global political transitions

MARKO STOJIĆ

PARTY RESPONSES TO THE EU IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Transformation, Opposition or Defiance?

Global Political Transitions

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—Dr Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik, *Aston University, UK*

Marko Stojić

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CHAPTER 1

Political Parties and the European Union

Introduction

This book examines how political parties make difficult decisions as well as change their fundamental stances and alter polices in an increasingly complex environment of contemporary Europe. It does so by studying party responses to European integration, one of the most—if not the most—contentious issues in European politics. The book specifically aims to provide insight into how political parties respond to the EU by examining the party systems of two former Yugoslav states—Serbia and Croatia. The issue of European integration has been one of the most pervasive causes of intense political debates cutting across the whole political spectrum in both countries. As a result, some parties have consistently supported or opposed European integration despite conflicting relations with the EU and shifting domestic party politics, while the others have fundamentally changed their stances and, in most cases, became more Euroenthusiastic. Having been torn between Eurosceptic, often anti-European, ideological convictions and strategic electoral incentives to pragmatically respond to European integration, these parties underwent a rapid Damascene conversion rarely seen in the contemporary European party systems. This volteface was primarily a strategically driven response to internal and external incentives in the context of dynamic party competition and a strong EU presence in candidate countries. It is recognised in the comparative literature that, though rarely, parties may undergo fundamental changes of

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ideology and stance on European integration. Examples are the British Labour Party in the 1980s and Greek PASOK in the 1990s. Yet, there are different opinions on what exactly drives party responses to European integration and why some parties turn into pragmatic advocates of the EU after a long history of seemingly firm opposition to it.

Parties are generally found to determine positions and change their stances in relation to the four key goals they constantly seek to balance (Müller and Strøm 1999), namely organisational survival, pursuing core policy preferences, securing votes and accessing executive office. Party positions on the EU therefore may draw on long-term goals—parties' identities or core policy preferences—or more strategic, short-term goals—garnering votes and winning elections. A debate about the factors that motivate parties to take or shift stances on this issue reflects this pattern, with some form of party ideology or strategy most often cited (Sitter 2001, 2002; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Rovny 2004; Steenbergen et al. 2007; Sitter and Batory 2008; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, b). However, there remain a number of controversies about the exact mechanism by which these factors drive party responses to European integration. The book engages directly with these issues and the central research questions it addresses are: How do political parties adopt and why do they shift their positions on European integration? What are the most important factors that may induce their stances on the EU? More specifically, this study seeks to understand the nature of the relation between party views on the EU and their ideologies, and whether certain ideologies predispose parties to oppose European integration. Does the EU serve as a new dimension of political conflicts or are European issues accommodated into the existing patterns of domestic politics? In what ways are the issues stemming from the process of European integration strategically politicised or depoliticised? Which strategic incentives do parties face when determining positions on this issue in the context of dynamic electoral competition?

These dilemmas have been particularly pronounced in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Political and economic transition to market-oriented liberal democracies have crucially shaped these societies and corresponding social cleavages (Kitschelt 1995; Markowski 1997; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Hloušek and Kopeček 2010) resulting in predominantly unstable political and party systems. The book is therefore about party responses to the EU and politics in a state of flux. It aims to draw a conclusion on how Central and East European parties form and alter positions in the milieu of post-communist political

transition. The study specifically addresses the issue of how far the arguments derived from the Western European experience can travel to the East. In other words, does post-communist and post-conflict transition shape party views on the EU in any particular manner, different from Western Europe? Likewise, do post-communist parties express any ideological commitments or do they mostly act in response to electoral incentives, and how does this relate to their stances on the EU?

The book also seeks to draw more general conclusions about the impact of European integration on national party politics. Parties do not respond to the EU in a vacuum; they are rather influenced—to a varying degree though—by European integration (Grabbe 2003, 2006; Enyedi and Lewis 2006). The EU has been particularly strongly present in Central and Eastern European countries from the beginning of their post-communist transitions, in the context of their EU accession. Although well recognised as an important factor, the depth of the EU's impact on party politics as well as the reach of its transformative power remain a contested issue. The external force of the EU has been perceived both as an important catalyst for significant pro-European changes (Pridham 2002, 2008; Vachudova 2012) and as a factor that has a relatively limited impact on parties (Mair 2000; Ladrech 2002; Haughton 2009; Szczerbiak and Bil 2009). This book thus aims to help us understand how the EU attempts to structure party contestation in candidate countries. In what way does it empower and legitimise some, while at the same time constrain and delegitimise other, political actors? Finally, how do domestic political actors react to EU presence and how do they mediate EU influence? These general issues constitute the central comparative framework that guides this study. The book thus examines how parties faced with the significant EU impact on party politics, in the context of unstable political and party systems, respond to the increasingly controversial process of European integration. In other words, do they seek to transform, oppose or indeed defy the EU when adopting and shifting their views on European integration?

These dilemmas are addressed in the following chapters by looking at the cases of Serbian and Croatian party politics and their relations with the EU. The book specifically examines how European issues have played out in Serbian and Croatian party politics, in the context of significant challenges brought by protracted European integration of the Western Balkans since 2000. In both countries, European issues have entailed difficult and all-important choices of whether these countries should join the EU, if so under which (political) conditions as well as whether there are

alternatives to the EU and fundamental values underpinning its concept of social and economic development. The book seeks to shed light on how Serbian and Croatian parties adopted and shifted positions on these issues, and how European integration permeated the nature of these party systems and consequently framed party responses to the EU. To do so, the study employs a comparative method (which has rarely been used in the analysis of Central and Eastern European party systems) and draws on four explanatory variables derived from the comparative theoretical literature: party ideology and identity, party strategy, party relations with the general public and core voters, as well as transnational party linkages. It utilises an original dataset compiled through an extensive set of interviews with senior party officials, country experts and officials of the EU and European transnational party federations in addition to qualitative content analysis of parties' programmatic documents.

There are three main reasons for the case selection. First, party positions on the EU in Serbia and Croatia have been very rarely examined in the existing literature and, as such, they merit an in-depth comprehensive study. Very little is known about why some mainstream Serbian and Croatian parties have fundamentally shifted their positions on the EU, and this is a surprise given the surge of studies of the positions taken on the EU by Central and Eastern European parties (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001, 2002; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2007; Batory 2008a, b, 2009). With a few notable exceptions (Fisher 2006; Haughton and Fisher 2008; Konitzer 2011; Vachudova 2012, Stojić 2013, 2017), the comparative literature has mostly ignored these 'difficult' cases on the European periphery, particularly the Serbian one. Thus, this book aims to bring into academic debate the under-researched, yet empirically rich, cases of Serbian and Croatian parties, and move forward the scholarly debate on the key determinants of party responses to European integration.

Second, these countries share key empirical features that render them suitable for comparative analysis. Both Serbia and Croatia assumed central roles in the former Yugoslavia, experiencing violent conflict following the federation's disintegration. The two countries were candidates for EU membership and faced a strikingly similar set of challenges, including relations with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), significant radical right political forces opposing EU membership in addition to delayed and difficult democratisation and transformation due to the nature of authoritarian regimes in both countries throughout the 1990s. Nevertheless, there are some variances in these two cases, most

notably a different level of integration with the EU. Unlike Serbia, Croatia more successfully pursued its EU membership bid, experiencing related political and economic transformation. The important difference also lies in the relative stability of Croatian and high volatility of Serbian party system. Significantly, Croatia solved crucial statehood issues in the late 1990s, while Serbia struggled with outstanding national issues well into the 2010s, crucially impeding its EU accession. These factors, therefore, provide a rich comparative basis for this analysis and allow for the discernment of the causal mechanism under investigation.

Third, the purpose of this study is theory testing which in principle requires peculiar cases that should be different from those on which the current literature based its postulations. Serbian and Croatian cases present a contrast to most other European states, readily allowing for the testing of existing theoretical propositions. Their specificity can be attributed to the fact that they were latecomers to the process of EU integration, complex relations with the EU—for instance, Western intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 and the EU's unofficial policy of isolating Croatia in the 1990s, the prevalence of statehood and identity issues, and the long-term negative impact of the post-Yugoslav wars. Thus, examination of cases with these characteristics and 'specificity' is needed to show whether and to what extent existing general theory needs refining or holds true in the new and somewhat different circumstances.

The principal argument of the book is that the interplay between party ideology and strategy may account for party response to the increasingly contentious process of European integration. Namely, party ideology proved to be the factor that considerably influenced the formation of party views on this issue. Support for, and opposition to, the EU essentially reflected the dominant patterns of domestic politics in both countries. Most parties formed stances on the EU based on their attitudes towards national and identity issues—that is, their position on the dominant nationalism versus cosmopolitanism dimension, while party preferences on the socio-economic left-right axis appear not to have been translated into specific views on the EU. Therefore, the particular nature of European issues, closely related to crucial identity and statehood dilemmas in these post-conflict societies, largely determined party responses to European integration. The dominance of identity politics also provided strong ideological foundations for the post-Yugoslav Euroscepticism that drew dominantly on the national conservative or nationalist ideologies.

On the other side, under a set of specific conditions pertaining to the political milieu of (potential) candidate countries, several former nationalist and Eurosceptic parties fundamentally shifted their ideologies and long-term positions on the EU, motivated by strategic electoral incentives stemming from the logic of domestic party systems and external stimuli. The strategic factors that framed their newly founded Euroenthusiastic perception were inter alia the perceived beneficial effects of EU integration for party leadership, disincentives to compete on the Eurosceptic space that was already 'occupied' by stronger political competitors, and aspirations to become 'suitable coalition partners' for dominant pro-European parties as well as to break away from their long-term international isolation and join one of the European party federations to obtain European legitimacy.

Most of the factors examined in this book that proved to exert an effect on party positions were largely context-dependent. In other words, the legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars, the nature of these countries' domestic political and party systems and their peculiar and often 'difficult' relations with the EU (as discussed in Chap. 2) framed these parties' stances on this issue. Nevertheless, their experience cannot be considered completely unique. Most Central and Eastern European, and particularly Balkan, states faced similar challenges in their post-communist transition, such as difficulties in fulfilling EU membership requirements, disputes over their statehood or party politics predominantly driven by national and identity issues. This, therefore, allows for drawing a set of 'cross-case' generalizable conclusions. By focusing on these two cases, the study thus expects to provide insight into causal relationships across a larger population of similar cases.

The book starts from the presumption that it is important to know how political parties adopt and alter stances, since they are the key social actors having a major role in shaping the strategic direction of modern states. This is the result of the functions usually associated with them, such as structuring the popular vote, integrating and mobilising the mass citizenry, aggregating diverse interests, recruiting leaders for public office and formulating public policy (Mair 1990). Moreover, political parties mobilise sentiment, structure the competition over European issues and determine the content of politics at the domestic level (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008). In those Central and Eastern European countries with weak civil societies and political institutions in a permanent state of flux, parties are even more significant factors that decisively shape their interactions with the EU and the overall nature of these states and societies. In other words,

the outcomes of their post-communist transformations are determined primarily by the beliefs and interests of political elites expressed through the attitudes and actions of political parties. Moreover, party positions on the EU in Serbia and Croatia proved to be emblematic of their general policies and overall political stances. Parties' most important attitudes towards fundamental political and economic issues are very well reflected in their views on the EU. Examining these stances is thus a way to understand a great deal of party politics both in general and in the context of post-Yugoslav political space.

The role of political parties has become even more important as the EU encountered a series of severe crises with far-reaching and unpredictable consequences. Many authoritative voices argued that the EU is 'in danger of falling apart' (Schultz 2015), faced with a migrant crisis, security challenges and the British decision to leave the Union. This sense of crisis created conditions for the emergence of—not anymore only fringe or radical nationalist—parties that express strong Euroscepticism in almost all European countries (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013). Moreover, as 'Brexit' showed that leaving the EU can be a viable political option, the rejectionist party-based Euroscepticism ceased to be a marginal stance (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2016). Hence, it is ever so more important to understand the motives behind Eurosceptic stances. By examining the two cases of traditionally strong Euroscepticism, driven by the issues of nationhood, statehood and identity—which are also at the very heart of the crisis of the EU—the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of this increasingly important phenomenon.

The book also hopes to make a general theoretical contribution and help us to better understand the dynamics of the domestic politics of European integration in different national settings. It does so by using a set of new cases to test, amend and develop the varied literature pertaining to party responses to the EU, and it does this in a number of ways. First, the study aims to contribute to the literature on the domestic politics of European integration—specifically on party attitudes towards the EU—by looking comparatively at the individual impact of four factors as well as the interaction between them. This is an approach rarely used in in-depth analyses of party responses to Europe, since the prevalent method was to focus on the limited number of causal factors, mostly ideology (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006), strategy (Sitter 2001) or a combination of these two factors (Batory 2002; Sitter and Batory 2008). The book aims to contribute to the dominant 'ideology

versus strategy' debate within this scholarly tradition by focusing on these two factors in relation to other potentially significant drivers of party stances. It also intends to advance this body of literature by analysing the effects of explanatory variables that have been rarely studied in other cases. These are primarily party relations with their core voters as well as their linkages with EU institutions and foreign governments which proved to be important factors in some cases, yet largely neglected in the comparative literature. The dominant field of inquiry within this scholarly tradition was focused on Eurosceptic party stances (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000, 2008a, b; Sitter 2001, 2002). However, the precise meaning of the term 'Euroscepticism' remained contested among scholars (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Flood and Usherwood 2007; Kaniok 2012). The study thus hopes to contribute to the ongoing debate on the categorisation of party attitudes by critically examining the current models and categorising the stances of political parties in EU candidate states.

Second, by looking at explanatory factors stemming from the domestic and international (EU) levels and how they interrelate, the study makes a contribution to both the literature on the domestic politics of European integration and the literature on the EU's impact on member and candidate states—'Europeanisation' literature (Grabbe 2003, 2006; Schimmelfennig 2005; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). Unlike these two schools, which mostly ignored each other and focused on either internal or external factors respectively, this book argues that both factors may account for party responses to Europe. It thus aims to advance our understanding of how domestic political actors behave and mediate significant EU influence in EU candidate states. Third, the study also seeks to advance the wider literature on Central and Eastern European politics (Kitschelt 1995; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Grzymala-Busse 2007). It specifically contributes to our understanding of the nature of these party systems, party ideologies as well as their strategic behaviour by examining how the issue of the EU has been politicised in the post-communist and post-conflict milieu. Fourth, by looking at the fundamental transformation of some parties' ideologies and stances on the EU, the book hopes to advance the literature on party transformation and how parties make difficult political decisions in general (Katz and Mair 1992; Harmel and Janda 1994). Fifth, by examining the relationship between party stances towards the EU and the preferences of their core voters and the general public, the book aims to advance the literature concerned with the links between political elites and mass public in general (Dalton 1985; Carrubba 2001; Adams et al. 2004, 2009).

The remainder of this chapter reviews the existing literature on party responses to the EU and explains the rationale behind the explanatory model employed in this book. It then critically examines different conceptual models of party positions on the EU, discusses the difficulties in conceptualising party stance in (potential) candidate states and presents the classifying model used in this study. The chapter then lays down the methodological framework of the inquiry by discussing the research design and the methods of data collection. The chapter concludes by outlining the structure of the book.

Explaining Party Responses to the EU

The aim of this section is to outline the main potential drivers of party responses to the EU. In the subsequent chapters, I will discuss in more detail each of the factors that have been found to shape party views on this issue. Although (West European) parties have been influenced by the process of European integration since the 1950s, the academic interest in this topic has surged only over the last two decades. As European integration deepened with the Treaty of Maastricht to include, apart from economic, a substantial level of political integration, European issues became more politicised in domestic politics of member states, with the public opinions gradually taking increasingly sceptical or negative positions (Leconte 2010; McLaren and Guerra 2013). Political parties therefore found themselves under a pressure to incorporate stances on this issue in their party programmes and manifestos. Although strong support for supranational cooperation of European states—in a form of a European federation—has been traditionally weak, most political elites have been broadly in favour of European integration. However, with the onset of the financial and migrant crisis in Europe as well as the decision of the British public to leave the EU, European issues became central to domestic politics of almost all European states prompting political elites to respond and adopt often sceptical, if not negative, views about the process of European integration.

Which are the factors that shape party responses to this growing importance of European issues in their domestic political systems? There are three broad factors that may determine party responses to European integration: party ideology and identity, a number of drivers related to party strategy and tactics, as well as the EU itself. It is reasonable to assume that all political parties are driven by these factors when determining positions, albeit at different times and to a different extent. The degree to which each factor affects parties largely depends on parties' inherent features as well as specific national milieus.

The nature of parties themselves—whether they are more office-, vote- or policy-seeking (Müller and Strøm 1999)—may be crucial for understanding their stances. Seeking to survive as an organisation and to secure votes and access to executive office, parties may be driven by strategic and tactical motives, and thus prone to change their positions under internal or external (EU) influences. For other, mostly ideologically driven, parties which primarily seek to implement policies, the (positive or negative) stances on the EU may represent an essential element of their world-views based on their fundamental values. Such parties tend to resist external pressures for change and are less likely to fundamentally alter their stances on this issue. Moreover, the specific national contexts—such as political culture, history or institutional opportunities—create conditions for different party responses to the EU. This may explain significant cross-country variations and why, for example, the Balkan Euroscepticism has been predominantly value-driven and almost exclusively radical right and strongly traditionalist and conservative in its nature (Bandović and Vujačić 2014), while the Scandinavian one tends to be motivated by post-material or rural values (Skinner 2013).

Party stances on the EU have been most often perceived as a result of party ideology, a system of fundamental values and ideas that underpins all segments of party policies and constitutes its overall identity. In most general terms, a centrist, mainstream ideology is found to predispose parties towards Euroenthusiasm, while more radical (right or left) ideologies tend to produce more Eurosceptic sentiments. Although it is widely assumed that ideology plays an important role in determining party stances, the exact nature of the relationship between party ideologies and their stances on the EU remains a contentious issue. The key question is which fundamental party values crucially shape their stances on this issue. In other words, may party positions on the conventional socio-economic left–right ideological dimension or on the 'new politics cleavage' better account for their stances on the EU? Advocates of the first approach argue that parties assimilate and exploit European issues within existing ideologies, which are the results of key social (left–right) cleavages (Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks et al. 2002). Based on this 'cleavage theory of party positions on European integration', the most pro-EU-oriented party families are expected to be the liberal and Christian democratic, followed by the social democratic and regionalist families. The agrarian, conservative and green party families tend to be less supportive, while the Protestant, extreme right and extreme left/communist families are often the most Eurosceptic. Other scholars contested these assumptions.

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001, 2008) claimed that a party's position on the left–right spectrum is not correlated with whether a party is Eurosceptic or not. Although they identified a stronger tendency for Eurosceptic parties to be on the right of the spectrum, they argued that parties from different areas of the left–right spectrum express Euroscepticism. Indeed, Euroscepticism seems to be advocated by diverse parties positioned along the full socio-economic left–right spectrum. Crucially, many parties—particularly in new member and candidate states—do not largely perceive the EU in socio-economic terms and thus this dimension appears to be less relevant for their positioning on this issue, as will be discussed in Chap. 3.

An alternative approach is that party stances on the 'new politics' dimension—based on the issues such as national identity, migration, human right, reproductive rights, environmental protection—are associated with their responses to the EU. In other words, parties that have conservative or authoritarian position on key social issues also tend to express Euroscepticism, while parties with libertarian agenda assert more enthusiasm for European integration. Hooghe et al. (2002) thus argued that the most powerful predictor of party positioning on Europe is their location along an axis between two poles, namely the GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) and the TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist). They specifically found that parties near the TAN pole are, without exception, highly Eurosceptic. Indeed, leading Eurosceptic parties are radical right (the Hungarian Jobbik, Greek Golden Dawn, Serbian Radical Party), right-populist (the French National Front, UKIP, Italian Northern League, Danish People's Party) or conservative (the British Conservatives, Polish Law and Justice Party). Conversely, with the exception of some Scandinavian parties that have remained Eurosceptic—but precisely on the ground that the EU does not satisfy their libertarian views—libertarian parties tend to express support for European integration (including all liberal and social democratic parties in the Western Balkans).

Even though it appears that 'new politics' dimension is more likely to hold true, both dimension of party contestation need to be taken into account if we want to understand party stances on the EU. In other words, it is crucial to examine what parties exactly oppose or support. Specifically, do they oppose the EU for being too free-market-oriented or for trying to regulate national economies and unnecessary interfering in economic processes, both of which may be driven by parties' social-economic left–right outlooks? Conversely, a growing number of parties object the EU

for imposing too liberal view on identity matters and pushing for supranational policies on these sensitive issues, with migration being the most important issue of contestation and a source of growing Euroscepticism among political elites. Moreover, party positions and the motives behind them may also vary across issues. They may be dominantly driven by socio-economic outlooks and new politics views at the same time but in relation to different aspects of EU integration.

Besides being policy-seeking, parties may also be dominantly vote- and office-seeking organisations, and as such they may strategically form and alter their attitudes towards the EU to achieve electoral success, irrespective of their ideological convictions. Moreover, some parties, mostly in unsettled party systems of the post-communist countries, do not express any identifiable ideology (as a set of fundamental values they stand for) that may be linked to their stances on the EU. Therefore, they may form opportunistic policies on this issue. As pragmatic actors, such parties respond to strategic incentives in the context of national elections. Euroscepticism is particularly found to be 'a deliberate strategic choice' (Sitter and Batory 2008) shaped by strategic short-term goals, such as the quest for votes and access to executive office. In this respect, the positions of other parties on European integration—the extent to which other parties have crowded out the Eurosceptic/Euroenthusiastic space—may significantly affect party responses to European integration. The underlying assumption is that parties are less likely to adopt (in most cases) Eurosceptic attitudes if their political competitors have already 'occupied' the Eurosceptic space. Such parties therefore have strong reasons to move away from the Eurosceptic political space and focus on other more electorally beneficial issues that have not been exploited by their competitors. Also, the pressures of coalition politics prove to be a factor strong enough to fundamentally shape or change a party's broad position on the EU. Following the logic of coalition building, parties that seek to be 'suitable coalition partners' for other parties in order to come to power tend to adopt positions of their potential coalition partners. This tendency can be particularity seen in smaller (Eurosceptic) parties that adopt (pro-EU) agenda of their more dominant potential partners. Furthermore, party position in the party system is also recognised as an important casual factor. The rationale is that peripheral parties are more predisposed to using Euroscepticism strategically as a mobilising issue than parties more central to their party systems (Taggart 1998). Such parties tend to take up EU issues as protest issues and thereby stress their outsider and peripheral

position to gain electoral support. Indeed, there is a general pattern across Europe that core mainstream parties are much more enthusiastic about the European integration project than protest parties that tend to heavily criticise an elitist project of EU integration.

The position of party's target electorate on this issue is also reasonably expected to shape party stances. The underlying assumption is that parties (including those mostly ideologically driven) find it difficult to ignore concerns of their core voters. This may be seen in cases 'where strong constituency ties and economic vulnerability of the party's core electoral base to EU policies strengthen parties' incentives for taking up the European issue' (Batory 2008a, p. 22). General public opinion is also often found to be an underlying motive for party positioning on this issue. For example, the pressure of predominantly Euroenthusiastic public opinion may account for the transformation of former Eurosceptic parties in the Western Balkans (Konitzer 2011; Vachudova 2012), although other studies found no strong correlation between public and party response to the EU (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b). Parties may also perceive that the interests of their supporters are in line (or not) with European integration, and determine position accordingly. This is not necessarily the same as ideology (which involves reference to some more or less abstract set of values) or strategy (which involves considering the likely response of the parties' voters or potential voters). Rather, it suggests parties found that, in most cases, the EU was in their supporters' interests and deliberately started advocating pro-European policies without having the ideological predisposition to do so. As Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) argued, such goal-seeking parties may undertake an economic cost-benefit analysis of how European integration is likely to benefit their supporters and adopt an underlying position on this issue accordingly.

Finally, the EU itself is an external actor that can considerably shape or limit party contestation in members and particularly candidate states. Likewise, it can significantly impact party views on European integration. There are two broad channels of EU influence on political parties: indirectly through European transnational party federations as well as more directly through the mechanisms of EU conditionality aimed at moderating party systems to make them more EU-compatible. First, parties seeking membership in European party federations need to fulfil several conditions; most important ones are ideological compatibility, democratic conditionality and, crucially, pro-EU commitment (Pridham 2008). Even though most studies found a limited impact of European transnational

parties (Ladrech 2002, Haughton 2009, Szczerbiak and Bil 2009), Pridham (2008) claimed that these external pressures do reduce or 'soften' stances of Eurosceptic parties towards the EU. This is mostly the case in Central and Eastern European states where parties seek an additional level of legitimisation by securing international affiliations and as such they tend to be susceptible to foreign influences.

Second, the external force of the EU itself may be an important catalyst for significant changes in domestic actors, including political parties. Political elites may transform and adopt, in most cases, more pro-EU positions because of EU leverage; the change may be a result of two mechanisms—conditionality and socialisation. Namely, strict conditionality and tangible material incentives provided by the EU may create incentives to moderate party positions. Alternatively, the EU's socialisation and persuasion may gradually change the perception of elites' identities and interests so that they accept EU norms as legitimate and intrinsically good, irrespective of material incentives (Grabbe 2003; Schimmelfennig 2005; Sedelmeier 2011). Both channels of the EU external influence are present in candidate states during the process of their accession to the EU, while the EU leverage considerably weakens or effectively ceases to exist once these parties and their countries obtain membership in European party federations (Stojić 2015) and the EU respectively (Jović 2015). Some authors argue that, in almost all cases, major parties have responded to EU conditionality by embracing agendas that are consistent with EU requirements (Vachudova 2005, 2012). However, this assumption that the EU is the single most important driver of party stances should be nuanced. As Sedelmeier (2011) noted, the EU does not usually attempt to exercise direct influence on party systems and individual parties, except when it takes sides (arguably very rarely) in national elections against nationalist and authoritarian parties such as in the 2008 Serbian election (Stojić 2010). Political consensus on EU integration may be an unofficial aim of EU institutions, not least because that can foster candidate countries' EU accession, so it may be in their interest to minimise the political significance of Eurosceptic parties. Nevertheless, party politics appear to be less suitable to being impacted in this way as there was a lack of clear demands and credible positive incentives for parties that did transform, with no direct use of conditionality on the part of the EU.

All these factors are reasonably expected to shape party responses to European integration and they will be examined in this book. Specifically, ideology is likely to predispose parties towards more or less contesting the European integration project, but as Batory (2002) claimed, parties

are limited when forming these attitudes by short-term competitive pressures. These include the need to be acceptable as coalition partners as well as to be responsive to core voters' and general public concerns regarding the EU, the extent other parties have already taken their preferred position on this issue, their core or peripheral status in the party system, and their international affiliations. Crucially, the interplay between ideology and strategy may account for party response only in the context of the EU which as an external power affects how EU issues are played out in domestic party systems of candidate states. Thus, this book looks at the effect but also importantly at the interaction between the four factors: party ideology, party strategy, party relations with the general public and core voters, as well as parties' transnational relations. In order to understand how contemporary parties determine their views on the EU, the book also considers the overall role of the EU that provides the context in which these factors may shape parties' positions. This study however argues against the claims that the EU is the single most important factor that shapes party stances and that consequently party systems in candidate countries almost inevitably transform. This seems to be a deterministic approach that ignores the complexity of the causal mechanism of different internal and external factors that may shape party responses to the EU. Moreover, empirical evidence from this research shows that parties do not necessary become pro-EU under European pressure as there were significant parties that did not abandon Euroscepticism, or even became more Eurosceptic despite (or exactly because of) EU behaviour, even though several parties did transform and adopted more pro-EU positions over time. Figure 1.1 illustrates the explanatory model concerning the formation of party stances on the EU that is employed in this book.

Conceptualising Party Responses to the EU

Apart from the discussion on the drivers of party responses to European integration, the comparative theoretical literature (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Conti 2003; Flood and Usherwood 2007; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, b; Leconte 2010; Kaniok 2012; Skinner 2013) has been characterised by an ongoing debate on the key classification criteria as well as the most appropriate terminology that should be employed to depict all the nuances in party views on the EU. The most widely used conceptual model of party-based Euroscepticism was developed by Szczerbiak and Taggart, who broke this position down into hard and soft Euroscepticism.

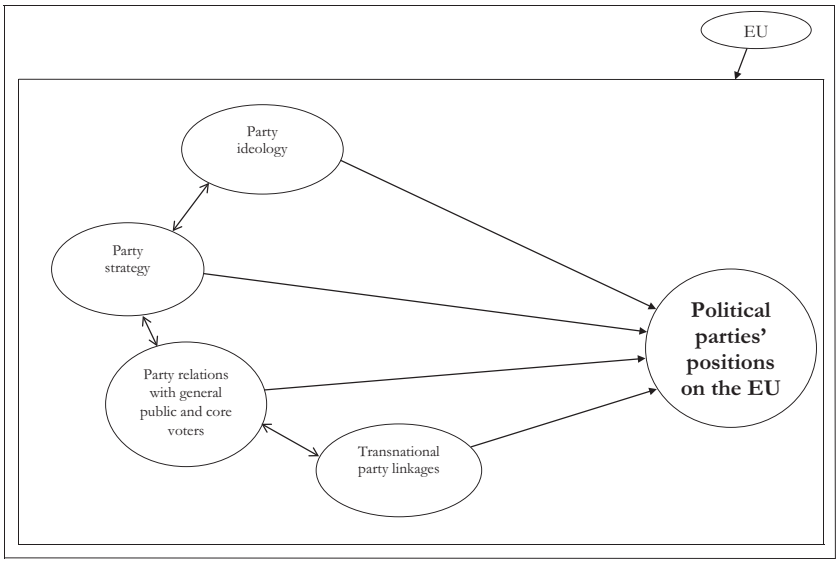

Fig. 1.1 Explanatory model concerning the formation of party positions on the EU

The first term initially referred to *'a principled opposition to the EU and European integration* and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, p. 2; emphasis added). The second term implied a party position 'where there is not a principled objection to the European integration or EU membership, but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas leads to the expression of *qualified oppositions to the EU*, or where there is a sense that "national interest" is currently at odds with the EU trajectory' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, p. 2; emphasis added).

This concept was later applied in several case studies, but it was also adapted by scholars who sought to capture specific features of individual party systems. Conti (2003), for example, used this concept to examine Italian parties and introduced three additional attitudes that a party may adopt. He proposed a neutral category, defining it as lack of a clear position on European integration, and then conceived the two pro-European stances labelled as functional and identity Europeanism. The former position was characterised by a strategic interest and context-based support,

while the latter described an identity- and ideology-driven support for European integration. However, this conceptual framework has also received criticism. Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p. 300) argued that 'soft Euroscepticism is defined in such a broad manner that virtually every disagreement with any policy decision of the EU can be included'. Flood and Usherwood (2007, p. 3) also asserted that soft Euroscepticism was a too broad category since 'there is scarcely any political party which does not object to some feature of the EU as presently constituted'. In response to this criticism, Szczerbiak and Taggart later argued that attitudes towards a country's EU membership should not be the ultimate litmus test of whether a party is hard or soft Eurosceptic. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p. 248; emphasis added) therefore claimed that hard Euroscepticism is *'principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU*, based on the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institutions such as the EU'. In contrast, they stated that soft Euroscepticism exists when there is not principled objection to the European integration project of transferring powers to a supranational body such as the EU, but there is '*opposition to the EU's current or future planned trajectory* based on the further extension of competencies that the EU is planning to make' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b, p. 248; emphasis added).

Drawing on the criticism of hard–soft Euroscepticism dichotomies, Kopecký and Mudde (2002; emphasis added) proposed a concept that covered both pro- and anti-EU positions. They introduced a distinction between support for *the ideas of European integration that underlie the EU* (institutionalised cooperation based on pooled sovereignty and an integrated liberal market economy) and *support for the EU as it is in reality* (the general shape and development of the EU's political, institutional and social elements). They further made a distinction between Europhiles and Europhobes based on their support for, or opposition to, the ideas underlying European integration as well as between EU optimists and EU pessimists, based on party attitudes towards the EU as it is in reality. Consequently, Kopecký and Mudde constructed the four ideal-type categories of party positions. Euroenthusiasts thus support both the general ideas of European integration and the EU as it is. Eurosceptics support the general ideas of European integration but are pessimistic about the EU as such. Eurorejects oppose both the ideas underlying the process of European integration and the EU as it is in reality, while Europragmatists do not support the general ideas underlying the EU, but support the EU.

In summary, Kopecký and Mudde, and Szczerbiak and Taggart appear to have arrived at essentially the same conclusion about the criteria based on which parties should be classified. Drawing on their arguments, the first criterion is party support for or opposition to the original ideas underlying the EU—that is, the principle of ceding national sovereignty to supranational bodies, such as the EU. The second criterion is party support for, or opposition to, the EU's current or expected future trajectory—that is, the planned further extensions of EU sovereignty. Both criteria may be thus used to identify underlying party positions on what Szczerbiak (2008, p. 225) termed, 'the substance of European integration project'. In this way, these two concepts are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

An alternative concept was proposed by Flood and Usherwood (2007). Their framework covers a full range of party attitudes, from maximalist—in favour of pushing integration as far and as fast as is feasible—to rejectionist characterised by an outright refusal of integration. Moreover, they identified a spectrum of more nuanced views on the EU between the two extreme poles. On the positive side, these authors found reformists who endorse the advancement of integration subject to remedying the deficiencies of what has already been achieved, and gradualists that accept some slow and piecemeal advance of integration. On the negative side of the continuum, they identified minimalists that accept the status quo but want to limit further integration, as well as revisionists, who want to return to an earlier state.

These authors did not extensively deal with the motives for party stances, apart from discussing whether they are more ideologically or strategically driven. In other words, they did not discuss which fundamental party values are behind their responses to the EU or exactly which strategic electoral incentives drive parties towards one or another pole. Thus, they proposed degree typologies. An alternative and arguably more useful approach is to develop a motivation typology, where party stances are classified according to the motives underlying them. Leconte (2010), for instance, differentiated among utilitarian, political, value-based and cultural Euroscepticism. Skinner (2013) later added two more categories—Euroscepticism based on rural and post-material social values—to identify such sentiments in West European non-EU members. Yet, it seems that these categories somewhat overlap and do not take into consideration that Eurosceptic sentiments can be equally strategically driven irrespective of basic party values; nevertheless, they provide a useful analytical tool for comparison between different countries and parties.

