

SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT ORGANIZATION

Ideology and Party Structure in East-Central Europe

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ABSTRACT

This article examines four centre-right parties in East-Central Europe in order to assess the impact of ideology on party organization and revisit the thesis of organizational weakness in the region. The data collected indicate that, together with electoral success, inherited resources and national context, ideology does indeed shape the style of organization. Centre-right parties, as opposed to leftist parties, tend to be less bureaucratized, have fewer staff members, a simpler structure, more individualized leadership and in public office tend to have a more elevated role. Parties that have more individualistic ideologies tend to have 'lighter' organization and weaker embeddedness, while parties subscribing to a more collectivist and corporatist type of conservatism have developed more complex party organization and rely more heavily on affiliate organizations. Analysis of temporal changes uncovers a degree of organizational vitality that is surprising given that the literature on both centre-right and on post-communist politics points towards organizational weakness.

KEY WORDS ■ Czech Republic ■ Hungary ■ ideology ■ party organization ■ post-communism

Introduction

Organization is routinely listed as one of the least well-known aspects of party behaviour (Mair, 1994; Szczerbiak, 2001, etc.). Lack of comparable knowledge of this key aspect of political parties has made systematic assessment of political developments difficult, particularly so of post-communist politics. Nevertheless, the pioneering work of a number of scholars suggests that parties in many post-communist states have weak, leader-dependent

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organizations (Ágh, 1998; Kopecký, 1995; Lewis, 2000; Szczerbiak, 2001; van Biezen, 2003). Indeed, organizational weakness is often regarded as the principal reason for the volatility of post-communist party systems (Kostelecký, 2002: 175).

The literature on the organizational style of party families is surprisingly small. Most of the comparative work on party organization contrasts developmental models, countries or individual parties. The literature contains many passing references to the specific organizational profiles of ideologically defined groups, but these references are typically based on the example of a few, mainly Western European, parties. Nevertheless, observers tend to agree that the centre-right has a shallower, more leader-dependent and donor-dependent organization than the left (Duverger, 1965; Janda and King, 1985; Lane and Ersson, 1994; von Beyme, 1985; Wilson, 1998). Consequently, centre-right parties in East-Central Europe face a 'double burden' when it comes to organization-building: both the region and the party family they belong to are known to have parties with particularly shallow organizations. One of the tasks of this article is to revisit this thesis of organizational weakness.

In order to examine the correlation between ideology and type of party organization more carefully, we have chosen centre-right parties that exhibit three key features: (1) they have existed since the fall of communism, (2) they exhibit an unambiguous centre-right identity, and (3) they have been continuously represented in parliament. In order to control for the impact of the national context, we needed at least two centre-right parties in each country examined.

Four parties in the two states meet these criteria: the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and the Christian-Democratic Union –Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU–ČSL) in the Czech Republic, and Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) and the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) in Hungary. The representatives of these parties all sit in the EPP–ED grouping within the European Parliament and they are, with the exception of ODS, members of the European People's Party. While they all belong to the centre-right, they represent different currents: KDU–ČSL is Christian traditionalist; ODS is liberal conservative; MDF is conservative, but moving from its previous nationalism towards pragmatism and economic liberalism; while Fidesz, once liberal, is at present nationalist conservative, heading in recent years towards populism. We compare these four parties with each other and with their main left-wing rivals. In the Czech Republic, the main left-wing parties are the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) and the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD). Within Hungary, the main leftist parties are the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ). For the sake of brevity, the main features of these leftist parties are presented in the summary.

In the first two sections of this article, we briefly discuss the literature on party organizations in Central Eastern Europe and on the link between

ideology and party structure as background for the theoretical component of this research. In the third section, we present our conceptualization and operationalization of party organization. The fourth part contains our empirical findings concerning the profile of the parties examined. In the final section, we conclude by focusing on potential sources of variance in organizational style among the parties examined and between post-communist and Western party structures.

Party Organization in East-Central Europe

The literature on post-communist politics is fairly unequivocal about the general weakness of party organizations. Although they have registered members, national congresses, branches, local offices and full-time staff, and according to their statutes are bottom-up membership organizations, observers (cf. Ágh, 1998; Katz, 1996: 122; Kopecký, 1995; Lewis, 1996: 12, 2000: 103; Mair, 1997; Mair and van Biezen, 2001; Padgett, 1996; van Biezen, 2003, 2005, etc.) regularly find them weakly institutionalized and dependent on a small coterie of leaders. Ingrid van Biezen (2003, 2005) notes: that there is an absence of membership recruitment campaigns; that members' obligations to the parties are minimal; and that the parties often support independent candidates. She concludes, as Kopecký (1995) did, that parties have little interest in having members and that their operation is determined by an electoral logic and not by the logic of party mobilization.

The literature points at a number of factors that are responsible for this elitist and electoral organizational style: the lack of popular involvement in the transition process, the weakness of civil society, the existence of state financing and the central role of the mass media in party competition. Parties tend, generally, to be weakly organized in new democracies, but in Eastern Europe the prevailing anti-party traditions and the feebleness of organized socio-economic groups create special obstacles to organizational mobilization. Most scholars also recognize that there is variance in the region in terms of strength and institutionalization of party organizations. But the variance is due almost exclusively to the relative strength of 'successor' parties: former Communist parties and their satellites (Lewis, 1996: 16–17, 2000: 100; Szczerbiak, 2001: 26; van Biezen, 2005, etc.) and of the integrated nature of sectoral (ethnic and agrarian) parties (Kopecký, 1995).

