

*National MPs and their parliamentary behaviour: still a case for structural explanations?*

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Paper presented at the CEU 2008 annual doctoral conference  
-draft chapter-

The more structured the environment in which political parties function, the more are they expected to act and interact taking into account the institutional structure at work. This paper deals with institutional determinants of party unity, their impact, if any, and also with the strength of relationships identified. Starting from the distinction between unity of behaviour and unity of attitudes (ideological unity), the study refines and tests some “old” assumptions and propositions derived from the literature and also provides new hypotheses which consider additional factors and their interactions.

As mentioned in many scholarly works, the way the state is organized constitutionally may affect the interaction between political parties, MPs behaviour, let alone the emphasis on electoral system which could explain at least in theory why some parliamentarians stick to the party decisions or not. The need for unity is at the heart of representative democracy and guarantees the articulation of voters’ interests and the translation of political opinions and into public policies. Some big question marks are indeed if parties can stay united despite a federal system at work or an electoral system which discourages loyalty while it favours individualism or are they able to adapt and make use of internal mechanisms which counteract environmental influences perceived as obstacles in achieving their objectives, those being either votes, seats or policy goals. The paper depicts the theoretical arguments behind every hypothesis, continues with a presentation of the data and a discussion of the results

based on the 1996 European elite surveys and the 2007 Borz, Enyedi, Janda expert survey on party unity in twenty-three European countries. The method is block analysis which depicts the strength, direction, direct or indirect impact of institutions on unity of behaviour via unity of attitudes as intervening variable.

### **1.1 The theoretical case for structural explanations**

Amongst system level determinants of unity, theorists of electoral systems (Katz 1980, Taagepera and Shugart 1989, Carey and Shugart 1995) mention the electoral formula, district magnitude and ballot structure as being related to party unity. Party list proportional representation is expected to generate more united parties than single member district systems using plurality or majority, because in the latter case, the relationship with the constituency makes the MPs less attached to the party at the central level (Taagepera and Shugart 1989). From the electoral system dimensions to the actual behavior in the parliament and attitudes of MPs, there is a gap to fill in and that can be done taking into consideration the principle delegate theories and representation theories. Representation is as an essential feature of democratic governance and who elected representatives see as important in shaping their legislative behavior is at the heart of representative government. How representation is perceived and valued by the MPs elected under different set of rules can influence their final behavior on the floor. Same national studies have been already conducted for the British, Dutch, German or Australian MPs (Searing 1985, 1991, Andeweg 1997, Patzelt 1997, Damgaard 1997, Studlar and McAllister 1996) and showed that while the emphasis has shifted over the years from one role orientation to the other, all three roles can co-exist. For the analysis pursued here, I expect not only differences in the representation roles enhanced by the MPs of the same party but also

cross-country differences which could explain different levels of party unity. The traditional and more recent theoretical expectations see the MPs as delegates (imperative mandate), trustees (free mandate), politico (mixed delegate and trustee) or partisans (party representatives). It is the latter role which I consider to be more linked to party unity either in terms of attitudes or in terms of behavior. Following from this, those MPs who see themselves as representatives of the constituency are expected to behave less united in parliament as compared to those who see themselves as the representatives of the whole nation or of all party voters. *The broader the focus of representation, the higher the level of party behavioral unity is expected to be* (H1). MPs who are elected in single member districts are more probable to see representation just in terms of their constituency and consequently to show a low level of party behavioral unity. Therefore, *the bigger the district magnitude, the lower the focus of representation and the level of behavioral unity* (H2).

Because of different links established between principals and delegates vs. trustees vs. partisans, different levels of representation can be distinguished. *At the individual level*, the MP is the trustee, delegate or politico of his voters, while at the *national level* political parties put representation into practice and they can be as well considered as having the above representation roles. In the later level, it is the party rather than the individual MP, which sets the link between the citizens and the state (Kopecký 2004: 353). If these representation roles at different levels are influenced by the institutional structure in which political parties operate, and if we further add the other dimensions of electoral system to the party unity explanatory model, the hypothesis is that *MPs elected under open lists with preferential voting allowed or in single member districts are expected to have a narrow understanding of*

*representation (representation focus) and to show a low level of behavioral unity (H3).*

Besides the electoral system, the state structure and the political regime as parts of the state institutional structure were for a long time assumed to impact on party unity. Federalism is also one of the factors that have usually been blamed for the low cohesion in the American parties (Key, 1964: 334) because of the decentralizing effect on the party system. Blondel (1978, 151) agrees and observes that “federal countries are also those in which the parties’ state or provincial organs are strongest”. Katz and Kolodny (1994, 27) also contend that “the most fundamental point about federalism as a factor conditioning the character of American parties is simply that the states are extremely important, both as loci for political careers and as independent decision-makers”, which not only creates decentralized parties but in reality the national parties become “empty vessels”.

In theory, all the above points seem to be valid but more recent studies show a different turn, like Tan (2000) for example, who has found a reverse relationship between federalism and party centralization. It appears that federalism contributes to more party centralization and concentration of power, which is in contradiction with Key’s arguments. There are clear empirical cases like Germany which run counter the above mentioned theoretical arguments. USA, the classic example of a federal state, unexpectedly portrays more party unity after 2000 (Janda 2008). Taking into consideration the old theoretical arguments and what actually happens in parliamentary activity nowadays, the current analysis aims at retesting and reformulating the hypothesis derived from the literature. Considering the conceptual

distinction between party unity in terms of attitude and party unity in terms of behavior, *political parties in federal states are expected to show a lower level of party behavioral unity as compared to those operating in unitary states* (H 4).

Not only how states are organized constitutionally, but also the balance of power between executive and legislative has been long perceived to matter for party unity. Cox (1987) pointed out that the rise of power of Commons in the nineteenth century may have encouraged the formation of disciplined parties. *Parties in parliamentary states are expected to show a higher level of party behavioral unity as compared to political parties operating in presidential regimes* (H 5). It is mainly the power of dissolution associated with the parliamentary system that is regarded as the effective instrument to strengthen party behavioral unity. This power may give the parliamentary leaders and the party executive a great control over the parliamentary party. Sartori (1997: 94) argues for the necessity of cohesion and discipline because “parliamentary democracy cannot perform – in any of its many varieties – unless it is served by *parliamentary fit* [emphasis in original] parties, that is to say, parties that have been socialized (by failure, duration, and appropriate incentives) into being relatively cohesive and/or disciplined bodies... [And] disciplined parties are a *necessary condition* for the ‘working of parliamentary systems’”. Sartori is not very specific in what party cohesion means and does not give any specific definition of party discipline either, except for the fact that he sees party discipline as connected to parliamentary voting. What is intriguing is the different levels of party unity encountered within the group of parliamentary states and then the question is whether those differences are caused by other party or systemic factors like the party system

or by other intrinsic differences steaming from the institutional engineering of parliamentary states.