Conceptual Models in EU Candidate Countries

This section points to the difficulties in applying the classification models in the context of EU non-member states. Although well regarded and widely used in different national settings, the major issue with the concepts of Kopecký and Mudde (2002) and Flood and Usherwood (2007) is that they assume that parties expressed nuanced and highly differentiated positions on the EU. Yet, political parties (even in EU member states) often do not have or do not express any specific model of the EU that they want to achieve, whereas parties in EU candidate countries focus almost exclusively on the issue of EU membership. Szczerbiak and Taggart's re-conceptualised model offered more precise criteria for party classification, but it also faced the same problem—the lack of elaborated party positions on the EU. This book addresses the lack of elaborated party views on the EU by employing methodological triangulation. It categorises party stances by identifying (wherever available data allowed) their attitudes towards the EU in party programmatic documents, the rhetoric of senior politicians and party elites' interviews. The goal is to discern party positions on the ideas that underlie the EU (ceding sovereignty to supranational bodies) as well as the EU as it is. It is assumed that using diverse sources and methods of data collection would result in more reliable information on party positions on these issues, and consequently more precise classification. Even though parties may not say anything about the EU in their documents or rhetoric, it does not necessarily mean that they do not have a stance. This may indicate that some parties choose not to give prominence to these issues, while senior politicians may have strong beliefs. Nevertheless, in some cases it was impossible to identify these nuances in party positions on the EU, so their broad (or indirect) views on European integration were considered.

Another contentious issue in the comparative literature is whether party stances on EU membership are an indicator of their underlying positions on the EU. Szczerbiak (2008, p. 240) argued that 'party attitudes towards whether or not their country should be a member of the EU are not necessarily emblematic of a party's broad, underlying policy on European integration and can be more the product of an instrumental cost-benefit analysis'.[1] Conversely, being in favour or against EU membership was an important (in some cases, critical) issue at the early stage of EU accession for countries where there was not a wider political consensus on joining the EU. Often, there was the lack of any informed political debate about the substance of European integration along with

the general ignorance of the principles underpinning the EU in many candidate countries. Moreover, Skinner (2013) claimed that, in Western European non-EU member states, the debate on European integration has a natural tendency to focus on the issue of membership with the divisions between pro-European and Eurosceptic stances running along this divide. Following the British decision to leave the EU, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2016) noted hard Euroscepticism now 'includes withdrawal from the EU as a serious political option and (once again) possible litmus test for such rejectionist parties'. Examining party views on EU membership in order to assess their overall stance on the EU appears, therefore, to be justified, particularly in parties that have not yet considered the substance of European integration in candidate countries with a distant prospect of joining the EU. As their accession advances, with the EU becoming more than an issue of pure abstraction, it is more likely that parties will adopt more nuanced positions on the substance of European integration and use the issue of EU membership more strategically in response to electoral incentives (particularly in the run-up to EU accession referendums).

To map party stances on the EU, this study amends and combines the existing conceptual frameworks. The model used here consists of four ordinal categories of party positions depicting different degrees of enthusiasm or opposition to the EU, as presented in Table 1.1. Parties are specifically classified into the four categories: hard and soft Euroscepticism as well as hard and soft Euroenthusiasm. While Hard Euroscepticism is defined as principled opposition to the principle of supranational cooperation that underlie the EU, further extension of its competencies as well as EU membership, hard Euroenthusiasm is conceptualised as principled support for these principles and policies. Soft Euroscepticism and soft Euroenthusiasm are defined as contingent and qualified opposition to and support for the ideas underpinning the EU, extension of its competencies as well as joining the EU, respectively.

Table 1.1 Model of party positions on the EU in candidate countries

Hard Euroenthusiasm	*Soft Euroenthusiasm*	*Soft Euroscepticism*	*Hard Euroscepticism*
Principled pro-integration position	Contingent pro-integration position	Contingent anti-integration position	Principled anti-integration position

Sources: Adapted Conti (2003), Rovny (2004), Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b)

Hard Eurosceptic parties explicitly favour an intergovernmental, rather than supranational, form of cooperation among sovereign nations and oppose the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institutions. They also express a principled opposition to their countries' EU membership. In most cases, this is the position that parties adopt when motivated by their ideological convictions. Underlying principles of EU integration may run counter to such parties' original ideological positions and fundamental identity values. As Rovny argued (2004, p. 36), 'the particular values and normative political goals vested in the initial ideology are at odds with some values, normative goals, or particular policies of the European integration project'. These parties are not likely to compromise on this issue and moderate their stances, even if the logic of party competition or an overwhelmingly pro-EU electorate creates incentives to do so. They are therefore not expected to change their negative position on European integration over time, although they may sometimes moderate rhetoric for strategic electoral reasons. Hard Eurosceptic positions can be also strategically motivated. Such parties find it electorally profitable to advocate this extreme position, although their ideologies do not necessarily have to be counter to the principles of EU integration—or if they lack any elaborated ideologies. Rovny (2004, p. 45) found that some Central and East European parties (such as the Polish Law and Justice and Self-Defence) are inclined to hard Euroscepticism that is strategically driven.

By contrast, hard Euroenthusiasts express principled support for the substance of European integration. This category resonates with what Conti (2003) termed 'identity Europeanism'—that is, parties that consider European integration as good in itself. These are often ideologically motivated positions since European integration process is 'not presented in terms of costs and benefits upon the domestic arena or upon the party itself' (Conti 2003, p. 18). The fundamental principles of these parties tend to be in line with the values underpinning the process of EU integration: they are committed to the closest cooperation among European nations and the transfer of power to supranational institutions. They strongly and consistently support their countries' EU membership as well as fulfilling all preconditions for EU accession in candidate countries. These are parties that advocate and support the EU even at the price of losing out—for example, despite growing Eurosceptic sentiments in the public or their core electorate. As Rovny (2004, p. 35) pointed out, they would accept 'losing voters at the cost of pursuing specific value-based ends' that the EU embodies. These positions may also be strategically

driven when parties find it electorally profitable to advocate such pro-EU agenda, although their fundamental values do not necessarily always relate to the principles of EU integration.

On the other side, soft Eurosceptic parties tend to express contingent and qualified opposition to the project of transferring powers to a supranational body such as the EU, as well as further extension of EU competencies. Often, these are strategically driven positions. In other words, these parties may express qualified opposition to the EU (and sometimes a country's EU accession) to secure more votes and in response to the concerns of their core electorate or the general public about the EU. Their approach to the EU is therefore context-driven, and couched in instrumental terms, primarily on a cost-benefit analysis of the expected benefits for voters or the party itself (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b). In most cases, these are not deeply ideologically rooted parties. As Rovny (2004) argued, they are willing to amend their programmes by more or less Eurosceptic positions and discourses in the hope of gaining new voters and greater political influence, even at the cost of abandoning some of the parties' original fundamental principles (if they possess any). This, however, may also be an ideologically motivated position. For example, Rovny (2004, p. 40–41) argued that the Smallholders' Party in Hungary seem to be 'mildly ideologically driven' soft Eurosceptics. Ideologies compel such parties to express neither hard Eurosceptic nor Euroenthisiastic attitudes. They are rather predisposed, by their fundamental values, to be consistently 'cautious' about EU issues and inclined to critically assess the EU, regardless of electoral incentives.

Finally, a soft Euroenthusiastic position mostly resonates with Kopecký and Mudde's (2002, p. 303) Europragmatist category of parties that 'do not hold a firm ideological opinion on European integration, and on the basis of pragmatic (often utilitarian) considerations decide to assess the EU positively because they deem it profitable for their own country or constituency'. Conti (2003) argued that this is 'functional Europeanism' which describes parties that express mostly strategic, rather than principled, support for the EU or their countries' EU membership. They are not committed to further integration unless it is proved that it would serve other, more important interests, such as maximising votes. Conti also noted that conditional and qualified supports for European integration (and EU membership) are sensitive to contextual factors and these parties therefore can experience shifts according to contextual interest. However, soft Euroenthusiasm may also be an ideologically motivated stance of

parties that are not predisposed by their ideology to strongly support the supranational principles of EU integration, nor to oppose it. They tend to critically assess the EU in principle, but also lean in favour of supporting it, largely irrespective of strategic incentives.

Research Design

This section lays down the methodological framework of the book. The research question that the book aims to answer is how political parties adopt and change their positions on European integration and it does so by examining party systems of Serbia and Croatia. The book draws on the four explanatory variables, as discussed above: party ideology, party strategy, party relations with the general public and core voters as well as parties' transnational relations. The study seeks to understand to what extent party views on the EU can be attributed to each of these factors examined in the context of the complex process of policy formulation, these countries' controversial relationship with the EU and the significant dynamics of domestic party politics. The book examines 11 political parties—six Serbian and five Croatian[2]—that according to Sartori's (1990) criterion had the ability to affect the tactics and direction of party competition. Yet, it is important to note that some parties were consistently small and found it difficult to secure enough votes to enter the parliament (such as the Liberal Democratic Party and the Croatian Peasant Party) or ceased to be a relevant political force over the time—the Croatian Party of Rights. Parties characterised as peripheral and not satisfying the criterion—primarily the Serbian Dveri or the Croatian Human Shield (Živi Zid)—are addressed separately in Chap. 4. Although the study generally conceptualises parties as unitary actors, it also examines the dynamic of intra-party relations wherever available data allowed for such an analysis. The research examines party positions since 2000 when both countries experienced the fundamental changes of their political systems and consequently began their integration into the EU.

The research design that is employed is a qualitative comparative study. The selection of qualitative study is based on assumption that party attitudes towards the EU are essentially qualitative data, which would lose its quality and depth if quantified. In the context of the Western Balkan politics, party views are determined primarily by the most senior party officials. As this research shows, their underlying motivating factors may be ideological convictions that are the result of individuals' beliefs, needs or

desires. Their motives may also be the result of strategic calculations related to electoral concerns, intentions to secure international affiliations or to become a 'coalitionable' party of the political mainstream. Party views on the EU may be therefore rooted in the fundamental beliefs of parties and senior party officials, or the results of carefully planned and pragmatic re-positioning. In either case, such decision-making seems inappropriate to be quantified and analysed by methods that privilege quantitative analysis. The research thus draws on qualitative data. Although it uses some quantitative data, such as election results and voters' stances on the EU, it does not employ statistical analysis other than in simple descriptive terms.

The analysis uses three methods to gather data. These are: qualitative content analysis of party programmatic documents and rhetoric of representative party leaders, semi-structured elite interviews, and analysis of the secondary sources and academic literature. The data was first gathered by a detailed qualitative examination of Serbian and Croatian political parties' programmatic documents. It examined different types of documents adopted over time to capture the underlying party stances present in all of them. It analysed the content of party programmes, manifestos, electoral campaign documents, as well as public statements of senior politicians and party leaders. The statutes and other relevant documents of European transnational parties were also qualitatively analysed. Data collected this way was complemented by information gathered through other means, primarily elite interviewing, given that some parties did not explicitly state their stances in the programmatic documents.

The second key source of data was 47 semi-structured interviews with political elites—26 in Serbia, 14 in Croatia, 7 in Brussels (see Appendixes A and B for the list of interviewees and questions). The politicians interviewed possessed relevant information not readily available in written sources (such as the characteristics of intra-party relations or the existence of party factions based on different attitudes towards the EU), but vital for understanding party responses to the EU. They also had different positions within the party—for example, party presidents or vice presidents, international secretaries, members of the presidency and political council, and MPs—which allowed for capturing parties' wider and underlying positions on this issue. Furthermore, country experts, political analysts and journalists were interviewed. The rationale for these interviews lies in the fact that they usually possess valuable information that is often hidden or not easily accessible through other sources. Data was also gathered through

interviews with the officials of the European Commission and European transnational party federations responsible for Serbian and Croatian EU integration and their parties' membership in European party federations. These officials were able to objectively evaluate the nuances in party attitudes towards the EU as well the patterns of Serbian and Croatian parties' transnational relations. The main purpose of the interviews was to verify the data obtained through analysis of party documents. To do so, it was crucial that the interviewees represented authoritative and reliable sources of information, which was indicated by stating their names and functions. With an exception of a senior official of the European Commission, none of the interviewees requested anonymity. The research also draws on secondary academic literature and evidence collected from a variety of additional sources. These are, namely: the mass media, official documents of state institutions (electoral commissions, national parliaments, the Serbian EU integration office and Croatian ministry of European integration), public opinion research agencies and non-governmental organisations (Medium Gallup, CESID).

Plan of the Book

Having outlined the theoretical and methodological starting points of this study, Chap. 2 aims to put the book's key finding into a wider post-Yugoslav political and social perspective. It briefly outlines the history of the two countries' controversial relationships with the EU, followed by an examination of the key events of Serbian and Croatian party politics since 2000. Although both countries experienced very dynamic relationships with the EU, the case of Serbia in particular demonstrated the dramatic challenges the country faced in its interaction with the EU, which fundamentally influenced the responses of Serbian parties to the EU and provided strong incentives for pronounced Euroscepticism. At the same time, the post-Yugoslav legacy in both countries significantly hindered the attempts of pro-EU political forces to bring these countries closer to the EU. Both countries faced strikingly similar issues as a consequence of the 1990s—namely, cooperation with the ICTY, strong nationalist forces that sought to reverse changes achieved by pro-EU governments, weak coalition governments that did not manage to deliver expected changes—which resulted in slow and painful first steps towards the EU. However, over time Croatia, unlike Serbia, managed to politically stabilise and pursue its EU agenda more rapidly for two key reasons. First, having

successfully solved the issue of sovereignty and territorial integrity by the late 1990s, the country did not face the state-building challenges that characterised Serbian party politics—first in relation with Montenegro, then more dramatically with Kosovo. Second, the key transformation of the Croatian Democratic Union in 2003 was crucial for the overall domestic political consensus on EU integration that stabilised the country's political systems. The reorientation of parties with similar political heritage (the Socialist Party of Serbia, Serbian Progressive Party) occurred only in the late 2000s in Serbia, with comparable positive effects on both the country's EU membership bid and the domestic party system.

Chapter 3 examines party ideologies as one of the most important drivers of party responses to the EU. It categorises party stance on the EU and attempts to map them onto their ideologies, aimed at assessing to what extent, and in what way, party stances were ideologically driven. In doing so, the chapter first identifies the ideological underpinnings of these parties. It then classifies party ideologies into party families and positions parties along the two most important dimensions of party competition—the socio-economic left–right and the nationalism-cosmopolitanism axes. Although these parties had generally loose ideological underpinnings, a party's ideology was an important source of motivation for a response to the EU. This is due to the specific nature of European issues, related to identity and statehood issues, in the context of these post-communist and post-conflict societies. As a result, the key driver of party position was a party's location on the dominant dimension of party competition between nationalism (nativism) and cosmopolitanism. In other words, the pattern of support for, and opposition to, the EU essentially reflected the dominant patterns of domestic politics.

Chapter 4 seeks to demonstrate how these parties have determined and changed their stances on the EU in relation to strategic incentives stemming from the domestic party system and the logic of electoral competition. It finds that party strategy was a key component in the transformation and overall positioning on the EU of the three former Eurosceptic parties—the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union. These essentially pragmatic parties underwent a fundamental ideological transformation and consequently shifted their stances towards the EU. This volte-face was a strategically driven response to internal and external incentives in the context of dynamic electoral competition and strong EU presence in (potential) candidate countries, and aimed at maximising their chances of securing

executive office. The key strategic factors were the perceived beneficial effects of EU integration for party leaderships, disincentives to compete in the Eurosceptic space that was already 'occupied' by stronger political competitors and aspirations to become 'suitable coalition partners' for dominant pro-European parties. This chapter also explores whether peripheral Eurosceptic parties strategically exploited their position within the party system by emphasising their (potentially electorally profitable) opposition to the pro-EU political core. It argues that party peripheral status served primarily as a reinforcement (rather than a determinant) for existent and mostly value-driven (radical right) hostility towards the EU. The chapter also finds that strategic considerations significantly affected how all parties translated and used EU issues in domestic party competition.

Chapter 5 seeks to understand whether parties determine attitudes towards European integration in response to preferences of the general public and electoral constituencies. The chapter argues that in most cases there was no direct link between party and public/core voters' stances on the EU and that parties tended to ignore public and core voters' preferences on this issue. This was primarily due to weak and unarticulated impulses coming from the public and core voters, which left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on this issue and, in some cases, change stances. The EU was generally a 'difficult issue' for voters of most Serbian (and some Croatian) core parties; they had difficulties expressing their definite and firm views given contradictory relations between the EU and Serbia, the lack of wider political consensus on EU membership as well as outstanding statehood issues that were directly related to EU political conditionality. By not having reflected public interests on this important issue, parties further weakened these fragile representative democracies where a large swath of public remains distrustful of party and political systems.

In contrast to previous chapters that deal with domestic factors, Chap. 6 examines external drivers of party positions on the EU. It specifically seeks to understand how and to what extent party linkages with European transnational party federations, EU institutions and ambassadors affected the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties. It examines the nature of these linkages in a systematic manner by employing the concept of direct and indirect impact of the EU. This chapter argues that parties' transnational linkages in most cases did not have a direct effect on party attitudes towards the EU. However, this factor may, to some extent, explain strategically

driven pro-EU stances of a group of parties that strongly aspired to break away from the long-term international isolation, establish contacts with mainstream European parties and join one of the European party federations. They were, consequently, more willing to harmonise their positions with (potential) European partners. Their key motivation was to obtain European legitimacy, but also participation in government, given the significant veto power of these external actors in EU candidate states.

Finally, Chap. 7 discusses the key general findings of this research and formulates the overarching arguments. Apart from revisiting the effects of the four individual variables, this chapter examines the interaction between these factors and how their combined impact shaped party views on the EU. This chapter argues that party ideology and, under specific circumstances, party strategy were the factors that decisively influenced the formation of their stances on the EU. It also points to the importance of the specific post-Yugoslav context that significantly influenced Serbian and Croatian party responses to the EU. The legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars, the nature of these countries' domestic political and party systems as well as their peculiar relations with the EU considerably framed these parties' stances on European integration, as further examined in the following chapter.

Notes

1. For instance, a liberal and reformist Serbian movement 'Enough is enough' (Dosta je bilo), although not anti-EU, advocated a one-year suspension of Serbian EU membership negotiation, an informed public debate and a referendum on this issue. This appears to be a tactical decision to delegitimise the efforts of the Serbian Progressive Party to bring Serbia closer to the EU, but equally an expression of a deep dissatisfaction with EU approach towards the Western Balkans that has been based on 'realpolitik' considerations, given that it 'turned a blind eye to the collapse of its own values in Serbia' (DJB 2016a, b).
2. The book examines the following Serbian parties: Democratic Party (Demokratska Stranka, DS), Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka, SNS), Socialist Party of Serbia (Socijalistička Partija Srbije, SPS), Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska Stranka Srbije, DSS), Liberal Democratic Party (Liberalno Demokratska Partija, LDP) and Serbian Radical Party (Srpska Radikalna Stranka, SRS). It looks at the following Croatian parties: Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, HDZ), Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokratska Partija,

SDP), Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka, HSS), Croatian People's Party- Liberal Democrats (Hrvatska Narodna Stranka- Liberalni Demokrati, HNS) and Croatian Party of Rights (Hrvatska Stranka Prava, HSP).

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CHAPTER 2

Serbia, Croatia and the European Union

This chapter aims to put the book's key finding into a wider post-Yugoslav political and social perspective. It first briefly outlines the history of the two countries' relationships with the European Communities (EC) and the EU since the 1970s that were often controversial and difficult. The chapter then examines the key events of Serbian and Croatian party politics since 2000, when both countries experienced radical political change and consequently started the process of EU integration. It aims to provide a specific post-Yugoslav context that significantly influenced how parties responded to the challenges brought about by European integration.

Serbian and Croatian Relations with the EU

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the precursor of both countries, was the closest political and economic partner of the EC in Eastern Europe. A number of comprehensive cooperation agreements, signed in the 1970s and 1980s, stressed 'Yugoslavia's special position as a non-aligned, European, Mediterranean state and a member of the group of 77 developing countries' (EC 1979). The two parties accorded each other most-favoured-nation treatment – the import of Yugoslav industrial products to the EC was free of customs duties – while cooperation was facilitated by regular EC-Yugoslavia Joint Committees and Cooperation Councils. In the late 1980s, Yugoslavia was in a prime position to integrate into EC structures, given its relative economic development and elements

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of a free market economy, a relatively free and open society, and particularly a tradition of fruitful cooperation with Western countries. Furthermore, as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, being neither a member of the Warsaw Pact nor NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), the country occupied a strategic buffer zone between the Soviet block and Western Europe; it was thus an important factor in maintaining European stability.

However, as the Cold War came to an end so did Yugoslavia's privileged international position vis-à-vis the West. The beginning of the violent disintegration of the Yugoslav federation led to the EC decision to suspend its Cooperation Agreement with Yugoslavia in November 1991 (EC 1991). As the first conflicts broke out, the nature of the relationship between the two sides changed dramatically since the EC ceased to be a trading partner and became an important, though rather unsuccessful, mediator in the war that had intensified in its neighbourhood. The Maastricht Treaty, containing elements of the emerging common foreign and security policy, was drafted in December 1991, just several months after the beginning of the Yugoslav war. As such, the EC was a natural mediator that took initiative – however, it turned out to not have sufficient capacity to negotiate a peaceful solution; EC representatives were also rather ignorant and lacked a serious strategy on how to approach the Yugoslav problem given the complexity of and internal divisions on the issue (Radeljić 2010). Although the EC's initial reaction to the crisis was that the SFRY should be preserved as an independent state, in December 1991 the Council adopted the declaration on the recognition of the new states in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. It also invited all Yugoslav republics to declare whether they wished to be recognised as independent states (EPC 1991). As a result, the EC recognised Croatia and Slovenia as independent states in January 1992, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 1992. Macedonia was only recognised in 1993 due to the dispute with Greece over its name. The two remaining Yugoslav republics, Serbia and Montenegro, formed a new federation, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in April 1992, which was not officially recognised by the EC until 1996.

A Decade of Lost Opportunities (1990–2000)

The decade that followed was primarily characterised by the post-Yugoslav wars as well as national and state-building issues; during that time, neither Serbia nor Croatia expressed an intention to join the EU. On the contrary, Eurosceptic and isolationist sentiments flourished across both states,

most significantly in Serbia during the nationalist euphoria. While in other Central and Eastern European states 'returning to Europe' (Batory 2008a, b; Henderson 2008a, b) was a key foreign policy objective and a common theme for the majority of parties as a symbol of democracy and prosperity, the then-ruling Serbian and Croatian parties – the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union – had rather different agendas. The 1990s may therefore be seen as a decade of lost European opportunities for both countries.

Serbia's relationship with the EC/EU throughout the 1990s was primarily a reflection of its status as a pariah in the international community and a key generator of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. The country experienced the cessation of all relationships with the EC and its member states in the early 1990s. The EC's perception of Serbia's nationalist and autocratic regime, led by Slobodan Milošević, as the main culprit of the war led the Community in November 1991 to introduce a set of restrictive measures, including the termination of cooperation agreements and a recall of EC member states' ambassadors from Belgrade. The full range of sanctions was imposed in May 1992 and included an embargo on all trade other than food and medicine, a ban on all flights, as well as on cultural, scientific and sporting collaboration. After the EC called on the United Nations to exclude the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from its membership, the country was expelled from the UN and other international organisations in 1992. Finally, as a reaction to the involvement of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EC adopted a further set of sanctions in April 1993; these included a ban on the international transport of goods, a freezing of Yugoslav assets abroad and a ban on all services except telecommunication and mail (EC 1993). These developments were, however, widely seen in Serbia as biased and further fuelled already prevalent anti-European sentiments. This was particularly used by anti-European and nationalist parties – such as the Serbian Radical Party, the Yugoslav Left and a number of small radical right parties that emerged in this period – as a prime example of the hostile intentions of Western countries and their historically anti-Serbian politics.

The first phase of the post-Yugoslav conflicts ended in November 1995 with the negotiation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which stopped the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and led to the partial normalisation of the relationship between the EU and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Sanctions were abolished and the declaration on the recognition of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by the EU member states was adopted in

April 1996. The EU's new regional approach, which established political and economic conditionality for the development of bilateral relations with the former Yugoslav countries, was adopted in 1997. However, as the new conflict in Kosovo developed and the Yugoslav authorities were again held accountable for the growing violence in the province, the EU Council abolished earlier autonomous trade measures for the import of goods from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1998. Once again, the relationship between the two sides was not only interrupted due to the further disintegration of the former Yugoslav federation, but they practically went to war in March 1999. The NATO military campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, led by key EU member states, was the culmination of years of tensions between the Serbian nationalist regime and the West. The result was the defeat of Serbia, which had to withdraw its military and police forces from the province. The war, however, also indirectly led to the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, as well as to Kosovo's self-proclaimed independence in 2008. The ramifications of the 1990s events have crucially framed the relations between Serbia and the EU to this day. The EU (and the West in general) has largely perceived Serbia as a 'suspicious' partner and a source of regional instability well into the 2000s, while Serbian political elites have never genuinely and enthusiastically embraced the integration into Western political and economic structures, most visible in their decisive refusal to join NATO.

The relationship between Croatia and the EC/EU in the 1990s, although tense, never ceased. The country did not experience such dramatic events in its relationship with the West, although it found itself in unofficial isolation due to the nationalist and authoritarian character of President Tudjman's regime and its involvement in the post-Yugoslav wars. The EC did start the negotiations to conclude the cooperation and trade agreement in the mid-1990s. However, in reaction to the military operation 'Storm' against the local Serbs in August 1995, the EU Council immediately froze financial assistance and suspended negotiations, both of which were never resumed. On the other hand, Tudjman's regime strongly objected to the EU's regional approach, which was seen as an attempt to establish a new Yugoslavia, and in particular the concept of the 'Western Balkans',[1] coined by the EU in 1999. Tudjman also 'accused Europe of not being supportive of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and of being vindictive towards Croatia, in effect punishing it for the role it played in the destruction of Yugoslavia' (Jović 2006, p. 89). As a result, there was

no real intention on the part of the then-Croatian political elites to bring the country closer to the EU, although the regime insisted that Croatia was a European (rather than Balkan) country that has always belonged to the Austro-Hungarian – that is, Central European – cultural and political structure, and thus was a natural part of the larger European project (Jović, Interview 2011). In an interview, Vesna Škare Ožbolt (Interview 2011), Tudjman's former political advisor and vice president of the Croatian Democratic Union, argued that Tudjman has never been anti-European.

A Difficult Role for Latecomers (2000–2017)

The nature of the relationship between the EU and these two countries fundamentally changed in the 2000s as a result of two important events. On one hand, the EU Council adopted a new, more comprehensive approach to the troublesome region in 1999 – the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), aimed at supporting the Western Balkan countries' development and preparations for future EU membership. The European Council clearly stated in June 2001 that all SAP countries were potential candidates for EU membership; this was further reaffirmed at the Thessaloniki summit in June 2003 (European Council 2003). On the other hand, the fall of the Milošević regime in October 2000 as well the electoral defeat of the Croatian Democratic Union in January 2000 opened the way for improving their relationship with the EU, given that both newly elected governments proclaimed EU membership to be their ultimate foreign policy goals. Nevertheless, the legacy of the 1990s heavily burdened both countries, impeded their transformation and democratisation and, in the case of Serbia, significantly slowed down the process of EU accession, with the consequences being felt well into the 2010s.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was included in the SAP in 2001. However, due to internal political tensions between Serbia and Montenegro, which sought more independence, the accession process stalled until 2003, when the loose union of the two countries was established. The European Commission decided in 2005 to negotiate the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the new state union. However, the ever-present legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars overshadowed the process of the country's integration into the EU. The main issue throughout this decade was the inability and unwillingness of Serbian governments to arrest and extradite to the ICTY war crimes indictees. Although the negotiations on the SAA were opened in October 2005,

they were suspended between May 2006 and June 2007, as the country did not fulfil its commitment to cooperate with the Tribunal. In the meantime, the EU recognised Montenegro as an independent state in June 2006 (following the May 2006 referendum on independence) and took note that Serbia was the legal successor of the short-lived union. Finally, the EU decided to sign the SAA with the caretaker Serbian government in April 2008, in the sole attempt to support the pro-European coalition led by the Democratic Party during the heated electoral campaign prior to the May 2008 elections. The SAA was de facto signed only by the pro-European half of the outgoing government, led by the Democratic Party, while another major coalition partner, the Democratic Party of Serbia, strongly opposed it. Interestingly, the ratification of the SAA was automatically suspended, given the country's unsatisfied cooperation with the ICTY. The Council unblocked the process of ratification of the agreement in June 2010, and after a long process of ratification, the SAA came into force only in September 2013.

In the meantime, the Democratic Party-led Serbian government applied for membership of the EU in December 2009. Following the arrest of the most wanted war crime indictee, Ratko Mladić, in June 2011, the European Commission recommended that Serbia become a candidate country in October 2011. However, the last unresolved territorial issue from the 1990s, the status of Kosovo, on which Serbia and leading EU countries had entirely opposing positions, fundamentally marked the relationship between the two sides after 2008. Specifically, Kosovo was recognised by a large number of EU member states as an independent state, although the EU had no formal stance towards its status given that there was no agreement among all the member states on the issue. On the other side, the Constitution of Serbia defined Kosovo as an integral part of its territory. Serbian EU integration, therefore, again stalled, given the condition that Serbia de facto needed to accept (if not officially recognise) the independence of this province during its EU accession. This was most obvious in December 2011 when, despite the Commission's recommendation to grant candidate status, the European Council postponed the decision. However, it granted Serbia candidacy in March 2012, following the concessions that it made with regard to Kosovo's status. Nevertheless, the start of accession negotiations was conditional upon Serbia taking further steps towards 'a visible and sustainable improvement of relations with Kosovo' (Council of Ministers 2012). Following further Serbian concessions on Kosovo, the European Council opened accession talks with Serbia in January 2014.

Serbia has been very slow in opening negotiating chapters since 2014. This was a consequence of a complex set of external and internal factors that came into play, impeding European integration of the country. Faced with an unprecedented level of uncertainty, as a result of a series of crisis, the EU and member states became less enthusiastic about expanding the weakened Union. The willingness of member states to genuinely support, encourage or, at least, not to block the candidates on this long and arduous journey further decreased following the 2016 British decision to leave the Union. This affected the prospects of all countries that seek to join the Union, bringing delays in EU integration process and boosting voices that propagate anti-EU sentiments. Furthermore, Croatia stalled Serbian EU membership negotiations on two occasions, demanding better treatment of Croats in Serbia and particularly the annulment of a Serbian law on universal jurisdiction for crimes committed in the 1990s conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. This happened despite the 2011 Croatian parliament declaration (Croatian Parliament 2011) that stated that Croatia will strongly advocate further EU enlargement and promote European values as well as that bilateral issues 'must not block the accession of the candidates to the EU'. On the other side, the internal reforms in Serbia have been predominantly held back by the lack of genuine resolve of political elites to carry out essential reforms. Serbian EU accession remained a hostage to the ruling elites that have rhetorically supported EU membership and relatively successfully implemented EU-required economic reforms. At the same time, they have demonstrated a high level of reluctance to implement political reforms, particularly in relation the rule of law and democratic standards. What will, however, crucially determine the outcome of Serbian integration with the EU – which is by no means inevitable – is its relation with Kosovo as it became increasingly difficult to reconcile Serbian claims over Kosovo with efforts to progress to more demanding phases of EU accession.

Croatian accession into the EU, although occasionally slowed and interrupted due to the 1990s legacy, has progressed since the 2000 parliamentary election, when the new centre-left government declared that EU accession was its strategic goal. The country opened negotiations for the conclusion of the SAA in November 2000 at the Zagreb summit, when the newly established SAP was launched. A year later, the Croatian Parliament accepted a resolution on EU accession, which was the first sign of an overall political consensus on Croatian EU membership. The SAA was signed in October 2001 and entered into force after being ratified by all EU member states in February 2005. In the meantime, Croatia applied

for EU membership in February 2003. The European Council granted Croatia official candidate status in June 2004, following the Commission's positive opinion on the Croatian application. However, as with Serbia, the key political condition for the start of accession negotiations was full cooperation with the ICTY, which at that time it lacked. The accession negotiations were thus postponed and only finally opened in October 2005, after a positive report by the then-ICTY chief prosecutor.

The accession process, however, did not proceed smoothly and without obstacles. Due to border disputes, Slovenia blocked the negotiations in autumn 2008 and only a year later did the two countries manage to reach an agreement to bring the disputes before an international arbitration tribunal. The country also faced difficulties in closing the chapter on competition policy due to the issue of shipbuilding subsidies, as well as the most challenging chapter on the judiciary and fundamental rights that was linked to full cooperation with the ICTY, an independent judiciary and the fight against corruption and organised crime. However, the resignation and consequent arrest of the former Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, in December 2010, on charges of corruption, was seen as the prime indicator of an independent judiciary; in the following months, negotiations intensified and were finally concluded in June 2011. The Accession Treaty was signed in December 2011, and 66% of voters supported Croatia's accession to the EU in a referendum held in January 2012 (Croatian electoral commission 2012). Croatia became the twenty-eighth EU member state on 1 July 2013.

However, Croatia has not fully capitalised on EU membership. Faced with a prolonged recession, it largely failed to make use of EU funds, remaining one of the EU's mostly poorly performing economies. Croatia did not significantly influence any European policy, finding it difficult to move from an object to a subject of EU policies. Although it distanced itself from the Balkan neighbourhood – which was one of the driving forces behind elites' EU aspirations – it largely failed to 'strengthen' its Central European dimension and forge strong links with the Visegrad Group of countries. On the contrary, it appears that after joining the EU, democratic consolidation of the country largely staled as nationalism and authoritarian tendencies, especially in the Croatian Democratic Union, resurfaced. As Jović (2016) put it, 'joining the EU freed the negative forces of nationalism in Croatia' given that 'now there is no one outside to tell us what we should and should not do'.