Ideology and Organization

One may posit three main reasons for the correlation between ideology and organization among political parties. Firstly, ideology may have a direct causal impact on organizational style. This happens when the ideology of a party explicitly addresses issues of organization and cooperation among

PARTY POLITICS 14(4)

citizens. Belief in the *Führerprinzip* and belief in direct democracy are contrasting ideological positions that have direct implications for the preferred forms of party organization. Other beliefs, such as collectivism or the endorsement of aristocratic rule, can also prioritize certain organizational forms over others. Examples of direct intrinsic links between ideology and organization are not numerous – after all, the ideas and principles that a party offers to society and the way politicians organize themselves are distinct social phenomena.

Secondly, often the covariation between ideology and organization is spurious in the sense that neither phenomenon causes the other. The real source of covariation is often the character of the social group represented by the parties. Representing a large, well-organized social entity or a few wealthy citizens constrains both the ideological platform and form of party organization.

Thirdly, the relationship between ideology and organization may be a result of historical path dependency. Therefore the members of an ideological family may resemble each other organizationally because they share a similar origin with similar resources available at the time of their inception. Following the classic contributions of Duverger (1965) and Panebianco (1988), one could argue that factors such as origin (internal or external), pattern of national development (diffusion or penetration) and the existence of a dominant sponsor are the principal factors that may have a lasting impact on the parties' internal structure. Different party families can be characterized by a different distribution of these conditions, and thus exhibit unique organizational features.

A number of factors can cross-cut the impact of ideology. With a few exceptions, Duverger's famous thesis of 'contagion from the left' (as well as Epstein's subsequent anti-thesis of 'contagion from the right') associates the origins of mass-party organizational styles with a leftist ideological orientation. However, his thesis also claims that successful organizational styles tend to be copied by parties of different ideological persuasions. Harmel and Janda (1982: 51) demonstrated the existence of this 'contagion' when revealing that in countries with old and successful leftist parties non-leftist parties were in fact better organized. The convergence of organizational styles is explainable by contextual factors such as level of electoral competition. A number of empirical studies indicate that the most consequential contextual characteristics for patterns of party organization are type of electoral system, form of constitutional regime, type of party system and size and density of the population (Harmel and Janda, 1982; Katz, 1980; Loewenberg and Patterson, 1979; Ozbudun, 1970; Tan, 2000).

Imitation is not always an option for parties, however, nor is it a necessary precondition for success. Many right-wing parties lacked both the incentive and the possibility of mimicking the large-scale bureaucratic apparatuses and mass membership of the left, just as a number of ideological and sectoral parties failed, or never intended, to embrace the 'catch-all' strategy

(Katz and Mair, 1995, Kirchheimer, 1966). Parties endowed with different resources and different electoral ambitions are likely to choose different organizational models.

Owing to a mixture of direct ideological effects and indirect social background influences combined with similar historical origins, centre-right parties tend to have a number of common organizational features. Wilson (1998: 251) summarizes these in claiming that centre-right parties tend to have 'light organization'. Parties belonging to the centre-right tend: to rely more than leftist parties on donations from business groups, to have a less complex organizational structure, to give relatively large autonomy to MPs, to expect little activity from members, to have fewer members and to depend more on charismatic leaders. Dominated by public office-holders, these parties prefer to concentrate their resources on campaigning rather than on organization building. Large-scale bureaucratic structures, active due-paying membership, high density of collateral organizations are organizational features that are expected to appear more on the left (among socialist and communist parties) than on the right (Duverger, 1965; Janda and King, 1985; Lane and Ersson, 1994; von Beyme, 1985; Wilson, 1998). Indeed, scarce empirical research tends to confirm that the organizational styles of left-wing and right-wing parties differ, especially as regards organizational complexity and level of centralization (Janda and King, 1985).

For these reasons, our expectation is that centre-right parties in East-Central Europe will exhibit a greater propensity toward 'light organization' than their left-wing competitors.¹ This expectation is based on the insight that although all parties in East-Central Europe face similar constraints with regard to party organization building, the ideology of the party and social structuring of electoral support influence the organizational form chosen by parties. Furthermore, the fact that these parties inherited fewer resources from the previous regime should also push them towards organizational weakness.

Conceptualization and Measurement of Party Organizational Features

In order to create a reasonably comprehensive profile of a party, one must first determine what the principal dimensions of its organizational structure are. In this section, using insights and ideas from previous work (Duverger, 1965; Janda, 1980; Panebianco, 1988), we briefly outline six main criteria for profiling political parties: 1. party size, 2. activity of members, 3. organizational complexity, 4. autonomy of the party, 5. power concentration, and 6. balance of power within the organization.

First, we examine the size of parties, the number of members and employees and level of organizational coverage within a state. According to Duverger, a party belongs to the 'mass' type depending on its structure, not on number of members. But the number of members is typically treated as a good

indicator of the values attributed to membership within the party. There is a debate in the literature concerning the inclusion of supporters and voters among indicators of the extensiveness of organization (Müller-Rommel and Pridham, 1991), but in the European context the tradition is to focus on card-carrying members.

Second, there will be an investigation of the activity of members. The level of member activism is both reflected and determined by the party statutes, and therefore forms part of the parties' organizational profile as well. In fact, the amount and quality of participation by members is one of the major defining factors of party typologies (Duverger, 1965: 90–132; Neumann, 1956). When analysing the activity of party members, we focus mainly on membership requirements, frequency of meetings, the activity of members and the role of mobilization in party politics.

Our third criterion is the degree of complexity within and outside of party organization. At the most abstract level, this factor encompasses 'regularised procedures for mobilising and co-ordinating the efforts of party supporters in executing the party's strategy and tactics' and it may involve various phenomena, such as division of labour between party bodies, formalization of rules and formality of relationships (Harmel and Janda, 1982: 43; Janda, 1980: 98). We focus on the question how elaborate, structurally differentiated party organizations are. We examine under the heading of complexity the embeddedness of the parties within society, a feature Janda (1980) called the 'pervasiveness of organization'. We operationalize this factor in terms of the linkage density between a political party and civil society.