In order to see whether increased legislative power matters more in achieving unity on the floor, the intervening variable in this situation is the number/strength of the parties composing the legislature. Therefore the *type* of party system that functions in a country has also been related to party unity. When we consider the number of parties within the political system, the claims are contradictory. Turner and Schier (1970), Loewenberg and Patterson (1979) argue that multi-party systems produce smaller and more homogeneous parties with greater intra-party cohesion. But when, besides the numerical criterion, other dimensions are considered, the arguments relating party unity to party system fragmentation are reversed. In two-party parliamentary systems, party unity is expected to be high because the majority party has to maintain the government (Epstein 1967, Sartori 1997), but it is still not clear which of the two variables (two-party system or parliamentary system) has a bigger impact on party unity, or whether there is a joint effect of the two factors. Following the conceptual distinction used in this thesis between unity of behavior and unity of attitudes, the expectation which will be that *the more fragmented the party system is, the more parties will be interested in constructing a high level of attitudinal homogeneity, which will keep their representatives attached to the party and make them act unitary (H6).*

Whether few in number or many, for an optimal activity political parties need sufficient financial resources. Given their transformation into cartels and their closer link with the state, party financing is a variable worth considering for party unity.

“Providing essential funding- both during and between campaigns- and engaging the self-interest citizens and groups in financing politics, and in political process generally, are vital aspects of democracy building” (Johnston 2005: 3). The financial resources, their magnitude and the way in which the funds are distributed can play an important role in explaining party behavioural unity. Subsidies can be restricted to election campaigns, or given to parties, irrespectively of the electoral campaign. Also campaign financing can be directed to the parties as organizations or directly to the candidates (Katz 1996) and this may influence the manner in which party representatives behave. *The more subsidies from the state the higher the level of party behavioural unity is expected to be (H7)*. The logic behind this hypothesis is that the level of clientelistic linkages will decrease given the existence of enough resources always available to parties. Parties will be less prone this way to the influence of pressure and business groups who could claim policy favours in exchange for generous donations. Moreover even if the constituency party opinion and the parliamentary party opinion would differ, the MP will not feel that much attached to the constituency anymore as vast majority financial incentives are not derived from the party membership anymore. The drawback of this position though, would be that she will be punished by the voters and might lose her seat the next elections. While comparable data on the amount of state subsidies received is difficult to find for all the European countries considered, a potential proxy can be the state regulations on the amount of donations political parties can receive and consequently the expectation is that *the higher the restrictions on donations to political parties, the higher the party unity (H8)*. Also who has the control over the state subsidies can control the party, party behaviour in the parliament. Whether the subsidies go directly to the candidates instead of the party’s general headquarters can lead to individualistic behaviour,

especially from the MPs elected in single member districts. The more resources those MPs control, the more could they be inclined to defect from the party policy in case his constituents would completely disagree with the party line. Therefore the expectation is that *party centred systems of financing will show higher unity than candidate centred systems of party financing (H9)*.

## **1.2 Variables and data**

The dependent variable is party unity in terms of behavior as measured by the Rice index, by the elite surveys answers or by the expert survey conducted on party unity. The systemic variables (apart from focus of representation) and their measurements are outlined bellow. As derived from the elite surveys in Western and Eastern Europe the variable uses the MPs answers to the questions about their voting decision, whether they are inclined to base their decision on their own judgment, on the view of the voters of the party, or on the views of their party. MPs are also asked which of the opinions above will constitute their first choice when voting<sup>1</sup>. Rice index offers a clear count of the MPs who voted no on a bill and who defected from the party line while the expert survey brings the party politics opinions on voting unity in each country.

### *Focus of representation*

When we think of the representation roles the MPs undertake, the picture becomes complicated when at a simple scrutiny of the European constitutions we observe

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<sup>1</sup> A clear description of how the variables were coded is offered in the appendix. For a more detailed discussion on the dependent variable- party unity, see "Behaviour, Attitudes and Institutions: How to Achieve Party Unity inside the European National Parliaments. An East – West Differentiation?" paper presented at the ECPR General Conference, Pisa, Italy, 6-8 September 2007, <http://www.eudo.eu/download/grad%20conf.gabriela%20borz.doc>

differences with regards to their provisions on the members of the parliament, their duties and their mandates. While some constitutions clearly stipulate that any imperative mandate is considered void or clearly mention the members of parliament as the representatives of the whole nation, others do not attribute any kind of mandate to the representatives. In practice we are interested only in how MPs see themselves either as the representatives of their party, their voters, their constituency, the whole nation, or a mixture of all these roles. Moreover, when interviewed some argue that different representation roles can be assumed in different context and as well when voting on different bills<sup>2</sup>.

*Electoral system (district magnitude, ballot structure)*

The electoral system in this analysis indicates the electoral rules that remain unchanged after one or more consequent elections. It refers to the rules and procedures with the help of which, the distribution of seats in parliament is determined, on the basis of electoral results (Lijphart 1994: 7,8). The purpose is to see what happens when the electoral rules are candidates or party centred and if they influence party unity, both in terms of attitudes and behaviour. Special attention will be paid to the district magnitude (the number of representatives elected in a constituency), and the vote structure (categorical or ordinal). Categorical voting allows the expression of choice only for one of the candidates or political parties entered in the competition. Ordinal voting instead permits the expression of voters' preferences. With preferential voting voters have the opportunity "to express a relative preference among the candidates of a single party" (Katz 1980: 32), preferences which could hinder party unity and lead to intraparty competition.

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<sup>2</sup> Personal interviews with the British MPs in 2007, as part of the European Commission Framework 6 Intune Research Project; for more information see [www.intune.it](http://www.intune.it);

Out of the twenty three European countries considered (Table 1), half of them use open lists, with different ways of expressing the preferences over the candidates, from ranking them to crossing the disliked candidates like in Iceland. According to my hypothesis, political parties in these countries are expected to show less unity than those which elect their MPs from PR closed lists.