This section presented the nature of relationships between Serbia/Croatia and the EC/EU since the 1970s. Although both countries experienced very dynamic and controversial relationships with the EC/EU, the case of Serbia in particular demonstrated the dramatic challenges the country faced in its interaction with the EU, which fundamentally influenced the responses of Serbian parties to Europe. In other words, traditionally strong Serbian Eurosceptics tended to be rather anti-European and generally anti-Western, partly due to very complex relations with the EU and the perceived hostility of the West throughout the post-Yugoslav crisis. On the other hand, Croatian Euroscepticism was less anti-Western in its nature (and more anti-Yugoslav, as will be discussed in Chap. 3) despite difficulties in its relations with the EU. At the same time, the post-Yugoslav legacy in both countries significantly hindered the attempts of pro-EU political forces to bring these countries closer to the EU.

Serbian and Croatian Party Politics Since 2000

This section outlines the key events of Serbian and Croatian party politics since 2000, when both countries experienced radical political change and embarked on their EU integration paths. It aims to provide each country's wider political context, which framed how parties responded to the challenges of European integration. The relevant Serbian and Croatian parties and the number of their MPs in 2017 are presented in Table 2.1.

Serbian Party Politics Since 2000: The Agony of Political and State Fragmentation

In October 2000, following a largely peaceful revolution on the streets of Belgrade, the ten-year authoritarian reign of the Socialist Party of Serbia came to an end. Mass protests occurred following elections for the president of what was then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after the opposition candidate, Vojislav Koštunica, won significantly more votes in the first round (50.24%) than the long-time Serbian and Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević, who received 37.15% of the total votes (Orlović 2011) but refused to accept the election results. In response to this, opposition parties held a mass anti-government rally and, with the support of police and military forces, quickly took over key state institutions, forcing

Table 2.1 Relevant political parties in Serbia and Croatia and the number of their MPs in 2017

Political party	*Number of MPs*
Serbia	
Serbian Progressive Party	102
Socialist Party of Serbia	22
Serbian Radical Party	22
Democratic Party	15
Enough is Enough	13
Social Democratic Party of Serbia	10
Party of United Pensioners of Serbia	9
Dveri	7
United Serbia	6
Social Democratic Party	5
Liberal Democratic Party	4
Croatia	
Croatian Democratic Union	55
Social Democratic Party	37
Bridge of the Independent Lists	13
Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats	5
Croatian Peasant Party	5
Istrian Democratic Assembly	3
Human Shield	3

Sources: Serbian Parliament (2017), Croatian Parliament (2017)

Note: There are 250 MPs in Serbian and 151 MPs in Croatian Parliament

Milošević to step down from power. The transition of power was completed later that year when the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) won the parliamentary election. The new government consisted of the 18 parties of the DOS, although the Democratic Party and Democratic Party of Serbia were by far the strongest parties in the coalition.

A new reformist government led by the president of the Democratic Party, Zoran Djindjić, managed to secure foreign financial support for the country, introduced market reforms and swiftly re-established relations with the EU and other international organisations. However, within a few months, an internal division between the Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia became apparent. The conflict intensified after the Serbian government extradited Slobodan Milošević to the ICTY in June 2001, despite strong opposition from the Democratic Party of Serbia. The conflict between the two parties was primarily the result of profound political differences. The Democratic Party advocated a pragmatic policy that would bring Serbia closer to the West, achieve rapid reintegration into

the international community, and it was ready to fulfil the EU accession conditions, including the extradition of Serbian citizens indicted by The Hague Tribunal. On the other side, the Democratic Party of Serbia opposed cooperation with The Hague Tribunal, favouring voluntary surrender of the indicted. In addition, the parties of the old regime denied the legitimacy of the newly established system, viewed the democratic changes as a coup and believed that Milošević had been kidnapped and illegally extradited (Goati 2009).

A radical change came after the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjić in March 2003, when the remaining cabinet members were unable to proceed with economic and social reforms. Consequently, an early election was called later that year. Election results indicated that voters wished to punish democratic parties, as the radical right Serbian Radical Party, a member of the old regime, received the highest number of votes. However, a minority government was formed by other parties: the Democratic Party of Serbia (whose leader, Vojislav Koštunica, became Serbian Prime Minister), G17 Plus and a coalition of the Serbian Renewal Movement and New Serbia. Since this coalition did not have enough parliamentary votes to secure a majority, the government was supported by the party of the old regime – the Socialist Party of Serbia. The incoming government's policies clearly deviated from those of the previous government, particularly regarding cooperation with the ICTY and attitudes towards the legacy of the Milošević regime. It suspended cooperation with the ICTY by insisting on the voluntary surrender of individuals indicted for war crimes. As a result, financial support from Western countries was suspended, while the feasibility study on Serbia's readiness to enter into a contractual relationship with the EU was postponed. However, the negative economic effects of these policies and poor results in the 2004 presidential and local elections led the Democratic Party of Serbia to change its stance (Stojić 2017). Consequently, the government managed to 'persuade' 14 people charged with the war crimes to surrender voluntarily, which led to the EU's decision to resume negotiations with Serbia (Stojić 2013).

The following year, the citizens of Montenegro supported independence of the republic at a referendum, despite sharp opposition from the Serbian government. In this way, Serbia renewed its independence after nearly 90 years. Following the proclamation of the new constitution, a parliamentary election was held in January 2007. The Serbian Radical Party again emerged as the strongest party in Parliament. However, after lengthy and difficult negotiations, the Democratic Party of Serbia turned to the pro-European parties and formed a government with the

Democratic Party and G17 Plus, while its president, Koštunica, again became the Prime Minister (Stojić 2010). Initially, it seemed that the new government had managed to preserve its fragile internal unity, which was reflected primarily in a common attitude towards Kosovo's status and European integration. However, as negotiations on the status of Kosovo progressed in a direction unfavourable to Serbia later in 2007, conflicts within the ruling coalition became more visible – there was a key difference on the measures to be taken as a reaction to the Kosovan declaration of independence adopted in February 2008 and EU involvement in this process. Koštunica took a hard stance towards the EU, arguing that, under new circumstances, Serbia must refuse to sign the SAA with the EU; other coalition partners argued that the SAA was neutral on the issue of Kosovo's status (Stojić 2010). These irreconcilable views on future of the country and how to react to Kosovan independence, which was supported by key EU member states, led to an early election in May 2008.

The issue of the EU was the single most important topic during the campaign because the election was widely perceived as a referendum on Serbian EU membership. The coalition that had formed around the Democratic Party of Serbia argued in favour of stopping further integration into the EU until the EU explicitly recognised the international borders of Serbia. It also pledged stronger measures against the countries that had recognised Kosovo as well as strengthening cooperation with countries in favour of the Serbian position on Kosovo, primarily the Russian Federation. Conversely, the coalition led by the Democratic Party stressed that the issue of Kosovo and the EU were two separate issues and that Serbia must not return to the isolation seen in the 1990s. This coalition of parties was openly supported by the EU and this was most visible when the SAA was signed with the pro-European part of the Serbian caretaker government in April 2008.

The election constituted a victory for the coalition associated with the Democratic Party and G17 Plus. Unexpectedly, the Democratic Party, faced with the lack of an absolute majority in parliament, formed a government with the coalition based around the key former political opponent, the Socialist Party of Serbia, which gradually adopted more pro-European rhetoric and policies (see Chap. 4). Finally, as a result of the lost election and internal conflicts over the issue of EU membership, a group of senior party officials left the radical right and hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party and formed the Serbian Progressive Party in September 2008. The newly formed party adopted fundamentally new, pro-EU rhetoric, started

advocating Serbian EU membership and rapidly became the leading opposition party. On the other hand, the government gradually lost popularity, primarily due to a severe economic crisis, which opened the door for the Progressives to win the 2012 parliamentary and presidential elections. Following a turnaround in which the Progressive's candidate, Tomislav Nikolić, won the second round of the presidential election, the Serbian Progressive Party formed a government with the Socialist, while the Democratic Party went into opposition.

Once again, the Socialists proved to be a decisive factor in the formation of government. Although supporting the Democratic Party leader, Boris Tadić, as a candidate for the Serbian president, the Socialists' leader Ivica Dačić decided to form a government with the Serbian Progressive Party, which by then established itself as moderate and pro-European and, as such, acceptable for foreign 'veto players' that have traditionally influenced the formation of Serbian governments (see Chap. 6). The new government, led by Dačić, implemented a pro-EU agenda (although maintaining close links with Russia) and created the conditions for Serbia to start negotiations with the EU on membership by signing the so-called Brussels Agreement with Kosovo. Effectively faced with an EU ultimatum and no domestic resistance, the government agreed to integrate areas mainly inhabited by Serbs into the legal system of the newly self-proclaimed state, withdrawing the remaining Serbian state institutions from Kosovo.

This government lasted only two years, although it had a comfortable majority in parliament. Namely, the leader of the Serbian Progressive Party, Aleksandar Vučić, called a snap parliamentary election hoping that election results would reflect more the growing dominance of his party. Indeed, the Serbian Progressive Party-led coalition won almost 50% of the total votes, leaving far behind all other parties (Serbian Electoral Commission 2017). Significantly, there were no Eurosceptic deputies in the new parliament as, for the first time, Eurosceptic parties failed to cross the electoral threshold. The new government, led by Vučić, continued the same policy of balancing between Russia – which in the meantime strengthened its presence in the Balkans supporting Serbian stance on Kosovo – and aspirations to get into the EU. The government also carried out market-oriented economic reforms and continued negotiations with Kosovo hoping to progress in European integration. Finally, in an effort to further solidify his power and boost the results of his party at local elections, Vučić called yet another snap parliamentary election in 2016. This was again a landslide victory for the Serbian Progressive Party that

received 48% of the votes (Serbian Electoral Commission 2017), but this time a larger number of parties, including those Eurosceptic, managed to get into parliament (see Table 2.1). Although anti-EU parties remained to be on the fringe of party politics (Serbian Radical Party and Dveri) or divided by internal conflicts (Democratic Party of Serbia), and thus unable to present a serious alternative to the government, Serbian public Euroscepticism hit a record low level – only 41% of respondents were in favour of EU membership in June 2016 (SEIO 2017).

Croatian Party Politics Since 2000: A Gradual Post-conflict Normalisation and Stabilisation

The domestic party politics of Croatia in the early 2000s closely resembled that of Serbia. Weakened by the death of its leader and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman in December 1999, the Croatian Democratic Union lost the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections for the first time since the party's creation. The new government was formed by the loosely centre-left 'Coalition of Six' parties that had opposed Tudjman's autocratic rule in the 1990s; it consisted of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia, Croatian Social Liberal Party, Croatian Peasant Party, Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party and Istrian Democratic Assembly. However, as in Serbia, differences over the issue of cooperation with the ICTY between two of the leading parties in the coalition, the Croatian Social Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party, resulted in the resignation of the cabinet led by Ivica Račan, president of the Social Democratic Party, in July 2002. In addition, due to the disagreement with the Social Democratic Party, the Istrian Democratic Assembly withdrew from the coalition a year earlier. The second government, formed by the four remaining parties, tried to continue with the reform and EU agenda but soon faced new tensions between the Social Democratic Party and the conservative Croatian Peasant Party.

When the ICTY accused the two Croatian generals, Ante Gotovina and Janko Bobetko, of war crimes in 2001, it sparked a political crisis and strong resistance among the nationalist parties. As in Serbia, friction also came from important segments of the administration – such as the intelligence services, police, judiciary and the army, which remained largely unreformed and significantly slowed down the implementation of reforms and new pro-EU policies (Jović 2006). The weak ruling coalition, faced with protests, although essentially oriented towards the EU, was unable or

unwilling to cooperate with the ICTY and extradite the indictees, and it actually contested the indictment as unlawful. The government's failure to capture its indicted citizens (although some individuals voluntarily surrendered to the ICTY) raised alarm bells across the international community (Roter and Bojinović 2005). As a consequence, this led to a significant slowdown in the process of ratification of the SAA and the suspension of US financial aid in late 2002.

The key and rather surprising breakthrough came in late 2003. Following the November election, the reformed nationalist Croatian Democratic Union, led by its new leader, Ivo Sanader, came back to power. This government continued with the reforms and decided to pursue the EU agenda set by the previous cabinet, although Sanader had vocally opposed cooperation with the ICTY while in opposition. However, having previously neutralised nationalist factions within the Croatian Democratic Union and faced with either international isolation or the start of accession negotiations, Sanader decided to work closely with EU member states. As a result, General Gotovina was finally arrested in December 2005, which considerably accelerated the country's accession into the EU. In the November 2007 election, the Croatian Democratic Union again won the most votes, although the opposition Social Democratic Party also performed well. It turned out that the 'Yellow-Green Coalition' of the Croatian Social Liberal Party and Croatian Peasant Party played a major role in the formation of a new government. After intense negotiations, Sanader secured support from this coalition as well as the Independent Democratic Serb Party and formed his second cabinet in January 2008. However, Sanader resigned abruptly in June 2009, which later proved to be the result of his involvement in the corruption scandals, for which he was sentenced to eight and a half years in prison in 2014.

The government was taken over by Jadranka Kosor, who also became president of the Croatian Democratic Union at a time of grave economic crisis and blocked accession negotiations with the EU due to a territorial dispute with Slovenia. Kosor, however, managed to agree on how to solve the long-standing row with Slovenia and thus restarted negotiations in November 2009, but also successfully dealt with high-level corruption cases within her own party. Nevertheless, deeply compromised by a series of corruption scandals coupled with extremely poor performance during the economic crisis, and despite successfully concluded accession negotiations, the Croatian Democratic Union and its partners suffered a severe electoral defeat in the December 2011 election. The new cabinet

was formed by the centre-left 'Kukuriku coalition', which consisted of the Social Democratic Party, Croatian People's Party, Istrian Democratic Assembly and Croatian Party of Pensioners.

This government failed to implement much-needed reforms, thus not improving the Croatian economy that was badly affected by the financial crisis; as a result, the country experienced six years of recession. Faced with the relatively consolidated Croatian Democratic Union which, under the leadership of Tomislav Karamarko, experienced a shift towards illiberal nationalism, the Social Democratic Party did not manage to secure the majority of the votes following the November 2015 elections. The election produced a hung parliament, with a new political force, the Bridge of Independent Lists, proving to be a decisive factor in the formation of government. This party platform presented itself as an alternative to two dominant parties and thus harvested the protest vote. After a protracted negotiation and many turnarounds, the new government was formed in January 2016 by the Bridge of Independent Lists and the Patriotic Coalition (led by the Croatian Democratic Union and the Croatian Peasant Party), while an independent businessman Tihomir Orešković become a Prime Minister. However, in June 2016, this government collapsed due to a corruption scandal that implicated Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Karamarko. As a consequence, a snap parliamentary election was called for September 2016. The Social Democratic Party failed to capitalise on the Croatian Democratic Union failure in the short-lived government of Tihomir Orešković. In sharp contrast, a moderate Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Andrej Plenković secured the leadership of the Croatian Democratic Union. Presenting the Croatian Democratic Union as a modern centre-right party with a pro-European outlook, Plenković secured most of the votes (Croatian Electoral Commission 2016) and became a new Croatian Prime Minister supported until May 2017 by the Bridge of Independent Lists and since June 2017 the Croatian People's Party. The elections also witnessed the rise of the anti-establishment, radical left and hard Eurosceptic party, Human Shield, which entered the parliament by advocating an anti-neoliberal economic model and Croatian exit from the EU and NATO (see Table 2.1).

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the empirically peculiar political and social contexts of two former Yugoslav countries, in which parties adopted or changed positions on the EU since 2000. Both countries initially faced strikingly similar issues as a consequence of the 1990s – namely,

cooperation with the ICTY, strong nationalist forces that sought to reverse changes achieved by pro-EU governments, weak coalition governments that did not manage to deliver expected changes – which resulted in slow and painful first steps towards the EU. However, over time Croatia, unlike Serbia, managed to politically stabilise and pursue its EU agenda more rapidly for two key reasons. First, having successfully solved the issue of sovereignty and territorial integrity by the late 1990s, the country did not face the state-building challenges that crucially characterised Serbian party politics – first in relation with Montenegro, then more dramatically with Kosovo. Second, the key transformation of a conservative and nationalist block of core parties from a Eurosceptic to a pro-European pole occurred with the reorientation of the Croatian Democratic Union in 2003, which was crucial for the overall domestic political consensus on EU integration that stabilised the country's political system. The reorientation of parties with similar political heritage (the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party) occurred only in the late 2000s in Serbia, with comparable positive effects on both the country's EU membership bid and the domestic party system, which became less polarised. What was also remarkable is that once hard Eurosceptic parties in both countries essentially experienced the same pattern of transformation, driven by the same or very similar strategic factors, which is discussed in Chap. 4.

Yet, the relations between these two countries have remained strained throughout this period despite pro-EU reorientation of their 1990s nationalist political elites. The relations reached its peak in the early 2010s when both moderate presidents, Boris Tadić in Serbia and Ivo Josipović in Croatia, made initial steps towards reconciliation and apologised for wartime crimes (AP 2010). However, the relations deteriorated significantly in the following years when more nationalist right-wing politicians – Tomislav Nikolić and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović – assumed presidential offices. The essence of the conflict was disputed understanding of the causes and consequences of the 1990s (as well as the Second World War) and the fact that these countries have never come to terms with their recent pasts. As a result, the ideology of nationalism and the narrative of victimhood fundamentally characterised these societies and their party systems. The relations were therefore particularly strained during the (frequent) election campaigns when nationalist – but also some moderate – parties tended to present themselves as champions of a national cause and staunch defenders of national interests, often perceived in opposition to the other nation.

At the same time, the moderating effect of the EU proved to be weak and not sufficient to transform these societies and change the nature of their relations. On the contrary, a failure of the EU to deal with the migrant crisis further undermined the already fragile relations between these countries in 2015. Unable to stem the unprecedented flow of migrants transiting through their territories and in attempt to avoid becoming a 'migrant hotspot', they even resorted to temporary closure of borders crossings. The crisis was solved after yet another belated reaction of the EU, but it highlighted the lack of basic communication between the political elites. Moreover, using its privileged position as an EU member state, Croatia blocked opening of Serbian negotiating chapters on several occasions in 2016, demanding better treatment of Croatian minority and the annulment of a Serbian law on universal jurisdiction for crimes committed in the 1990s. The accession negotiations eventually continued, but unresolved bilateral issues with Croatia are likely to affect Serbian membership bid and create continued tensions between the two countries. These events were a stark reminder that the relations between Serbia and Croatia remain to be beset by competing nationalisms and legacy of the post-Yugoslav conflicts; they prevailed even in the context of European integration of both countries and significantly affected their parties' responses to the EU, as discussed in the following chapter.

Notes

1. The Western Balkans included Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo.

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CHAPTER 3

Ideology, Identity and Party Attitudes Towards the EU

This chapter examines party ideologies as one of the most important drivers of party responses to European integration, which has received considerable attention in the comparative literature. It aims to assess the extent to which underlying party attitudes towards European integration in Serbia and Croatia have been shaped by party ideologies defined as a system of fundamental values and ideas that underpins all segments of party policies and constitutes its overall identity. In doing so, the chapter analyses party positions on the EU in relation to their ideological preferences on the traditional socio-economic left–right dimension, as well as the dominant nationalism/traditionalism versus cosmopolitanism/modernism axes. By examining these two former Yugoslav countries, this chapter intends to offer more general arguments and contribute to the debate about the importance of ideology as a factor that may explain how contemporary parties in the context of EU member and candidate states respond to European integration.

Based on the empirical data examined, ideology generally proved to be an important driver of party responses to the EU since they found it difficult to disregard their values and principles when determining a position on this issue. The fundamental beliefs of some party leaders and a value-based approach to politics in general made some parties rather unwilling to compromise on the issue of 'Europe' and thus unresponsive to strategic incentives coming both from the domestic party system and considerable external pressures. Furthermore, the pattern of support for,

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and opposition to, the EU essentially reflected the dominant patterns of domestic politics in both countries. Most parties formed stances on the EU based on their attitudes towards identity issues—that is, their position on the dominant nationalism versus cosmopolitanism dimension, while location on the socio-economic left–right axis appeared to be less relevant. This was the consequence of the specific nature of European issues and how they were translated into the party politics of these post-communist and post-conflict societies.

The chapter first examines ideology as an explanatory factor for party positions on the EU from a comparative perspective and outlines the key debates in the existing literature. It then examines the ideological underpinnings of Serbian and Croatian parties that are grouped into party families and how party ideology may have impacted their underlying views on the EU. The chapter then discusses different dimensions of ideology in relation to party responses to European integration in more general terms. Key conceptual and empirical findings are summarised in the conclusion.

Does Party Ideology Drive Party Responses to the EU?

Party ideology and strategy have been identified in the comparative literature as two of the most important factors that impact party responses to the EU. However, there is an ongoing 'ideology versus strategy' debate about the relative importance of these factors in different national circumstances. While some authors argued that ideology decisively shapes party stances, others claimed that parties approach the issue of Europe strategically, with most scholars making the case that interplay between these two variables may best account for party positions on this matter. Indeed, there is a strong case that party ideology can shape party positions on EU issues. Specifically, the issue of European integration can be 'assimilated into pre-existing ideologies of party leaders, activists and constituencies that reflect long-standing commitments on fundamental domestic issues' (Marks and Wilson 2000, p. 433). A cleavage theory of party response to the EU put forward by Marks and Wilson (2000) draws on the assumption that the response of (Western European) political parties to European integration is filtered by historical predispositions rooted in the basic cleavages that structure political competition. These authors argued that parties' ideological schemas rooted in political cleavages are a 'prism' through which

parties come to terms with European issues, noting a systematic relationship between party families and their responses to European integration. Marks et al. (2002) later also argued that party family is a stronger causal factor than strategic competition, participation in government or the attitudes of a party's supporters towards the EU. In general, the most pro-EU-oriented party families were the liberal and Christian democratic parties, followed by the social democratic and regionalist families; the agrarian, conservative and green party families were less supportive, while the Protestant, extreme right and extreme left/communist families were the most Eurosceptic (Marks et al. 2002). These authors hence claimed that the location of a party on the left–right dimension is closely associated with its position on European integration, and the effect of party family on their stances on this issue is the strongest.

Hooghe et al. (2002) further demonstrated that there is a relationship between the conventional left–right dimension and party positioning on European integration, since West European parties located towards the left and the right extremes are more Eurosceptic than parties oriented towards the centre. However, these authors found that the most powerful predictor of party positioning on Europe is the 'new politics' dimension related to communal, environmental and cultural issues, which they operationalised as an axis between two poles, namely the GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) and the TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist). They argued that the GAL/TAN axis exerts a strong, consistent effect on party positioning on European issues and structures party attitudes in the major party families—parties near the TAN pole (radical right and right-populist) were, without exception, highly Eurosceptic, while conservative parties with a TAN inclination also tended to be Eurosceptic. Marks et al. (2006) later examined whether the GAL/TAN model can explain party positioning on Europe both in Western and Eastern European countries. They, importantly, found that Euroscepticism is prevalent among the same types of parties, namely radical left and radical TAN parties across the continent. Yet, the opposition to European integration in the East tends to be concentrated among parties that are, at the same time, hard left and hard TAN, whereas Eurosceptic parties in the West are either the hard left or hard TAN parties.

Marks and Steenbergen (2002) also looked at how the left–right dimension is related to party stances on the EU, and they presented four possible models. The IR model assumes that the two dimensions are fully independent of each other, since contestation on EU issues has no

ideological underpinning. The Hix-Lord model argues that the two dimensions coexist orthogonally, since they are unrelated given that they crosscut political coalitions. The third model assumes that these dimensions are fused in a single dimension, with the left pushing for common economic regulations, and the right favouring fewer EU regulations. Finally, they argued that the fourth model, which they appear to support, assumes that these dimensions are neither fused together nor orthogonal to each other, and that the various aspects of European integration are incorporated into one of these two dimensions. These authors thus concluded that the left–right and new politics dimensions underlie stances on the EU.

On the other side, several scholars contested these assumptions. Gaffney (1996, p. 19) claimed, 'the EU can in principle engender allegiance or hostility from any ideological perspective'. Batory (2008b, p. 267) found that 'ideology clearly plays a part' in the formation of Eurosceptic stances, but she also argued that the issue of Europe does not confirm to a single left–right dimension in a comparative perspective, while Sitter (2001, p. 37) claimed that Euroscepticism emerges as a phenomenon potentially linked to a range of ideologies and that 'it covers a multitude of ideological and interest-driven stances'. Sitter (2001) pointed out that Euroscepticism, as a product of party competition, is driven by party strategy, conceptualised as the party's combined goals of survival, votes, policy and office. Taggart (1998) also contested that ideology alone can predict party Euroscepticism, arguing the European integration issue cuts across left–right ideological divisions. Stojić (2013b) found that belonging to a particular ideological family does not seem to be an indicator of a party's stance on the EU in Serbia and Croatia, given that parties from the same family expressed rather opposing positions on this issue. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) emphasised that a party's position on the left–right spectrum is not correlated with whether a party is Eurosceptic or not. Although they identified a stronger tendency for Eurosceptic parties in the Central and Eastern candidate states to be on the right of the spectrum, they argued that parties from different areas of the left–right spectrum express Euroscepticism. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) therefore concluded that Euroscepticism in Central and Eastern Europe draws from a range of party families. In their later study, these authors further argued that there is no straightforward relationship between general party ideology and stances on Europe, since 'it is not possible to "read off" a party's position from whatever ideological family it belongs to' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b, p. 257).

However, these authors did not claim that ideology is an irrelevant explanatory factor. They rather argued that a combination of ideological and strategic factors best explains party positions on Europe. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a, p. 13) thus suggested that underlying party positions on the issue of European integration are determined by 'a blend of the party's ideology and what it perceives as the interests of its members'. Batory (2002) similarly claimed that ideology structures underlying attitudes to integration, but that parties' predispositions are not directly translated into a corresponding policy of supporting or rejecting membership per se. She pointed out that parties are limited when forming these attitudes by their own early pro-European rhetoric as well as short-term competitive pressures and the need to be acceptable as coalition partners. Finally, Kopecký and Mudde (2002) made the case that ideology determines a party's support for the general ideas that underlie the EU, whereas strategy can play an important role in explaining a party's support for the EU as it is. Overall, party ideology was perceived as an important factor that, to a great extent, impacted, if not shaped, party responses to European integration. Parties found it difficult to disregard their fundamental values (provided they have them) when determining a position on the EU. This chapter therefore aims to test the key arguments about the nature of the relationship between ideology and attitudes towards the EU, and assess the importance of this factor in the context of Serbian and Croatian party politics since 2000, when both countries declared their intentions to join the EU.

Ideology and Party Attitudes Towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia

This section aims to identify the ideologies of Serbian and Croatian parties, followed by an examination of party responses to the EU in relation to their ideologies. The notion of party ideology is difficult to define. Gaffney (1996, p. 4) even asked whether it is possible to identify the 'true' underlying organising principles of political parties, while Mair and Mudde (1998) claimed that it is difficult to specify party ideology with any precision. The task of identifying party ideology is particularly difficult in the context of recently established multi-party systems in Central and Eastern Europe. Recently founded parties in Serbia and Croatia (e.g., the Serbian Progressive Party was founded in 2008) did not have a long tradition of

any firmly established ideological underpinnings. Therefore, it is questionable whether some of these parties have ideological principles at all, in the sense of a system of fundamental, underlying and firmly established values and ideas that underpins all segments of party policies and constitutes its overall identity.

One of the ways to identify parties' ideologies is to find their common characteristics and construct typologies of parties that exhibit such features. This is the rationale behind the most popular concept of party families (Von Beyme 1985). Other authors identified the dominant lines of social and economic cleavages in societies and the consequent patterns of party competition in different party systems. They then positioned parties along the key dimension of political contestation according to their ideology (Siaroff 2000; Batory 2002; Marks et al. 2006). To conduct a comparative analysis of parties' ideologies in Serbia and Croatia, this study employs both methods of comparison: party family classification and placing parties along the dominant axes of party competition. However, these are not fully ideologically profiled parties and party family classification may have limited utility in these cases—despite a tendency of some core parties to converge with Western concepts of party families, which served as models for their ideological reinventions. Therefore, party family concept is primarily used to classify parties, while the focus is on the pattern of party competition which consists of two axes—the socio-economic left–right and the nationalism–cosmopolitanism, which generates issues on sovereignty and national identity, with the latter being by far more dominant due to still outstanding or only recently solved national and state-building issues.

The chapter then seeks to identify cases where party ideology seemed to have played a key role in party positioning on the EU. To do so, it aims to estimate how party ideology relate to the values, goals and policies of the EU, which suggests the likelihood of parties assuming Euroscepticism or Euroenthusiasm 'as an implicit addition to its original propositions and voters' interests' (Rovny 2004, p. 38)—that is, their ideology and identity. This is then compared to actual party stances on the EU as outlined in their programmes, statements and political behaviour, which should allow for an estimation of the extent of parties' ideological motivation. However, it is important to note that ideology is only one possible driver of party positions that can be fully assessed only in relation to other strategic factors—such as parties' relationships with one another, the general public and their core voters, as further discussed the Chapters 4 and 5.

This study draws heavily on official party documents. A qualitative content analysis examines key party documents over a relatively long period (since 2000), which allows for a substantial assessment of parties' key policies and ideological predispositions as well as tendencies to change and adapt them. However, party documents are often strategic documents that are shaped by certain political context and sometimes do not indicate the real motives and underlying principles behind party policies. Therefore, data was also obtained through personal interviews with senior party officials. The interviewees were asked to term and describe the ideological position of their parties and to express their attitudes towards issues that may indicate party ideology, such as the role of the state in the economy, sovereignty, national identity and traditional values (Appendixes A and B). Unlike a quantitative analysis of party documents (Budge et al. 2001) or quantifying expert responses (Hooghe et al. 2002), a qualitative content analysis supplemented by interviews may examine the essential foundations of parties, and therefore make sense of, and provide a broad context for, the statements set forth in party documents. The result of the analysis is schematically presented in Table 3.1 which shows party ideologies and attitudes towards the EU of Serbian and Croatian political parties.

Social Democratic Parties and the EU

Although both countries had rich left-wing political traditions and were faced with a difficult post-communist socio-economic transition, which was fertile ground for the emergence of left-wing parties, the socio-economic left remained relatively scarcely populated. However, it is important to note that almost all parties in these countries expressed some leftist socio-economic stances in their programmatic documents as well as that an economic left-right division was not clear-cut and was rather subsumed by other dominant cleavages (related to identity and statehood issues). The Democratic Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia were the only relevant parties that may be categorised as social democratic in Serbia, while the Social Democratic Party was the uncontested major left-wing political force in Croatia. All three social democratic parties in these countries expressed a pro-European orientation. This has always been a feature of the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party, while the pro-European position of the Socialist Party of Serbia has gradually formed since the mid-2000s.

Table 3.1 Party ideologies and attitudes towards the EU of Serbian and Croatian political parties

Serbian parties	*Croatian parties*	*Attitudes towards the EU*
Social democratic parties		
Democratic Party (Liberal legacy)		Hard Euroenthusiastic
Socialist Party of Serbia (Left-centre national populist until the mid-2000s)		Hard Eurosceptic until the mid-2000s Soft Euroenthusiastic since 2008
	Social Democratic Party	Hard Euroenthusiastic
Conservative parties		
Democratic Party of Serbia (National conservative)		Hard Eurosceptic
Serbian Progressive Party (Weakly ideologically profiled)		Soft Euroenthusiastic (Populist Euroenthusiasm)
Christian democratic parties		
	Croatian Democratic Union (National populist until the early 2000s)	Hard Eurosceptic until the early 2000s Soft Euroenthusiastic since the early 2000s
Agrarian parties		
	Croatian Peasant Party	Soft Euroenthusiastic
Liberal parties		
Liberal Democratic Party		Hard Euroenthusiastic
	Croatian People's Party- Liberal Democrats (Social liberal)	Hard Euroenthusiastic
Radical right parties		
Serbian Radical Party		Hard Eurosceptic
	Croatian Party of Rights	Hard Eurosceptic

Sources: Adapted Stojić 2013b, Party programmes and interviews with senior party officials

The Democratic Party was founded in 1990 as a centre-right party whose programme was based on the concept of a liberal market economy and economic freedoms. It was the only relevant party in Serbia that explicitly mentioned capitalism as a political goal in its 1992 programme, advocating full liberalisation of the economy, the elimination of all restrictions on private initiatives and a minimal role for the state (Vukomanović 2007). However, after coming to power in 2000, the then-party leader, Zoran Djindjić, decided

to strategically shift the party's ideological basis and adopted social democratic principles (Stojić 2013b). Former EPP's MEP, Doris Pack (Interview 2011), a close friend of Djindjić, claimed that this party changed ideology because Djindjić wanted to join the Party of European Socialists since this was the strongest grouping in the European Parliament. Senior party official Zoran Alimpić (Interview 2011) revealed that Djindjić's decision to apply for membership in the Party of European Socialists came as a surprise even to senior party officials. The party's ideological reorientation was also a result of the calculation that the left political spectrum was unoccupied by a relevant social democratic party (given the nationalist political legacy of the then-unreformed Socialist Party of Serbia, which claimed that position) and that the party could expand its political influence (Stojiljković 2011).

This ideological transformation was not initially reflected in party programmes which did not contain elaborated social democratic principles. The 2001 party programme, interestingly, stated that the Democratic Party was a flexible party of principles rather than of ideology, as well as a party interested in results rather than ideological orthodoxy (DS 2001). However, in its later documents, this party included more social democratic content. In its 2007 election manifesto (DS 2007), for example, the party argued that it intended to develop a market economy, but also a socially responsible state, and that it would fight against 'wild capitalism' and misuse of the market. It also advocated 'a new social contract' in line with modern social democratic tendencies, although without elaborating its content. In its 2015 election manifesto, the Democratic Party advocated 'more equitable distribution of social wealth' as well as 'the abolition of the enormous differences between the rich and the poor', which are 'morally unacceptable and socially dangerous' (DS 2015). On the other hand, this party never emphasised national issues (unlike most Serbian parties) and it had consistently moderate and liberal stances on identity and statehood issues, promoting 'dialogue, tolerance and condemning discrimination, crimes and hate speech' (DS 2015).