Our fourth criterion is the autonomy of a political party, as organizationally strong parties are expected to be independent. Party autonomy is seen here to refer to 'a party's structural independence from other institutions and organizations, whether in or out of the country' (Janda, 1980: 91). Quite obviously, a party lacks autonomy if external actors can manipulate internal decision-making. While this aspect is difficult to operationalize, one may examine the personnel (members, leaders, candidates) and finance (dependence on different sources of income) of parties. The more exclusive a party is in the recruitment of its members, leaders and representatives, and the more secure its sources of income are, the more autonomous it is.

More specifically, sources of income can be ranked according to their impact on the financial autonomy of the parties. From this point of view, membership fees and income coming from real estate or from other businesses run by the party are for obvious reasons the most 'independent' type of income. State subsidies, on the one hand, lower the parties' autonomy vis-à-vis the state, but also provide parties with the financial freedom to pursue their specific policy agendas. As far as donations are concerned, the more concentrated they are the less likely it is that the party will be able to disregard the sponsors' priorities.

A high degree of embeddedness of parties in society may undermine their autonomy, but whether links to trade unions, churches, sports clubs, etc.,

constrain a party, or empower it, depends on whether the party or one of its collateral organizations is at the top of the hierarchy.

Our fifth factor is the degree of power concentration within a party. This criterion relates mainly to the 'distribution of control over decision making among the levels of party organization' (Harmel and Janda, 1982: 59). A centralized party is one which features the concentration of effective decision-making authority in national party organs, with a premium placed on a smaller number of individuals participating in the decision (Janda, 1980: 108). The extremes are one-man-rule versus grassroots democracy, and, to take another aspect, strict subordination (hierarchy) versus mutual autonomy (stratarchy) (Carty, 2004). We operationalize this dimension by examining: (i) the method of selecting party leaders and parliamentary candidates, (ii) the relationship between national and local bodies, and (iii) the style of party leadership.

The final criterion used to create an organizational profile of parties is the balance of power between the parliamentary, governmental and extra-parliamentary elements within a party (Duverger, 1965: 182–202; Harmel and Janda, 1982: 72). This factor has a less clear-cut relationship with party strength than the other criteria, though one could argue that strong, autonomous and centralized parties must have a dominant extra-parliamentary leadership. This criterion is measured here in terms of the number of public office-holders in the party leadership and the status accorded to parliamentary groups within the party's statutes.

We expect the centre–right parties analysed to be characterized by small organization, inactive membership, simple structure, low autonomy, high level of centralization and dominance of the party in public office. At a less abstract level, we expect them to have few members, local organizations and staff, to conduct few meetings, to maintain few collateral organizations, to demand little from members, to rely more on donors (and less on members) and on the state, to have a highly personalized and centralized leadership and to grant a stronger role to MPs and members of the government and a lesser role to the 'party in central office' and the 'party on the ground'. These statements are expected to be true relative to the leftist parties as well as in absolute terms. Owing to space constraints, we present all our hypotheses and findings in Table 3. This table contains not only the comparison between left and right, but also the direction of changes since the early 1990s. The following section focuses specifically on the dynamics of the changes and places the data in political context.

Organizational Profile of Parties

Party Size

The data presented in Table 1 reveal that centre–right parties have indeed relatively few members, with the exception of the Czech Christian Democrats

PARTY POLITICS 14(4)

Table 1. Trends in party membership in the Czech Republic and Hungary, 1990–2005

Year	Czech Republic				Hungary			
	Centre-right		Left		Centre-right		Left	
	ODS	KDU-ČSL	ČSSD	KSČM	Fidesz	MDF	SZDSZ	MSZP
1990	NA	96,712	10,785	≈1 million	5000	21,000	15,000	50,000
1991	NA	94,100	12,468	562,529	NA	NA	NA	NA
1992	18,557	88,784	12,468	354,549	13,252	30,000	32,258	40,000
1993	23,269	80,000	11,031	317,104	NA	NA	NA	NA
1994	21,984	74,000	10,936	212,714	NA	NA	NA	NA
1995	22,499	65,000	11,326	196,224	10,000	28,000	32,000	37,000
1996	22,002	62,176	13,043	171,323	10,000	26,000	32,000	36,600
1997	23,488	NA	14,121	154,923	12,600	25,000	35,500	37,000
1998	22,095	60,460	17,343	142,490	15,000	21,500	14,000	38,200
1999	19,335	56,616	18,762	136,516	15,600	22,000	19,900	38,000
2000	18,432	55,306	17,079	128,346	15,600	25,000	20,780	32,300
2001	17,962	51,453	16,300	120,673	NA	NA	NA	NA
2002	18,188	50,657	17,026	113,027	16,500	25,000	27,000	37,600
2003	20,412	49,441	17,913	107,813	25,000	25,000	27,000	41,000
2004	21,641	46,905	16,288	100,781	25,630	16,500	26,371	37,500
2005	23,138	44,308	16,328	94,396	30,300	10,000	26,827	36,436
M/E								
1992	0.24	1.29	0.16	4.58	0.06	0.27	0.19	0.64
1996	0.28	1.00	0.16	2.14	0.19	0.34	0.44	0.45
1998	0.28	0.75	0.21	1.76	0.19	0.27	0.17	0.47
2002	0.22	0.61	0.21	1.37	0.20	0.31	0.34	0.47
2006	0.28	0.53	0.20	1.13	0.37	0.12	0.33	0.45
1992–2006	+0.04	-0.76	+0.04	-3.45	+0.31	-0.15	+0.15	-0.19
M/V								
1992	1.0	21.8	2.9	39.0	1.1	1.7	1.4	9.3
1996	1.2	16.3	0.8	27.4	4.0	4.3	3.3	2.0
1998	1.3	11.3	0.9	21.6	1.1	17.0	4.1	2.6
2002	1.6	7.4	1.2	12.8	1.8	1.8	8.6	1.6
2006	1.2	11.5	0.9	13.7	1.8	10.0	11.1	3.6

Source: Party headquarters and several party documents prepared for party congresses in the case of Czech political parties. For Hungarian parties, data from Hungary's Political Yearbooks and various newspaper reports have been used. *Note:* The numbers refer to the situation as of 1 January of each year; only ČSSD in 2002 is as of 31 March 2002 and KDU-ČSL in 1996 is as of 10 June 1996; NA indicates that the data are not available.