Table 1 European electoral systems and their dimensions

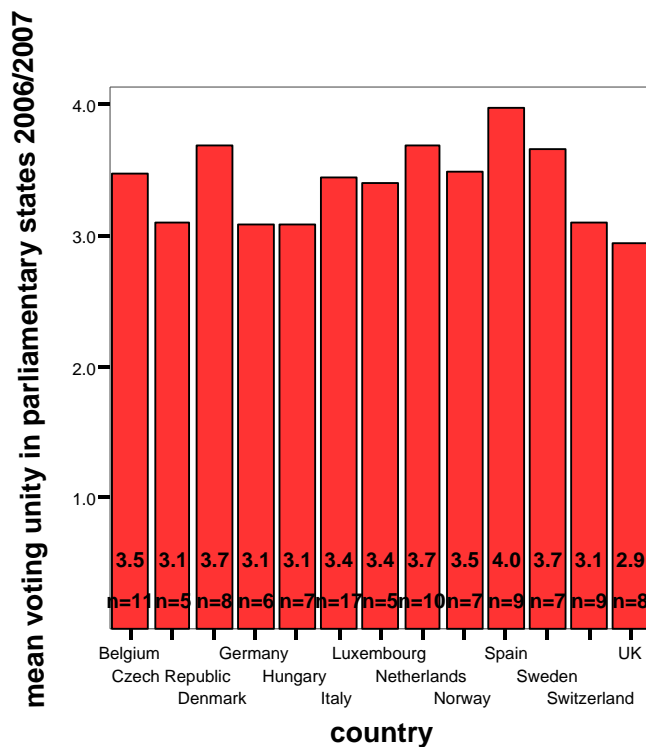
Country	Electoral magnitude	Ballot	Formula
Austria 1999	42	Open list	Prop.(2-3tiers)-Hare/d'Hondt
Belgium 1999	2-33	Open list	Prop (2 tiers)-d'Hondt/Hare
Denmark 2001	2-40	Open list	Prop (2 tiers)-m.St.Laguë
Finland 1999	1-30	Open list	Prop.-d'Hondt
France 2002	1	Single	Majority/2 <sup>nd</sup> round plurality
Germany 2002	496-656 3-65 1	Double: Closed list Single	P. prop-Hare
Iceland	9	Open list	Prop (2 tiers) d'Hondt
Ireland 2002	3-5	Single transferable	Proportional droop
Italy 2001	1 154	Double: Single Closed list	Plurality Prop. – Hare
Luxembourg '03	23-21-9-7	Open list	Prop-Hagenbach- Bishoff
Netherlands 2003	100-150	Open list	Prop (2 tiers)-Hare/d'Hondt
Norway 2001	4-15	Open list	Prop. (2 tiers)-M.St-Laguë
Portugal 2002	1-55	Closed list	Prop. – d'Hondt
Spain 2000	1-43	Closed list	Proportional – d'Hondt
Sweden 2002	2-40	Open list	Prop. (2 tiers)-m. St-Laguë
Switzerland 1999	1-34	Multiple/cumulative	Prop. – d'Hondt
UK 2001	1	Single	Plurality
Czech Republic 1998 2002	15-41 5-25	Open list Open list	Prop.- Droop Prop.- d'Hondt
Hungary 2002	4-58 1	Double: Closed list Single	Parallel: Prop. (2 tiers)-Droop/d'Hondt Majority/2 <sup>nd</sup> round plurality
Poland 1997 2001	3-69 7-19	Open list Closed list	Prop. (2 tiers) – d'Hondt Prop. –m. St-Laguë
Romania 2000	4-39	Closed list	Prop.- Hare
Russia 1999	1 225	Double: Single Closed list	Parallel: Plurality Prop-Hare
Slovakia 2002	5-150	Open list	Prop.-Droop

Source: Colomer, M. Josep. 2004. *Handbook of electoral system choice*. N.Y. Palgrave Macmillan.

*Type of political regime (presidential, semi-presidential, parliamentary)*

At the European level, political regimes range from parliamentary (most of them), to semi-presidential ones or presidential. Their classification depends on the definition of concepts and no agreement has been reached so far between scholars as to what category many European regimes fall into (Krouwel 2003). While there are no doubts about Russia being a presidential regime, scholars completely disagree when they classify the regimes in Romania, Bulgaria or Poland for example. The later country is considered parliamentary by Baylis (1997), limited presidentialism by Derbyshire and Derbyshire (1996) and presidential as well by Stepan and Skach (1993). Baylis (1997: 300) also stipulates that it is not even clear to country experts what type of executive is prevalent in Romania.

**Graph 1. Unity of behaviour in parliamentary states**



In relation to party unity, the common feature emphasized in the literature is the power of dissolution associated with the parliamentary regime which in theory is expected to generate highly united parties. Judging from this, a simple classification of regimes in three simple categories (presidential, semi-presidential or parliamentary) would seem sufficient in order to check for the regime impact on party unity. Still most of the European regimes are parliamentary but exhibit differences in their level of unity as it is shown in graph 1. Therefore, besides the dichotomous categories parliamentary or non-parliamentary, I employ the Executive-Legislative index (Woldendorp, Keman and Budge 2000). The index cumulates majority of criteria for classification used so far and has negative or positive values according to which side the balance of power is inclining to, either the legislative or the executive. The closer the score is to zero, the more balanced the relationship between the Executive and Legislative power in the polity is assumed to be. A negative score implies dominance of government and/or head of state over parliament. The balance of power between the executive and the legislative shows the differences between the parliamentary states and it could account for their dissimilarity of party behavioural unity.

**Table 2 Executive/Legislative Index**

Country	Exec/Leg. Index	Country	Exec./Leg index	Country	Exec.Leg index
Austria	-0.5	Hungary	1.5	Portugal	0
Belgium	-1	Iceland	-1	Romania	0
Czech Rep.	0	Ireland	0	Russia	0
Denmark	0	Italy	0.5	Spain	0
Finland	-1	Luxembourg	0	Sweden	0
France	-1.5	Netherlands	0	Slovakia	0.5
Germany	0.5	Norway	0	Switzerland	0
		Poland	0	UK	-1

Source: Woldendorp, J. Budge I. and Keman, H. (2000) *Party Government in 48 Democracies (1945-1998)*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

There is variety in the ways the vote of confidence is exercised such as, the constructive vote of non-confidence (Germany or Spain). The vote can be constitutional, structural like in the UK, or circumstantial, historical like in Germany (Sartori 1999). Confidence procedures are normally authorized by the constitutions but also used by convention. In the UK the votes of confidence are regarded as binding and defeat of a motion of confidence has been treated as fatal since 1832. The confidence procedure allows a ruling coalition to propose a bill without allowing amendments and to link the adoption of the bill with the survival of the coalition (Huber 1996).

#### *State structure (federal/unitary)*

State structure is expected to have an indirect influence on the degree of party behavioral unity party through its impact on attitudinal homogeneity and party centralization. The variable is operationalized on a scale from 1 (unitary and centralized), to 5 (federal and decentralized), taking into account two criteria: decentralization and whether the states have a formal federal constitution or not (Lijphart 1999: 186-188). In order to give a more detailed picture of federalism, besides Lijphart scores on this variable, I use Schneider index which comprises fiscal, administrative and political dimensions, all confirmed by factor analysis. “Fiscal decentralization refers to how much central governments cede fiscal impact to non-central government entities. Administrative decentralization refers to how much autonomy non-central government entities possess relative to central control. Finally, political decentralization refers to the degree to which central governments allow non-central government entities to undertake the political function of governance, such as

representation. “(Schneider 2003: 33). Fiscal decentralization is measured by subnational expenditures as percentage of total expenditures and subnational revenues as percentage of total revenues; administrative decentralization has as indicators taxation as a percentage of subnational grants and revenues and transfers as a percentage of subnational grants and revenues, while political decentralization is identified by municipal and state elections.