However, it is questionable whether this ideological transformation was completed. While in government from 2008 to 2012, the party did not pursue any recognisable social democratic agenda. A majority of the party's electorate, including party members, did not associate the Democratic Party with the social democratic option (Stojiljković 2007). Goati (2009) claimed that the Democratic Party, judging by its policy, was close to the liberal family, but its intentions were with the social democratic family. It can be therefore best characterised as a centre to centre-left party close to social democratic and social liberal principles

(endorsing a market economy as well as civil and political liberties, but also a significant role of the government in addressing economic and social issues) that are yet to be fully embraced by its members and recognised by the public.

The European credentials of the Democratic Party, unlike its socio-democratic orientation, have never been contested (Stojić 2013b). However, the Democratic Party did not express any meaningful position on the substance of the European integration. It was therefore difficult to establish concrete party attitudes towards any specific model of the EU it prefers, since the party has never considered these issues apart from general arguments that 'a united Europe can become competitive on a global scale, only by creating the largest market and the accumulation of vast economic power' (DS 2005). On the other hand, it appears that this party supported the general ideas of integration that underlie the EU, given that its overall stances and policies essentially did not run counter to the principles of the ceding of powers to supranational institutions such as the EU. Moreover, the Democratic Party was a strong and consistent supporter of Serbian EU integration. The Democrats stood for 'European structures and standards to become a part of Serbian society, and Serbia to become an equal member state of the EU' (DS 2009, p. 23). It also perceived the EU as instrumental in modernising and democratising of the country. Its 2007 declaration (DS 2007, p. 118) stated, 'the key to solving all the most important social, economic and political issues is Serbian EU integration' and that 'EU membership is a way and crucial chance for Serbia to become a modern and developed society'. It pleaded for Serbian EU accession, both as an opposition and governing party, and even in the period after 2008, when most EU member states recognised Kosovo as an independent state, which temporarily blocked the process of EU integration. When in the mid-2010s, Serbian government led by the Progressives and Socialists refused to align its foreign policy with the EU and impose sanctions on Russia, the Democratic Party argued that 'Serbia must harmonize its foreign and security policy with EU policies' (DS 2015).

The party's overall position on the EU may be, therefore, interpreted as principled hard Euroenthusiastic (Table 3.1) and dominantly driven by its consistent moderate and liberal stances on national and statehood issue. In other words, the party's orientation towards the EU was essentially a core element of its overall identity and 'world view'. However, its position was less likely to be driven specifically by its (self-proclaimed)

social democratic outlook. Its ideological reorientation in the early 2000s and turn to the social democratic pole appear to have been a pragmatic decision largely devoid of any intrinsic belief in social democratic principles. Consequently, its hard Euroenthusiasm was not couched in strong social democratic ideological terms. It did not provide any social democratic vision of Europe, nor did it explain the kind of Europe it stood for. In other words, an initial Euroenthusiastic position adopted by the party founders proved to be a fundamental feature of this party, irrespective of its strategically driven ideological transformations in socio-economic terms (Stojić 2013b).

The Socialist Party of Serbia was founded in 1990 as the successor of the Serbian League of Communists. Given its pronounced nationalist rhetoric and policies throughout the 1990s, this party might have been categorised in Siaroff's (2000, p. 14) words as 'the left-centre national populist party'. He argued that this type of parties had been positioned left of the socio-economic centre, but what was key was their strong populist nationalism. Mudde (2007) noted that the Socialist Party of Serbia had pronounced 'social populist ideology', and thus classified it as 'radical opportunist', rather than 'radical nationalist'. The Socialist Party of Serbia expressed an ideological suspicion towards private property and privatisation throughout the 1990s. It perceived the privatisation of public property as general extortion, and it gave up opposing this privatisation only in its 2003 programme (Stojić 2013b). However, even the 2003 programmatic declaration pointed out that the Socialists were against total privatisation and in favour of the preservation of the public sector (Vukomanović 2007). At the same time, its 2006 programmatic declaration objected to the results of 'the October 2000 capitalist counter-revolution', since 'the Socialists saved Serbia from the transition, while those who came to power afterwards created dramatic social gaps' (SPS 2006, p. 3). The declaration also praised the achievements of 'one of the most important statesman of the twentieth century, Slobodan Milošević' (SPS 2006, p. 2). The Socialists were also anti-globalists and, in the mid-2000s, still expressed Eurosceptic sentiments. They specifically believed that 'every nation and every man has the right to develop freely in accordance with their traditions and needs, so the Socialists refuse to support those who impose their own beliefs and way of life by using weapons and political violence' (SPS 2006, p. 9), which was an obvious reference to the Western countries and their policies towards Serbia. The party also shared traditional and conservative views since it was 'firmly against the cultural and spiritual degradation as a result of uncondi-

tional acceptance of the values that come from abroad. Cultivation and preservation of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script should be of the utmost consideration of the national institutions' (SPS 2006, p. 9).

One of the most remarkable developments in Serbian party politics was the Socialists' ideological transformation after 2008, when it helped form a pro-European government with the Democratic Party. The party underwent a substantial, although strategically driven, ideological reorientation in an effort to position itself as a modern, social democratic party, both in relation to socio-economic and identity issues. The 2010 party programme reflected such an intention, and represented a radical break with the previous ideology. It explicitly stated that the Socialists remembered their mistakes, authoritarian rule, economic failures and persecution of political opponents, and that the new generation should know the full truth about the party's past (SPS 2010). The party's former vice president, Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011), argued that the party was in favour of a socially responsible market economy. The party specifically stood for the mixed economy with a state having a corrective role in the market and restraining exploitation. However, it opposed state control of the economy, arguing, 'private property has historically proved its economic and social sustainability and efficiency' (SPS 2010). This party was also opposed to the 'wild' capitalism in which 'unscrupulous pursuit of profit threatens the security, safety and health of workers' (SPS 2014). The Socialists also advocated reviewing of the legality of the privatisation of the state-owned companies, while those who 'contributed to the destruction of privatized enterprises and the massive loss of jobs should be prosecuted and punished' (SPS 2014). Nevertheless, the party did support a set of austerity measures and a new labour law that largely restricted workers' rights in 2014. There was thus 'the disharmony of the left position in programme manifests' and participation in the governments that implemented 'a neoliberal policy of austerity' (Stojiljković and Spasojević 2015, p. 59). Interestingly enough, its 2014 programmatic declaration stated that 'the state of Serbian economy does not give us a lot of leeway for ideological consistency' (SPS 2014). Additionally, its nationalistic populism largely vanished both from party documents and rhetoric, but also from the policies this party has pursued since 2008. The reoriented party stood for 'a democratic political culture and a spirit of tolerance, open and constructive discussion and dialogue', respect for different ideas, the rights and interests of minorities and a secular state (SPS 2010). In summary, the Socialist Party of Serbia can be classified as a centre-left party close to a

social democratic family and self-identified as a democratic socialist party (although it was not clear to what extent it stood for social ownership of the means of production, a key feature of democratic socialism). This classification is based on its post-2008 programmatic documents, given that its policies did not epitomise any discernible ideological principles.

The Socialist Party of Serbia underwent a fundamental shift in its position on the EU. Until the mid-2000s, it was a nationalist, anti-globalist and anti-Western party that expressed a strong critical stance on the EU (Stojić 2013a). The party specifically 'condemned Europe because of its participation in the 1999 aggression against Yugoslavia, which was an expression of American imperialist strategy' (Komšić 2007, p. 28). The Socialists argued, 'Europe has participated in the destruction of its own interest and universal values such as freedom, equality and humanity' (Komšić 2007, p. 28). Interestingly, though, the party did not articulate outright rejection of Serbian EU membership, although its policies amounted to it. Specifically, it did not endorse a 2004 parliamentary resolution on Serbian accession to the EU, although 'it has never been explicitly against Serbian EU integration' as argued by party vice president Slavica Djukić Dejanović (Interview 2011). Even though it asserted the accession of Serbia to the EU as a political goal at its 2003 congress, this party practically nullified this commitment through a decisive refusal to extradite those charged with war crimes to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Goati 2009). The Socialists also stood against any attempts to trade EU membership for the recognition of Kosovo, since 'the West has not given up "the carrot and stick policy" in its relation to Serbia' (SPS 2006, p. 44).

The key changes came after the death of its authoritarian leader, Slobodan Milošević, in 2006, when Ivica Dačić, as the new party president, pushed for a strategic ideological repositioning, including a sharp shift in stance towards the EU. The party thus fully abandoned hostility towards the EU. Although it has never publicly elaborated a position on the substance of the European integration, its programme broadly advocated the open borders in Europe that would allow for the free flow of people, goods, capital and ideas (SPS 2006). The former party vice president, Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011), argued that 'the EU has proven as the most convincing political, economic, cultural and civilizational model that unquestionably has no alternative'. Regarding the party's position on Serbian EU membership, a shift as a result of ideological reinvention was more obvious. The 2008 declaration on political

reconciliation and joint responsibility, signed between the Socialists and a former key political opponent, the Democratic Party, stated, 'we have always belonged to Europe and have always shared European values. Our European identity is confirmed by our history and the strategic orientation of Serbia is EU membership' (SPS-DS 2008, p. 3). The 2010 party programme (SPS 2010), which was a radical break with the party's troublesome past, similarly argued that the priority of Serbian foreign policy should be integration into the EU. The Socialists thus 'fully supported and contributed to the negotiations on Serbia's membership in the EU' (SPS 2010, p. 24). Its 2014 programmatic declaration went as far as to state that EU membership is the party's strategic and political, historical and civilisational choice, since 'Europe is our common home and the European nations are our close family' (SPS 2014, p. 85). It also stated that the party's 'commitment to the European path' and 'Europeanization of the Serbian society as a whole' is lasting and comprehensive (SPS 2014, p. 84).

The ideological transformation was the result of the pragmatic decisions of new party leaders, who realised that if it were to politically survive, the party needed to reinvent itself as a modern social democratic party (Stojić 2013b). The transformation—aimed at maximising the chances of coming to power—encompassed, as its most important element, a reorientation regarding the desirability of Serbian EU membership, the EU and the West in general. What crucially drove the party's new stance on the EU was the moderation of its position on national and statehood issue. As a consequence, after almost two decades of hard nationalism and anti-Europeanism, the party incorporated joining the EU into its new 'world view'. Still, the party's Europeanism was not a reflection of any deeper ideological values. While its 2010 programme did represent an elaborated social democratic 'world view', the (social democratic) party position on the EU or the concept of integration for which it stood, are yet to be developed. Moreover, given its strong Eurosceptic legacy, it is no surprise that Euroenthusiastic sentiments did not permeate the party ranks (as discussed in Chap. 4).

Following the reinvention, the party pursued somewhat ambiguous policies towards the EU. On the one side, its commitment to Serbian EU membership was most evident in 2013 when the party president, acting as a Serbian PM, signed an agreement with Kosovo, which unblocked Serbian membership bid, but also led to the integration of Kosovan Serbs into a political and legal system of a self-proclaimed state (a decision seen by Serbian rightists as 'national treason'). On the other side, the party

opposed imposing sanction on Russia, referred to EU pressure to do so as 'unacceptable' and argued that joining the EU 'cannot be done at a cost of our good relations with the Russian Federation' (Dačić 2016a). The party leader often criticised the EU, stating that it 'must understand Serbia no longer reacts to pressure' (Dačić 2016b). Overall, the Socialist Party of Serbia remained pro-EU, although its policies did not reflect strong enthusiasm for the EU stated in its programmatic documents. This party may be thus characterised as a soft Euroenthusiastic party. The 2014 programmatic documents emphasised that the party's commitment to EU membership was not motivated by material benefits. Yet, as an essentially pragmatic party, its responses to the EU appear to have been contingent rather than principled. The utilitarian support for the EU was reflected in the words of the party's vice president, Slavica Djukić Dejanović (Interview 2011):

> Geographically, historically, economically we are close to the EU. We are a small country that has yet to develop, and we cannot do it alone. We have become extremely exhausted during the previous decades. Without economic investments, Serbia cannot move forward. That is why we have to belong to someone. Logically, that is the EU.

Finally, the Social Democratic Party of Croatia, founded in 1990, was the legal successor of the Croatian League of Communists. As a post-communist successor party, it underwent rapid ideological transformation in the early 1990s, becoming a centre-left, democratic party. It has since been a strong advocate of the social democratic values that permeated the party's programmatic documents and rhetoric, although not necessarily its key policies. Its 2004 political declaration (SDP 2004) stated that 'social democracy is a historical choice' of this party. In the mid-2000s, the party started identifying itself with the values of 'the European third way social democracy', understood as 'a path towards the post-modern society based on sustainable growth, new technologies, pluralism of values and interests, underlying social justice and concern for human rights' (SDP 2004), effectively strengthening its preference for more liberal economic policies. Its 2007 election manifesto thus stated that this party strove for the promotion of entrepreneurship, but also 'responsibility of ownership, public health service, a society that takes care of the weak and unprotected, as well as consideration and respect for the human differences that enrich a society' (SDP 2007a). During the protracted recession in Croatia in the

early 2010s, this party argued that sharp cuts and austerity measures lead to an even greater decline (Croatia is Growing 2015). It thus 'did not accept the neo-liberal economic and political models' that created the belief that policy of austerity and market self-regulation result in economic progress (Croatia is Growing 2015). Yet, the economic recession limited freedom for implementing such economic policies and the party did not pursue any leftist economic agenda while it was in power. On the other hand, the Social Democratic Party was traditionally seen as a moderate and liberal party. Its 2004 political declaration (SDP 2004) stated that it was against political authoritarianism, backward conservatism and isolationism, while being in favour of political equality, social justice and a modern, European Croatia (SDP 2004). Its former leader Zoran Milanović emphasised that the party advocates 'a society in which ethnic and other minority groups deserve special care, where violence and hatred are suppressed by all legal means, and free people are permanently proud of antifascist foundations of the state' (Milanović 2015). Nevertheless, this party did not always manage to withstand electorally profitable nationalist populism, most visible in Milanović's (2016) rhetoric during the 2016 electoral campaign.

Lastly, the Social Democratic Party of Croatia has consistently been a pro-European party. This party position was driven by its moderate and liberal positions on national and statehood issue; as a result, there was no ideological conflict with the idea of European integration. Specifically, the party's concept of the EU was principally an expression of its social democratic orientation—dominantly shaped by its membership in the Party of European Socialist (as discussed in Chap. 6). The 2007 manifesto (SDP 2007a) underlined the Social Democratic Party's principled opposition to a Europe of unbridled capital and support for a Europe of social solidarity. It stood for the interests of preserving national identity, social solidarity, responsibility and the general good, without allowing 'the market economy to become a market society that only favours the rich' in Europe. The party advocated a Europe that would 'establish and maintain the balance between state and market, individual and social responsibility, competition and solidarity, capital and labour, as well as workers' rights and selfish profit'. It also stood in favour of 'the socially sensitive and solidaristic Europe, which will not be based on maximising profits, but social justice' (SDP 2007b, p. 54).

The party has always argued for Croatian EU membership. It claimed that 'the EU brings three key advantages: a long-term political and

democratic stability, sustainable economic competitiveness, and the social and legal regulation' (SDP 2007b, p. 53). It did not object to pooling sovereignty and pointed out, 'Croatian sovereignty will not be transferred to the EU level, but it will be exercised together with other EU member states' (SDP 2007b, p. 49). The party also argued that only EU membership can guarantee the survival of Croatia on the global market. The Social democrats criticised the Croatian Democratic Union-led accession negotiations on ideological grounds by arguing that this party made concessions with the Europe of unlimited capital but did not care about human rights and destinies, and that 'it took over our pro-European politics out of necessity and political opportunism, not as its own belief' (SDP 2007b, p. 1). It appears therefore that this party's positive attitude towards the EU was an essential part of its ideology, grounded in its social democratic identity (Stojić 2013b). The party itself argued that its attitude towards Europe 'builds on the tradition of social democracy that is the core value of the European Union' (SDP 2007a, p. 43). Its position may be thus interpreted as hard Euroenthusiastic. Yet, it remains questionable whether the specific social democratic vision of Europe permeated the party ranks or it was just the consequence of the party's international affiliation and strong links with the Party of European Socialists.

Conservative Parties and the EU

There were several parties across both countries with conservative and traditional ideologies. According to its programmes and policies, the Democratic Party of Serbia may be characterised as conservative parties, while the Serbian Progressive Party also claimed to belong to this party family, although it was essentially pragmatic and weakly ideologically profiled. In addition, the Croatian Democratic Union and the Croatian Peasant Party, although categorised as Christian democrat and agrarian respectively, to a large extent, shared these values. Conservatives in these countries were primarily national conservatives; this aligns with Von Beyme's (1985) argument that this family emphasises national themes and national identity in countries where the process of nation building was late, as was the case in Serbia and Croatia. These were also parties whose programmatic documents and political discourse contained elements of leftist economic principles, but also strong traditionalism and conservatism—they thus maintained a close proximity to the traditionalist pole of the modernism-traditionalism axis. In other words, they were not liberal

conservatives given the lack of liberal economic arguments and the dominance of identity and statehood issues. Conservative parties expressed a variety of stances on the EU, spanning the strong Euroscepticism of the Democratic Party of Serbia to the newly formulated pro-EU position of the Serbian Progressive Party.

The Democratic Party of Serbia was founded in 1992 as a centre-right, national and conservative party. The fundamental party principles included: support for the Serbian Orthodox Church; demographic recovery and population growth; preservation of traditional moral values as the foundation of the family, society and the state; protection of national identity and self-awareness; and the strengthening of national cultural institutions as well as protection of Cyrillic script (DSS 2010). Its programme also expressed strong traditionalism and stated, 'true patriotism and education of youth in the spirit of love for the motherland should be the basis of state policy' (DSS 2010). In socio-economic terms, however, this party advocated social justice and social dialogue between workers and employers, aimed at providing all citizens with a decent life, employment, social and health care, especially during the global economic crisis (DSS 2010). Stojiljković (2011) noted 'the populist solidaristic' orientation of the party, which was visible in its explicit appeals for solidarity, social justice and the social role of state. However, as a ruling party in the mid-2000s, it pursued a rapid privatisation of public enterprises, including 24 'suspicious' privatisation deals pinpointed by the European Commission as legally problematic. This national conservative party did not significantly change its ideological principles over the years and it consistently acted in line with its traditionalist political principles established by its founder Vojislav Koštunica.

There were two periods in the perception of the Democratic Party of Serbia of the EU, demarcated by the de facto EU-supported self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo in 2008. Prior to this, the party expressed qualified support for Serbian EU membership. Its programme stated that Serbia should closely cooperate with European countries, ultimately becoming a member state of the EU (DSS 2010). Former party president Vojislav Koštunica (2004) stated in 2004 'that EU membership is not only what we want, but it's something that must be done and cannot be avoided', adding that there was no alternative to the European path. In 2007, Koštunica's government announced that its main goal would be acquiring EU candidate status and speeding up the process of

legislative harmonisation with EU standards (Koštunica 2007). As a result, the negotiations on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU were completed and the agreement was initialled in 2007, which was supported by the Democratic Party of Serbia (Stojić 2013a).

On the other hand, the party has traditionally demonstrated mistrust of the West and particularly contested the legitimacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Goati 2009). It strongly opposed cooperation with the ICTY and the arrest of the individuals indicted for war crimes, which was a key precondition for EU accession; it favoured voluntary surrendering of the indicted. Its programme (DSS 2010) was also a reflection of its contingent support for Serbian EU integration, since it stated that Serbia should become an EU member state 'under the equal conditions', arguing that the EU did not treat Serbia in the same manner as other states and that the accession conditions were unfair. It also stressed that the fundamental principle of foreign policy should be respectful of the territorial integrity of internationally recognised states (DSS 2010).

Recognition of Kosovo's independence by a large majority of EU member states fundamentally affected the position of the Democratic Party of Serbia. It became a full-fledged Eurosceptic party because of its principled disagreement with the policies of EU countries towards Serbia (Stojić 2013a). The party adopted strong opposition to further Serbian integration into the EU and subordinated all elements of party politics to the issue of Serbia's relationship with the EU. Koštunica (DSS 2012a, p. 111) also articulated strong criticism of the very concept of the EU as a supranational organisation on the grounds of its 'undemocratic' character. His criticism was focused on the EU as a prime example of 'a post-modern state system that reduces the importance of state sovereignty' and 'makes a classic concept of a state—power, territory and nation—relative'. Koštunica (DSS 2012a, p. 111) further specified:

> The European Union, as a form of transnational and supranational governance, leads to a weakening of traditional foundations of democracy that is a backbone of a nation state. […] The supranational form of governance, such as the EU, inevitably comes into conflict with democratic procedures and institutions. The European Union has, therefore, transformed from the community of nations, cooperating and working together, into a union of non-sovereign entities, leading to the creation of supranational bureaucratic

> structures and suppression of democracy in the European context, as well as the weakening of democracy within its member states.

The Democratic Party of Serbia also criticised EU foreign and security policies. The former party vice president, Slobodan Samardžić (Interview 2011), thus claimed that the EU did not have its own authentic security and foreign policy, and pointed out that it became a periphery under the influence of the USA. He particularly objected the EU's policy towards the Western Balkans, since 'it did not deal anymore with strengthening institutions, democratization and economic stabilization, but rather became a consequence of geo-strategic concerns related to NATO's role in the world'.

As a result, the party adopted the concept of military and political neutrality and opposition to Serbian EU membership as its basic political principle. It stressed that there was a fundamental opposition between the Serbian Constitution that defined Kosovo as an inalienable part of Serbia and the decision of 22 EU member states to 'illegally recognize a fake state of Kosovo' (DSS 2011b). Koštunica argued:

> The policy of the EU means that the EU actually does not perceive Serbia as a state and its future equal member, but as a territory which can be forcibly cut out. There is not a single European state that has given up part of its territory under pressure or has recognized a violent change of its borders. The rules that apply to all European countries must also apply to Serbia. (DSS 2011a)

The party argued that Serbia had to find an alternative for EU membership and advocated 'a new national policy that will have as its main objective Serbia itself and its internal development based on the best European values and standards that are in the interests of our country' (DSS 2011b). It also opposed Serbian EU integration on economic grounds, arguing that the country lost EUR 500 million since the unilateral implementation of the SAA by opening its market for EU products (DSS 2012a). The party claimed that 'the dogmatic Euroenthusiastic policy' therefore led to economic dependence and loss of economic sovereignty, while the policy of finding economic and political alternatives (read *Russia*) could open new markets, partnerships and alliances for the Serbian economy.

The Democratic Party of Serbia was therefore a hard Eurosceptic party (Table 3.1) that—unlike most of other Western Balkan Eurosceptic par-

ties—was not driven by radical right and anti-Western ideology. Its opposition to Serbian EU accession was rather a consequence of complex political relations in the Western Balkans, as well as the violent breakup of the former Yugoslav federation. Party officials often underlined its European orientation based on old European, conservative heritage and values, such as commitment to the rule of law, market economy, and family and Christian values, and that 'Serbia must democratize and reform according to best European standards' (Samardžić, Interview 2011). This was predominantly national conservative party—that is, culturally conservative and nationally oriented—which crucially shaped its stances on the EU. Such party ideology—which gave absolute priority to the issues of national identity and sovereignty over the EU (membership)—'naturally' led this party to express initially 'wary and suspicious' and ultimately opposing stance on this issue.

Moreover, this party was not prone to shifting stances (including those on the EU) according to electoral incentives and did not significantly change its ideological principles over time (despite intra-party conflicts and changes of party leadership after 2014). It did, however, fundamentally modify its position on the EU, but that was the consequence of the crucial shift of EU policy towards Serbia (by de facto supporting Kosovo's independence) rather than a strategic party decision to so. The Democratic Party of Serbia appears to have been a rare example of a mostly value-based party that prioritised its programmatic principles and national politics, even when faced with a sharply declining support from its electorate (Stojić 2013a). Electoral success—or international affiliations (DSS 2012b) as discussed in Chap. 6—were not the most important goal for Koštunica, who 'insufficiently rationally perceived reality' and was rather 'persistent and stubborn' (Bakić, Interview 2011). This was confirmed by Koštunica himself, who argued:

> For me, political power has never been a goal in itself. My interest lies in politics that is guided and determined by the interests of the Serbian people. I consider that it is nationally irresponsible to implement pro-EU policy just in order to remain in power. (DSS 2012a, p. 14)

He further explained:

> There are sometimes exceptional situations in politics, when the fate of the whole country and the people is at stake, which leaves no room for compro-

> mise, but rather necessitates the principled, consistent and resolute defence of state and national interests. […] Acceptance of [Western] requests [in relation to Kosovo and EU membership] is not politics of compromise, but agreeing to self-denial and self-abolition. (DSS 2012a, p. 7)

Consequently, this party's position on the EU reflected conviction that the territorial integrity, sovereignty as well as protection of national identity were prime values that had an absolute priority over issues of the EU and EU membership. Koštunica pointed out that that Kosovo was not just a territory, but 'the issue of national identity and culture, historical backbone of Serbian people, and the origin of Serbian state and the Serbian church' (DSS 2012a). The party thus tried to position itself as an authoritative interpreter of the principles of national politics and its aversion to the EU was mostly rooted in its traditionalist and national identity (Stojić 2013b).

Finally, the Serbian Progressive Party was founded by a group of moderate members that broke away from the Serbian Radical Party in 2008. Like the Socialists, this party's leadership also underwent remarkable ideological transformation and abandoned the radical right ideology of the Radicals. Although it aimed to present itself as a moderate centre-right and conservative party, the ideological profile of this party remained vague. This was primarily pragmatic and weakly ideologically profiled party, as a consequence of the strategic decision of party leaders to mostly avoid 'identity issues' (having advocated radical right nationalism for almost two decades) and focus pragmatically on economic issues. In socio-economic terms, the Serbian Progressive Party's key principles contained the usual leftist slogans advocated by almost all Serbian parties, such as protection of a welfare state, reduction of unemployment and the distributive role of the state (SNS 2008). The party's 2011 programme specifically stated its opposition to privatisation based on the 'shock therapy' concept that led to the redistribution of wealth in the interests of big business and the creation of 'the economic system of party capitalism' (SNS 2011). It also advocated social justice, the implementation of fair privatisation and a review of the legality of the privatisations that had been carried out (SNS 2008). However, in line with its pragmatic nature, after coming to power in 2012, this party started pursuing a market-oriented economic policy. It implemented harsh austerity measures by slashing public sector salaries and pensions as well as adopting a new labour law (despite strong opposition of trade unions) that was largely seen as limiting workers' rights. At

the same time, it reduced state subsidies to some public-owned companies, but interestingly continued subsidising foreign investors.

In terms of identity issues, the party clearly abandoned the Radicals' extreme ideology of a Greater Serbia. However, it initially advocated the peaceful formation of a joint state between Serbia and the Bosnian entity of the Republic of Srpska, which was one of the party's ten programmatic principles (SNS 2008). This was abandoned in its 2011 party programme, while the preservation of the territorial integrity of Serbia and military neutrality remained among its core principles. The party 2011 programme contained only the general references to identity, arguing that the state should protect 'the Serbian cultural authenticity' and the family, which plays 'a crucial role in educating the younger generations based on the tradition' (SNS 2011). A senior party official, Damjan Jović (Interview 2001), further specified that the party advocated moderate conservatism and is committed to respect traditional social values, the strengthening of families and preservation of the 'social ethos'. A senior party official Marko Djurić (Interview 2011) similarly argued that the Serbian Progressive Party was a centre-right party, but admitting that 'ideology was not a priority of this party'. This party can be categorised mostly based on its self-identification as a moderate conservative party with a weak (and still developing) ideological profile. At the same time, it essentially remained a broad church that includes members expressing a range of opposing ideological opinions with a strong (tempered though) nationally oriented, if not nationalistic, core inherited from its radical right political legacy.

The Serbian Progressive Party underwent a fundamental and rapid transformation of attitudes towards the EU as a consequence of strategically driven ideological reinvention. Even though the party leaders had expressed pronounced Euroscepticism for almost twenty years, they founded the Serbian Progressive Party on a radically new, pro-European platform (Stojić 2013a). The party programme (SNS 2011) clearly stated that the party supported the European integration process aimed at the institutional and economic strengthening of Serbia, and that it believed that Serbian EU accession was in the best, long-term interests of all citizens. On the other hand, the Serbian Progressive Party, unsurprisingly, did not express attitudes towards the substance of European integration. The only document that broadly revealed its stance on this issue was the cooperation agreement with, interestingly, the notoriously Eurosceptic Austrian Freedom Party. The agreement stated that the two parties support 'the creation of a Europe of free nations and self-determined people in the

framework of a grouping of national sovereign states' (SNS-FPO 2011). They required the preservation of national identities, including the Western traditions of Christianity, humanism and the Enlightenment, as well as 'the effective protection of Europe against the guardianship of imperialist superpowers [arguably the USA]'. These parties also stood for a fight against globalisation and 'the infiltration of religious fanaticism into European society'. It seems, therefore, that the Serbian Progressive Party initially stood for a radical transformation of the EU and intergovernmental cooperation among sovereign European states based on opposition to presumably American imperialism and Muslim fundamentalism. This, however, has never been stated in any of the party's documents and public rhetoric. This document can rather be seen as a reflection of the initial confusion and uncertainty over the political trajectory of a newly established party that sought international partners and the lack of leaderships' capacity to formulate a clear stance on this issue as well as their unease about the newly proclaimed Euroenthusiastic platform.

This party was characterised as strategically driven and soft Euroenthusiastic. The decision of the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party to start advocating Serbian accession to the EU was highly pragmatic. Adopting a radically new attitude towards the EU and moving away from its long-term anti-European political legacy can be primarily interpreted as the result of electoral tactics to come to power, secure political future and obtain 'European legitimacy'. On the other side, there were no indications in the party programmatic documents and rhetoric of any ideologically motivated stances on the EU or Serbian EU membership. Aleksandar Vučić, leader of the Serbian Progressive Party, specified:

> I could not care less about them [the EU and Europeans], I only respect them. I do not love them and they are not particularly dear to me, but we, as responsible people, have to take care of our nation. [...] We need a rational, realistic and serious approach to state policy so that we gain the most we can for our country, and give away the least of what we have to lose. (SNS 2010)

The support for Serbian EU membership was therefore mostly couched in instrumental and utilitarian terms, since the party perceived the EU as a key economic partner that could contribute to a better life for ordinary people (SNS 2011). Vučić further explained:

> I ask those who are against the EU today—because it was normal to be against Europeans at times when they were beating and killing our country—what will we do if they withdrew cross-border loans? What and whose money are we going to use to rebuild the economy? How are we going to open new factories? If someone tells me that all of this is possible without Europe, I congratulate him and give him power. […] I personally think that is impossible. We need Europe more than it needs us. (SNS 2010)

This was neatly reflecting in the party's ambiguous politics towards the EU since its came to power in 2012. The Progressive-led government created the conditions that allowed Serbia to commence EU membership negotiations; it pursued policy of good neighbourly relations with the former Yugoslav republics and, crucially, signed an EU-brokered deal with Kosovo, and relatively successfully implemented the EU-supported economic reforms. What is more, the party leader Vučić put an absolute priority on Serbian EU membership presenting himself as a 'messiah' who has the task of changing Serbia and turning the course of history that led the country to the brink of collapse in the late twentieth century. As he argued, 'I want Serbia to be in front of the door of the EU', describing himself as 'the proudest in the world' because he was able 'to do much for his people' (Vučić 2016a).

Yet, the Progressive-led government refused to align its foreign policy with the EU and impose sanctions on Russia, a key supporters of Serbian claims over Kosovo. It also prioritised economic transformation at the expense of a country's democratic consolidation and demonstrated a high level of misunderstanding of the key principles of modern liberal democracies—the freedom of speech and the rule of law—with a detrimental impact on Serbian EU membership bid. In other words, the vested interests of senior party officials and the party's electoral concern prevailed over its self-proclaimed commitment to Serbian EU membership. This was most visible in the 2016 elections, when it gathered a broad pre-election coalition of very diverse Euroenthusiastic and Eurosceptic parties. A joint slate included, among others, the national conservative, hard Eurosceptic and pro-Russian Serbian People's Party, whose platform was epitomised by the slogan 'Only with Russia can Serbia win'. As a typical catch-all party lacking any embedded ideology, the Serbian Progressive Party was driven to reach out to significant Eurosceptic and pro-Russian segments of the electorate in order to maximise its electoral gains—the party's fundamental goal. Former party leader Tomislav Nikolić was particularly more critical of

the EU and repeatedly argued that if the accession means that 'someone will force us to recognize the independence of Kosovo and give up our cooperation with Russia, then we'd rather not join the EU' (Nikolić 2016a), although he ultimately concluded that the EU is essentially 'a necessary evil' (Nikolić 2016b). Significantly, this view appears to be shared by many within the party ranks, although it has been thus far successfully suppressed by a pro-EU party leader. The Serbian Progressive Party, nevertheless, remained to be a party with the latent and disguised Euroscepticism inherited from its radical right political legacy. As the allure of EU membership gradually wanes, given the slow and troublesome process of Serbian EU membership negotiations along with an increasingly assertive role of Russia in the region, these sentiments may re-emerge particularly once the strong leader's grip on the party loosens.

The Serbian Progressive Party may be also characterised as a 'populist Euroenthusiast'. It appears to have strategically supported EU integration, but at the same it was reluctant to face that this has implications for the domestic politics and that it requires an engagement with the realities of Western democratic principles (Henderson 2008a). This party position thus largely resonates with Henderson's 'phoney Europhiles' category. However, the Serbian Progressive Party also expressed several features associated with the growing phenomenon of populism, which crucially shaped its responses to the EU. As Stojiljković and Spasojević (2015, p. 58) pointed out, it draws on 'a dominantly populist reinterpretation of the neoliberal and pro-European matrix' combined with 'the idea on the need for change of the national mentality'.