Note: M/E means membership/total electorate ratio in percentages; M/V means membership party voters ratio in percentages.

(KDU-ČSL). Only the Czech Communist Party (KSČM) has a higher member-to-voter ratio than the Christian Democrats. The Czech Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and Hungary's Fidesz increased their membership between 1990 and 2005, while the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and KDU-ČSL lost members. The feat achieved by ODS and Fidesz is all the more remarkable

ENYEDI & LINEK: IDEOLOGY AND PARTY STRUCTURE

as both parties were in opposition during their main periods of growth. Such evidence suggests that growth in membership was not a product of institutionalizing clientelistic structures, but a genuine mobilization breakthrough. Significantly, in the same period, membership in leftist parties either stagnated or declined.

The number of local party branches generally paralleled the growth in numbers of party members, but unsurprisingly exhibited more inertia.² In the case of KDU-ČSL, there was a slight decrease between 1998 and 2002 from 2,437 to 2,218 local organizations. As MDF was shrinking in electoral terms, its local organizations declined in number from 575 in 1995 to 540 in 2005. But given that MDF support has fallen since the early 1990s, from 24 percent to 5 percent in electoral terms, it is remarkable that its local structures have remained so intact. The number of local branches of the ODS decreased from 1,405 (1996) to 1,290 (2004), mainly the result of the Freedom Union splitting from the ODS in 1998. Finally, in the case of Fidesz membership, growth was coupled with even more spectacular growth in the number of local organizations. In 2001 the party had around 400 local branches and by 2005 this number had increased to 1,050. This growth is even more significant given that the number of left-wing party branches decreased during the same period.

The official figures relating to the number of staff employed by parties indicate that centre-right parties in the Czech Republic have around 120 employees, while the Hungarian centre-right parties employ around 40.³ In Fidesz and ODS the growth in membership has not been mirrored by similar growth in the number of party bureaucrats, which means that these parties are managing their growing number of members by relying less on paid officials and increasingly on (officially) unpaid activists. This trend may be a product of necessity, as opposition parties have fewer resources at their disposal. However, the financial situations of ODS and Fidesz were such that staff cuts were not a necessity. It would seem that the growing reliance on activists is consonant with two major ideological tenets of ODS and Fidesz, anti-bureaucracy and populism.⁴ Whatever the immediate reasons for this trend, however, the key point to be made here is that centre-right parties are less bureaucratized than their competitors on the left are.⁵

Activity

According to the statutes, parties in East-Central Europe do not require much activity from their members (van Biezen, 2003). This state of affairs is reflected also in the way membership fees are collected. Scarrow (1996) differentiates on the basis of the history of British and German parties between activist-based methods (door-to-door collecting) and staff-based methods (bank accounts or party meetings). Door-to-door collecting used to be an important technique for retaining and mobilizing members in Western Europe. In East-Central Europe this method of collecting membership fees is

PARTY POLITICS 14(4)

largely unknown and only the Czech Christian Democrat Party (KDU-ČSL) has employed it.

The skeleton of the local party organizations' activity is provided by the bottom-up constitution of party bodies. Local party organizations must regularly (re)elect their chairmen and their delegates to the upper echelons and to the congresses in all parties examined here. There must be at least two party meetings per year in KDU-ČSL and one in the ODS. In contrast, the MDF does not prescribe a minimal number of meetings for local party members. In Fidesz, however, at least four local meetings must be organized per year and the party's national board can disband local organizations if these have been inactive for a year.⁶

While the statutes of the leftist parties tend to make more references to membership activity, in real terms the difference between left and right is not significant. Interviews with Czech party officials and party managers reveal that party member activity is roughly the same in leftist and rightist parties.⁷ A quarter of the members are active in parties with small membership, like the Civic Democrats (ODS), and even fewer in parties with a larger membership, like the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL).

According to the statutes, Fidesz is particularly demanding of its members. Indeed, Fidesz activists have been deployed during the past decade in a large number of mass rallies, petitions, town hall meetings, fora on specific issues and demonstrations. The party headquarters measures all potential outputs of local organizations, such as the number of new members, number of organized events, local turnout at elections and referendums, the number of signatures collected, etc. Since 2002 the party has organized four large-scale petitions, each time collecting close to a million signatures. In 2002, and again in 2006, more than 100,000 citizens attended some of the demonstrations organized by the party. While other Hungarian parties have attempted to imitate Fidesz's new style of campaigning, they have been considerably less successful.

Complexity

On average, Czech parties have a simpler organization than parties in Hungary and, moreover, centre-right parties in the Czech Republic have a simpler organizational form and more homogeneous structure than their left-wing competitors. Party structures based on vocational or policy-based criteria, such as education or ecology, tend to be features of left-wing parties. All Czech parties, except the Civic Democrats (ODS), have policy commissions to formulate, discuss and evaluate party policies. ODS has had a more expert-oriented and public-office-oriented way of doing the same thing through the use of shadow cabinets. KDU-ČSL just as the other Czech parties, but unlike ODS, has affiliated youth organizations, bodies for education and dissemination of the parties' message, sport and women sections. However, only a left-wing party, the ČSSD, allows representatives

ENYEDI & LINEK: IDEOLOGY AND PARTY STRUCTURE

of the young, women and senior organizations to take part (without voting rights) in meetings of the national executive committee.

