading may continue. It will, however, be based on numerical *rappports de force* rather than simple convergence of policy or ideological stances, contrary to what some writers claim (Wilson, 1998: 263 ff.). Social democracy has undoubtedly given up on some of its transformative ambitions and made a firmer commitment to the marketplace; but that does not mean that the difference between right and left has disappeared. EPP knows this insofar as it has opted for a rightwards move, as set out above; if there was a general convergence of ideas or policies as claimed, it could just as easily (and perhaps more profitably) have moved the other way. One result of Europeanization for Christian

Democrats may well be an increased political polarization, which will further modify their approach to competitors.

Towards a European Party System?

It remains briefly to anticipate future developments, in particular whether EPP and its rivals will move into a genuine European party system. The question is a loaded one in that the EU political system is still one in gestation, rather than fully-fledged (Hix, 1999; Peterson and Bomberg, 1999). In their comparison of the EU with a generalized model of Western party democracy, Hix and Lord draw out the deficiencies in the EU party system (1997: 199–220). European parties can only carry out the classic party functions weakly in comparison to their national equivalents. They can present competitive manifestos or platforms; but that is the easiest task for any party. When it comes to cohesive organization (never mind unitary), or placing personnel into key loci of power or even holding deciders responsible in terms of party positions, the Europarties are very weak. Above all, they lack legitimacy. EP elections are effectively controlled by national parties (even if they sign up to a common programme); they tend to be fought on national issues, and voters know little about the EP except what national parties choose to tell them.

These shortcomings arise simply because the loci of power within the EU are still competed for essentially by national parties, out of whom national governments are formed, which then fill the main positions. Any further strengthening of the Europarties will therefore depend on national politicians consenting to further changes in the rules, which will involve acceptance of more integration. The various remedies are often discussed – a proper statute and full resourcing for European parties, a standard electoral procedure (with candidates being chosen by the transnational parties), direct election of the president of the commission, procedural changes in the EP. It is not our purpose here to argue in favour of any of these, but simply to point out that any strengthening of the Europarties (CD or other) depends primarily on national forces, i.e. what are supposed to be the sub-units of these parties. Hitherto, the Christian Democrats and others have shown considerable capacity for adaptation; but their Europeanization has usually been in response to stimuli provided by national forces acting intergovernmentally. Even though the European parties have now developed considerably as a result, they are still comparatively weak. It is hard to imagine the tail wagging the dog.

Conclusion: Europeanization, an Unending Dialectic?

We have tried to present Europeanization as a response by EPP and its members to various developments within the EU, but we have tried to see

the process dialectically; EPP and its members continue, by their actions, to modify the very process to which they are subjected. A number of findings emerge from observation of this sometimes paradoxical process.

Programmatically, it is hard to ascribe EPP's move to a neoliberal line on socio-economic questions to downwards Europeanization. But the party's heavy downplaying of its integrationist beliefs seems inextricably linked to its alliance strategy. Enlargement begat the need to recruit new members; as the most likely candidates came from the old centre-right, then ideological shifts had to be made to incorporate them. This logic was reinforced by the systemic pressures within the EP. If incoming parties were not picked up by EPP (at the ideological price just specified) then Liberals or Conservatives could move in.

Downward pressure from an evolving EU thus produced moves within EPP. But upwards pressure was also at work, in that some incomers actively sought EPP membership for their own domestic political purposes. These patterns of downward and upward pressures fusing harmoniously have been repeated in the case of EPP's relations with parties in candidate countries. Organizationally, EPP has used the widening of the party to develop more centralized, efficient machinery; here is a technical gain in addition to numerical progress.

There was a downside to these processes, however. Widening of EPP has led to potential rifts within it, which will require considerable brokering skills. More seriously, Europeanization has revealed fundamental blockages. The failure to integrate the UK Conservatives results from a bottom-up pressure. Had they been willing to trim their line on integration (as seemed likely under Major and Patten), they might have been incorporated as easily as the PP or FI. That they chose not to do so reflects the primacy of their national strategy; they believe there are more gains to be had from an active Eurosceptic policy. Here is one proof that bottom-up responses to European pressure can go against the grain, so to speak.

Europeanization reveals itself to be a matrix of powerful pressures not always pulling in the same direction. It is a complex process that proceeds at different speeds in different places; its outcomes are variable and not always controllable by EPP. It is unhelpful to see it as some inevitable process which will one day produce a tidy set of Europarties. The interplay between national and supranational actors makes such an outcome anything but predictable.

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