Specifically, populism is often defined as ideology that considers society to be separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups—that is, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' (Mudde 2004). The Serbian Progressive Party presented itself precisely as a non-elitist party and the voice of the impoverished people. Party leader Aleksandra Vučić thus often argued that 'we must face' all difficulties and overcome them, stressing that he 'will make decisions in the interest of citizens, and not in the interest of its popularity' (Vučić 2015). Another common feature of populist parties is their opposition to the establishment. This party has become since 2012 the most dominant political force at the core of the political establishment. Yet, it expressed an anti-establishment attitude. The political establishment, alleged to act against the interest of 'the people', was perceived as consisting of opposition parties that ruled the country between 2000 and 2012 on a pro-EU and reformist agenda. The Serbian Progressive Party portrayed itself as the strong opponent of these 'corrupt'

parties and criminalised economic elites that have grown into a crucial political force prior to 2012.

Although the party did not express hostility to representative politics, it arguably (mis)used the institutions of representative democracy by holding frequent elections and creating a permanent electoral campaign to exploit the advantages of having state resources and a tight grip on media outlets. As in the case of populists in other unconsolidated democracies (Van Kessel 2015), this party demonstrated disdain for 'checks and balances' by disregarding the independence of regulatory bodies and the judiciary. Moreover, as Taggart (2000) noted, populism tends to emerge where there is a sense of crisis. The Serbian Progressive Party not only used, but also created, the sense of constant crises to make political capital out of it. The sense of internal crisis was ensured by frequent parliamentary elections—there have been three elections between 2012 and 2016—which lead to tensions and uncertainty, both among opposition parties and the Progressives' coalition partners. The sense of internal crisis was also created by invoking 'internal enemies' that allegedly aim to topple the government, be it foreign (Western) diplomats and secret services, the independent media or civil society and international organisations. The sense of external crisis, on the other side, was the result of unsettled relations between the former Yugoslav states, often presented in a dramatic manner. In 2015, Vučić (2015) argued that 'the next month will be difficult for Serbia', noting that 'things are getting complicated in the region'. He thus called on citizens to achieve 'complete unity' because 'full political stability must be maintained in the coming days and months'. A year later, Vučić (2016b) asserted that 'one of the most difficult weeks is behind us', stressing that 'regional stability has been endangered for the first time in a more serious manner'.

Crucially, the Serbian Progressive Party did not adopt Eurosceptic political platform. The party has been constantly striving—following its 2008 pro-EU reorientation—to portrait itself as a legitimate European party, most notably visible during the 2016 migrant crisis. The Serbian Progressive Party-led government thus pursued the policy of welcoming the hundreds of thousands of migrants that transited through the country. Instead of closing the borders, PM often appealed to the EU to establish a single policy towards migrants. To position itself as a loyal partner, Vučić (2016c) argued that Serbia will 'successfully execute each task given by the EU as a serious and responsible country, protecting the rights of these people, respecting human rights, but will also do what has been agreed and what is the overall policy of the Union'. In stark contrast to other

Central and Eastern European countries, the Serbian government expressed its readiness 'to shoulder a part of the obligations of EU member states and take a quota of refugees although it is not in the EU' (Vučić 2016d). Vučić (2016e) even 'hoped that some of them will stay and that Serbia will become their fatherland'.

At the time of a sharp rise in anti-migrant rhetoric and policies across Europe, a pro-migrant policy pursed by Serbian populists may come as a surprise. However, the migrant crisis was an opportunity for Vučić to show—and finally prove himself and his party—as 'truly European'. The government thus seized the opportunity to present itself as European, stressing that 'Serbia is one of the countries that respect European values and act accordingly' (Vučić 2016f). Crucially, this was not a contentious issue in the country. Except in a few minor parties, there was no fear that the country would be 'flooded' with the refugees, not least because almost none of the 700,000 migrants intended to seek asylum in Serbia. Parties were not therefore able to capitalise on this issue by adopting anti-migration stances, which has become the trend across Europe. The case of the Serbian Progressive Party thus demonstrates that Euroscepticism and anti-migration rhetoric are not necessarily a key feature of populist parties, as often argued in the literature. On the contrary, Europeanism can also be linked to populist parties, particularly in the context of EU candidate states where the grand debates on the nature of the EU do not resonate with domestic publics and voters.

Christian Democratic and Agrarian Parties and the EU

The major centre-right party in Croatia, the Croatian Democratic Union, also underwent significant ideological transformation in the early 2000s. Given its nationalist and authoritarian policies throughout the 1990s, the party was often described as a conservative, nationalist umbrella party with a radical right faction and as a 'fundamentally populist radical right party' (Mudde 2007; Šedo 2010). After the death of its authoritarian president, Franjo Tudjman, and the election of Ivo Sanader as a moderate party leader, Mudde (2007, p. 54) asserted that the Croatian Democratic Union transformed into a 'truly conservative party' as a result of expulsion of radical individuals and factions. The party ideology, from the mid-2000s, became a blend of pronounced conservative, traditionalist, Christian democratic and often nationalistic values. The party placed 'man with his inalienable rights, indispensable individuality and social responsibility' at the centre of its politics, and strove particularly for a Christian ethic and

family values (HDZ 2002). It was committed to 'the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Croatian people, as part of a common European civilisation and cultural heritage' (HDZ 2002). As a typical conservative and traditionalist party, its 'fundamental belief is that changes and reforms must be implemented in a way that would not lead to social conflicts and tensions' (HDZ 2011).

In socio-economic terms, the party expressed mostly leftist principles (although its 1990s rule was characterised by tycoon privatisation and crony capitalism). The 2002 programme stated that it is against socially unacceptable and insensitive economic liberalism that privileges the interests of shareholders at the expense of the employees and the interests of a society (HDZ 2002). In its 2011 party programme, this party supported 'the social responsibility market economy', where the state encourages enterprises, but does not interfere in their work. It also insisted on a social market economy based on balancing the interests of and developing partnerships among workers, entrepreneurs and government (HDZ 2011). However, the party did not pursue any recognisable leftist economic agenda while it was power. As other traditionalist parties in the region, the Croatian Democratic Union was not fundamentally characterised by its eclectic and underdeveloped socio-economic worldviews, but by its pronounced national conservative social outlook and constant internal tensions between more liberal factions (personified by its post-2016 leader Andrej Plenković) and nationalistic factions (exemplified by its former leader Tomislav Karamarko).

The Croatian Democratic Union also significantly changed stances on the EU and Croatian membership in the EU in the early 2000s in an effort to transform from a fundamentally nationalist party to a moderate, conservative Christian democratic and crucially pro-European party. Until the early 2000s, the party position on Europe was clearly Eurosceptic. Party policies demonstrated substantial and deep disagreement with the essence of the EU and European integration, although it has never been ideologically anti-Western. This party argued that Croatia was a core European (Mediterranean and Central European) country and that in historic terms the 'Balkan episode' was just a very short one, when compared to its belonging to the West for centuries (Jović 2006). It thus did not explicitly oppose Croatian EU accession, but it pursued a nationalist political agenda and had a pronounced negative stance on EU policy towards Croatia, as well as the conditions for Croatian accession to the EU, primarily the country's cooperation with the ICTY (Jović 2006). It strongly opposed the EU's regional approach and the concept of the

'Western Balkans' and particularly feared the restoration of a new Yugoslavia.[1] Jović (2006, p. 89) argued that Tudjmanist 'scepticism and hostility towards the concept of Europe' was primarily based on criticising Europe for not helping Croatia when it was attacked in the post-Yugoslav wars and assist Croatia on its road from 'the Balkans' to 'Europe'. He also claimed that Tudjman perceived Europe as an 'artificial creation', a project based on the unrealistic idealism and unworkable principles of multinational 'federations'. Tudjman also argued that Europe was based on an illusion that a new European culture, which will replace the existing small identities, would emerge and that any new, federal Europe is as unlikely as a federal Yugoslavia (Jović 2006). This party's Eurosceptic policy of nationalism and isolationism throughout the 1990s was therefore primarily ideologically driven.

The fundamental change in party attitudes towards the EU in the early 2000 following the death of its founder and ideologue, Franjo Tudjman, can be explained by strategic and pragmatic considerations and intra-party dynamics, as examined in Chap. 4. Its 2002 programme (HDZ 2002) stated, 'the priority of Croatia is accession to the EU, which has proven to be the core of a stable peace, freedom and high living standards'. Under its moderate leader Ivo Sanader, the party strongly pursued the policy of Croatian EU accession, which the Croatian Democratic Union-led government successfully secured in 2011. The 2002 programme also contained references to party attitudes towards the substance of the European integration. The party, specifically, expressed somewhat cautious (albeit not opposing) approach to further extensions of EU competencies—although this has never been further elaborated nor has it become prominent in its political agenda. The programme explicitly stated that:

> A united Europe has a chance only if it is based on enlightened and firm self-understanding of each nation and the preservation of their national identities. The unity of Europe should be based on the principles of respect for diversity, partnership and equality. The Croatian Democratic Union, like other European peoples' parties, advocates that the devolution of powers to supranational institutions or organizations can be realized only on the principle of subsidiarity, so that national competencies would not be unnecessarily internationalized. (HDZ 2002, p. 28)

Until 2012, its pro-EU position was dominantly driven by its moderated stances on national and statehood issue during the leadership of Ivo Sanader and, to a lesser extent, Jadranka Kosor. Supported by the European People's Party (as discussed in Chap. 6), they largely tempered the Croatian nationalism and successfully reconciled it with the Croatian EU aspirations. Crucially, the party leadership perceived joining the EU in the context of 'escaping from the Balkans'. This was often emphasised in the party's programmatic documents as 'strengthening the central European and Mediterranean dimension of Croatia' (HDZ 2016, p. 105). Following the 2012 return of the more nationally oriented faction of Tomislav Karamarko, the party returned to re-Tudjmanisation. As a result, the 2012 programmatic principles of 'New Croatian independence' called for joining the EU with 'more wisdom and dignity' (HDZ 2012). It stated that 'Croatia must become an equal member of the EU' by preserving its 'importance and self-awareness' (HDZ 2012). What caused the most frictions with its European partners was the party decision to include the Eurosceptic and nationalist Croatian Party of Rights—Dr Ante Starčević to its slate for the European Parliament elections in 2013 and 2014. Although the European People's Party was harshly critical of the decision (Daul 2014), the Croatian Democratic Union resisted these pressures, given the popularity of its new coalition partner with the Croatian electorate. This was also a reflection of the fact that after the accession, the EU and the EPP ceased to have effective leverage on this party, whereas the need to prove its Europeanism that drove the party's transformation in the 2000s gradually vanished.

By contrast, when a more moderate faction of Andrej Plenković (a former MEP for the European Peoples' Party) prevailed in 2016, the party adopted more pragmatic policies, including one towards the EU. Its 2016 electoral manifesto dominantly focused on the financial aspect of Croatian EU membership, most notably EU funds available to Croatia as a new member state (HDZ 2016). Nonetheless, the new party leadership remained, at least rhetorically, devoted to the ideology of Tudjman. He was, specifically, praised as 'a humanist and a great supporter of the protection of human and minority rights' who created all necessary democratic institutions and, crucially, tied Croatia in with the Western European politics, freeing it of 'the grip of the East and Balkan associations' (HDZ 2016, p. 96).

Overall, the party's position on the EU can be broadly interpreted as soft Euroenthusiastic. The Croatian Democratic Union was ideologically

inclined to have a generally wary, if not critical, approach to the EU; as a consequence, strong enthusiasm for the EU did not become an essential feature of the party identity over the years. Less pragmatic and more ideologically embedded than its Serbian counterparts that also transformed after sharing similar nationalistic ideology, the Croatian Democratic Union remained predominantly driven by national conservative concerns. It primarily championed 'the national cause', emphasising national issues, such as 'restoring self-respect and dignity of the Croatian people' and 'developing national pride' (HDZ 2012). In other words, it was supportive of Croatian EU membership insofar as it did not run counter to the perceived Croatian national interests. The extent to which such ideology was compatible with the country's EU membership and the principles of modern liberal democracies fundamentally hinged upon an internal tension between moderate and nationalist factions, and their different interpretation of the party's basic values.

Finally, unlike Serbia, where conditions did not give rise to organised rural parties, the leading pre-World War II party in Croatia was the agrarian Croatian Peasant Party, which was officially re-established in 1989 as a traditional centre-right, agrarian and conservative party. The Croatian Peasant Party was a party primarily focused on the interests of its core electorates: farmers and craftsmen. Šedo (2010, p. 80) thus argued that this was a principally agrarian party that gave priority to agrarian, conservative and social issues, with 'the support for the rural sector as the first and foremost issue in the party programme'. The party also stood for 'the principle of Christian solidarity and traditional, Croatian values', including preservation of national identity, culture, language and customs, as well as the promotion of family oriented values (HSS 2009). In socio-economic terms, the Croatian Peasant Party may be seen as a right-wing party (Čular and Gregurić 2007) that advocated liberal ideas of the market economy and private ownership as its essential element, and believed that free, private initiative was the main driver of the economy (HSS 2000).

The Croatian Peasant Party was characterised here as a broadly soft Euroenthusiastic party that at some times expressed a more Eurosceptic position. It generally supported Croatian EU integration and did not demonstrate principled opposition to the EU. However, the party did often employ Eurosceptic rhetoric, and has never been a hard enthusiast for Croatian EU accession and the EU in general. This was due to its core values, which were of a conservative, Christian democrat and agrarian nature, so it consequently prioritised the protection of national identity, traditional

family values and agriculture. It did not have an elaborated position on the substance of the EU, although it expressed sceptic attitudes towards the common agricultural policy of the EU. However, some senior party officials also argued for greater European monetary integration and control of the banking system, as well as stronger fiscal integration and control of the budgetary policies of member states, which were 'the achievements of European development that Croatia must accept' (Novotny 2012).

However, this party openly worried over the position of the Croatian agricultural and fishing industry in the EU, given that 'farmers, fishermen and small businesses will be the most endangered by EU accession' (HSS 2009). Its former president, Josip Friščić, explained that he did not want to 'rush into the EU without protecting our national interests' and added, 'I have yet to hear what concrete benefits we get from EU entry' (HSS 2007). The party believed that 'Croatia's accession into the global integration processes is necessary', but the country must also preserve its natural resources and national identity (HSS 2009). The former party vice president, Marijana Petir (Interview 2011), explained that this party supported joining the EU, but also expressed concerns that Croatia 'uncritically accepted everything that the EU demanded'. She referred to the concerns and doubts of the party's core voters, which were mainly farmers and craftsmen, about the EU and how it would impact on them. The party therefore argued for 'the postponement of the sale of agricultural land to foreigners at least 12 years after joining the EU' (HSS 2009).

Liberal Parties and the EU

Despite a weak liberal tradition, there were four relevant liberal parties across these two countries: G17 Plus and the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia, and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats and the Croatian Social Liberal Party in Croatia. While G17 Plus ceased to exist in 2014 and the Croatian Social Liberal Party moved to the fringe of the party system, the remaining two parties, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, continued to be relevant, although minor, political forces. These were the strongest modernist parties and the most consistent advocates of these countries' European integration. They were ideologically inclined to have a generally affirmative approach to the EU and are characterised as hard Euroenthusiasts (Table 3.1).

The Liberal Democratic Party was founded in 2005 by former members of the Democratic Party that had been dissatisfied with party politics after the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister and party leader Zoran Djindjić. The Liberal Democratic Party was a classical liberal party that rejected any form of traditionalism and advocated a secular state, multiculturalism, radical economic transition and the rapid completion of privatisation (LDP 2011). The party programme also pointed out that prices should be determined by the market, not the state, and it strongly supported privatisation of public enterprises. It also asserted that the state should not take upon itself the role of entrepreneur, owner or manager but that it should have a very limited role. The party believed that a state was the biggest opponent of individuals and called for a radical reduction of state intervention and deregulation of the economy. It also stood for a radical break from the Serbian politics of the 1990s, a complete change of the government policy towards Kosovo and acceptance of the reality that Serbia has not had jurisdiction over Kosovo since 1999, which made it unique among relevant Serbian parties (LDP 2011).

The Liberal Democratic Party, the most liberal party in both socio-economic and identity terms, has always been the strongest proponent of European integration among Serbian political parties and as well as an advocate of a complete societal and political 'volte-face' based on rapid modernisation and accession to the EU. The interviewed former senior party officials confirmed, for example, that, although in opposition, the Liberal Democratic Party supported parliament legislation aimed at harmonising Serbian laws with EU rules and regulations (Andrić, Interview 2011; Prokić, Interview 2011). Its 2012 manifesto entitled 'The turnaround' (LDP 2012) argued that EU membership was a key tool for modernisation and it therefore pledged 'to fight for creating Europe in Serbia and Serbia in Europe, instead of the illusion that we are to survive as an isolated island'. Its manifesto also stated, 'the first and fundamental prerequisite for economic development in Serbia is the unconditional continuation of the process of EU integration' that will create conditions for developing 'a normal society' (LDP 2012). It was the only relevant party that advocated accession to NATO, which 'will bring a permanent peace in the Balkans' (LDP 2012). The party was highly critical of the Russian involvement in Serbian domestic politics, stressing 'a danger that Serbia may end up being a Russian province, isolated and left to disappear in the middle of Europe' (LDP 2016). It emphasised that 'Serbia will never become a member of the EU if it does not align its foreign policy with the

foreign policy of the EU' (LDP 2016)—a decision resolutely opposed by the ruling Socialist and Progressive parties.

The Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats was founded in 1990 by a number of prominent political leaders of the Croatian 1971 national political movement as a liberal party. Its 2008 programme (HNS 2008) stated that this party was committed to the highest standards in protecting, developing and promoting the human and civil rights. The Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, unlike its Serbian counterpart, adopted significant leftist principles in socio-economic terms, advocating a stronger government role in addressing economic and social issues. It stood for a society of equal opportunities, primarily through education being made available to everyone, as well as health care and social policies designed to protect the most sensitive social groups (HNS 2008). Čular and Gregurić (2007) argued that this party had the position of the most leftist socio-economic party in Croatia. It is thus broadly defined as a social liberal party.

The Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats similarly proclaimed in its programme that immediate EU accession should be the most important national interest and an absolute priority for Croatian foreign policy, and argued that it was strongly and unreservedly committed to fulfilling all the accession criteria (HNS 2011). Its fundamental principle was 'striving for standards of European civilization' since 'the EU provides a framework for social and economic development' (HNS 2012). The party believed that Croatian membership in the EU is the best long-term guarantee for the realisation of Croatian national interests, whereas 'the survival, durability and stability of the state and the institutions are absolutely the most important advantages of Croatian EU accession' (HNS 2012). Although this party did not publicly elaborate its position on the substance of the EU, it has never displayed any sense of unease about the principle of supranational political organisations. Both liberal parties appear to confirm Von Beyme's (1985) argument that the liberals have been most emphatic parties in declaring their support for a united Europe. As Hanley (2008) also noted, liberal ideology was the most predisposed to transnational structures. Their liberal ideology did not put emphasis on state sovereignty and nations, but rather individuals, their rights and a minimal role of the state; as such, these two parties were prone to accepting supranational organisations and were most enthusiastic about the EU.

Radical Right Parties and the EU

The most relevant radical right party in Serbia was the Serbian Radical Party, while in Croatia a radical right pole was more fragmented and consisted of a large number of small parties with varying electoral success. Yet, most Croatian radical right parties emerged from a common political heritage of the Croatian Rights with the Croatian Party of Right being the most electorally successful until the early 2010s. Both radical right parties examined here, the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights, have been key opponents of the EU in these countries and, given their pronounced radical right ideology, are characterised as ideologically driven, hard Eurosceptic parties (Table 3.1). Radical right identity seemed to provide a framework through which these parties determined their key attitudes and policies, including those regarding the EU. This is in line with Mudde's (2007, p. 181) argument that in radical right parties 'ideology is clearly more important' and that the predominance of nativism[2] in their ideology drove their negative views on the EU.

The Serbian Radical Party was a nationalist, conservative and radical right party whose fundamental political aim, proclaimed in the first paragraph of its 2009 programme, was 'the unification of the entire Serbian nation and establishment of a single, unitary state on the whole Serbian national territory, which would include Serbia, Montenegro, the Republic of Srpska and the Republic of Serbian Krajina' (SRS 2009, p. 2). Mudde (2000, p. 18) précised that the concept of a Greater Serbia included 'a mono-cultural, centralist state from which all Croats would be expelled, and in which other minorities would only be allowed to stay under the condition that they accept Serbian rule' and argued that this was essentially 'a post-Communist extreme right party'. Overall, the party's ideology was a combination of nationalistic political values and a mix of classical liberal and social democratic principles in the economy. It was a traditionalist party that advocated the development of national consciousness and patriotism, preservation of national traditions, protection of the traditional Serbian family and bringing up youth in the Serbian Orthodox spirit (SRS 2009). The party called for a return to the traditional moral values and norms of Orthodox Christianity, as written in the Ten Commandments of the Bible (SRS 2009). In socio-economic terms, the Radicals have, over time, adopted an ideological mix that covers almost the entire spectrum between the left and right. Stojiljković (2011, p. 90) argued that the Radicals crossed the path from initial state interventionism towards a liberal position and advocacy for a minimal state and the supremacy of private

property, free market and enterprise, then back towards re-advocating the active role of the state and inclining towards the position of 'left-centrist etatism'.

The Serbian Radical Party has been the strongest and most consistent opponent of Serbian EU integration and the EU in general. The Radicals objected to the very nature of the EU and supranational cooperation among European states. Following the 2008 outbreak of the financial crisis, the party particularly attempted to present the EU as 'a political, economic and moral corpse' and failed experiment of the Western European elites, as its former vice president Dejan Mirović (Interview 2011) argued in an interview. Mirović specifically pointed out that 'the EU is only useful for Western European members, while it is absolutely useless for Eastern Europe. The very existence of the EU is the result of the interests of the largest exporters and, in any case, it is not in the interest of small nations'. Former senior party official Aleksandar Martinović (Interview 2011) specified that this party was in favour of the 'De Gaulle principle of a Europe of nations from the Urals to the Atlantic' that would crucially include Russia, and that its preferable form of European organisation was the Council of Europe, an organisation based on intergovernmental cooperation of sovereign states. Interestingly, the Radicals also criticised the EU's institutional setting on the grounds that it was not democratic. Mirović (Interview 2011) asserted that the European Parliament was a second-rate institution, while the Council of Ministers was an undemocratic body, given that 'there is not a similar system in the world, where the laws are passed by the ministers' and concluded that 'the EU is a too cumbersome and bureaucratic organisation that has lost the purpose of its existence'.

The party expressed 'an absolute and unconditional opposition to Serbian EU integration' (Mirović, Interview 2011), particularly after the 2008 unilateral declaration of Kosovo independence had been supported by key EU member states. The party's authoritarian leader and ideologue, Vojislav Šešelj, called on party members to 'strongly oppose any attempts to include Serbia in NATO and the EU, because all the traditional Serbian enemies are there' (Komšić 2007, p. 14). He went on to argue, 'they [members of the EU] have been furious with us because the Serbs had defeated their grandfathers and ancestors who therefore left a testament to their heirs to punish Serbia' (Komšić 2007, p. 16). This party firmly opposed the conditions for Serbian EU integration, especially the extradition of suspected war criminals to the ICTY, which indicted its leader for war crimes. It called on the government to suspend all negotiations with the EU and 'to give up the disastrous policies of European integration and

turn to the countries that respect international law and territorial integrity of our country' (SRS 2010). Although corruption and economic difficulties also featured prominently in its 2016 electoral campaign, it employed traditionally fierce anti-Western rhetoric, including public burning of EU and NATO flags. As the only relevant party in favour of Serbian entry into the Russian-led Eurasian Customs Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Radicals particularly portrayed themselves as the only real alternative to European integration.

The Serbian Radical Party was deeply grounded in the pronounced ideology of anti-Westernism and its opposition to Serbian EU membership and the EU itself was therefore principled and ideologically motivated (Stojić 2013b). The party's programmatic documents and rhetoric indicated 'a deep-seated animosity and hatred towards the EU and the West in general', as well as embedded prejudice and hostility towards other nations (Stojić 2013a, p. 142). In other words, as a radical right and nationalist party, whose vision of a Greater Serbia was incompatible with the values underpinning the process of European integration, the Serbian Radical Party was a hard Eurosceptic party. Overall, the party stance reflected strong anti-European (and pro-Russian) sentiments that have traditionally been a feature of a considerable part of Serbian society and politics (Stojić 2013b).

The Croatian Party of Rights, founded in 1990, was classified by Mudde (2007) as 'populist radical right'; Stojarova (2013) characterised it as 'far right', while Čular and Gregurić (2007) noted that it somewhat softened its radical ideology after 2000. The party emphasised traditional family and Catholic values, and was rather hostile towards other nations. It stood for Croatia's 'national and state sovereignty on its entire historic and ethnic territory, without which the centuries' old aspirations of the Croatian people could not be achieved' (EED 2012). The Croatian Party of Rights was committed to the protection of Croatian cultural heritage, supported the traditional values of Croatian morality as a basis of everyday life, and stood for protecting life from conception to natural death (HSP 2012). This party underlined that Croatia was a sovereign state and that it would not tolerate any encroachment on its sovereignty; therefore, it 'permanently fought against all plans and ideas of a Greater Serbia' (HSP 2010). The party also claimed that each Croat has a duty to act in accordance with the principles of justice and morality by which the homeland was defended (HSP 2010). It was also a clerical party, arguing, 'all animate and inanimate creatures were created by the will of God, and every man's actions must be consistent with it' (HSP 2013c). In socio-economic terms, this party

mainly adopted centrist positions—although opposing cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and selling of 'big state companies' (Srb 2011), but it focused overwhelmingly on identity and state-building issues.

On the other hand, the Croatian Party of Rights did not demonstrate anti-Westernism (in contrast to Serbian hard Eurosceptics), but rather ideologically driven radical nationalism, the core element of which was principled opposition to both the EU and Croatian EU membership. The party strongly argued against the EU and 'the centralization that has absolutely gained momentum in the EU' (HSP 2013a). Party leaders claimed that 'the aim of European bureaucracy is to subdue the independent and sovereign state' and that the EU was not a community of states, but rather a centralised system of wealth extraction from the periphery to the centre, which destroys the economies of small countries (HSP 2013b, d). It therefore pledged 'to fight against a federal Europe' (HSP 2013a). The values underpinning the EU run counter to the party's identity given its argument that 'EU policies and regulations aim to achieve uniformity that destroys the family as well as identity, sovereignty and democracy', and has devastating effects on the Catholic values supported by the vast majority of the Croatian population (HSP 2013b, d).

Despite moderated rhetoric in the mid-2000s, the party essentially and principally opposed Croatian EU membership. The party's 1991 founding fundamental principles specifically proclaimed strong opposition to any inter-state unions or supranational organisation, arguing, 'any form of state union with other countries and nations is unacceptable, without the consent of the Croatian people whose fundamental right is to have a fully sovereign and independent state' (HSP 2012). Therefore, the Croatian Party of Rights believed that accession to any state union that would endanger Croatian sovereignty was unacceptable and unnecessary, given the Croats' nine-century struggle for independence (HSP 2010). In early 2011, 'when the negative results of the accession negotiations had become public', the Croatian Party of Rights adopted a policy of outright opposition to Croatian EU membership and called on Croatian citizens to vote against it at a referendum on EU accession, as confirmed by former party leader Daniel Srb (Interview 2011). Its opposition was also couched in economic terms. The party argued that EU accession was not in Croatia's economic interests. It claimed, 'Croatia will be gravely affected by settlements of the foreigners as well as resettlement of Croatia's young, most qualified people. We will become a political and economic colony and most of the Croatian farmers and fishermen will be doomed' (HSP 2013d). Given its pronounced

nationalist ideology and opposition to 'the re-emerging concept of Greater Serbia' (Srb 2011), this party particularly opposed 'regional cooperation' and 'good neighbourly relations' which were requirements for Croatian EU accession. This was seen as 'revitalisation of 'Serb dominated Yugo-sphere' as well as 'criminal Yugo-communist legacy', which was a serious threat for the newly independent Croatia (Srb Interview 2011).

Its position on the substance of the European integration seemed to be embedded in its conservative, nationalist and nativist identity focused on the homogenous nation-state. One of its 12 fundamental principles specifically stated that 'supranational communities are a grave danger to small states, because they arithmetically do not allow for any impact of these states and they are not democratic, since their actions are not legitimized by the will of the people' (HSP 2013c). The party also advocated 'an organic approach' to society, since 'every nation is an organic community with its own consciousness, traditions and destiny' (HSP 2013c), which was contrary to the liberal values of individualism and freedoms that underpin modern European societies and the EU itself. The Croatian Party of Rights may be therefore characterised as an ideologically driven, hard Eurosceptic party (Table 3.1).

Dimensions of Ideology and Party Attitudes Towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia

The above analysis shows that in general terms parties in Serbia and Croatia were newer and weakly rooted parties that lacked clear-cut ideological coherence. Most of these parties did not emerge out of the deep social cleavages, but primarily as 'political projects of some groups, leaders and narrow political elites' (Pavlović 2011, p. 150). The cases of Serbian and Croatian parties seem, therefore, to confirm argument that most post-communist parties have been 'mere vehicles of small groups of elites, which sported diffuse and highly similar ideologies' (Mudde 2007, p. 41) and held very weak links with social groups. For example, the Serbian Progressive Party constituted a prime example of a pragmatic party whose programmatic documents did not express coherent ideological underpinning. However, there was a clear tendency of most parties to advocate consistently fundamental principles related to identity and statehood issues, while rarely expressing coherent and fully developed stances on socio-economic issues. For instance, Democratic Party has been (rather unsuccessfully) searching for its identity related to socio-economic issues

from the early 2000s, while the Serbian Radical Party had a confusing and eclectic mix of stances on the economy. Yet, both parties were clearly and consistently positioned at the opposing ends of the traditionalism versus modernism divide. This had an important bearing on these party systems in general, and party stances on the EU in particular.

Specifically, as in other Central and East European countries with an ethnically diverse population (Kitschelt 1995), political contestation along the socio-economic left–right remained in the background, despite unresolved social and economic problems that could have opened up space for politically profitable party positioning. This was a reflection of the fact that the class cleavages that generate these issues and create conditions for parties to compete along this axis have never been dominant in Serbia and Croatia. In other words, social groups with differentiated economic interests (clearly recognisable classes) were not fully erased during the communist period and re-emerged in a different form during the post-communist transition, but these groups did not manage to politically articulate their interests for parties to seek to represent. Former vice president of the Socialist Party of Serbia, Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011) explained, for example, that 'there was no longer a classical monolithic working class', since it was 'broken' during the transition and 'the problem is now how to interpret authentic socio-economic problems and interests of the workers'. Dolenec (2012, p. 69) similarly found that in Croatia 'structural conditions are conducive to a socioeconomic cleavage, but that interests on their own cannot trigger collective social action' and that effective representation must be fought for through political articulation and mobilisation.

In addition, as Batory (2008a) argued, the nature of the post-communist transition significantly limited freedom of Central and East European parties for manoeuvre in economic policies. Irrespective of parties' rhetorical proclamations, the state of post-communist economies necessitated similar economic policies; as a consequence, the socio-economic dimension had less potential to structure these party systems (Kitschelt et al. 1999). Notably, the large majority of parties in Serbia and Croatia rhetorically advocated leftist approaches to socio-economic issues, with a significant redistributive role for the state. Parties tended to avoid the liberal concept of the economy based on private initiative and individualism, which was very unpopular with electorates that were used to a significant role of the state in the relatively successful model of Yugoslav self-management socialism until the late 1980s. However, once in power,

most of these parties pursued policies of attracting foreign investments, slashing public expenses, privatisation and liberalisation at the expense of the welfare state. As Dolenec (2012, p. 83) found in Croatia, both major parties (including the Social Democratic Party) tried to reconcile liberal economic policies prescribed by the EU, the World Bank and the IMF with social objectives, but 'imperatives of liberal economic policies repeatedly carried the day'. Thus, these parties overall had no incentives to compete along this dimension.

Conversely, the dominance of concerns regarding nation- and state-building crucially drove party politics. The dimension with strongly national, traditionalist and conservative values on one side, and liberal, secular, modernist concepts on the other side dominantly shaped both party systems. The cleavage between traditionalism and modernism was particularly pronounced in Serbia whose inability to come to terms with the consequences of post-Yugoslav wars fed into strong nationalist sentiments. Stojiljković (2011) thus asserted that historical-ethnic and cultural-value cleavages, especially divisions between traditional/conservative nationalism and civic modernism/reformism, impacted Serbian political parties' stances and effectively shaping the country's party politics. Similarly, Čular and Gregurić (2007) maintained that the ideological cultural cleavage based on two different conceptions of cultural identities and political communities was historically most pronounced in Croatia.

Some authors did note that similar tendencies may have been present in other Central and East European countries (Kitschelt et al. 1999). However, the post-Yugoslav conflicts uniquely defined Serbian and Croatian societies and directly impacted their party systems. As Antonić (2007) argued, the dominance of identity issues also marked the initial phase of party system developments in other post-communist countries. Yet, as he observed, the cases of the post-communist Czech Republic, Poland or Hungary show that the significance of identity politics decreased during the transition, while social cleavages based on tangible socio-economic interests became dominant. Antonić (2007, p. 61) thus asserted that (in contrast to Serbia) 'these countries did not have Kosovo. They did not have a territorial dispute with a strong minority that is related to the very foundation of the state'. Dolenec (2012, p. 79) similarly specified that the 1990s' wars tabooed issues of economic inequality in Croatia and removed them from public discourse given that socio-economic

conflicts were perceived as 'undermining the homogenous national community'. Overall, party politics and general party stances across both countries have been predominantly driven by the ever-present issues of nationhood, statehood and identity, in the peculiar post-Yugoslav context that crucially affected their positions.