Table 3 Federalism dimensions

Country	Fiscal Decentralization 1996	Administrative Decentralization 1996	Political Decentralization 1996	Lijphart's Fed. Index 1945-1996	Average Party centralization 1996 elite survey
Austria	0.6	0.59	0.62	4.5	85.11
Belgium	0.3	0.41	0.67	5	60.42
Czech Rep.	0.43	0.52	0.49		74.76
Denmark	0.71	0.53	0.87	2	80.61
Finland	0.61	0.62	0.29	2	73.17
France	0.29	0.63	0.8	1.2	78.67
Germany	0.66	0.64	0.88		
Hungary	0.34	0.38	0.59		63.77
Iceland	0.38	0.81	0.8	1	
Ireland	0.4	0.12	0.87	1	39.36
Italy	0.36	0.3	0.91	1.3	95.44
Luxembourg	0.3	0.51	0.35	1	52.03
Netherlands	0.45	0.2	0.44	3	72.05
Norway	0.48	0.56	0.75	2	
Poland	0.38	0.52	0.49		65
Portugal	0.23	0.55	0.36	1	57.37
Romania	0.19	0.69	0.67		
Russia	0.67	0.83	0.91		
Slovakia	0.16	0.76	1		76.11
Spain	0.5	0.35	0.89	3	59.02
Sweden	0.58	0.83	0.5	2	57.42
Switzerland	0.8	0.61	0.85		
UK	0.37	0.2	0.89	1	86.72

Source: Schneider, Aaron 2003. *Studies in Comparative International Development*. 38: 3; pp. 32-56. Lijphart, Arend. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy. Government forms and performance in Thirty-Six countries*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Party centralization own calculations.

Decentralization is regarded by most of the federalism theorists as one major element of any federal state. Lijphart index has its caveats in the sense that it is calculated for the period 1945-1996, it does not provide a clear operationalization of centralization

and refers to it mostly as the decentralization of the system of government. However just by looking at the table 4, Lijphart's index does not correlate with the decentralization indexes apart from fiscal decentralization, and this generates caution in using the index when speaking of federalism as such. The only high correlation is between Lijphart index and Gerring-Thacker index. The explanation is that both indexes in fact take the formal criterion into consideration, meaning the constitutional provisions, and also bicameralism as the other component of federalism. "In a fully unitary state, territorial units if any, have no constitutional standing, no independently elected territorial legislature, no specific policy purviews reserved to them, and minimal revenue-raising authority. A non-unitary ("federal") state has the opposite characteristics" (Gerring, Thacker 2004: 304).

**Table 4. Outline of the federalism indexes**

Federalism indexes - correlations						
		lijphart's index for federal-unitary dimension	Federalism index (Gerring- Thacker)	Fiscal decentraliza tion 68 nations (Schneider)	Admin decentraliza tion 68 nations (Schneider)	Political decentraliza tion 68 nations (Schneider)
lijphart's index for federal-unitary dimension	Pearson Correlation	1	-.803**	.576*	.064	.300
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.016	.807	.242
	N	17	17	17	17	17
Federalism index (Gerring-Thacker)	Pearson Correlation	-.803**	1	-.538**	-.153	-.405*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.007	.475	.050
	N	17	24	24	24	24
Fiscal decentralization 68 nations (Schneider)	Pearson Correlation	.576*	-.538**	1	.132	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.007		.539	.785
	N	17	24	24	24	24
Admin decentralization 68 nations (Schneider)	Pearson Correlation	.064	-.153	.132	1	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.807	.475	.539		.895
	N	17	24	24	24	24
Political decentralization 68 nations (Schneider)	Pearson Correlation	.300	-.405*	.059	.029	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.242	.050	.785	.895	
	N	17	24	24	24	24

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 on the previous page illustrates different patterns of federalism and decentralization in Europe. Some countries are high on all three dimensions of

decentralization (i.e. Russia, Switzerland), while Italy, UK or France have a high degree of political decentralization and lower scores otherwise. What is important to notice is that, regardless of the constitutional federal provisions, countries can decentralize or not on various dimensions and political parties are parts of this process as well.

In the final analysis relating federalism and party unity I use the Gerring-Thacker index which gives a good picture of the formal constitutional provisions on federalism and also the decentralization dimensions from Schneider index, which offer a clearer and more detailed image of how it is actually implemented in practice. Table 4 confirms that even the federal states by constitution display different degrees of fiscal, administrative and political decentralization. While they score highest on political decentralization, not the same can be uttered about the administrative and fiscal areas where they portray scores similar to those of unitary states.

#### *Party system fragmentation*

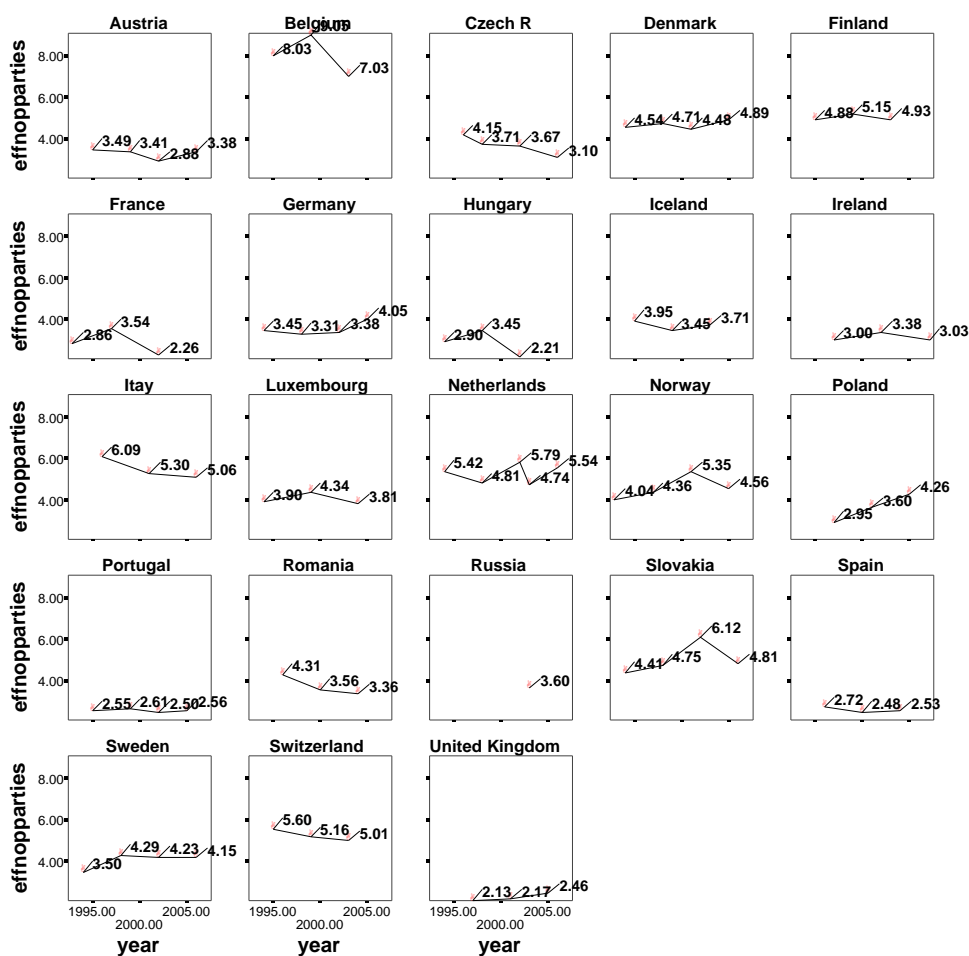
In a multiparty system, present in the majority of European states, there are more than two parties that get representation in parliament and usually the government is formed by a coalition of parties. The number of parties in government and their seat share may affect the behaviour of parties in the parliament. The measure employed for party system fragmentation is Taagepera and Shugart's (1989) index of least squares<sup>3</sup>, for all countries after the legislative elections. The measure is appropriate for the needs of the research as the number of parties could affect either positively or negatively how united the parties will behave.