In Hungary, the Socialist Party (MSZP) used to have the most differentiated internal organization with 32 different sections (for example, Roma, women, religious believers or teachers). In the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), it is possible to organize interest-based groupings if 50 members wish to do so, but, to date, no sub-organizations have been created. It is Fidesz that has recently challenged the superiority of the left in providing an elaborate group-based structure. The current position of Fidesz in this regard is unique. The original party structure contained both territorial and non-territorial units and Fidesz party members could affiliate either with interest-based or territorially-based units. These interest-based groupings within Fidesz were abolished in 1990 when the party structure was homogenized, but a decade later new non-territorial units called 'sections' were (re-)introduced. These sections are not supposed to be based on ideological differences, however, but on 'similar life-situation and social activity' and that they have all been created by the party's presidium. To sum up, Fidesz went through three phases: first, bottom-up complexity, then flat structure and, finally, top-down complexity. While the MSZP may still be the most complex party organization in Hungary, the evolution of the Fidesz indicates that centre-right parties in CEE are capable of imitating this supposedly leftist strategy (Enyedi, 2005).

One of the main challenges facing party leaders is how to mobilize citizens between two elections. Their answers to this challenge shape the embeddedness of parties. Leftist parties in the Czech Republic and Hungary, as in other parts of the world, tend to cooperate more with trade unions and organizations of tenants and retired people. The centre-right in these two countries did not inherit similar links. Significantly, business associations have preferred to direct their efforts mainly at government and the civil service rather than at right-wing parties as such. However, in more recent times, centre-right parties seem to have realized the potential of a more institutionalized subculture around the party, and they have developed new strategies of dissemination and mobilization.

In Hungary, the response of Fidesz to the challenge of mobilizing party members has been to create a number of overlapping organizations and movements. Besides direct membership, one can affiliate with the party by gaining the status of 'supporter without membership' or by joining one of the affiliate organizations (Christian-Democratic, Smallholder, Roma, etc.) or the Civic Circles, a movement led by Viktor Orbán, the President of Fidesz.

In a less spectacular manner, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in the Czech Republic has begun to move in a similar direction. The party under Václav Klaus maintained a simple organizational structure, which was expected to be nothing but a vehicle for elections. However, after the departure of Klaus in late 2002, ODS started to cultivate relationships with civic organizations, particularly with the Young Conservatives. Moreover, the

PARTY POLITICS 14(4)

party now invests more energy in providing educational facilities for its candidates and an infrastructure for public lectures and discussions with its supporters. ODS is planning to acquire (and in some regions, has already acquired) buildings where there is scope for meetings and receptions of non-members and supporters. Recently, ODS started its own private university, called the Liberal Conservative Academy, the primary aim of which is to educate local and regional councillors and MPs and award bachelor degrees in public administration and political science.

The embeddedness of the Czech Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) has not changed significantly during the transformation era. It has retained its strong links with church organizations, pro-life civic groups and charities. In contrast, the MDF was so weakened in 2001 that it was left without resources to launch new organizational initiatives. Overall, however, our evidence suggests that the gap between the left and the right in terms of the embeddedness of parties within civic organizations and civil society more generally is quite small and decreasing.

Autonomy

The centre-right parties examined tend to be more selective in admitting new members than left-wing parties are. Their application forms often contain a number of sensitive questions about, e.g. possession of a criminal record, previous membership in another party (Fidesz, ODS), membership in the Communist Party militia structures (Fidesz, ODS, KDU-ČSL) and membership in civic or religious organizations (Fidesz). Fidesz in Hungary is particularly demanding, i.e. requiring each new member to provide three references from current party members of at least one year's standing. The Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) also asks new members to provide references from two current members.

Long-standing party members who have made a career within party politics currently lead all of the centre-right parties in the Czech Republic and Hungary. The former leader of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus, was an exception, having been a government minister prior to establishing ODS. No centre-right party followed the example of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MZSP), who at one point selected a Prime Minister (and a party leader) from outside the party.

On turning our attention to the selection of candidates for public office, we find considerable variance across centre-right parties. While preferring insiders, most parties in Hungary are ready to endorse non-party members (cf. van Biezen, 2005). This is much less so in the Czech Republic, where around 80 percent of candidates of the KDU-ČSL, 90 percent of KSČM and almost 100 percent of ODS and ČSSD are party members (Linek and Pecháček, 2007). At the municipal level, only about half of the candidates are members of a party in the Czech Republic, and less than one-fifth in Hungary (Horváth, 2000). Parties are ready to support non-members partly

ENYEDI & LINEK: IDEOLOGY AND PARTY STRUCTURE

because there is often a lack of suitable internal candidates. However, the nomination of non-members can also be conceived of as an intelligent response to anti-party sentiments, i.e. parties hiding themselves behind nominally non-partisan figures. Many of the 'independent' candidates supported by parties become party members after the elections, or at least they operate as such.

An analysis of the finances of centre-right parties in Table 2 reveals that they receive around 5–6 percent of their income from membership fees.⁸ Only in the case of the Czech Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) does one encounter double-digit figures for some years. This low proportion of membership contributions is not solely a right-wing phenomenon. The only party in the Czech Republic and Hungary that relies to any considerable extent on fees is the Czech Communist Party (KSČM), which receives on average more than 30 percent of its income from this source. For the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and Civic Democrats (ODS) in the Czech Republic we observe a decline in the relevance of membership fees, a decline caused not by a decrease in absolute terms but by an enormous increase in state subsidies during the late 1990s. The party that relies least on members is not one of the right-wing parties; Hungary's Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) typically receives around 2 percent from this source. The 5 percent level within the Fidesz budget counts as a dramatic increase compared to the 1990s, when this form of income rarely surpassed 1 percent (Enyedi, 2006a).