This significantly shaped the way party responded to the EU in Serbia and Croatia. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 schematically outline the relations between the two dominant dimensions of party competition and party stances on the EU. Figure 3.1 presents the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties towards the EU and their position on the socio-economic

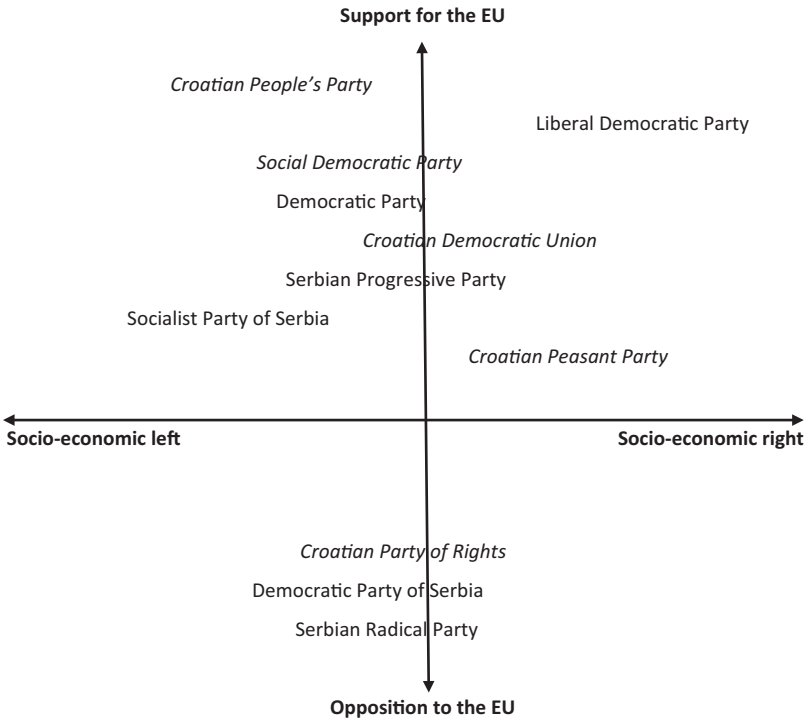

Fig. 3.1 Attitudes towards the EU and ideological position of Serbian and Croatian parties on the socio-economic left–right dimension
Sources: Party programmes and interviews with party officials
Note: Croatian parties are in Italics

left–right axis. Empirically, parties characterised as Euroenthusiastic were located across the whole left–right spectrum in socio-economic terms, from the strongly pro-market-oriented Liberal Democratic Party to the Croatian People's Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia that advocated egalitarian economic principles, with a significant level of intervention of the state in the economy. It appears, therefore, that there was no correlation between specific party positioning on this ideological dimension and their enthusiasm for the EU in Serbia and Croatia. Conversely, parties termed Eurosceptic (the Serbian Radical Party, the Croatian Party of Rights and the Democratic Party of Serbia) were all positioned in the centre, which may indicate a certain level of congruence between their attitudes towards the EU and socio-economic issues. However, a closer look at party stances shows that neither enthusiasm nor scepticism for the EU were driven by economic issues in Serbia and Croatia.

The analysis of parties' programmatic documents and policies demonstrates that most parties have never seriously considered European integration or their countries' EU membership in economic terms. This was reflected in the fact that the bottom-left and right quadrants were not populated by any relevant party. Specifically, there were no relevant radical left parties that would, for instance, primarily oppose the EU for its pro-market, deregulation and neoliberal economic policies.[3] Similarly, no parties opposing the EU on its interventionist or redistributive characteristics were identified. Eurosceptic parties across both countries were rather indifferent to the EU in socio-economic terms, although they increasingly started objecting to EU membership on the grounds that it would have deleterious effects on national economies since the 2008 financial crisis.[4] These parties perceived the EU almost exclusively as a political, not an economic, reality. They mainly viewed the EU through the prism of EU membership or EU policies towards the former Yugoslavia and later the Western Balkans—policies that were not essentially related to the issues stemming from the left–right socio-economic dimension of party competition. Paradoxically, this continued in Croatia even after this country became an EU member state fully economically integrated into the European single market. This reflected the continued dominance of identity politics, and the inability and unwillingness of the Croatian parties to define themselves in more socio-economic terms, but also the complexity of EU economic policies that were 'uncharted territory' for most of mainstream Croatian political elites.

Furthermore, the ideological preferences of Serbian and Croatian parties on the socio-economic left–right axis were not translated into specific stances on the EU since these preferences were weak and never fully developed. As discussed earlier, a left–right ideological distinction was blurred in these societies and the class cleavages that give rise to party competition on this dimension were not dominant. Very few parties had a coherent position on these issues. Most parties advocated leftist and egalitarian socio-economic principles (despite implementing rather different economic policies) including parties that were the most radical right on identity issues. In other words, these parties tended to avoid competing on this dimension and were overwhelmingly positioned in the centre or left-of-centre (Fig. 3.1). Therefore, parties' position on this dimension was less relevant for their attitudes towards the substance of the European integration. Overall, the cases of Serbia and Croatia seem to confirm arguments that (in contrast to Western Europe) socio-economic dimension had less potential to structure, not only Central and East European party systems, but also party responses to the EU. As Henderson (2008b, p. 124) argued, 'a left–right dimension relating to value orientation rather than economic issues fits better with the measure of Euroscepticism' in Central and East European states. This was especially the case in post-conflict and ethnically diverse societies where parties strongly emphasised national and statehood issues and competed on ethnonational issues.

Fig. 3.2 therefore shows the dominant social cleavages in both countries that stemmed from identity politics and a division between liberal, cosmopolitan and modernist concepts on one side, and nationalist, traditionalist and conservative values on the other side, presented as GAL versus TAN distinction (Hooghe et al. 2002). This dimension appeared to be crucial in understanding party positioning on the EU in these countries, given that party attitudes towards the EU essentially matched their locations on this axis. Namely, parties that strongly advocated individualism in opposition to the state, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, an open society based on democracy and the respect of human rights, such as the Liberal Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party were the most pronounced hard Euroenthusiasts. Hard Euroenthusiasm of the Social Democratic Party and the Democratic Party also appears to be driven by their consistent moderate and liberal stances on national and statehood issue. On the other side, Eurosceptic parties were all traditionalist and national parties (such as the Democratic Party of Serbia), with hard Eurosceptics (the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights)

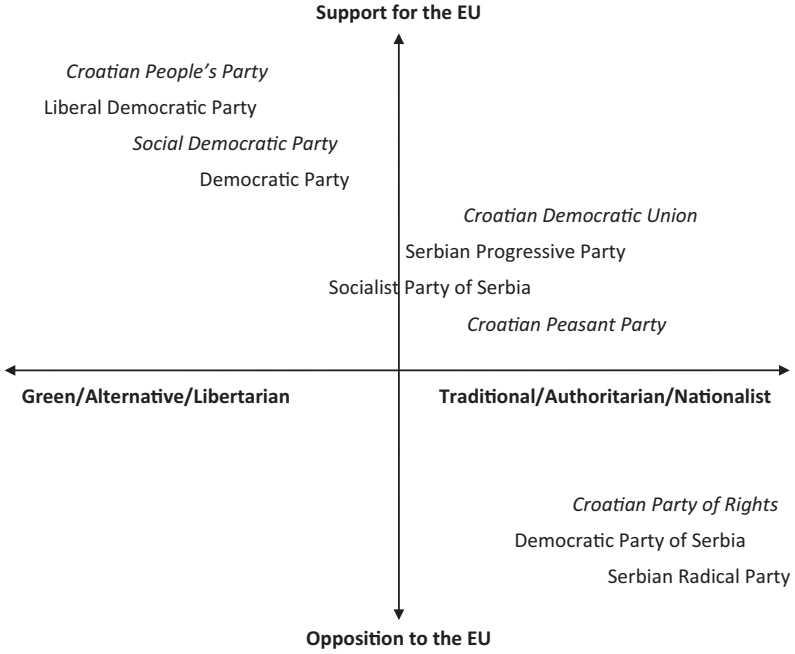

Fig. 3.2 Attitudes towards the EU and ideological position of Serbian and Croatian parties on the GAL-TAN dimension
Sources: Party programmes and interviews with party officials
Note: Croatian parties are in Italics

being also nationalist and authoritarian radical right parties characterised by strong ethnocentric worldviews. Likewise, the case of the Croatian Democratic Union, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party showed that changes in ideological profiles and moving away from the TAN pole were accompanied by more pro-EU attitudes; in other words, moderated traditionalism of (pragmatic) parties can be accommodated with soft (and arguably strategically driven) Euroenthusiasm. Traditionalism and nationalism in the context of these post-conflict societies therefore bred isolationism and opposition to the EU. Finally, the notable absence of any mainstream party in the bottom-left quadrant—that is, the lack of any relevant libertarian, green or post-material Eurosceptic parties—reflected the nature of these countries, where—

unlike Western Europe (Vachudova and Hooghe 2009)—social conditions did not give rise to the development of modern post-material societies and parties, particularly those that would oppose the EU (Stojić 2013b).

In general, Serbian and Croatian parties projected their stances on issues of sovereignty, democracy, traditional values and, crucially, national identity onto the EU. This study therefore somewhat supports the arguments put forward by Marks et al. (2006) that, in contrast to Western Europe, the TAN-GAL position is the key for predicting party positioning on Europe in Central and Eastern Europe. More specifically, there is evidence that the TAN side of the dimension was a key driving force behind party-based Euroscepticism, while parties closer to the GAL pole tended to support European integration (Hooghe et al. 2002; Vachudova and Hooghe 2009). However, it is important to note that it was a specific aspect of the GAL-TAN division that crucially shaped parties' stances on the EU in Serbia and Croatia. In these countries, the issues related to green, alternative and post-material politics were fully absent from domestic party competition. Instead, the GAL-TAN dimension essentially captured the social conflict around the defence of national communities and primarily identity and statehood issues. As a result, the division between nationalism (nativism) versus cosmopolitanism was the key driver of party responses to the EU. For example, although traditional, conservative and authoritarian, Serbian and Croatian hard Euroscepticism drew dominantly on the nationalist and nativist ideology, in opposition to cosmopolitanism that was advocated by Euroenthusiasts. In both countries, therefore, the dominance of identity politics—in particular the nationalist and nativist pole—provided strong ideological foundations for post-Yugoslav Euroscepticism.

There are two country-specific reasons behind this pattern. First, as discussed above, the violent breakup of the former Yugoslav federation brought the defence of national communities into absolute focus of political parties. Most parties thus built a strong national component into their identity, with commitment to nationalism (or 'flirting' with it) being the key features of Serbian multi-party system, and resulting in 'the whole party system being moved towards the right' (Pavlović 2011). Čular and Gregurić (2007) argued that Croatia had to manage a state-building process with the creation of non-existing state institutions that decisively drove its party politics in the similar direction. As a result, support for and

opposition to the EU essentially reflected the dominant pattern of party competition—the one between rather strong nationalism and weak cosmopolitanism. This may also account for the fact that, in contrast to other Central and Eastern countries where opposition to the EU gradually emerged over the 1990s (Batory 2008a), party-based Euroscepticism has been present from the very beginning of both Serbian and Croatian multiparty systems.

Second, the nature of European issues and their translation into party politics in the context of these post-conflict societies had significant bearings on party responses to the EU. While in other Central and Eastern European countries, joining the EU was associated with relatively straightforward modernisation and transformation from communism to a democratic multi-party system and liberal society, the countries of the former Yugoslavia have been going through an additional and more complex process: post-conflict stabilisation and consolidation following the violent breakup of the joint state. Therefore, Serbia and Croatia had to tackle a specific set of predominantly identity-related issues. These were, namely, the key national and state-building issues, such as the status of Kosovo, cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation, reconciliation and overall attitudes towards the legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars. These issues crucially framed their relations with the EU—they were in absolute focus of the EU and the backbone of its policy of conditionality as the key political precondition for EU accession of these countries. As a result, given the significance and nature of these national issues *par excellence*, parties predominantly adopted views on European integration from their standpoint on ethnonational issues.

Conclusion

Party ideology proved to be an important explanatory factor for party attitudes towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia. It clearly predisposed parties to more sceptic or enthusiastic views of the EU (Stojić 2013b). Namely, the liberal parties (the Liberal Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party) closest to the cosmopolitan pole stood out as principled hard Euroenthusiasts. Together with a group of similar social democratic parties (the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party), they found it easier to accept the supranational principles underpinning the process of European integration, whereas this was a rather

difficult issue for conservative and traditionalist parties given their pronounced concerns for national issues, such as the preservation of sovereignty, national culture and traditional values. While most of conservative and traditionalist parties pragmatically adopted soft Euroenthusiasm (the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Croatian Democratic Union, the Croatian Peasant Party), other more ideologically oriented (the Democratic Party of Serbia) remained true to their ideology, expressing more sceptic, if not hostile, stances on the EU. The radical right parties characterised by nationalism and nativism (the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights) adopted ideology-driven principled hard Eurosceptic positions, opposing both the principles of supranational European integration and their countries' EU memberships.

This pattern of support for and opposition to the EU was primarily the result of the structure of party competition. Specifically, party responses to the EU seem to be almost entirely structured by a single dominant dimension of contestation—that is, between nationalism versus cosmopolitanism aspect of the GAL and TAN pole. Their location on the conventional socio-economic left–right axis—between market liberalism and state interventionism—appears to be less relevant for their positioning on the EU. This holds true across party spectrum in both countries; all analysed parties seem to have followed this pattern with no outliers among relevant parties. This is somewhat at odds with other Central Eastern European countries where both axes were found to drive party positions. There was, notably, a systematic relationship between Euroenthusiastic pro-market cosmopolitans and Eurosceptic egalitarian nationalists (Marks et al. 2006; Batory 2008a). In other words, pro-Europeanism was concentrated among parties with right and GAL positions, while anti-Europeanism among left and TAN parties (Vachudova and Hooghe 2009). However, as discussed earlier, the weak potential of socio-economic left–right to drive party politics in general and party stances on the EU in particular in Serbia and Croatia was primarily due to country-specific, post-Yugoslav circumstances as well as the sheer dominance of identity politics in both countries.

It is also important to note that three core parties (or more precisely their party leaderships) significantly changed their ideologies. The Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party and the Croatian Democratic Union have undergone fundamental ideological transformations by abandoning nationalism, striving to define themselves in more

moderate social democratic and conservative ideological terms respectively. Crucially, changes in ideologies were accompanied by the clear shift of their stances on the EU from hard Eurosceptic to soft Euroenthusiastic. As discussed in Chap. 4, this volte-face was a strategically driven response to internal and external incentives in the context of dynamic electoral competition and a strong EU presence in candidate countries, aimed at maximising the chances of securing executive office. Furthermore, these parties repositioned themselves primarily along the identity policy dimension towards more modernist, if not cosmopolitan, outlook, whereas no similar changes can be observed on the socio-economic left and right axis (with some exception of the Socialist Party of Serbia). In other words, moving closer to the modernist and cosmopolitan pole implied moderation of party positions on European integration across both countries. Conversely, the ideological repositioning of the Democratic Party from pro-market to more egalitarian party in economic terms had no apparent bearings on its strong pro-EU orientation. This further corroborated the arguments about the importance of identity-driven party ideology for their responses to the EU.

Nevertheless, parties' initial ideological predispositions and historical origins did impact the scope and depth of their transformations. This was most evident in the case of the Croatian Democratic Union that found it difficult to genuinely abandon (and arguably has never done so) EU-incompatible 'ideological baggage' of illiberal nationalism that fundamentally shaped this party and permeated its ranks, and to become a strong enthusiast for the EU. The Serbian Progressives and Socialists appeared to be more opportunistic and devoid of deeper ideological principles. As such, they found it somewhat easier to undergo the pro-EU transformation despite the difficult political legacy of Serbian nationalism and anti-Westernism. Yet, the process was crucially led by pragmatic and authoritarian leaders who left little space for dissonant voices. This implies the importance of other non-ideological factors for party (re)position on European integration—such as intra-party relations as well as parties' relationships with one another, the general publics and their electorates. In other words, party ideology is only one (arguably the most important) of the possible drivers of party stances and its explanatory power largely hinged upon the nature of individual parties, that is, to what extent they were strategically or ideologically driven. The following chapter thus examines strategic factors that may shape party responses to the EU, primarily the logic of party competition and related electoral incentives in the context of

dynamic party politics and complex relations with the EU in Serbia and Croatia.

Notes

1. This was reflected in the Croatian Constitution that was amended to include an explicit prohibition 'to initiate any procedure for the association of the Republic of Croatia into alliances with other states if such an association leads, or might lead, to a renewal of a Yugoslav state community or to any Balkan state form of any kind' (Ustavni Sud 2014).
2. Mudde (2007, p. 19) characterised nativism as an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that non-native elements are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.
3. The notable exception was the Croatian anti-establishment and radical left Human Shield (Živi Zid) that pledged to 'radically transform the EU' and liberate it from the 'monetary occupation of private banks' (Živi Zid 2015). Given its peripheral position within the party system and protest nature, this party is examined in Chap. 4 along with other peripheral Eurosceptic parties.
4. Peripheral Eurosceptic parties were particularly inclined to criticise the EU in these terms. Hard Eurosceptic and peripheral parties, such as Serbian Dveri and Only Croatia, stood against 'the destructive neo-liberal economic model' of the EU (Dveri 2011) that would result in 'the semi-colonial position of the country' as argued by the vice president of Only Croatia, Marjan Bošnjak (Interview 2011). However, radical right, strongly traditionalist or social conservative ideology predominantly characterised such Eurosceptic parties and their aversion to the EU as further discussed in Chap. 4.

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CHAPTER 4

Party Strategy and Attitudes Towards the EU

After examining ideological-programmatic factors, Chap. 4 utilises both cases to look at the strategic-tactical drivers of party positions on the EU. It seeks to demonstrate how parties in Serbia and Croatia have determined and changed their stances on the EU in relation to strategic incentives stemming from the domestic party systems: the logic of electoral competition and post-election coalition formation. Party strategy has been recognised in the comparative literature as having the potential to significantly drive party responses to Europe integration. This factor specifically relates to the intrinsic nature of political parties. Besides being policy-seeking, parties may also be vote- and office-seeking organisations (Müller and Strøm 1999) and as such they may strategically form and alter their views on the EU in order to achieve electoral success, irrespective of their ideological convictions.

The chapter finds that most parties were generally not prone to strategic positioning on the EU due to the specific post-Yugoslav context of these countries' integration into the EU, as discussed in Chap. 3. Party strategy, however, was a key component in the transformation the three core former Eurosceptic parties—the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union. They underwent a fundamental ideological transformation and shifted their stances towards the EU, seeking to maximise their chances of securing an executive office. This adjustment was triggered by internal and external strategic incentives in the context of dynamic electoral competition. The chapter also finds that

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strategic considerations significantly affected how all parties translated and used EU issues in domestic party competition.

This chapter first reviews previous studies of how strategy drives political parties' stances on the EU. The second section consists of a series of case studies aimed at depicting and explaining individual party attitudes towards the EU in relation to the strategic concerns they faced. A separate section examines how strategic incentives stemming from a party peripheral position within the party system may be linked to their stances on the EU, primarily hard Euroscepticism. The key conceptual and empirical findings are summarised in the concluding section.

Does Party Strategy Drive Party Responses to the EU?

Party strategy as a factor influencing party positions and policies towards the EU has been documented in the comparative literature. There are a few scholars, most notably Sitter and Batory (Sitter 2001, 2002; Sitter and Batory 2008), who argued for strategy as a crucial driver of parties' perceptions of the EU. Instead, other authors (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe et al. 2002) prioritised party ideology, while the majority of scholars argued that the interplay between both factors may best account for political parties' stances on the EU. More specifically, Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p. 319) found that strategy determines whether or not a party supports the EU's current trajectory, while the ideas underlying the process of European integration are determined by party ideology. Batory (2002) identified ideology as the crucial factor in determining underlying attitudes to EU integration but notes that parties are also constrained by the dynamics of coalition building and electoral competition, that is, the need to be acceptable as coalition partners. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a, b) differentiated between a party's ideological profile and the perceived interests of its supporters as key drivers of broad positions on the issue of European integration. The latter seems to be related to party strategy, given their argument that an interest-based office-seeking party would undertake an economic cost-benefit analysis of how European integration is likely to benefit its supporters and formulate its position accordingly. They also emphasised that electoral strategy and coalition tactics influence whether or not parties use the European issue as an element of inter-party competition. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) specified that electoral strategy is determined inter alia by the type of party—that is, if it is a catch-

all party that is attempting to attract a broad electorate or a fringe party with a more segmented electoral strategy, the positions taken by party competitors, and if an electoral system allows parties to secure parliamentary representation by carving out a niche electorate or it forces them to construct a broader electoral base. On the other side, coalition-tactical considerations are related to the position of its potential coalition partners, as well as whether the party has to 'tone down' its rhetoric in order to secure a place in government.

Sitter and Batory (Sitter 2001, 2002; Sitter and Batory 2008) made a strong case that Euroscepticism is a product of party competition and 'the politics of opposition'. Sitter (2001, p. 37) specifically asserted that Euroscepticism is related to ideology, interests and identity, voter alignments, and party strategy and organisation since 'Euroscepticism is not a single coherent stance on the EU' but 'a term that covers a multitude of ideological and interest-driven stance'. What is central to his argument, however, is that 'these factors are translated into party competition in the context of the party system, that is, the patterned interaction between parties' (Sitter 2001, p. 37). Sitter and Batory (2008) later further elaborated on these assumptions. They argued that the sources of Euroscepticism are related to the four key goals parties seek to balance (Müller and Strøm 1999): party management/organisational survival, pursuing core policy preferences, securing votes and accessing executive office. They asserted that while party-based Euroscepticism may draw on long-term goals—such as parties' identities or core policy preferences—Euroscepticism is ultimately shaped by strategic, short-term goals—garnering votes and winning elections. As a result, Sitter and Batory (2008, p. 58) claimed that 'for most political parties, Euroscepticism has been a deliberate strategic choice'. In other words, even if a party's identity predisposes it towards Euroscepticism, *electoral competition and coalition games* may provide incentives for it to avoid contesting European integration and vice versa.

With respect to electoral competition, Sitter and Batory (2008) noted that focusing on a delineated section of the electorate might prompt a party to adopt its target voters' view on the EU and therefore contest European integration if its voters are Eurosceptic. Conversely, if stressing catch-all competition, parties might face incentives to conform and not oppose the EU if there is a broader pro-EU consensus among other parties and a majority of the electorate. In other words, Sitter and Batory claimed that electoral incentives to contest

European integration depend on the party's target electorate (discussed in Chap. 5) and the positions of other parties on this issue, that is, the extent to which other parties have crowded out the Eurosceptic space. With regards to coalition games, Sitter and Batory (2008) claimed that the quest to participate in governing coalitions has an important effect on party stances on the EU. Specifically, if the parties' most likely and credible partners are Eurosceptic, they do not have to moderate their position because Euroscepticism does not disqualify them from office. More frequently, however, parties face pro-EU partners and must moderate their stance on the EU. In other words, the logic of coalition building/coalition politics may provide a disincentive for Euroscepticism and has a moderating effect. Moreover, Sitter and Batory argued that even after securing executive office, the logic remains the same because moving into government provides an incentive to tone down or abandon Euroscepticism.

Another aspect of this debate is the issue of how parties' positions within the party system—governmental/opposition and core/peripheral positions—may determine party stances on European integration. This chapter specifically examines whether peripheral party position (as a consequence of its protest and anti-establishment agenda) shapes party views, a link found to be a particularly important driver of party-based Euroscepticism. Taggart (1998), for instance, argued that Euroscepticism of new politics, new populist and extreme left parties was due primarily to their peripheral status within the party system. As Szczerbiak and Taggart (2000) explained, only protest parties were likely to strategically adopt a hard Eurosceptic stance as a deliberate means of differentiating themselves from the political mainstream. On the other hand, mainstream parties tend to avoid adopting such positions to avoid being labelled as a protest party and being marginalised within their own party system. Sitter (2001) similarly asserted that Euroscepticism may develop among the 'new politics' left parties as well as 'new populist' parties on the right primarily based on their opposition to cartel politics and opposition to the EU as an elite project. Drawing upon these debates, this chapter tests the following assumptions in the Serbian and Croatian cases:

- The more that parties perceive the interests of their supporters are in line with European integration, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

- The more that parties attempt to broaden their electoral base and rely on the catch-all electoral strategy, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;
- The more that parties' political competitors 'occupy' the Eurosceptic space, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;
- The more that parties seek to be 'suitable coalition partners' for pro-European parties in order to come to power, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes.
- The more that parties are positioned towards the periphery of their party system, the more likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes.

The main challenge of analysing party strategies is establishing that party policies and stances on the EU are strategically driven and not the consequence of ideological convictions or other concerns. The comparative literature offers no clear answer to this dilemma: it seems that authors who favoured strategic incentives over party ideology as a driver of their stances on the EU formulated conclusions based on their own judgements and knowledge of political situations in the cases they analysed. In contrast to ideology, which is often indicated by a party's programme and rhetoric (see Chap. 3), parties do not publish their electoral or coalition-building strategy in their programmatic documents, publicly discuss the methods by which they obtained political power, and rarely admit to acting strategically. The term 'strategy' itself generally had negative connotations within Serbian and Croatian party politics because it was often perceived of as indicating a lack of political principles. Kasapović (2003, p. 56) thus noted that political negotiations and compromises aimed at forming a coalition government in 2003 in Croatia were interpreted in public as 'futile bargaining', 'political trade-offs' and 'inter-party bickering', which was not auspicious for the formation of a coalition government. For their part, however, parties wanted to demonstrate the legitimacy of their views and core principles and continued faith in their key policies. Therefore, they did not want to be viewed as pursuing only the pure short-term goals of winning and maintaining political power.

This chapter builds on Chap. 3's examination of party ideological stances as they relate to the values, goals and policies of the EU. It focuses, therefore, on the cases that appear to be mostly strategically driven, that is, where there was a low likelihood of parties adopting Euroscepticism or

Euroenthusiasm as 'an implicit addition to its original propositions and voters' interests' (Rovny 2004, p. 38). The chapter looks at the critical junctures and situations in which parties seemingly behave in accordance with their strategic interests, that is, winning votes, office or implement policy depending on the type of party. Bearing in mind the methodological constraints of analysing strategic party decisions discussed above, this chapter primarily draws on several interviews with Serbian and Croatian politicians. Party officials were specifically asked in an interview to provide a personal explanation of events that may be interpreted as reflecting the strategic repositioning of their parties regarding the EU.

Party Strategy and Attitudes Towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia

This section examines how parties' strategical and tactical considerations influenced the formation and, more importantly, transformation of their positions on the EU. It specifically looks at three core parties that strategically shifted their underlying positions on the EU—the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party and the Croatian Democratic Union. It also examines parties that modified their rhetoric on the EU in response to electoral concerns and coalition-building strategies. The government coalitions in both countries since 2000, examined in this section, are presented in Table 4.1.

The Socialist Party of Serbia

The following excerpt from the 2006 Socialists' political declaration seems to indicate the principled consistent position of this communist successor party and firm pledges to the principles set forth by its first leader and ideologist Slobodan Milošević. It specifically stated that:

> Our consistency is not dogmatism. Beliefs and goals that we have adopted in the historic year of 1990 with our president Slobodan Milošević have withstood the test of time and all the temptations brought about to us by history and reality. […] Socialists will never be ready to sail the sea of unlimited pragmatism where every compromise is possible, desirable and welcome just to win or retain power. […] We highly value our beliefs, and we are not willing to change or discredit them for any personal or political gains. (SPS 2006, p. 1)

Table 4.1 Government coalitions in Serbia and Croatia since 2000

Serbia		*Croatia*	
Term	*Leading parties in the coalition*	*Term*	*Leading parties in the coalition*
2000–2003	Democratic Party Democratic Party of Serbia *(until mid-2001)*	2000–2003	Social Democratic Party Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats Croatian Peasant Party
2003–2007	Democratic Party of Serbia G17 plus *Minority support of the Socialist Party of Serbia*	2003–2007	Croatian Democratic Union
2007–2008	Democratic Party of Serbia Democratic Party G17 plus	2007–2011	Croatian Democratic Union Croatian Peasant Party
2008–2012	Democratic Party Socialist Party of Serbia G17 plus/United Regions of Serbia[a]	2011–2016	Social Democratic Party Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats
2012–2014	Serbian Progressive Party Socialist Party of Serbia G17 plus/United Regions of Serbia *(until August 2013)*	2016	Croatian Democratic Union Croatian Peasant Party Bridge of Independent Lists
2014–2016	Serbian Progressive Party Socialist Party of Serbia	2016–2017	Croatian Democratic Union Bridge of Independent Lists *(until May 2017)* Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats *(since June 2017)*
2016–2017	Serbian Progressive Party Socialist Party of Serbia		

Source: Data collected by author

[a]In 2010, G17 Plus founded and acted as the centrepiece of a coalition of regional parties, the United Regions of Serbia. In 2013, G17 Plus fully merged into the United Regions of Serbia, transforming it into a political party. However, following an electoral defeat, this party ceased to exist in 2014.

Only a few years later, however, not only did the party abandon its founding principles, but it embarked on a complete ideological transformation, rejecting the political legacy of 1990s. Its 2010 programme explicitly stated that:

> Our policy has not always been pragmatic and realistic enough. […] Two decades since the restoration of democracy, many things have changed in Serbia. The Socialist Party of Serbia has also changed. We need the change in order to

> confirm that under the new circumstances we are a well-organized party whose ideas and programmes are deeply rooted in our society. (SPS 2010, p. 5/47)

Strategic considerations and political pragmatism decisively contributed to the party's fundamental ideological transformation, including its attitudes towards the EU and Serbian EU membership, which was actually the most visible indication of this transformation. In other words, the Socialist Party of Serbia serves as a prime example of a party that experienced a symbiosis, rather than a division, between strategy and identity. In other words, parties do change their ideology for strategic reasons. The ideological transformation of this party as well as the shift of party stances on the EU documented in the party programmatic documents was discussed in Chap. 3. The focus of this chapter is on the evidence showing that the strategy was the key driver of this change.

As discussed earlier, the Socialist Party of Serbia was the leading Eurosceptic and nationalistic party throughout the 1990s. Following its expulsion from power in 2000, the party maintained its earlier positions on key issues and did not face strategic incentives to change its stances on the EU. Instead, it denied the legitimacy of the newly established political system. It also viewed the democratic changes as a coup. After the Serbian government extradited Milošević to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), it argued that he had been kidnapped and illegally sent to the tribunal (Goati 2009). As such, in the early 2000s, this party was on the fringe of the party system and was largely what Sartori (1990) termed an 'anti-system party'. The party was externally isolated, while internally politically 'ostracised' and therefore 'uncoalitionable'.

Following a series of conflicts within a group of pro-European parties that came to power in 2000, the Socialist Party of Serbia indirectly returned to power in 2004 by supporting the minority government of the Democratic Party of Serbia and G17 Plus in the parliament (Table 4.1). However, this did not affect its key policies and stances. On the contrary, this party effectively blocked the Serbian EU membership bid due to its strong opposition to the conditions for Serbian EU accession, especially the requirement that Serbia fully cooperate with the ICTY. The Socialists publicly emphasised that the sole condition for its support for the minority government was the refusal to extradite those charged with war crimes (Goati 2009). Additionally, the Democratic Party of Serbia itself had strong animosity towards the ICTY. As a result, the feasibility study on Serbian readiness to enter into a contractual relationship with the EU was blocked by the EU due to the government's failure to cooperate with the ICTY.

Following the 2007 election, the government was formed of pro-European parties, and the Socialists found themselves in a strategically new position that required the party to undergo ideological transformation. It largely lost the political importance as pro-EU parties had secured the majority on the parliament, and the government no longer depended upon the Socialists. Moreover, Milošević died in 2006, which brought a new moderate party leader, Ivica Dačić, into power. Although a long-term devotee of Milošević, Dačić was a pragmatic politician who understood that, under the new circumstances, the party was significantly weakened by intra-party factional fighting over Milošević's legacy and shrinking electoral support. He publicly declared that the Socialists would not be able to win a single vote in the future if they stayed committed to the past, and that there would be no places for party members who were not ready to understand the depth of party changes (Dačić 2010). The Socialist Party of Serbia, however, found itself in a difficult political situation. Achieving its two key strategic goals—votes and political office—necessitated complex and time-sensitive political strategy and tactics. On the one hand, it remained opposed to Serbian EU membership until the mid-2000s in accordance with ideological convictions and electoral considerations as its voters were loyal followers of Milošević's Eurosceptic and nationalistic policies. As will be further discussed in Chap. 5, the Socialists' supporters were mainly rural, poor, less educated and conservative voters who were prone to nationalism and favoured an authoritarian state (Stojiljković 2007). However, aspiring to engage in coalition building and thus regain its former political glory, the Socialist Party of Serbia found it necessary to assume a more pro-European stance as all potential allies were themselves Euroenthusiastic.

The electoral base of the party shrunk over time, and, in 2007, it secured only 5.6% of the total votes in the parliamentary elections (Stojić 2011). Most of the nationally oriented and conservative voters that used to overwhelmingly vote for the Socialists during the 1990s turned to the Serbian Radical Party, soon making it the strongest party in the Serbian parliament. Thus, the Eurosceptic political space was 'occupied' by the Radicals. This development can be attributed to the conflicts and tensions that emerged within this party in the absence of its leader; there was a growing distance between Milošević, who was on trial in The Hague, and the senior party officials, especially after Milošević's support of the Radicals' leader Vojislav Šešelj during the 2002 presidential election, even though the Socialists had their own candidate (Milošević 2002). The Socialist Party of Serbia was

therefore on the verge of collapse, as it targeted the same electorate as the Radicals. The latter party, however, proved to be better representatives of the traditionalist and isolationist segments of the electorate. As a result, as Bochsler (2008) argued, political competition on the dominant axis between nationalism/isolationism and modernism/cosmopolitanism ceased to be advantageous to the Socialists, given that the Serbian Radical Party was a dominant nationalist party. Bochsler, therefore, claimed that the Socialists attempted to abandon its difficult electoral position as part of the nationalist bloc, hoping to reach new voters as a modern left-wing party. Although it is difficult to claim that it sought new voters or targeted the same electorate, the Socialist Party of Serbia strategically decided to change its policies and identity. Based on the evidence from this research, there is somewhat more support for the latter. In other words, the party aimed to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable: keeping its national and anti-European voters (see Ch. 5), drawing its former supporters away from the Radicals, and moving closer to the pro-European pole of the political spectrum as a result of its long-term strategic interests (Stojić 2013a).