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<sup>3</sup> The index has the following formula,  $N_s = 1 / \sum (p_i^2)$ , where,  $p_i$  = fractional share of votes or seats of the i-th component (party) and  $N$  = the effective number of political parties.

With the exception of Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Ireland, Finland and UK, the figures on the next page present declines in the effective number of parties in the parliament across Europe over the last decade. Belgium, Slovakia, Norway, Luxembourg, Hungary and France have experienced an abrupt decline in the late 2000, which means that not only the number of parties in parliament reduced, but also that the vote/seat share of the smaller parties diminished as well.

**Figure 1 Variations in the effective number of parliamentary parties over the last decade**



If party system fragmentation will appear as an important variable in explaining party unity, then differences in the levels of party unity should appear between the groups of countries which have experienced an augment and a decline of party fragmentation.

### *Party finance*

*Party finance* as used in the current analysis refers to the amount (relative *magnitude*) of subsidies that parties receive from the state during the year and during the electoral campaign and to *the funds' structure* (distribution to the party organization for managing or directly to party candidates). This variable is measured by analysing the laws on parties and party finance in each country. Due to reasons pertaining to data availability on the magnitude and distribution of funds, which could affect unity of behaviour the variable used was the legal restrictions applied to the amount of donations which parties can receive, data offered by the IDEA report 2004 on party finance. Contributors can be individual or organized, domestic or international. There are rules which apply to how and how much they can contribute to campaign. When the amount is under discussion, large individual contributors are a concern for corruption. While a small number of large contributors may be allowed to help launch campaigns, what is concerning is the ability of super-rich contributors and their personal organizations which may influence politics like in the case of Forza Italia (Johnston 2005: 18). Whether the name of the contributors are disclosed or not is another issue which may lead to political scandal like in the UK when Labour Party has been forced by the opposition and by the public opinion to publicly declare the source of its campaign funds. Therefore legal limits and prohibitions imposed on contributions appear as a good proxy for this variable. Limits may apply to aggregate amounts or to specific categories of funds, donors or phase of campaign while

prohibitions from contributing might apply to business, trade unions, foreign individuals and organizations. From the data offered by IDEA international, we observe that there are still countries with no legal restrictions on party donations like the UK, Switzerland, Sweden, Slovakia, Norway, Netherlands, Iceland, Hungary, Germany, Czech Republic, Finland, Denmark, Austria. Out of these, Germany is a special case, mainly because as specified in the Grundgesetz (Basic Law) the Federal Republic provides, based on the number of votes the party received, between a quarter and a third of the major parties' national revenues and the same subventions are available at the Land (State) level as well. Overly generous subsidies may make us think of lack of accountability and decreased contact with the party organization, but nonetheless, accountability to donors can be as well weakened by limiting the share of overall revenues coming from donors in rapport to those coming from public funds (Johnston 2005: 15).

Table 5: Regulations on political parties funding

Country	No system of regulation for financing political parties	No provision for disclosure of contributions to political parties	No ceiling on contributions to political parties	Ban on trade unions contributions to political parties	Ban on anonymous donations to political parties	% finance as public donations	Public funding
Austria		√	√			68	Party centered
Belgium					√	77.5	Party centered
Czech Republic			√		√		Party centered
Denmark			√			40	Party centered
Finland		√	√			84	Party centered
France				√	√	80	Party centered
Hungary			√		√		Mixed
Germany			√		√	33	Mixed
Iceland	√	√	√				Party centered
Ireland					√	20	Party centered
Italy						4	Party

							centered
<b>Netherlands</b>			√		√	20	Party centered
<b>Norway</b>	√		√			75	Party centered
<b>Poland</b>					√		Party centered
<b>Portugal</b>				√	√		Party centered
<b>Romania</b>					√		Party centered
<b>Russia</b>					√		Candidate centered
<b>Slovakia</b>	√	√	√				Party centered
<b>Sweden</b>	√	√	√			47.1	Party centered
<b>Switzerland</b>	√	√	√			20	Parliamentary groups
<b>Spain</b>					√	80	Party centered
<b>UK</b>			√		√	20	Party centered

Source: Idea report 2004 [www.idea.org](http://www.idea.org), Thomas Grant.2005. *Lobbying, Government Relations, and Campaign Finance Worldwide Navigating the Laws, Regulations and Practices of National Regimes*. Oceana Publications, Smilov Daniel and Jurij Toplak 2007. *Political Finance and Corruption in Eastern Europe. The transition period*. Aldershot: Ashgate, Ingrid van Biezen 2004 "Political Parties as Public Utilities", *Party Politics*, 10(6): 701-722, Pierre, J. Svasand, L.&Whitefield, A. 2000. State subsidies to political parties: Confronting rhetoric with reality. *West European Politics*, 23(3): 1-24. personal discussions with Karl-Heinz Nassmacher and country party laws.

Table above illustrates the situation over the regulations and restrictions on party financing as published by IDEA in 2004. Transparency and accountability increase in countries where the anonymous donations are banned, even if the limit varies from country to country, from the smallest amount of 150 EUR in France, or 100 EUR in Ireland to 500 EUR in Germany, or 4.400 EUR in the Netherlands, 175.000 EUR in Portugal or amounts exceeding 10 times the minimum wage are banned. Also how much the donors can contribute differs from country to country. In Belgium a donor is allowed to contribute a maximum of EUR 500 per political party and year, while in Ireland the amount increases to 6.750\$, or 11.620\$ in Italy. In The United Kingdom, provisions exist on the public disclosure of contributions by party in the first instance and by donors as well in some circumstances. Companies must disclose donations of

more than GBP 5000 in their annual reports. At the same time British donors of more than GBP 1000 must report to the Electoral Commission.

### 1.3 Assessing the impact of systemic factors on unity

Voter's option to choose and rank the candidates on the list gives them indeed more responsibility towards the constituents and they are more likely to manifest defection in their behavior. The variance in the importance of representing the constituency it is explained a great deal by the difference between being elected under *open or closed list*, while the opposite can be told about the importance of representing the party and party voters, which has no connection with the existence of open or closed lists. The electoral system influences therefore behavioral unity by the choice given to electors. The delegate-principal theories also apply here as automatically the MPs will be more attached to the constituency than to their party, given the need to be liked by their constituency voters and to be ranked higher as compared to their own party colleagues.

Table 6. Regression models 1997

Variables	Model 1					Model 2					
	Party centralization	Ideological unity	Power status	Representation focus1 (constituency)	Representation focus 2 (party & party voters)	Restrictions on party donations	Eff. no. of parties	Open or closed lists	Average district magnitude	Executive-Legislative relations index	Federalism index
Beta	.439	-.483	.200	-.083	.755	.251	-.340	-.694	-.018	-.014	-.156
Standardized coefficients											
T	2.606	3.171	1.376	-.563	4.905	1.537	-2.588	-4.722	-.155	-.093	-1.107
Sig.	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.01</b>	.187	.580	<b>.000</b>	.129	<b>.012</b>	<b>.000</b>	.878	.926	.272
<b>R square</b>	<b>0.68</b>					<b>0.27</b>					
Sig.	0.05					0.00					

Dependent variable: behavioral unity (Rice index)

Tale 7.