As far as real estate and party-owned businesses are concerned, neither the left nor the right, but older more established parties have a considerable advantage. The Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Czech Communists (KSČM) and Czech Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) inherited real estate and companies. The Czech Communists managed to buy some buildings during the early 1990s as well. The Hungarian Socialists (MSZP) have gradually given up their enterprises, but the Czech parties still get around 20 percent of their income from their own business interests, which mainly consist of revenues from office rental. One of the newer parties, the leftist ČSSD, also owns a large building in the centre of Prague, and future income from this building is likely to make the party virtually independent of other sources of income. In general, parties of the centre-right in the Czech

Table 2. Proportion of state subsidies and membership fees on total party income, 2000–2005 (per cent)

<i>Source of funding</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>				<i>Hungary</i>			
	<i>ODS</i>	<i>KD-ČSL</i>	<i>ČSSD</i>	<i>KSČM</i>	<i>Fidesz</i>	<i>MDF</i>	<i>SZDSZ</i>	<i>MSZP</i>
State	69	58	80	45	66	84	63	72
Members	6	11	5	31	5	4	3	4
Corporate sponsors	8	2	2	0	0	2	7	0
Individual sponsors	9	1	1	1	7	4	11	16

Source: Party budgets in the Official Gazette for Hungarian parties; financial reports for Czech parties.

PARTY POLITICS 14(4)

Republic and Hungary benefit less from this type of income than parties of the left, and in this regard their autonomy is indeed lower.

Contrary to our expectations, the parties most independent of the state with regard to financing were not the right-wing parties; in Hungary it is the left-liberal SZDSZ, while in the Czech Republic it is the communist KSCM. In the Czech Republic, the old versus new party division dominates, because the contribution made by state grants to the budgets of the Civic Democrats (ODS) and Social Democrats (ČSSD), both founded in the early 1990s, is highest. However, some care in interpretation is required here because this pattern may also be a function of electoral performance. This is because state grants to parties are dependent on the number of seats won in the most recent national and regional elections.

On the basis of previous research, we expected that centre-right parties would benefit most from donations from business and individuals. This is true in the Czech Republic, but not in Hungary. Fidesz and the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) receive only about 7 percent of their income from donors, which is less than half of the donations received by parties of the left. If one includes loans in the category of donations, then Fidesz turns out to be a fairly well-supported party, while the MDF is not. In the Czech Republic, donors played an important role during the 1990s, but because of major financial scandals and the enactment of stricter rules concerning donations their weight decreased to at most 10 percent in the case of the ODS, which still attracts a majority of donations. ODS and the left-liberal SZDSZ in Hungary are the only parties that receive a significant contribution from corporate donors.

Centralization

As expected, centre-right parties tend to be dominated by their leaders. These parties have fewer open contests and less collegial decision-making than leftist parties. The authority of the party leader is clearest in the case of Fidesz, where collective leadership was transformed during the early 1990s under the highly personal leadership of Viktor Orbán. A similar pattern is evident in the case of KDU-ČSL and MDF. In the former, both Josef Lux (1990–99) and Miroslav Kalousek (2003–06) adopted a personalized style of leadership. In the latter case, strong leadership has been the norm except during the 1993–99 period. In the ODS, the role of Václav Klaus was similar to that of Viktor Orbán. Significantly, since the departure of Klaus in late 2002 the leadership of ODS has become more collective in nature.

Candidate selection for parliamentary elections is relatively centralized in all the parties examined here, but much more so in Hungary than in the Czech Republic. Looking first at centre-right parties in Hungary, national committees appear to have the final say over candidate selection. However, it is the top leadership that often effectively decides which candidates are allowed to stand for the party. In the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF),

ENYEDI & LINEK: IDEOLOGY AND PARTY STRUCTURE

the regional and national party lists are drawn up by the presidium, and the presidium can initiate a veto against single-member district candidates. The functional equivalent of the MDF presidium in Fidesz is the election coordination committee, which is chaired by the party leader and consists of the campaign manager (appointed by the party leader), the president of the national committee, three members of the party's executive organs (one representing the presidium and two the national committee) and the parliamentary group leader. The national committee can decide only about candidates already filtered and screened by this body. The party president has the right to appoint the presidents of the district organizations. Since in most cases the president of the district organization becomes the Fidesz candidate in the district, the party leader can thus determine the composition of the parliamentary group as well. In contrast, the leadership of the main leftist party, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), can alter the local choice of single-member-district candidates only in exceptional circumstances.

Turning our attention to the Czech Republic, all candidates to the lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, are elected from 14 electoral districts, where each district has a separate party list. All candidates are nominated by county and regional organizations, albeit with different inputs from the central party bodies. Selection is almost exclusively by delegates from local organizations who meet at regional level. Within the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) the national executive committee cooperates with regional bodies in selection of the top candidate for each district list.

Balance of Power

Parties in East-Central Europe resemble each other in terms of overall national party organization. All parties have either three or four organs at the national level. The Czech Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and Fidesz follow the three-tier pattern, while KDU-ČSL has four levels. In the broadest of the party organs, the Congress, a majority of members are delegates from local organizations, with the exception of ODS, where the proportion of public office-holders in the party assembly in the early 1990s (mainly MPs and Senators) was as high as one half (and still numbers more than a quarter).