The new party leadership, therefore, decided to focus on socio-economic issues and moderate its nationalistic rhetoric, following a strategy successfully employed by the Croatian Democratic Union in 2003. This new stance provided the party with an opportunity to be pro-EU without compromising its electoral position, given that it started arguing that only Serbian accession to the EU, which by that time was relatively advanced and difficult to reverse, would improve the nation's living standards. In other words, its strategy was to play on the core electorate's dissatisfaction with the socio-economic position, not on their pronounced concerns for national and statehood issues, thus allowing for the party gradual shift towards the pro-EU pole (Stojić 2013a). This was clearly visible in the formation of a coalition with, what was until then, the insignificant Party of the United Pensioners of Serbia, prior to the 2008 election, given that this party focused exclusively on socio-economic interests of the pensioners and did not have any legacy of nationalism or Euroscepticism. Additionally, the third member of this pre-election coalition, the United Serbia, also abandoned pragmatically its previous nationalist rhetoric and focused on socio-economic problems of the impoverished population.

The crucial 2008 electoral campaign witnessed this coalition's new strategy (Stojić 2010). On the one side, the Socialist Party of Serbia, Party of United Pensioners of Serbia and United Serbia conducted a

campaign focusing on the issues of social justice, economic development and the protection of pensioners and workers. The Socialists criticised the results of economic transition and privatisation, while arguing that Kosovo must remain, at all costs, an integral part of Serbia, in an attempt not to lose its core nationalistic voters. On the other side, the coalition's attitude towards the EU was rather vague and occasionally negative due to the prevalence of support for Kosovo's independence among EU member states. However, it did not openly declare its position regarding the most pressing issues in the relationship between the EU and Serbia: the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (Stojić 2013a). In this way, the party did not 'betray' its traditional voters, and it also left the door open for potential cooperation with pro-European parties. It strategically occupied a central position within the political spectrum, making it possible for the party to potentially cooperate with both the pro-European and the Eurosceptic political blocks. The post-2008 election coalition-building process proved to be a decisive factor that reinforced the transformation of the party's overall ideology and stances on the EU. After successfully balancing the apparent unwillingness of the electorate and a considerable group of senior party members to accept the new policy orientation (see Konitzer 2011), President Dačić made a pragmatic decision to help form a pro-EU government (with long-term political adversaries of the Democratic Party). This decision fundamentally and irreversibly changed the Serbian political scene and was the logical finale of the party's strategically driven ideological transformation. This reorientation was completed in late 2010 by the adoption of the new party programme written in the tradition of West European social democratic parties (see Chap. 3).

In summary, a set of strategic incentives contributed to this party reorientation. With the Eurosceptic and nationalistic political space firmly 'occupying' the radical right Serbian Radical Party, this party faced a shrinking electoral support, further creating disincentives for maintaining strong Euroscepticism. At the same time, the socio-economic left space was 'free' and not exploited by other parties. In the context of relatively advanced Serbian EU integration and the importance of economic relations with the EU, it became clear that advocating economic development and the protection of the most vulnerable groups based on social democratic principles required the party to become Euroenthusiastic. As former party vice president Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011) precisely explained in an

interview, the new party position was a result of the fact that 'it became clear that it was necessary to implement economic and social reforms, and it was realized that the EU has indeed no alternative. That was our "real-politik" assessment'.

The Socialist Party of Serbia was also 'non-coalitionable'. Its Euroscepticism was directly tied to nationalism, and as such, it had not been accepted as a legitimate partner by the majority of pro-European parties and, more importantly, by the EU. Specifically, the party sought to become a suitable coalition partner of pro-European parties that were the dominant political force in the country, which did create strong incentives to give up Euroscepticism. Crucially, as a 'pariah party' in Western circles, the Socialist Party of Serbia was effectively prevented from participating in the government alongside other parties by influential Western governments until it abandoned its political legacy of 1990s. Thus, the Socialists' outcast status served as a further catalyst for change (Stojić 2017). Moreover, as will be discussed in Chap. 6, the West pressured the Socialists to join the pro-European coalition following the 2008 post-election stalemate, hoping to counteract the Democratic Party of Serbia's decision to start opposing Serbian EU integration (Kralev 2012).

The case of this former communist and nationalist party demonstrates the strong power that the EU exerted on the political landscape of the Western Balkan countries and how the process of EU accession created strong incentives for parties to change and adapt to 'the new reality' (Stojić 2013b). This was very well reflected in the party's 2010 programme, which explained that the Socialists 'modified its programmes and corrected policies and strategies' to become 'adjusted to the structural changes in the world and the changed historical conditions in the country' (SPS 2010, p. 47). Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011) indirectly confirmed that impending EU integration and strategic political calculations played a crucial role in changing the party's ideology:

> The Socialist Party of Serbia closely follows and assesses what is happening on the political scene in Serbia, Europe and worldwide. We see that the European formula has succeeded in Central and Eastern Europe, that these countries have managed to reform and modernise based on the European model. We cannot invent something that does not exist in the region. We are experienced people who see that it is only politically viable if you behave and formulate a strategy that is in line with contemporary trends in the world. The EU is an undisputed model that has no alternative. We are part of the European civilization. It is no longer an issue in the party.

The party vice president Slavica Djukić Dejanović (Interview 2011) also confirmed that the change of party attitudes towards the EU was the result of coalition-building strategy. She claimed that 'the party has made a complete turnaround and decided to be oriented towards political partners who argued that it would be better if Serbia is in the EU'. She particularly stressed the experience of being in opposition when 'the Socialists were stigmatized and labelled as the Jews in Nazi Germany', as a factor that 'actually much helped the party to adopt European standards as its own'. Similarly, political analyst Jovo Bakić (Interview 2011) noted in an interview that this party transformation reflected the calculations that anti-European policies had absolutely no future. Finally, former EPP's MEP Doris Pack (Interview 2011) concluded in an interview that the Socialists pragmatically decided to change themselves, since 'they have responsibilities. They had to see the reality and acted accordingly'.

The Serbian Progressive Party

This rapid ideological transformation of the Serbian Progressive Party has been the most remarkable development in Serbian politics since the reintroduction of a multi-party system in the early 1990s. The party's leaders adopted a radically new pro-European stance in 2008 and underwent a fundamental ideological reorientation. Both the party's support for Serbian EU membership and its ideological transformation were principally strategically driven since the Serbian Progressive Party was predominantly an office-seeking pragmatic party whose key goal was to maximise control over political office benefits (as conceptualised by Müller and Strøm 1999). Its Euroenthusiasm therefore appears to be instrumental, and there was no evidence that the EU had any intrinsic value for the party. This was evident in support for Serbian EU membership expressed by the party leader Aleksandar Vučić, which was couched in instrumental and utilitarian terms. He specifically stressed the economic benefits of EU membership and pointed out the importance of EU funds for 'the rebuilding of the economy and opening the new factories' (SNS 2010) Moreover, as discussed in Chap. 3, although the Serbian Progressive Party abandoned its radical right-wing stance, it did not subscribe to a clearly expressed ideology. Consequently, it did not have a dominantly ideologically driven attitude to the EU.

The Serbian Progressive Party was founded in September 2008 by a break-away group of senior officials of the Serbian Radical Party, led by

the Radicals' deputy president Tomislav Nikolić and the secretary-general Aleksandar Vučić. The Serbian Radical Party was a radical right, nationalistic party deeply permeated by hostility towards the EU and the West. Its authoritarian party leader and ideologue of a Great Serbia, Vojislav Šešelj, was on trial for war crimes at the ICTY from 2003 to 2014. After Šešelj voluntarily surrendered to the tribunal, Nikolić and Vučić took over the party leadership and initially maintained a close relationship with the party leader. By the mid-2000s, the Serbian Radical Party achieved significant electoral success, receiving the highest number of votes in the 2003, 2007 and 2008 elections—from 28% to 29.45% of the total votes (Serbian Electoral Commission 2017)—and becoming the largest party in the parliament. In addition, Nikolić won the 2003 presidential election, although the election was later declared invalid due to low voter turnout. In 2008, Nikolić lost the presidential election to the candidate of the Democratic Party, Boris Tadić, with a margin of only 2.5% of the total votes (Serbian Electoral Commission 2017).

The electoral success of the Radicals was largely due to the softened nationalistic rhetoric of the party leadership that, in the absence of a nationalistic party president, managed to attract a considerable share of the electorate (Stojić 2013a). Nikolić was thus focused on socio-economic issues, such as poverty, unemployment, privatisation and corruption, rather than nationalism, although the party's core nationalistic values remained unchanged. Similarly, the party continued to maintain a negative attitude towards the EU, but it also began to moderating its rhetoric on this issue. For example, the party did not vocally oppose Serbian EU accession, and during the 2003 presidential election campaign Nikolić even declared that 'he and his party would provide a full contribution to Serbian accession to all European institutions and organizations, particularly the EU, but by preserving Serbian identity, national pride, honour and dignity' (Komšić 2007, p. 15). In a 2011 interview, former vice president of the Serbian Radical Party Dejan Mirović (Interview 2011) confirmed that this shift was solely rhetorical and tactically driven. He explained that the change in party rhetoric was not the result of belief that EU membership was in the interests of Serbia. Instead, Mirović (Interview 2011) argued that the party had 'a rather populist and pragmatic rhetoric' until the major inter-party schism in September 2008. Specifically, he argued that 'due to popularity of the EU with the Serbian electorate', the Serbian Radical Party rhetorically supported Serbian EU membership, provided that the EU recognised Kosovo as part of Serbia. He added that 'it was pure pragmatism of a former party

leadership, based on the results of public opinion research, which showed that a majority of citizens were in favour of the EU'.

The case of the Radicals in the mid-2000s thus demonstrates the strong electoral incentive to moderate pronounced Eurosceptic rhetoric even when a party is deeply ideologically grounded in anti-Europeanism (Stojić 2013a, p. 141). This supports Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2008b) arguments that strategic incentives predominantly impact how parties translate and use this issue in the domestic party competition rather than their broad stances on the EU. The tactical nature of the Radicals' rhetoric shift was most visible at times when electoral concerns were less important, such as immediately after elections, when the true nature of this party was clearly demonstrated. For instance, in May 2007, Nikolić strongly argued that Serbia should seek closer ties with Russia and not the West. He went as far as to claim that Russia would bring together 'nations that will stand up against the hegemony of America and the European Union' and that 'Serbia should associate itself with the Russian and Belarusian union' (RFE 2007). He asserted that the majority in Serbia would strive for membership in a Russian-led alliance of states and not in the European Union, adding that Serbia 'unfortunately' was not a Russian province (RFE 2007).

However, although successful in securing votes, the Radicals were highly unsuccessful in coalition building and obtaining power due to their lack of coalition potential (see Table 4.1). Its radical right ideology effectively isolated the party from the international community and foreign mainstream parties (with the exception of the Russian parties and similar peripheral parties from the EU), and it never became an acceptable coalition partner for other Serbian parties. Only the Democratic Party of Serbia supported Nikolić for the position of president of the parliament, tactically intended to strengthen its negotiating position as it attempted to form a coalition government with the Democratic Party in 2007. Nikolić was therefore confronted with the fact that the Serbian Radical Party would never come to power unless it became a party that was ideologically acceptable to other Serbian parties and the international community. Therefore, the necessity of coalition building significantly drove efforts to transform this party. However, this reorientation of the party soon proved impossible. Specifically, party president Šešelj had an overwhelming support among party members for his nationalistic and anti-European policy (Stojić 2013a). He thus resolutely opposed any agreement with the EU. Nikolić, however, planned to support the SAA if a declaration confirming the territorial integrity of Serbia was also adopted in the parliament.

It was therefore necessary for the moderate leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party to break away from the Serbian Radical Party, given that the Radicals repeatedly failed to get to power advocating anti-European politics after 2000. In an attempt to finally gain political power (which succeeded in 2012), Nikolić founded the Serbian Progressive Party. From the very beginning, this party adopted a radically new attitude towards the EU, supporting Serbian EU membership and rejecting the idea of a Great Serbia. Nikolić (2012) himself argued that 'only a fool does not change his opinion. I have been through the process and completed it. Nobody can make me go back there again'. As the former EPP's MEP Doris Pack (Interview 2011) noted in an interview, 'Nikolić understood the reality and he has been behaving pragmatically'. In other words, the fundamental change constituted a strategic decision born of electoral concerns, in the context of the strong EU impact on the domestic political scene and pro-European majority of the electorate, which was the fact that Nikolić himself did not hide. He specifically argued that:

> The Serbian Radical Party has never had a desire to come to power. The Serbian Progressive Party is something else. We are a pro-European party. […] If we stand against the EU, we would never be able to win the election in Serbia. […] We have to improve our international relations and do our homework. (Nikolić 2011)

In addition, assuming a pro-European stance was necessary in order to attract potential pro-European coalition partners, which proved to be crucial in the dramatic 2012 post-election coalition building. Other traditionally pro-European Serbian parties, such as G17 plus and minor coalition partners of the Democratic Party, unexpectedly joined the Progressives (and the already transformed Socialists) and formed the coalition government in July 2012, largely motivated by the Progressives' altered attitude towards European integration. Furthermore, the EU's stance on the Serbian Progressive Party significantly changed since 2008 thus making the party became 'coalitionable' and acceptable to other Serbian parties. Unlike the unofficial policy of isolation pursued by the EU in relation to the Radicals, the Progressives maintained close contact with EU officials after adopting a pro-European reorientation. The leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia, Ivica Dačić, confirmed this relationship, noting that during the 2012 post-election coalition building, EU representatives said 'that the Progressives' position on the EU would not be a

problem at all, and that the only problem would be the participation of the Democratic Party of Serbia in the government because of its anti-European position' (Dačić 2012).

Even without direct EU involvement in Serbian party politics, strong economic relations with the EU and the fact that Serbia had already made significant progress towards EU integration made it illogical for the party to remain Eurosceptic. Nikolić (2012) demonstrated this attitude when explaining why it no longer behoved Serbia to become part of the Russian federation:

> We have done too much for Serbian EU accession in the 11 years since the fall of Milošević. Ninety-seven per cent of all investments come from the EU. We have adjusted our legislation to EU's requirements. It would be very difficult for us now if the EU tells us we cannot be a member. We would have to change our whole system. Then everything would be in vain. We have done a lot of bad things in order to meet the requirements for membership. […] We gave up so many things. We allowed them, for instance, to tell us how to allocate funds from our own budget and allowed the import of goods without tariffs.

In summary, close study of the Serbian Progressive Party revealed several characteristics of strategic electoral incentives parties are often faced with when determining stances on key political issues. Specifically, these incentives had strong transformative power, ability to create rifts within parties, and ultimately change both a party's attitudes towards the EU and its overall ideological underpinnings.

The Croatian Democratic Union

In comparison to Serbian parties, Croatian parties have rarely changed their underlying attitudes and policies towards the EU. The most important and significant shift occurred in late 2002 when one of the two core and dominant parties in the country, the conservative Croatian Democratic Union, started advocating Croatian membership in the EU. Although not explicitly opposed to the EU, until the early 2000s, this party did not agree with the EU's policy towards Croatia and the Western Balkans. It opposed the political conditions for Croatia's accession into the EU, especially the requirement that Croatia cooperates with the ICTY (see Chap. 3). The party's attitude towards the EU significantly changed following an electoral

defeat and the death of Franjo Tudjman, founder of the Croatian Democratic Union and former president of Croatia, in 1999. These events triggered intra-party conflict, creating a schism between the pro-European and hard-nationalist factions. By the early 2000s, the very existence of this party was under threat. Although Ivo Sanader became the new leader in 2000, the inter-party conflicts continued until 2002, when Sanader was re-elected by defeating hard-nationalist factions. At that time, Sanader also adopted a new political platform, one that starkly contrasted with his policies prior to the 2002 re-election. He, specifically, declared that Croatia's accession into the EU henceforth served as the party's main goal. This stance effectively marginalised 'the Tudjmanist forces', and some of the most prominent politicians of the 1990s resigned from the party in protest (Jović 2006). As Jović (2006, p. 86) pointed out, the party's new leaders asserted that 'isolation from Europe was no longer seen as a viable option, but as a road to decay'. Sanader confirmed the party's new orientation, arguing that 'we are now a reformed, democratic, centre-right party. We are no longer a Tudjmanist party, although we are grateful to the former head of state for what he did for Croatian independence' (Jović 2006, p. 98).

This change in rhetoric was particularly striking. As recently as April 2002, while campaigning for party president, Sanader said that the Croatian Democratic Union would never give up heroes and knights of the war (Sanader 2002). He further stated that General Ante Gotovina, indicted by the ICTY in 2001 for war crimes, was a hero rather than a villain, adding that the party would honour the memory of the Croatian Homeland War. He also dismissed demands from the international communities that all sides involved in the post-Yugoslav war to apologise, stressing that 'Croatia would not accept this historical revisionism' (Sanader 2002). This attitude strongly contrasted with the EU's policies in the former Yugoslavia and its emphasis on regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and full cooperation with the ICTY. However, the new pro-EU party's position was reflected during the 2003 election campaign when this party identified European integration as a top political priority. Aware of voters' discontent with Croatia's economic situation and the failures of the centre-left government, the party's election campaign focused on economic and social, rather than nationalistic, issues (a strategy also employed by the Serbian Socialist Party in the 2008 election campaign). The Croatian Democratic Union thus 'guaranteed citizens a

tax reduction, economic growth, rise of employment and standard, as well as membership in the EU and NATO' (Sanader 2003). Sanader (2003) particularly emphasised that the party would make Croatia an EU member state by 2007 and that it would cooperate with the ICTY, one of the main preconditions for EU accession. This strategy ultimately proved successful, and the reformed Croatian Democratic Union prevailed in the 2003 election.

As in the case of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party, the ideological transformation of the Croatian Democratic Union was the result of several strategic incentives in the run-up to the 2003 parliamentary election. As Haughton and Fisher (2008) claimed, Sanader realised that a programme of national mobilisation, which had worked so well for the party in the 1990s, would probably condemn the party to permanent opposition. As a result, Sanader, along with a small group of senior party officials, strategically decided to change party policy and an overall ideology, and to begin advocating Croatian EU membership. This, in turn, also meant accepting of all the EU's preconditions for membership, including cooperation with the ICTY.

As senior party official and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, Marija Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011) explained in an interview, this new ideological stance was a deeply pragmatic decision by a small number of people who realised that 'the policy of isolation and nationalism had no future'. More importantly, Pejčinović Burić asserted that most senior politicians from the Croatian Democratic Union were pragmatists who knew the negative (economic) consequences of the county's unofficial isolation in the late 1990s. In other words, the party appeared to become aware that, inter alia, its supporters' economic interests intersected with European integration, thus triggering the transformation. Senior party officials, therefore, pushed for an ideological transformation and pro-EU orientation that was a gradual, top-bottom process, initiated by a party leadership, and critically strongly supported and reinforced by the parties' international partners from the European People's Party (see Chap. 6).

Given that the party was electorally focused on conservative, nationally oriented voters, a new policy orientation could have isolated the electorate of the Croatian Democratic Union. However, this did not occur. Although voters were unable to follow or understand the party's transformation, they lacked a serious alternative to this party. The

Croatian Democratic Union, therefore, felt it could safely shift its stances and acted accordingly. Parties with similar political agendas and traditions, such as the Croatian Party of Rights, were too weak and therefore unable to take over a conservative share of the electorate that could have been dissatisfied with new party policies. Consequently, as the unquestionably nationally oriented and 'pro-Croatian' party that had fought for Croatian independence and made a crucial contribution to the formation of the Croatian state, the Croatian Democratic Union had considerable political capital that prevented minor, Eurosceptic parties from usurping its position. Although defectors formed a number of new, small parties, these did not pose any serious political threat to the Croatian Democratic Union. This party thus remained the dominant political force on the right side of political spectrum. Furthermore, the change took place only after Sanader had confirmed and strengthened his position as party leader and concluded the process of 'de-Tudjmanisation' to the extent to which it was possible, given that his legacy deeply permeated the party (Konitzer 2011). In other words, as Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011) pointed out, some party members still strongly disagreed with the The Hague Tribunal and thus continued to express negative attitudes towards Croatian EU accession. However, she also argued that this was not a problem in the party since there was strong inter-party discipline and all members were obliged to follow the decisions of the leadership. Factions opposed to EU accession, she explained, either toned down their objections or left the Croatian Democratic Union and formed a new party.

Finally, strategic incentives arising from coalition-building politics appeared to be less significant for this party's shift. The Croatian Democratic Union did not engage in coalition building because it formed a number of one-party governments between 1990 and 2000. Moreover, fragmentation of the political scene was much less pronounced than in Serbia, and along with the Social Democratic Party, it was the dominant political party in Croatia. Aware of its strength and dominance on the right of the political spectrum, this party did not have to adjust its policies and attitudes to potential coalition partners (Table 4.1). It appears that the party transformation was more related to the party's internal developments and external pressures than to its relations with other political parties or potential coalition partners, which indicates that the pattern of domestic politics does not necessary have a crucial role in parties' repositioning on European integration.

Party Strategy and Other Parties' Attitudes Towards the EU

After outlining the positions of parties that experienced strategically motivated ideological transformation, this section addresses a few cases where party strategy appears to have affected the way parties translated this issue in the domestic party competition. There is, specifically, strong evidence that tactical considerations affect how parties used EU issues in domestic politics, without shifting their broad, underlying positions on the EU. For example, like the Serbian Radical Party (see above), the hard Eurosceptic Croatian Party of Rights softened its rhetoric with the aim of becoming 'suitable coalition partners' for other conservative Croatian parties that had become pro-European, most notably the Croatian Democratic Union. As with the Serbian Radicals, the party was 'non-coalitionable' due to international pressures as well as its radical right-wing and Eurosceptic ideology. In addition, with the formation of an informal 'Alliance for Europe' in the early 2000s that gathered all other relevant, pro-European Croatian parties, the party found itself on the fringe of the party system. In other words, the pressure of coalition politics and the broad national consensus on the EU created conditions that led to the moderation of party rhetoric. More specifically, it toned down its opposition to both the EU and Croatian EU membership, although essentially remaining hard Eurosceptic.

The tactical nature of this movement was most visible when, during the 2011 referendum on Croatian EU accession, the Croatian Party of Rights shifted back to its initial position and argued for the rejection of Croatian EU membership (Stojić 2017). Given the approaching general election and referendum, the party deliberately portrayed itself as the only relevant party opposing Croatian EU membership bid. Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chap. 5, the Croatian public became rather Eurosceptic since 2000, effectively creating a strong incentive for the party to change its rhetoric and use this issue in inter-party competition. Finally, the Croatian Party of Rights faced considerable competitive pressure from a group of similarly radical right-wing parties. These parties, especially the Croatian Party of Rights—Dr. Ante Starčević, had been Eurosceptic and opposed Croatian EU membership. The Croatian Party of Rights and Croatian Party of Rights—Dr. Ante Starčević, already engaged in a bitter dispute due to animosity between the parties' respective leaders, also shared the same electorate. Seeking to attract supporters away from the Croatian Party of Rights—Dr. Ante

Starčević, the Croatian Party of Rights returned to its former Eurosceptic stance. However, the Croatian Party of Rights—Dr. Ante Starčević proved to be more successful in advocating (over time moderated) Euroscepticism as it secured seats in the Croatian parliament in 2011 and 2015 on a joint slate with the Croatian Democratic Union, while the Croatian Party of Rights lost parliamentary representation.

However, the most remarkable case of tactical reposition and strategic use of the issue of EU membership was the case of the small, traditionalist and conservative New Serbia (Nova Srbija). This party has changed its stance on Serbian EU integration twice since 2008. This was due purely to electoral incentives, most notably, the desire to obtain the 'best' coalition partner. In 2008, the party fully supported its long-term coalition partner, the Democratic Party of Serbia, in opposing Serbian EU accession. This position, adopted in the heat of the Kosovo crisis, appeared to have strong support within the electorate. Thus, the party firmly opposed the signing of the SAA, accused the government of betraying national interests and announced its willingness to initiate the procedure for impeaching then-president Boris Tadić (NS 2008). However, after losing the election, the party assessed that this position was losing ground in the public, since 'Kosovo was not a priority among the population' as argued by former party vice president Dubravka Filipovski (Interview 2011). At the same time, the newly founded and ideologically close Serbian Progressive Party adopted a pragmatic stance on these issues, expressed support for Serbian EU membership and was rapidly gaining support among voters. As a result, New Serbia abandoned the coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia, which remained Eurosceptic and adopted the pro-European stance of its new coalition partner, the Serbian Progressive Party. Thus, the need to develop relationships with major parties and potential coalition partners in conjunction with the fear of political marginalisation induced parties' rhetorical shifts and repositioning on the issue of Serbian EU membership.

Finally, the small Serbian People's Party (Srpska Narodna Partija), a hard Eurosceptic, strongly national conservative and pro-Russian party whose policy platform was epitomised by the slogan 'Only with Russia can Serbia win' sharply criticised pro-EU policies pursued by Serbian elites since it was established in 2014 (as a splinter party of the Democratic Party of Serbia). Unlike other parties, it also employed anti-immigration rhetoric calling for the building of a fence on Serbia's southern borders which

was in direct opposition to policies pursued by the Serbian Progressive Party-led government (SNP 2017). Yet, motivated by electoral reasons, it pragmatically joined the slate of the Serbian Progressive Party in 2016, a party that advocated EU membership and a 'European solution' to the migrant crisis. As a typical catch-all party, the Serbian Progressive Party was driven to reach out to significant Eurosceptic and pro-Russian segments of the electorate to maximise its electoral gains. It thus clearly prioritised its electoral gains over consistent dedication for a Serbian EU membership bid. At the same time, the Serbian People's Party secured three seats in parliament; this did not affect its underlying hostility to the EU, although its rhetoric was strategically moderated and altered. Specifically, the party decided to focus on standing out against NATO and the independence of Kosovo, fostering very close relations with Russia and the protection of Serbian identity. It somewhat muted strong anti-EU narrative and framed it in more general and abstract terms, so that it did run counter to the agenda of its dominant pro-EU coalition partner.

Euroscepticism on the Political Periphery

The aim of this section is to assess to what extent peripheral positions in the party system have driven parties' Eurosceptic sentiments in Serbia and Croatia. As discussed earlier, it has been found in the existing literature (Taggart 1998) that peripheral, protest or anti-establishment nature of some parties may be a key source of their motivation to express critical or opposing stance on the EU. Motivated by strategic electoral reasons, such parties may deliberately adopt Eurosceptic platform in order to emphasise their 'uniqueness' and differentiate themselves from the political mainstream which tend to be Euroenthusiastic. Located at the extremes of the party system, these parties fundamentally stand against the pro-EU political core, and opposition to the EU is often an important feature of their protest nature and a wider aversion to domestic party, or even political, system.

The section examines parties in both countries that may be characterised as peripheral and anti-establishment. For the most part, such parties were not associated with one of the mainstream ideological families and were 'not-coalitionable'—that is, with no realistic chances of coming to power given that core parties rejected to interact with them. However, due to the unstable nature of Serbian party system, the clear difference between peripheral and core parties has been difficult to establish, with some established parties occasionally expressing protest and anti-system

sentiments.[1] What characterised almost all peripheral parties in both countries was a strong Euroscepticism visible in their pronounced hostility to European integration as well as opposition to EU membership. At the same time, they shared the same underlying world views, being on (or close to) the radical right or, less often, radical left extreme of their party systems.[2]

Whereas there were only a few peripheral and protest parties in Serbia,[3] a large number of mostly short-lived peripheral parties emerged in Croatia.[4] Most of these parties were close to the radical right pole claiming to represent the ideology of the Croatian rights, a national political movement from the mid-nineteenth century centred on the protection of Croatian national and ethnic rights (see Stojarová 2013). Other peripheral parties, less radical in their views, were established as sprinter parties from the nationalist factions of the Croatian Democratic Union. What, however, characterised all of them was an aversion to the EU—to a different degree though—as well as an opposition to Croatian EU membership. Although they often employed harsh rhetoric directed against the two mainstream pro-EU parties—the Croatian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party—they were mostly driven by their national conservative or radical right identity, rather than by deliberate decision to be anti-European 'outsiders' (Stojić 2017, p. 752). Nonetheless, those more pragmatic gradually migrated towards the political core and became more 'coalitionable' which resulted in the moderation of their overall ideologies and Eurosceptic rhetoric. The prime examples were the Croatian Party of Rights—Dr. Ante Starčević and the Hrast—Movement for a successful Croatia that, although never pronouncedly anti-EU, called on citizens to vote against EU membership in 2012 due 'to the lack of information' about the condition agreed with the EU (HSP AS 2012; Hrast 2012). After securing parliamentary seats on the slate with the Croatian Democratic Union in 2015 both parties further tempered their Eurosceptic (although not ultra-conservative) rhetoric.

More importantly, there were two essentially anti-establishment parties expressing hostility to European integration (although positioned at the opposite extreme ends of ideological spectrum) that managed to somewhat shape EU narrative and secure parliamentary seats in both countries without renouncing their anti-EU agendas—the Serbian Dveri and the Croatian Human Shield. Nationally conservative and strongly traditionalist Dveri portrayed itself as a new Eurosceptic political force strongly

opposed to both political and economic establishment represented by 'corrupted Serbian political elites and tycoons' and foreign capitalists, banks, the IMF and the EU that 'govern our economic and political life' (Dveri 2011). Dveri therefore declared that it was not yet another political party, but rather a people's movement named 'A Serbian Assembly Dveri – Movement for life of Serbia'. Accordingly, its 2011 programme advocated a new national contract between the elites and the people, emphasising its opposition to the 'parasitic party system' and 'tacit agreements between the tycoons-monopolists on the one hand and party profiteers on the other hand that robbed us blind' (Dveri 2011). It stood for the change of the regime, but also 'the entire twisted social system', including the electoral, banking and tax system, which would liberate Serbia from 'the status of colonial slavery' (Dveri 2011). It advocated an immediate suspension of negotiations with the EU, proclamation of Kosovo an occupied territory and nullification of the 'unconstitutional' EU-brokered agreement between Serbia and Kosovo (Dveri 2014).

Unable to profit politically as a movement since 1999 and an electoral list since 2012, Dveri became an official political party in 2015. Consequently, an emphasis on its anti-establishment nature has gradually vanished, but the party did not moderate its stance on European integration. To attract voters and move away from the political periphery, Dveri formed a coalition with the equally conservative and Eurosceptic but long-established Democratic Party of Serbia and secured seven seats in Serbian Parliament in 2016. In effect, this deprived Dveri of an argument that it was an alternative political force fighting against the rigged system and corrupted Euroenthusiastic mainstream parties. At the same time, its ideologically based opposition to European integration came to the fore. This party espoused a mix of conservative, traditionalist and nationalist ideology centred on the protection of national identity from the EU that wants 'to dismantle the family' (Dveri 2014). As 'we are under the fierce attack of the global colonialism', the party sought to defend the Cyrillic script and Orthodox Church (Dveri 2014). Dveri argued that, through the EU-driven reforms, the state lost its traditional functions, ceased to protect the constitutional values and accepted the harmful policies; it asserted that the EU 'requires legal recognition of Kosovo, imports of GMO food, imposing sanctions on Russia and joining NATO' (Dveri 2017b).

This party also expressed a paternalistic approach to society and economy based on 'social solidarity and patriotism' and opposition to 'the

destructive neo-liberal economic model' pursued by Serbian elites' (primarily the Serbian Progressive Party) dictated by the EU and the IMF (Dveri 2011). It thus stood for the annulment of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, since 'we have lost over half a million people, destroyed manufacturing and economy, and Serbia has become an economic and political colony of those who bombed us in 1999' (Dveri 2014). It advocated 'Europe of nations instead of the Brussels dictatorship' and bilateral cooperation with European countries, with Russia as the main foreign partner (Dveri 2014). Dveri espoused a populist rhetoric presenting itself as a voice of people seeking 'to bring the country back to the people', so that people can decide their fate in referendums (Dveri 2017a). Overall, it was a typical hard Eurosceptic party primarily driven by its ideology of pronounced social conservatism and traditionalism, while its initially anti-establishment outlook significantly framed its rhetoric.

Unlike Serbian established parties, their Croatian counterparts were challenged by significant parties employing anti-establishment rhetoric that have risen to power since 2010. These were the Bridge of Independent Lists (Most Nezavisnih Lista) founded in 2012 as a heterogenous regionalist political platform which established itself as the third biggest political party following the 2016 parliamentary elections as well as Human Shield (Živi Zid). While the conservative Bridge of Independent Lists employed harsh anti-establishment rhetoric aimed at dismantling 'the system of government that is based on private interests, clientelism, nepotism and corruption' established by the Croatian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party (Most 2016), it remained broadly supportive of the EU. In contrast, Human Shield was a hard Eurosceptic party advocating Croatian withdrawal from the EU and NATO. Although peripheral and protesting in its nature, the party became the most successful hard Eurosceptic party in Croatia. Moreover, it was the only significant leftist hard Eurosceptic party in the Western Balkans as all other parties standing against the EU were predominantly national conservative and often radical right.