S

**Systemic influences on behavioral unity (1996 data)<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	89.700	14.056		6.382	.000
	exec	-.816	1.950	-.052	-.418	.677
	restrictions by law on the level of party donations	8.606	3.020	.493	2.850	.006
	effective number of parliamentary parties after Lijphart 1996	-2.617	1.008	-.319	-2.595	.012
	open or closed	-1.668	.712	-.464	-2.341	.022
	average district magnitude	.023	.029	.107	.792	.431
	electoral system formula	2.431	1.536	.385	1.583	.118
	federalism index Liphart	-1.212	.675	-.243	-1.794	.077

<sup>a</sup>. Dependent Variable: Rice's index values; R square 0.33. sig. .00

Table 8. Regression models 2007 expert survey

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.755	.389		4.512	.000
	programatic cohesion 06/07	.246	.075	.264	3.277	.001
	party centralization 07	.308	.082	.329	3.743	.000
	national executive/parlyamentray party overlap	-.004	.046	-.006	-.081	.935
	disciplinary measures applied over the last decade	-.205	.094	-.200	-2.180	.031

Dependent variable: voting unity 2006/2007; R square .21.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	3.486	.101		34.622	.000
	party_finance_donations	.015	.039	.030	.384	.702
	exe_legRelations	-.025	.130	-.019	-.190	.850
	openlist	-.069	.034	-.169	-1.993	.048
	dm	-.001	.001	-.039	-.409	.683

Dependent variable: voting unity 2006/2007; R square .021.

Despite a long term emphasis in the literature on the systemic factors like the state structure, the legislative-executive relations or the electoral system dimensions it seems that only the *electoral system and the fragmentation of party system* plays an important role in achieving party unity in terms of behavior. There is positive relationship between the number of parliamentary parties and their unity of behavior, which means that the more parties in the parliament are, the higher their unity of behavior. When more than one party enters government and if the coalition has a comfortable majority, there is “space” left for defection even from the side of the government parties. Among the European countries considered, Denmark appears as a clear example. While around 1996 the effective number of parliamentary parties was quite high, above 5, the Rice index calculated for Denmark was 99.93, which means hardly ever any MP has voted against his/her party in Parliament.

There is a positive association between fragmentation and ideological unity, which suggests altogether that the more parties in the system, the lower the differences in the MPs attitudes on their party policies. The relation verifies against the 1996 and 2007 data. Parties will therefore try to differentiate from each other in terms of ideology and to have MPs who hold homogeneous opinions on most political issues. This relationship clearly points back to the difference between unity in attitudes and unity in behavior, and here it is even more obvious given the completely different impact the party system fragmentation has on the two dimensions of unity. The reason for why the impact of fragmentation is rather different are quite logic. The more parties in the system, the more crystallized the political programs and the less confusion among the party representatives as for what their party stands for. The highest values for ideological unity are found inside parties from Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway,

Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal and Spain, where experts assess parties with value scores over 4, meaning between 80 and 90 percent agreement among MPs with regards to their party ideology.

Whether the states are *federal or unitary or presidential or parliamentary* has no direct effect on the actual unity on the floor. There are plenty examples which rule against the old predictions of political scientist like Blondel (1978). Germany is only one example, a federal state but with a very high score of party unity on the floor and it seems that the old predictions about the negative effect of federalism on unity is overruled. Even, USA long term portrayed as an example of disunity because of its federalism and presidential system, shows in the last decade a much higher level of unity as before and goes again against the rule (Janda 2008). Also, from the 1996 data, when party centralization is measured by the MPs' declarations concerning the decision-making within the party over the party policy, there is no association whatsoever between centralization and federalism in all its forms. As assessed by the German experts, the German political parties exhibit quite a high level of voting unity and a similar level of centralization (except the Greens) unexpectedly high for a federal state if we consider the previous theoretical arguments. Whether in terms of decision-making, selection of candidates or distribution of funds, the process is still more controlled at the central federal level. The German parliamentary party groups receive financial assistance from the federal budget (Saafeld 2000:30), money mainly used to pay professional staff. The central control over it is exercised by the Federal Audit Office which scrutinizes the accounts of parliamentary parties.

The results appear intriguing, especially since Blondel (1978, 151) used to assert that the tendency of federal state of breeding decentralized parties stems from the institutional design of the respective countries. It is self evident that decentralization will increase the number of positions the parties can compete for let aside the national positions. Still there is an explanation to this, which is the difference between formal federalism and what actually happens in practice as discusses earlier when the variable was operationalized. Tan (2000) has used formal federalism as a variable in testing the hypothesis, that is the constitutional provisions of a federal state. As Harmel and Janda (1982, 69) stipulate, the difference is very important, simply because the simple existence of a formal federal state does not necessarily imply that political parties need to decentralize power as well. A simple correlation between federalism index and party centralization as of 1996 reveals a negative but non-significant relation between them.

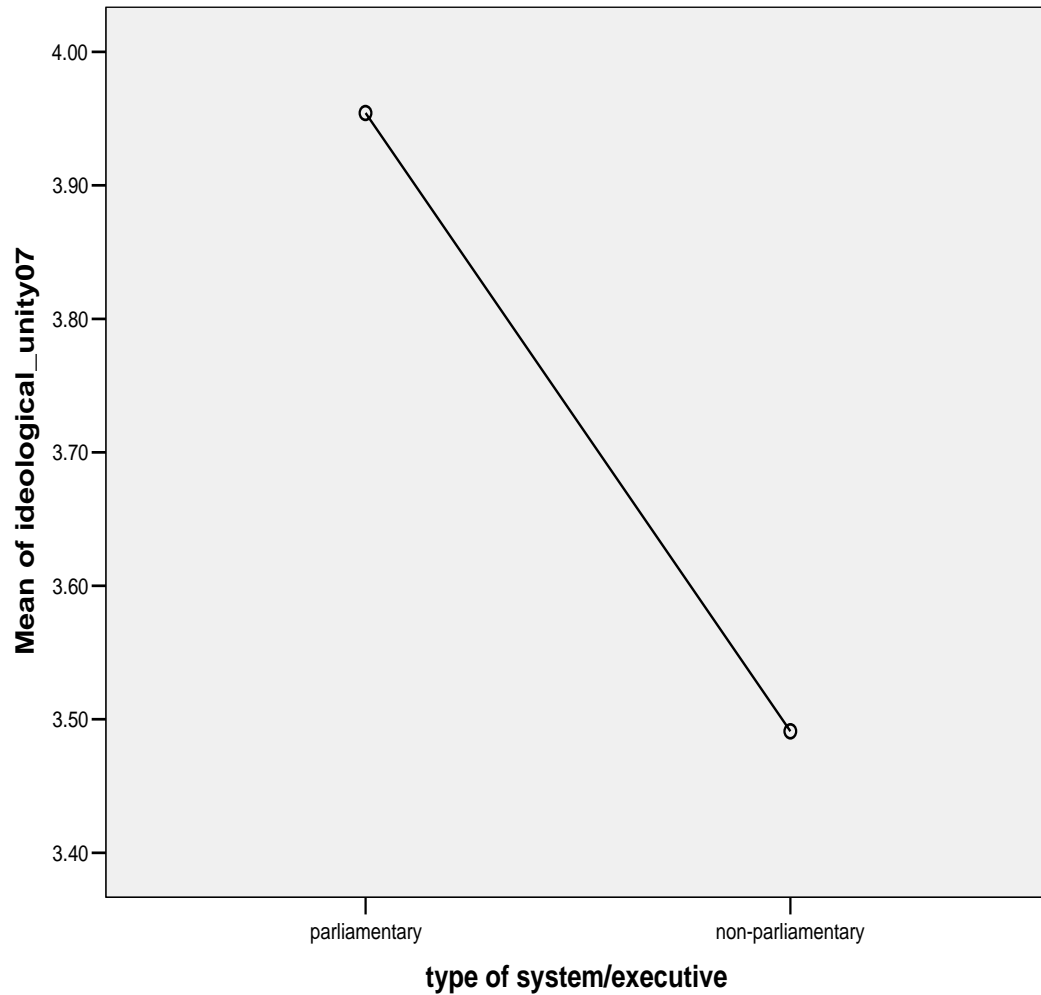
Why there is no effect of the executive-legislative balance of power over behavioral party unity as one would have expected? One of the possible explanations is that no matter if the power of dissolution associated with the parliamentary systems is in place or not in a country, the parties are more and more not only votes but policy oriented and they want to keep their image as united entities overlooking the environmental conditions.