In the MDF, the national committee consists of county presidents and delegates, members of parliament (10 percent), members of the presidium and two delegates from the youth organization. In Fidesz, the national committee has a strong incumbent party component. As well as presidents of Fidesz territorial organizations, members of the presidium and representatives of the sections, one finds in this body all of the ministers, junior ministers and mayors of larger cities (including Budapest districts). Finally, the national executive committee of the ODS contains, besides the presidium, only regional delegates. The KDU-ČSL national executive committee consists of the presidium, eight members elected by the party congress, members of the

PARTY POLITICS 14(4)

cabinet, five MPs and senators nominated by the Parliamentary Party Groups, regional prime ministers and speakers and vice-speakers of the Chamber and Senate.

The composition of these middle level party organs indicates that in the ODS and MDF they are expected to be representatives of the extra-parliamentary wing, although there is no restriction on public office-holders participating in them. In the Czech Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and Fidesz they function as arenas for coordinating the three faces of the party: the party on the ground, the party in central office and the party in public office (Katz and Mair, 1993). Leftist parties do not provide such guaranteed weight of public office-holders in middle level party bodies.

In all of the centre-right parties examined, the top party leaders tend to be members of parliament.⁹ Only the MDF presidium contains a few non-MPs, but this is mainly the result of recent defections from the MDF parliamentary party group. The overlap of party in public office and party in central office characterizes leftist parties as well, but there are significant exceptions in the cases of the KSCM and MSZP.

Most party statutes reflect the dominance of extra-parliamentary parties (cf. van Biezen, 2003). Parliamentary party leaders are required to report to various extra-parliamentary bodies (presidium, national committee, congress, etc.). In Hungary, groups in the local and national parliaments are conceived as part of the party structure. Leaving these groups leads to immediate expulsion from the party. Czech parties are less strict, as constitution requires separation between parliamentary party wing and the party proper. However, disciplinary measures are often employed against defectors or troublemakers regardless of their membership in parliament (Linek and Rakušanová, 2005).

The Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) parliamentary group is even more dominated by its extra-parliamentary leadership than is the case in the leftist parties: the national committee determines the rules that govern the internal life of the parliamentary party and has co-decision rights concerning selection of the parliamentary party leader. The right to nominate the parliamentary party leader belongs to the party presidium.¹⁰ While this extreme form of control is not a characteristic feature of Fidesz, its extra-parliamentary leadership has always dominated the party.¹¹ The current party statutes give the parliamentary wing autonomy to establish its own rules, but the party presidium may still make recommendations as to who should succeed as next parliamentary party leader.

In the Czech Republic, only in the Communist Party (KSCM) does the extra-parliamentary wing have the right to recommend a parliamentary party leader to members of the parliamentary party. Overall, such evidence should not distract us from the fact that decisions regarding party policy are made by the party leadership in all the parties (Linek and Rakušanová, 2002). Therefore contrary to Western examples, members of parliament for centre-right parties in the Czech Republic and Hungary have rather modest status.

The original hypothesis in relation to the dominance of the party in public office in centre-right parties seems to be better confirmed concerning the status of the party-in-government than by the status of the MPs. In Fidesz, the Prime Minister or the ex-Prime Minister is automatically a member of the top party leadership, and ministers are automatically made members of the national committee. Cabinet members sit on the national executive committees of the KDU-ČSL and ODS (in the latter without voting rights). The leftist parties provide members of the government with a less privileged role, although the Czech Social Democrats (ČSSD) give the highest-ranking cabinet member a seat on the national executive committee.

Conclusions

The evidence presented in Table 3 suggests that the centre-right parties in the countries examined share a number of commonalities with each other and with their Western counterparts. The majority of the indicators surveyed point in the 'right' direction. Centre-right parties, as opposed to leftist parties, tend to have fewer staff members, simpler structure, are characterized by a more personalized style of leadership, and in public office have a more elevated role.

Some of our hypotheses are refuted. First, Hungarian centre-right parties are less donor-oriented than their left-wing competitors. Second, centre-right parties in the Czech Republic and Hungary rely as much on the state as left-wing parties do. Third, in the Czech Republic the Christian Democrat party (KDU-ČSL) is more deeply embedded in its social niche than its left-wing rivals are. Fourth, Fidesz has developed a complex organization and maintains a network of affiliate organizations where it can call on an impressively large reservoir of activists – a characteristic typically associated with mass oriented left-wing parties. Finally, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) deviates from our expectations in its state-dependent budget and the low status of parliamentary members within the party.

This list of 'deviations' already indicates that our expectation that centre-right parties should have similar organization forms must be qualified. Inherited resources, charismatic personalities, the requirements of competition and the consequences of electoral success cross-cut the influence of ideology. In the Czech Republic, it is the age of parties that has a particular impact on organizational style. Within Hungary, the level of electoral success and the activities of charismatic leaders seem to have had a major impact on how parties have developed their organizations. Both cases show that electoral success and the amount of resources parties inherited from previous regimes are consequential for organizational profiles.

Finally, the cross-country differences showed that context is indeed important. Parties in different electoral, constitutional and socio-economic contexts must adapt to different challenges and opportunities. The relevance

Table 3. Comparison of hypothesised and actual differences between centre right and left wing parties and trends in organisational change since the 1990s

<i>Criteria and indicators</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>				<i>Hungary</i>				
	<i>Hypothesized effects</i>	<i>ODS</i>	<i>KDU-ČSL</i>	<i>FIDESZ</i>	<i>MDF</i>	<i>Change since the 1990s</i>	<i>Difference with left-wing parties</i>	<i>Change since the 1990s</i>	<i>Difference with left-wing parties</i>
Number of members	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Number of local organizations	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Number of staff	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Meetings, rallies, etc.	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Elaborate organization	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Collateral organizations	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Exclusivity of membership	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Exclusivity of candidates	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Role of membership fees	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Role of donations	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Role of state subsidies	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Centralized decision-making	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
One man rule	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌
Role of the party in public office	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌

* *Note:* For contrast of party families ↑ means greater (larger), ↓ means less; ⇌ means stable. For time comparison ↑ means increase; ↓ means decline; ⇌ means stable. Boldface arrows refer to effects opposite to those hypothesized.