When treated as a dummy variable, whether parliamentary or non-parliamentary (12 parliamentary states in our sample), Anova analysis for 1996 data finds no significant difference between the two groups of states in terms of party unity, both behavioral and attitudinal. When the same analysis is repeated for the 2007 expert survey data,

the same results are displayed but only for unity in behavior. The experts have ranked all the parties in the sample as being more cohesive in terms of attitudes in 2007 in parliamentary parties as opposed to the ideological unity of parties from non-parliamentary states. This does not necessarily imply that parliamentary systems lead to more ideologically united parties, but the association is there and can have other causes. However, if the analysis will show parliamentarism as one of the determinants of ideological unity, this will clarify indeed what Sartori has many times mentioned about “parliamentary fit” parties.

The graph bellow shows the ideological unity mean difference between parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties. While in parliamentary systems, the minimum score on programmatic cohesion a party has received was 2 (over sixty percent agreement among MPs on party ideology and policies), in non-parliamentary states, the minimum score for a party was 1 (fifty percent or less agreement among party MPs). The difference between the two groups is not huge but significant, quantified in about Ten percentage points of MPs who do not agree with the overall party ideology and policies in non-parliamentary states.

**Graph 1 Relation between ideological unity and parliamentary vs. non-parliamentary systems**



If for the 1996 data there was no difference between parliamentary and non-parliamentary systems in terms of any dimension of unity, one can ask the question: has indeed the ideological unity of parties increased over the last decade? The experts have seen an overall increase in the party unity in parliament and also in the ideological unity when we look at the average score of the 186 political parties. This is not a trend applicable to every single party though in all the twenty-three countries.

Belgian parties for example are perceived as showing less and less unity in terms of ideology over the last decade (with the exception of Ecologists, Flemish Alliance and Flemish Left Liberals) and the recent crisis in Belgian politics is a clear example, with the Flemish parties not that open to consensus anymore. Sweden is another example where parties have lost their cohesion in terms of ideology together with Slovakian parties (with the exception of the Slovak National Party) and also Romanian parties minus the Democrat Party (PD), which has experienced the least conflicts over the last decade. PD is also the only Romanian party who merged with a splinter from National Liberal Party, forming the Democrat Liberal Party at the end of 2007. The vast majority of Romanian parties have experienced leadership and ideological factionalism over the last years, PNL and PSD being the most famous examples. The former has suffered a split while the latter has constantly had the former and current leader openly criticizing each other in public.

The change in the ideological unity of parties is significantly related to the difference between the parliamentary and non-parliamentary systems, the latter cases not experiencing an overall increase in the programmatic party cohesion.

#### **1.4 Systemic influences on attitudes or on behavior? Path ways and interaction effects**

*When ideological unity* (tables appendix) is treated as *dependent variable* it is directly affected by the executive/legislative balance and by the district magnitude as environmental factors. The standard deviation of the MP's opinion on the ideological

stance of their party decreases as the representation of the party and party voters becomes more important to them. In other words the more attached the representatives are their party and party voters, the higher the party ideological unity. The inverse relationship has been found between the importance of representing the constituency and the ideological unity- the more important the representation of the constituency in the eyes of the deputies, the lesser their attitudinal homogeneity in terms of party ideology.

No other party level variables have a significant impact on ideological unity, while the systemic influence comes only from the balance of power between the executive and the legislative and from the average district magnitude. The higher the average district magnitude, the more united in terms of ideology the parties are. As for the executive-legislative relations, the impact on ideological unity is negative, the standard deviation of MP's attitudes towards party ideology decreases as the balance of power moves more towards the legislature, which indeed means as previously suggested that parliamentary systems generate more united parties in terms of ideology, which consequently will lead to more unity in parliament.

**Figure 2 Systemic Influences on party unity**

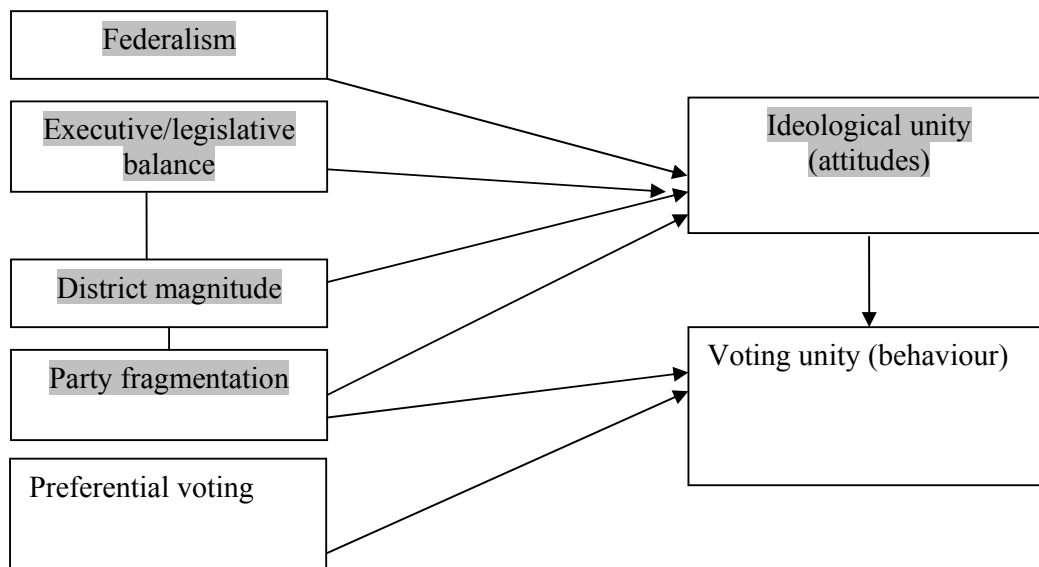


Figure above shows the direct and indirect effects on party unity coming from the environmental factors. It is pretty clear that the structure of the environment does not effect directly the voting unity in parliament except for the preferential voting. It is only the party fragmentation which impacts on both dimensions of unity, although in different directions. The separation of unity in behavior and attitudes makes the chains of causation much clearer and ideological unity appears indeed the most important intervening factor via which the structure of the environment impacts indirectly on voting unity.

As measured by this analysis party finance appears to have a positive impact on both aspect of party unity, but more pronounced on unity of behavior. Money does not change the attitudes of parliamentarians over the party policies but it appears to influence their propensity to vote unanimously or not.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

This paper has tested the major hypotheses which link systemic factors and party unity. Some hypotheses were derived from the literature and refined like those in relation to federalism, parliamentary systems, electoral systems or fragmentation of party systems, while at others I have arrived deductively using other theories like representation, financing, or principle-delegate theories. The analysis clarifies the impact which all the above mentioned “environmental” factors have on party unity, whether it is direct or indirect, positive or negative.

Contrary to expectations and against many of the propositions and hypothesis stipulated in the literature, systemic factors, like those taken into account by the present analysis, perform poorly in explaining the MPs behavior on the floor. Among them only the ballot structure and the party system fragmentation seem to have a significant negative influence on the MPs behavior in parliament. It appears that indeed the option of ranking the candidates on the list makes the MPs more constituency orientated and this shrinks their party loyalty in terms of voting. At the same time the more parties in the parliament and in the party system, the less unity on the floor.

However if the systemic factors considered do not affect directly unity of behavior, their influence is manifested more on the attitudinal part of unity and therefore indirectly on the behavioral unity. Party system fragmentation, type of political regime, the existence of federalism and the MPs focus of representation have a significant impact on the MPs attitudes towards the ideology of their party.

Apparently, the more parties in the parliament, the less congruence of MPs' attitudes on the parties' issue positions and fragmentation impacts therefore negatively on both aspects of unity. Federalism has no direct impact on voting unity, but the interesting result is that it leads to low congruence of opinions in terms of party ideology and therefore brings an indirect contribution towards the final behavior of MPs that is voting. The rest of indirect impacts on behavioral unity come from both the parliamentary system and the high district magnitude which both have a positive impact on ideological unity. Whether the system is parliamentary or not makes a difference in explaining the level of unity but parliamentarism alone cannot explain the differences of unity among parliamentary states.

**Appendix:**

Table 2

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Eta	Eta Squared
Open or closed list *represent constituency	Between groups	284.322	68	4.181	18.815	<b>.000</b>		
	Within groups	4.667	21	.222			.992	.984
	Total	288.989	89					

Table 3.

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Eta	Eta Squared
Open or closed list *represent party and party voters	Between groups	213.689	68	3.142	.835	.717		
	Within groups	75.300	20	3.765			.860	.739
	Total	288.989	88					

Table 4.

Model	Standardized coefficients		
	Beta	T	Sig
Constant		2.081	.042
Effective no. parl. Parties	.576	5.383	<b>.000</b>
Restrictions on donations	-.132	-1.194	.237
Av. distr. Magnitude	.488	3.135	<b>.003</b>
Exe-Leg. Relations	.754	5.620	<b>.000</b>
Federalism index	-.587	-2.503	<b>.017</b>
Party centralization	.086	.720	.474
Representation focus voters	-.209	-1.702	.097
Representation focus constituency	.197	2.215	<b>.033</b>

Dependent variable: party ideological unity 1996

### **Variables definition and coding:**

**Party unity (behavior)-** conduct convergence of party representatives in the legislature;

*1996 elite survey*

**WEQ:** In many cases people have different views concerning matters that the National Parliament must decide upon. On which one of the following would you be most inclined to base your decision in such cases?  
follow the view of the voters of your party; follow the view of your national party; own judgement; view party voter, own+party; own+party voters;

**CEEQ:** If an MP has to vote, but holds an opinion which is different from the one held by his parliamentary party, should he then vote in accordance with the opinion of the parliamentary party or should he follow his own opinion?

1. opinion of the parliamentary party
2. own opinion
3. it depends

Given the scale difference between questions used in CEE and WE, a multiplier has been used in order to make the two surveys comparable.

*2007 expert survey*

**Q :** Please assess the level of parliamentary unity inside the Hungarian parties as of 2006/2007. Give a score from 1 to 5 for each party, where 1 means very low unity and 5 means very high unity.

- 1 - Much internal conflict and MPs frequently depart from the party line in parliamentary votes
- 2 - Some internal conflicts and MPs occasionally defect from the party line in parliamentary votes
- 3 – Occasional internal conflicts but MPs rarely defect from the party line in parliamentary votes
- 4 - Despite minor internal conflicts, MPs never defect from the party line in parliamentary votes
- 5 - No internal conflicts and MPs never defect from the party line in parliamentary votes

**Party unity (attitudes)- ideological unity-** party attitudinal homogeneity as measured by party programmatic cohesion which refers to the ideological congruence of the party members;

**Executive-Legislative balance** - extent to which the relationship between the executive and the legislative powers is more or less balanced; the scores are computed by deducting **(Parl>Gov)** from the sum **(HoS>Parl)+(Gov>Parl)**;

**(Parl>Gov)**- extent to which parliament is dominant over government; cumulative index by adding the scores of: vote of investiture is necessary condition to govern and vote of confidence is a necessary condition to continue to govern;

**(HoS>Parl)**- extent to which the head of state can influence the composition and continuation of the existence of government thus indicating the independent power of the head of state vis-a-vis parliament; cumulative index by adding the scores of: HoS is directly involved in the formation of government, HoS can dissolve parliament; HoS has also executive powers;

**(Gov>Parl)**- extent to which government is dominant over parliament; cumulative index by adding the scores of: government can ignore the vote of confidence; government (or PM) can dissolve parliament;

### **Relation between the executive and legislative**

Country	<b>(Parl&gt;Gov)</b>	<b>(HoS&gt;Parl)</b>	<b>(Gov&gt;Parl)</b>	<b>ExLegBal</b>
Austria	1	0.5	1	-0.5
Belgium	1.5	0.5	1.5	-1
Czech Rep.	2	1	1	0
Denmark	1	0	1	0
Finland	0.5	0.5	1	-1
France	0.5	1	1	-1.5
Germany	2	0.5	1	0.5
Hungary	2	0.5	0	1.5
Iceland	1	1	1	-1
Ireland	2	0.5	1.5	0
Italy	2	1	0.5	0.5
Luxembourg	1	0	1	0
Netherlands	1	0.5	0.5	0
Norway	1	0	1	0
Poland	2	1	1	0
Portugal	2	1	1	0

Romania	2	1	1	0
Russia	1.5	1.5	0	0
Slovakia	2	1.5	0	0.5
Spain	2	0.5	1.5	0
Sweden	2	0	2	0
Switzerland	0	0	1	
UK	1	0.5	1.5	-1

Source: Woldendorp, J. Bugde I. and Keman, H. (2000) Party Government in 48 Democracies (1945-1998), Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

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