ENYEDI & LINEK: IDEOLOGY AND PARTY STRUCTURE

of context is underlined by the fact that we have also detected a convergence in structure and strategy between parties of the left and right. Electorally successful parties such as the ODS and Fidesz have striven to broaden their mass appeal and resources by expanding their membership and level of integration within civil society. This evidence qualifies the findings of previous research arguing that parties in Eastern Europe prioritize electoral mobilization over organization-building (Enyedi, 2006b; Mair, 1997; van Biezen, 2003). Parties with shorter histories are gradually building up solid organizational structures, while parties that have not been able to convert their superior organizational assets into electoral success are losing members, staff and organizational complexity.

Even acknowledging the relevance of these factors, the findings provide us with enough ammunition to argue for the importance of ideology. Some of the differences between the examined parties and the Western patterns can be attributed exactly to differences in the ideological profiles. The specific ideological and social character of the East-Central European centre-right led inevitably to 'deviations'. While in Western Europe centre-right parties arose from the aspirations and actions of social elites, within post-communist Europe centre-right parties sprung from groups that commanded few resources and could be considered counter-elites only in terms of intellectual contestation. In the region, Gaullism and Christian Democracy are more important points of reference for the right than Anglo-Saxon conservatism and economic liberalism. Centre-right parliamentarians are often (at least) as collectivist as their leftist rivals. One important consequence of these differences is the fact that in the Czech Republic and Hungary support from wealthy donors is much less than the evidence from Western Europe would lead us to expect.

Even the differences among the four parties examined are likely to be partly due to ideology. The evidence presented shows that parties that have more individualistic ideologies (the Czech Civic Democrats (ODS), Fidesz in the early 1990s and the present-day Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)) have slimmer organizations, less social embeddedness and prefer to campaign in the media and not on the streets. Parties that subscribe to a more collectivist and corporatist type of conservatism (Fidesz and the Czech Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL)) have developed a more complex party organization and rely more heavily on affiliate organizations. From this perspective, the greatest similarity is between the Czech ODS and the Hungarian Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ). In fact, both parties stand for individualism and conservative economic philosophy and differ only in terms of their cultural orientation and preferences for coalition partners.

The direction of changes in organizational style is also in line with the direction of ideological trajectories: as the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and Fidesz embraced nationalism, their organizational make-up started to move closer to a leftist-collectivist pattern, while the growing emphasis on economic liberalism in the MDF was mirrored by a move towards a 'lighter'

PARTY POLITICS 14(4)

organization. Ideology is not the most direct, and certainly not the only, predictor of organization, but it would be a serious mistake to disregard it even in an era of the 'end-of-ideology'.

Notes

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- 1 These expectations concerning centre-right parties mainly reflect the profile of conservative and liberal bourgeois parties. Religious parties used to have a typically more mass-party-like structure. As argued in this collection by Bale and Szczerbiak, however, Christian parties are likely to have only a marginal role in East-Central Europe.
- 2 The national differences are striking, but the difference between the legal-territorial structures of the two countries explains a large number of these differences. In the Czech Republic there are upwards of 6,200 municipalities, while in Hungary there are only 3,200.
- 3 Scrutinizing the size of party bureaucracies is a difficult task given that parties clearly understand the term 'employee' differently. Particularly in Hungary, there are many paid activists whose main employer is not the party, but some other organization affiliated to the party. We should also note that the large number of experts employed by parliamentary parties (there have been up to 200 in Hungary) are not included in these figures.
- 4 The current ODS party leader, Miroslav Topolánek, and several regional managers prepared party organization reform that implied abolishment of the county level and strengthening of the regional level. These plans would result in around 50 party staff being dismissed. The reform has never been made public and is unlikely ever to be implemented because it attracted enormous opposition from the rank and file and county leaders.
- 5 This is not to suggest that centre-right parties neglect mass membership organization. Between 2000 and 2005 the proportions of expenditure spent on organization (salaries, rent, general office expenses, etc.) were as follows: Fidesz 37 percent, MDF 66 percent, ODS 40 percent and KDU-ČSL 55 percent. The equivalent figures for the leftist parties were: MSZP 22 percent, SZDSZ 56 percent, KSČM 40 percent and ČSSD 50 percent.
- 6 Interestingly, in recent times a number of local Fidesz organizations have been dissolved and reorganized from above simply because they did not perform well enough. Unsatisfactory election and referendum results at elections, a failure to attract new members, or perceptions of cosy relations with political opponents were the typical reasons given for dissolution.
- 7 Lukáš Linek conducted more than 40 interviews with party managers of the four main Czech parties at national, regional and county level during 2003.
- 8 Note that we focus only on direct party income and do not take into account indirect financing of parties; for example, state subsidies to Parliamentary Party Groupings or MPs' salaries or free time for election broadcasts on public TV. We analyse only the budgets reported in official declarations. The real figures may

ENYEDI & LINEK: IDEOLOGY AND PARTY STRUCTURE

differ substantially, but we have no access to more reliable data than reported by the parties themselves.

- 9 The main exception is the current party leader of the ODS, Miroslav Topolánek, who was elected as party leader in 2002 when he held a seat in the Senate. In 2004 he decided not to run for re-election in the Senate elections in order to focus entirely on the 2006 elections to the Chamber of Deputies.
- 10 Moreover, use of the vote of no-confidence procedure in parliament is also a matter that is decided within the MDF national committee.
- 11 As a symbolic acknowledgement of this state of affairs, in 1993 the extra-parliamentary party was given the power to recommend who should be parliamentary party leader and to determine the statutes governing members of parliament.

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