This party was founded out of an anti-eviction movement as the Alliance for Change in 2011. It changed its name to Human Shield in 2014. The party portrayed itself as anti-establishment alternative to two dominant Croatian parties, espousing harsh criticism of their 'failed and unsustainable neoliberal economic policy' (Živi Zid 2015). It thus claimed to be a party of 'brave, humane, uncorrupted experts who truly fight for a just, socially sensitive and economically sustainable society where a man is in the

first place' (Živi Zid 2015). Human Shield stood in strong opposition to the existing system 'which mercilessly trample the little man', emphasising that its members were 'ready to submit to repression and prosecution without resorting to violence' to change the system (Živi Zid 2015). There was an absolute dominance of socio-economic issues in the party agenda, with a strong opposition to monetary system and austerity policies pursued across the EU. Therefore, the party stood against the EU on democratic and economic grounds arguing that the EU's goal was not democratic or economic development of its members, but 'neo-feudalism' and totalitarian social relations (Živi Zid 2015). It asserted that the EU was not managed by elected representatives of the people, but by bureaucracy and corporations. It pledged to forge ties with Spanish Podemos and British Left Unity to 'radical transform the EU' and liberate it from the 'monetary occupation of private banks' (Živi Zid 2015). Croatia, the party argued, had the status of colony that submitted itself to 'monetary occupation by private banks and multinational companies' (Živi Zid 2015). Following the British decision to leave the EU, the party declared that 'the dissolution of the EU was about to start'; Croatia should thus hold a referendum and leave the EU, while all politicians who 'have tricked us into joining the EU must be prosecuted' (Živi Zid 2016). Human Shield thus was an essentially anti-system party on the fringe of party system, on the radical left pole in socio-economic terms (and liberal pole with regard to identity issues), and driven by its anti-globalist and anti-establishment worldviews.

In summary, there was a significant difference between two party systems in terms of their (strategic) peripheral Euroscepticsim. The logic and structure party system in Serbia did not create conditions favourable for strategic protest-based Euroscepticism. Namely, there was no distinct group of core (or Western-style cartel) parties given high fragmentation and instability of the party system (see Chaps. 2 and 3). In addition, there was no wider political pro-EU consensus, and hard Euroscepticism was advocated by some established parties, such the Serbian Radical Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia until 2008. In other words, established parties did not have to avoid adopting Eurosceptic stances out of fear of political marginalisation, nor did they find it necessary to moderate their rhetoric on this issue; consequently, Eurosceptic peripheral parties had no space in which to exploit this issue and emphasise their uniqueness (Stojić 2017). Although Dveri did emerge as a relatively significant protest Eurosceptic party in 2012, it moved to the political mainstream in 2015. Conversely, there was a relatively consistent number of parties in Croatia, with the

Croatian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party being the most dominant ones. This relative stability of the party system created conditions conducive to the formation of a group of core mainstream parties (Stojić 2017). Moreover, an informal 'Alliance for Europe' was established in the early 2000s as all core parties pledged not to use Croatian EU accession during political confrontations, effectively creating a pro-EU core but also opening space for numerous (yet largely politically unsuccessful) anti-establishment opposition to the EU.

What, however, characterised protest parties in both countries was that their underlying Eurosceptic stances were not dominantly driven by strategic incentives stemming from their anti-establishment and peripheral position within the party system. These were mostly hard Eurosceptic parties that objected to the EU and opposed these countries' EU memberships in principle. In other words, peripheral Euroscepticism was primarily rooted in their strong national conservative and radical right (seldom radical left) identity as well as an aversion to the principles of liberal democracy as symbolised by the EU, rather than in the parties' deliberate strategic decision to be anti-European 'outsiders' (Stojić 2017, p. 752). Yet, their Eurosceptic narrative in both countries was predominantly framed by their protest nature.

Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the examination of Serbian and Croatian parties' responses to European integration as they relate to strategic incentives. In general terms, the volte-face of the three core parties closely analysed in this chapter was a strategically driven response to internal and external incentives in the context of dynamic electoral competition and a strong EU presence in candidate countries, aimed at maximising the chances of securing executive office. There are several strategic factors that framed their newly founded Euroenthusiastic perceptions. Intra-party dynamics conducive to pro-European reorientation—that is, marginalisation of hard-core nationalist and Eurosceptic factions as well as the strong leadership able to force the new views upon party ranks or at least temper any scepticism towards the EU, proved to be an important catalyst for change. Considerations pertinent to the logic of electoral competition, such as disincentives to compete on the Eurosceptic space that was already 'occupied' by stronger political competitors and aspirations to become 'suitable coalition partners' for other parties also proved to be important drivers of parties' reorientations. Furthermore, a relatively

advanced level of integration with the EU and trade links that were difficult to reverse were also important. This may have specifically resulted in pure utilitarian motives of party elites that found it personally economically profitable to shift stances. Additionally, it may have led party elites to come to realise that these links were economically important and beneficial to their supports too, and thus difficult to curtail. However, as demonstrated in Chap. 5, party supporters did not necessarily share such viewpoints of political elites. Other factors may have been the EU as an 'external veto player' that effectively prevented Eurosceptic parties from getting government participation. Namely, Eurosceptic and nationalistic parties (the Serbian Radical Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia) were prevented from participating in the government alongside other pro-EU parties by influential Western governments and de facto the EU (see Chap. 6). Euroscepticism was therefore a 'costly' political platform for parties faced with a strong EU involvement in domestic party politics and they found it necessary to transform. Some of these propositions are further discussed in this concluding section.

This chapter found some evidence to support the hypothesis that the more parties perceive the interests of their supporters are in line with European integration, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes. Although it was difficult to assess to what extent parties' stances were shaped by the perception that European integration was in the economic interests of their supporters, there are indications that this was an important factor in the case of parties that shifted their stances on the EU. As will be considered in Chap. 5, this, however, does not mean that parties followed their core voters' preferences on the EU. Rather, it suggests they found that the EU was in their supporters' interests and deliberately started advocating pro-European policies without having the ideological predisposition to do so. This motivation can be recognised in the qualified support for the EU among strategically motivated soft Euroenthusiastic parties, given that it was expressed in utilitarian, economic terms. As demonstrated in this chapter, leaders of both the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party pointed out how they eventually realised that the 'European formula has succeeded', and that 'we are a small country that has yet to develop, and we cannot do it alone' (SNS 2010; Vukomanović, Interview 2011). This may be seen as a consequence of the relatively advanced EU integration of these countries. In other words, there was the tendency that the more advanced level of EU integration generates strong incentives for the transformation of

Eurosceptics in potential (candidate) countries. Strong trade links with the EU, which over time became irreversible, led leaders of Eurosceptic parties to start assessing these links as economically important, beneficial to their supports, and thus difficult to curtail. This 'path dependence' cause of transformation was most evident in the case of the Serbian Progressives and Socialists.

However, there was no strong evidence to support arguments that the more parties attempt to broaden their electoral base and rely on the catch-all electoral strategy, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes. This hypothesis was proposed by Sitter and Batory (2008) and was based on their analysis of agrarian parties whose Euroscepticism was the result of electoral strategy intended to represent the interests of a delineated and Eurosceptic segment of the electorate. However, it was difficult to link party stances on the EU to any particular electoral strategies. It was challenging to work out which electoral strategies these parties employed and to what extent they were analogue to those in more traditional party systems, given the unsettled and conflicting nature of these parties and party systems. Significantly, the absence of politically articulated interests of clearly segmented and differentiated electorate and very weak links within electoral constituencies precluded the formulation of recognisable and focused electoral strategies. In other words, it is debatable to what extent these parties employed any meaningful electoral strategy faced with the lack of traditional voters or the social groups with clearly expressed social and economic interests. Parties that shifted stances on the EU did try to broaden their electoral basis, hoping to reach new voters as a modern left- or right-wing parties, respectively. It thus appears that they mostly employed a catch-all strategy. Yet, there was no evidence that this shaped their stances on the EU in any identifiable way, particularly given their tendency to ignore concerns of their core voters regarding the EU, as discussed in Chap. 5.

Moreover, the chapter found some evidence to support arguments that the more parties' political competitors 'occupy' the Eurosceptic space, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes. This hypothesis assumes that parties face strategic disincentives to adopt stances that have been propagated by other parties with similar political agendas. As discussed in this chapter, this was one of the significant factors for the transformation of the Serbian Socialists. Faced with falling electoral support as its voters turned to the Serbian Radical Party, the dominant Eurosceptic party, this party did have strong reasons to move away from the Eurosceptic

political space. However, it was difficult to assess whether this triggered the overall party transformation, although it appears that it significantly contributed to it and certainly encouraged the party to soften its stance on the EU. Nevertheless, this was clearly not the factor that prompted a change within the leaders of the Croatian Democratic Union and the Serbian Progressive Party (while they were members of the Serbian Radical Party). Both parties were dominant in the Eurosceptic political space and were not challenged by any other significant parties and thus did not feel 'compelled' to shift their position in this respect.

The chapter found some support for the hypothesis that the more parties seek to be 'suitable coalition partners' for pro-European parties in order to come to power, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes. Specifically, being 'non-coalitionable' prompted pragmatic Eurosceptic parties to change positions, while, as expected, this was rather irrelevant for ideologically driven Euroscepticism. There were indications that the logic of coalition building significantly influenced the transformation of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party, which were unacceptable coalition partners for other parties due to pressures from the West and their Eurosceptic ideology. Nevertheless, the pressures of coalition politics did not prove to be a factor strong enough to fundamentally shape or change a party's broad position on the EU of parties whose 'world view' run counter or was in line with the principles of European integration. The prime example was the Democratic Party of Serbia and its ideologically motivated opposition to Serbian EU membership despite the lack of like-minded potential coalition partners, as discussed in Chap. 3. Similarly, the Croatian Democratic Union had limited exposure to coalition politics. Moreover, as one of two dominant core parties in the country, it did not need to adjust its positions to other parties. Rather, it 'dictated' policies of other minor parties.

Finally, this chapter did not find strong evidence indicating that party-based Euroscepticism in Serbia and Croatia was driven by a party's peripheral position, as it has been argued in the comparative literature (Taggart 1998; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000). Rather, party peripheral status served primarily as a reinforcement for existent and mostly identity-driven (radical right) hostility or scepticism towards the EU (Stojić 2017, p. 751). Moreover, the structure of Serbian party system did not provide space for Eurosceptic peripheral to emerge and to strategically exploit this issue; there was no clearly demarcated group of pro-EU core parties due to a high fragmentation and unpredictability of this party system, with

some established parties themselves advocating anti-EU agendas. Croatian party system, in contrast, was more susceptible to protest-driven opposition given a pro-EU consensus and relative stability of its core, but most of these parties remained minor and unable to profit from their outsider's position.

Notes

1. The prime examples were the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Radical Party in the early 2000s when both parties questioned the legitimacy of the whole political system and were consequently anti-system parties.
2. An exception was a liberal reformist Serbian movement Enough is enough (Dosta je bilo), an anti-establishment political organisation opposed to 'partocracy and parasitic party system' established by 'both pro-European and Eurosceptic parties' (DJB 2016a). Although not fundamentally anti-EU, it advocated a one-year suspension of Serbian EU membership negotiations, an informed public debate and a referendum on this issue given that the EU 'turned a blind eye to the collapse of its own values in Serbia' (DJB 2016b).
3. Peripheral hard Euroscepticism was mostly represented by radical right movements such as the Serbian National Movement 1389, Naši and Obraz.
4. These were the Autochthon Croatian Party of Rights (Autohtona Hrvatska Stranka Prava), the Croatian Pure Party of Rights (Hrvatska Čista Stranka Prava), the Action for a Better Croatia (Akcija za Bolju Hrvatsku), the Croatian Dawn-People's Party (Hrvatska Zora-Stranka Naroda), A Vow for Croatia (Zavjet za Hrvatsku) and Only Croatia. The Croatian Party of Rights may also be characterised as peripheral, particularly after it lost parliamentary representation in 2011, as well as the regionalist Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja (Hrvatski Demokratski Savez Slavonije i Baranje) that often expressed Eurosceptic rhetoric.

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CHAPTER 5

Public, Voters' and Party Attitudes Towards the EU

Eurosceptic sentiments expressed by the general publics have been constantly on the rise across the continent (Gabel 2000, Leconte 2010). At the same time, party elites have been noticeably more in favour of European integration than their voters. As a result, there was 'a representational gap between parties and voters' with most parties not accommodating voters' preferences (Ray 2007; Hellström 2008). However, this appears not to be the case anymore; many parties seem to have responded to public preferences on this issue by adopting or strengthening their Eurosceptic stances (Usherwood and Startin 2013). We have recently witnessed the growing political importance of mostly fringe or radical nationalist parties expressing hard Euroscepticism (the United Kingdom Independence Party, the French Front National and the Dutch Party for Freedom). Moreover, many mainstream parties have also adopted more Eurosceptic positions (the British Conservative Party, the Polish Law and Justice and the Hungarian Fidesz). Parties thus appear to have responded to the negative public opinions on the EU, thereby narrowing a representational gap between them and their voters. As a consequence, Euroscepticism now permeates domestic politics of almost all European countries (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013). Nonetheless, there are cases where such trends have not been observed. On the contrary, a (sharp) rise of public Euroscepticism occurred simultaneously with the large majority of parties becoming more Euroenthusiastic, or at least not more Eurosceptic. This chapter aims to examine a relationship between parties' and public positions on the EU in

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Serbia and Croatia that have followed the latter trend. It specifically aims to examine how parties have responded (if at all) to fluctuating public preferences when determining stances and formulating policies on the EU. In other words, to what extent parties have adopted positions that are similar to those of public's in a bottom-up manner.[1]

The chapter argues that parties in general tended to ignore public and core voters' preferences on the EU. This was primarily due to weak and unarticulated stances expressed by the general public and core voters, which consequently left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on this issue and, in some cases, fundamentally change stances. By not having reflected public interests on this important issue, parties further weakened these fragile representative democracies where a large swath of public remains distrustful of party and political systems. The chapter first briefly discusses the key debates about the relationship between political elites and mass publics. It then looks at general publics in Serbia and Croatia and their opinions on European integration as a potential driver of party positions on the EU. This is followed by a detailed examination of how core voters' concerns regarding the EU affected party stances on this issue, first in Serbia and then in Croatia. The concluding section summarises the key findings and draws implications from these cases.

Do Parties Respond to Public Preferences?

There are few debates in the classical party literature that have so attracted scholars' attention but also deeply divided them, as the relationship between political elites and mass publics. This debate has centred on the issue of whether parties respond to fluctuating public preferences when determining stances and formulating policies, or parties instead cue a mass public that often lacks information on complex social issues. Drawing on a rational choice perspective (Downs 1957), some scholars argued that voters' stances provide incentives for party positioning. Accordingly, parties are seen as rational actors that seek to win elections and therefore respond to (informed and structured) public preferences in the context of electoral competition. Dalton (1985) claimed that there is a substantial agreement between views of party elites and public in Western Europe. He found that parties are generally responsive to their constituencies and that they change to reflect the opinions of their voters. Adams et al. (2004) argued that parties respond to shifts in public opinion, but only when that

shifts are in a direction disadvantageous to the party. Later, Adams et al. (2009) reiterated that parties adjust their ideological positions in response to shifts in public opinion, and specified that parties of the centre and right largely react to public opinion, whereas parties of the left appear less responsive to it. Provided that they are relatively stable and structured, public preferences may also be important drivers of party stances on European integration—especially since the EU has become a more salient and contested issue. Carrubba (2001) found that when electorates are more in favour of integration, their representatives also take a more supportive position and vice versa. Tillman (2004) showed that citizen attitudes about the EU significantly affected their vote choice in national elections, ultimately shaping party policies on this issue. Konitzer (2011) posited that the pressure of public opinion led to pro-EU transformation of Eurosceptic parties in Serbia and Croatia. Vachudova (2012) similarly claimed that the popularity of joining the EU in the general public of candidate states compel most, if not all, major parties to shift their agendas to make them EU compatible.

Other authors, however, argued that parties' responsiveness to public preferences on the EU is more conditional. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a, p. 22) found thata 'there is a misfit between parties and public over Europe'. Steenbergen et al. (2007) found evidence that party elites respond to the views of their supporters, but this depends on the type of electoral system, the proximity of elections, the salience of EU issues, intra-party dissent and the characteristics of party supporters. Williams and Spoon (2015) argued that party types condition party responsiveness to Eurosceptic public preferences, with larger as well as opposition parties being more responsive. Conversely, Hellström (2008) found strong evidence that parties are unresponsive to changes in voters' opinion since voters have little knowledge about the EU as well as weak preferences on European integration. Marks and Wilson (2000, p. 434) stressed that 'parties are not empty vessels into which issue positions are poured in response to electoral or constituency pressures, but organizations with historically rooted orientations that guide their response to new issues, such as European integration'. Similarly, Bandović and Vujačić (2014) and Konitzer (2014) noted that the decline in people's support for the EU had very little impact on Serbian and Croatian political elites' enthusiasm for the EU membership of their countries.

The existing studies thus make a number of conflicting assumptions about whether parties respond to public positions on European integration. The purpose of this chapter is to assess these arguments by examining Serbian and Croatian parties. Unlike the existing studies that drew on statistical analysis, it does not employ statistical analysis other than in simple descriptive terms—although it quantifies party stances on the EU and uses quantitative data on public and voters' stances on the EU. Moreover, the existing studies by and large do not distinguish (but rather equate) the general publics and parties' core voters. They utilised data on public opinion on the EU (from the Eurobarometer or the European Election Studies) and inferred core voters' stances from it (Carrubba 2001; Steenbergen et al. 2007; Hellström 2008; Williams and Spoon 2015). However, this is an important distinction. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p. 257), for example, argued that 'the views of the party's current supporters and potential target supporters (rather than voters as a whole)' may determine how parties use the European issue in inter-party competition. The chapter, therefore, seeks to understand whether parties adopted attitudes towards the EU in response to the preferences of both the general publics and core electorates by drawing on two separate datasets. To measure party positions on the EU, it uses data from the Chapel Hill expert survey, which allows for a direct comparison of parties over time. This is supplemented, for the years where data was missing, with the author's assessment of party stances based on the same scale. Party positions are further examined by looking at data collected from interviews with senior party officials, content analysis of parties' programmatic documents as well as secondary sources.

Party Attitudes Towards the EU and Public Opinion

This section examines how parties responded to the position of general publics on EU membership. In doing so, it looks at parties' stances (and changes in their positions) on this issue over time by using data from Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Hooghe et al. 2010; Bakker et al. 2015a,b). This is then compared to Serbian and Croatian public attitudes towards EU membership (SEIO 2017; Eurobarometer 2016). Table 5.1 demonstrates that the majority of relevant Serbian parties remained or became more pro-European since 2003. As discussed in previous chapters, this was most striking in the case of the newly founded Serbian Progressive Party whose leaders abandoned their long-term Euroscepticism and

Table 5.1 Serbian and Croatian party attitudes towards EU membership

Political party	*2003*	*2007*	*2010*	*2014*	*2017*	*Change of attitudes*
Serbia						
Serbian Progressive Party	1.5 (as SRS)	2.1 (as SRS)	5.8	5.8	5.8	↑
Socialist Party of Serbia	2.5	3.2	5.8	5.5	5.8	↑
Democratic Party	6.5	6.2	6.5	6.4	6.5	↔
Democratic Party of Serbia	5.0	4.1	2.0	1.7	1.5	↓
Liberal Democratic Party	-	6.7	7.0	6.7	7.0	↔
Serbian Radical Party	1.5	2.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	↔
Croatia						
Croatian Democratic Union	2.5	5.5	6.4	6.2	6.2	↑
Social Democratic Party	6.5	6.8	6.4	6.5	6.5	↔
Croatian Peasant Party	4.5	4.6	4.1	5.0	5.0	↔
Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats	6.8	6.6	6.8	7.0	7.0	↔
Croatian Party of Rights	2.0	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.0	↔

Sources: Hooghe et al. (2010), Bakker et al. (2015a,b) and author's estimates

Notes: Data for Serbia for 2007/2014 and Croatia for 2007–2014 periods are from Chapel Hill Expert Survey. Party positions are operationalised as an overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration: 1 = Strongly opposed, 2 = Opposed, 3 = Somewhat opposed, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Somewhat in favour, 6 = In favour, 7 = Strongly in favour. Data for Serbia for 2003/2010/2017 (and the SRS for 2014) and for Croatia for 2003/2017 are author's estimates using the same scale

anti-Westernism that had been endorsing within the hard-line nationalist Serbian Radical Party. The Socialist Party of Serbia also underwent a more gradual, but fundamental shift in its position on Serbian EU membership. Pro-European ideological transformation of both parties was primarily aimed at maximising the chances of coming to power (Chap. 4). Conversely, the Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party have been consistently pro-European. They pleaded for Serbian EU accession even in the period after 2008, when a majority of EU member states recognised Kosovo as an independent state, which temporarily blocked the process of EU integration and resulted in growing public Euroscepticism. The only outlier seems to be the Democratic Party of Serbia, which due to the Kosovo issue significantly strengthened its traditional ideologically driven scepticism towards the EU, becoming a hard Eurosceptic party after 2008. Similarly, all relevant Croatian parties, with a notable exception of the hard-line nationalist Croatian Party of Rights, either remained or became more Euroenthusiastic over time. Most importantly, the leading centre

right Croatian Democratic Union became markedly more enthusiastic for Croatian EU membership, especially compared to the early 2000s when it exhibited nationalist and Eurosceptic characteristics.

At the same time, as Fig. 5.1 shows, a distinct minority of Serbian citizens were against EU membership throughout the 2010s—only 8% in December 2003 and 12% September 2005 (SEIO 2017). However, the Serbian public has gradually become more Eurosceptic. The opposition to EU membership has fluctuated between 24% and 31% since 2010, but the support for it significantly dropped—from 72% in 2003 to 47% in December 2016 (SEIO 2017). The rise in public Euroscepticism can be primarily explained by the two key conditions for EU membership that the public strongly opposed—an extradition of war crimes indictees to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and de facto recognition of the independence of Kosovo.

The Serbian public did remain overall pro-EU oriented (Fig. 5.1), but a closer look at it indicates, at best, fragile pro-EU consensus. For example, a Cesid (2009, p. 2) survey found that 71% of Serbs supported EU membership, but 25% of them expressed an attitude 'which contains a mass of controversies, unclear views, mixed feelings and options that even annul each other'. Cesid surveyors thus argued that there was 'no

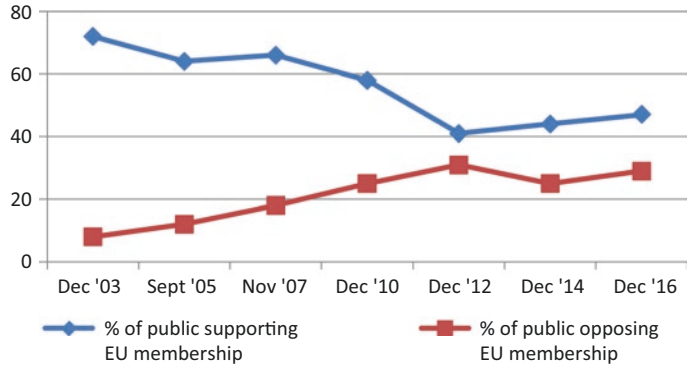

Fig. 5.1 Serbian public attitudes towards EU membership
Source: SEIO (2017)
Notes: Data are from the Serbian European Integration Office. N= 1015/1050. Marginal error: ±3.31%. The respondents were asked the following question: If there was a referendum tomorrow on the following question 'Do you support our country's integration in the EU', how would you vote?

single or unified positive or negative attitude towards the EU; one could rather speak about the multilayer and multidimensional attitude' since the attitude varied in relation to how the question was being asked (Cesid 2009, p. 3). Specifically, there was a steady trend of public aversion to cooperation with the ICTY throughout the 2000s, even thought that was the single most important condition for joining the EU. An SMR (2009) survey found that 78% of respondents had negative opinion on the ICTY in 2009. In addition, 54% and 61% of respondents opposed handing over Serbian citizens to this tribunal in 2003 and 2008 respectively (SMR 2003; Politikum 2008). At the same time, the public approval of stronger ties with Russia was consistently higher than support for EU membership. From 2008 to 2015, a stable majority of between 60% and 64% of Serbs was in favour of forming a union or the closest possible relations with Russia (NSPM 2008, 2015). Finally, in a BCBP (2012) survey, 62% of respondents argued that Kosovo should under no circumstances be recognised. Similarly, a large majority of citizens—65% in 2015 (NSPM 2015)—were ready to abandon EU membership bid if conditioned by the recognition of Kosovo's independence. In other words, it is arguable to what extent those who expressed support for EU membership genuinely did so. Overall, Euroscepticism has traditionally strongly permeated the Serbian public.

In Croatia, the pattern of public opinion becoming pronouncedly more Eurosceptic has been visible since 2003 (Fig. 5.2). This trend has been so dramatic that Croatia was seen as one of the most Eurosceptic nations in Europe, with more people opposing than supporting its EU membership; for instance, 50% were against and 40% were in favour of EU membership in 2007. Even after the country entered the EU, a significant share of the public—41% in November 2016 (Eurobarometer 2016)—opposed it. The similar factors may account for a dramatic rise in scepticism, with the public opposition to cooperation with the ICTY and bilateral disputes with neighbouring EU members being the most important ones. Franc and Medjugorac (2013) also attributed this trend to the lack of public debate about joining the EU as well as poor information and stereotypes about how the EU functions.

General public and party support for the EU—particularly since 2008 in Serbia and 2003 in Croatia—therefore largely diverged. The pro-EU agendas of the majority of Serbian and Croatian parties (Table 5.1) were in stark contrast to the growing public opposition to EU membership. A rise in public Euroscepticism did not seem to prompt political

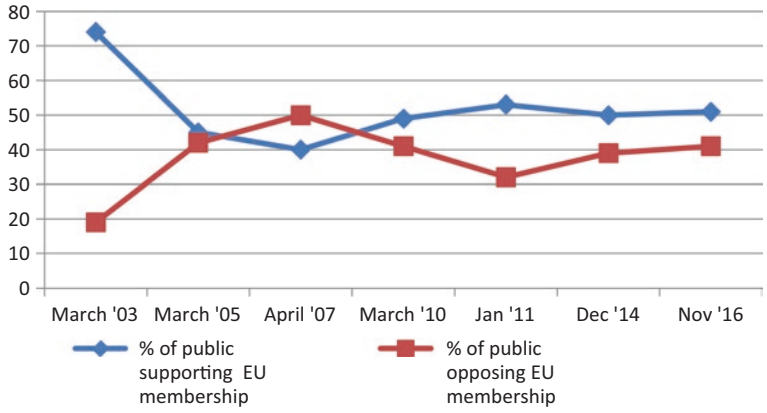

Fig. 5.2 Croatian public attitudes towards EU membership
Sources: Eurobarometer (2016), Author's personal collection
Notes: Data from 2003 to 2012 period are from Ipsos Puls. N=1000. Marginal error: ±3.3%. The respondents were asked the following question: Do you support Croatian EU membership? Data for 2014 and 2016 are from Eurobarometer 81 and 86, and show public response to the statement that 'Croatia could better face the future outside the EU'. N=1003. Marginal error: ±3%

elites to adopt more Eurosceptic platforms; Serbian and Croatian parties thus did not accommodate rising public Euroscepticism, which was largely unrepresented in the political arena or, rather, represented by protest movements and fringe radical right parties. This tendency was particularly striking in Croatia, where around 40% of the public has consistently opposed EU membership since 2005, but Eurosceptic parties were still minor, peripheral parties, while no major party adopted more Eurosceptic policies. On the contrary, the pro-European reorientation of the Croatian Democratic Union consolidated simultaneously with a rapid rise in public opposition to EU membership, between 2003 and 2005. In Serbia, the Democratic Party of Serbia did become more Eurosceptic, but there are no indications that was due to any public pressures to transform, given the party's ideologically driven stances—as discussed in the previous chapters. Overall, Euroscepticism was significantly more present among the general public than among the political elites in both countries, but particularly in Croatia.

This is a peculiar trend given that, in most European countries, parties in general became more Eurosceptic following, inter alia, a growing public disillusionment with EU responses to the key economic and social challenges. This lack of synchrony between elites and citizens may be explained by elite confidence that (in spite of everything) EU membership was still good for the country or, more importantly, that this would expand their personal economic opportunities (Konitzer 2014). It may also be due to the context of accession countries where (unlike in EU member states) Euroscepticism was a 'costly' political platform for mainstream parties faced with a strong EU involvement in domestic politics and thus necessary to consistently prove its pro-EU credentials. The other factor may have been the fact that parties prone to Euroscepticism (the Serbian Progressive Party and the Croatian Democracy Union) had already 'invested' too much in their pro-EU reorientation. Crucially, these parties led the accession negotiations. The Croatian Democracy Union, for instance, effectively monopolised the accession negotiations and portrayed the 2011 completion of negotiation as its historic success. Adopting a critical attitude towards EU accession terms was not a viable option, since doing so would cost the party its credibility in the run-up to the 2007 and 2011 elections (Stojić 2017). The observed trend may be also due to the low salience of European issues for the general public. Bogosavljević (2007, p. 61), for example, noted that EU issues have never been a priority in Serbia, and argued that the most salient issues in public opinion polls were unemployment, crime, corruption, and Kosovo, while 'almost never' EU integration. For example, in October 2008, only 6% of public was concerned about joining the EU (SMR 2008). Similarly, a Cesid survey (2008) found that EU membership was the eighth most important social issue. In 2012, EU integration was even not among the top issues affecting the Serbian public (SMR 2012). As a consequence, parties did not feel pressured to accommodate weak preferences of the increasingly Eurosceptic public. General public preferences therefore appear not to be a reliable indicator of how individual parties actually formulate their stances on the EU in relation to electoral incentives. The position of a party's core voters may be a better indicator of party behaviour and this will be examined in the following section.

Party Attitudes Towards the EU and Their Core Voters

This section first presents data on Serbian voters' preferences for EU membership and the EU, followed by an examination of individual parties and their constituencies most relevant to this study. The data on core electorate preferences for the EU expressed by Croatian parties are separately discussed. Table 5.2 illustrates attitudes of Serbian parties' voters towards EU membership, indicating a significant variation in their position. Namely, they did not have a consistent and firm attitude towards this issue; relatively similar percentages of voters for the same parties were in favour of and against EU membership, or fluctuated between support and opposition over time. This was most evident in the cases of the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Democratic Party of Serbia. Even a slim majority of the electorate of the radically right and hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party was in favour of EU membership until 2009, while their Euroenthusiasm significantly dropped afterwards. Nevertheless, the Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party were the clear outliers since they had most consistent Euroenthusiastic voters across both countries. Table 5.2 also shows a decrease of Euroenthusiasm among core voters of all parties after 2009 (the same trend was visible in the general public, Fig. 5.1). This coincided with the gradual realisation that some form of the recognition of Kosovo's independence was a condition for Serbia's EU membership. It also indicates that core voters' attitudes towards EU membership generally were not deeply rooted; their stances depended on concrete events and were prone to changes which may explain the reasons behind the variation in their preferences.

Furthermore, Table 5.3 provides additional insight into preferences of the core voters. Given that the key contentious issue that strongly polarised the public and parties was whether the recognition of Kosovo was a precondition for Serbian EU membership, this table demonstrates what kind of impulses parties received from their voters in this respect. What is striking is that an overwhelming majority of the core electorates of parties that evidently prioritised EU membership over Kosovo, including the former Eurosceptic Serbian Progressive Party and Socialist Party of Serbia, actually chose Kosovo over the EU, indicating the mismatch between voters and the parties for which they voted. Also, this may indirectly signify that for Serbian voters (unlike the parties) EU membership was not an issue of highest priority; electorates were more concerned with the status of Kosovo.

Table 5.2 Attitudes of Serbian parties' core voters towards Serbian EU membership

	DS			*SNS*			*SPS*			*DSS*			*LDP*			*SRS*		
	In favour	*Against*	*No stance*	*In favour*	*Against*	*No stance*	*In favour*	*Against*	*No stance*	*In favour*	*Against*	*No stance*	*In favour*	*Against*	*No stance*	*In favour*	*Against*	*No stance*
January 2005	**93%**	1%	–	–	–	–	**67%**	25%	–	**86%**	4%	–	–	–	–	**66%**	23%	–
June 2007	**92%**	3%	–	–	–	–	**46%**	23%	–	**79%**	6%	–	**91%**	0%	–	**42%**	36%	–
April 2008	**93%**	4%	2%[a]	**67%**	20%	–[b]	45%	**49%**[c]	5%	**61%**	31%	7%[d]	**92%**	7%	0%	**45%**	42%	12%
September 2009	**94%**	2%	2%	**59%**	23%	4%	**65%**	24%	3%	**72%**	15%	8%	**91%**	2%	3%	**47%**	44%	2%
January 2012	**82%**	9%	8%	27%	**56%**	16%	**52%**	34%	13%	25%	**60%**	14%	**91%**	5%	2%	5%	**85%**	8%
September 2012	**70%**	–	–	37%	**48%**	–	**51%**	36%	–[e]	**49%**	29%	–	**72%**	–	–	17%	**66%**	–
April 2015	**73%**	17%	10%	39%	**41%**	20%	39%	**40%**	21%	10%	**84%**	6%	**94%**	0%	6%	6%	**87%**	6%

Sources: Media Gallup (2005), Pantić (2007), Politikum (2008), SMR (2008), Cesid (2009), B92 (2012a), BCBP (2012), NSPM (2012), NSPM (2015) (No pooling agency has conducted regular monthly surveys of voters' stances on EU membership, and data are from different public opinion surveys. All respondents answered the version of the same questions on whether Serbia should become an EU member state. This allowed a cross-temporal comparison of relatively long-term data series. All samples are of similar size and representative: Pantić (2007): N=2019; Politikum (2008): N=1300; Cesid (2009): N=1595; B92 (2012a): N=1003; BCBP (2012): N=1032; NSPM (2012): N=1200; NSPM (2015): N=1020. Data are rounded off to the nearest whole number)

[a]DS, G17 Plus, Serbian Renewal Movement (*Srpski Pokret Obnove*, SPO) and League of Social-democrats of Vojvodina (*Liga Socijaldemokrata Vojvodine*, LSDV)

[b]In October 2008

[c]SPS, United Serbia (*Jedinstvena Srbija*, JS) and Party of United Pensioners (*Partija Ujedinjenih Penzionera*, PUPS)

[d]DSS and New Serbia (*Nova Srbija*, NS)

[e]SPS, JS, PUPS

Table 5.3 Preference of Serbian parties' core voters on Kosovo and EU membership

Political party	*2008*		*2012*	
	Kosovo	*EU membership*	*Kosovo*	*EU membership*
Serbian Progressive Party	57%	18%	78%	14%
Socialist Party of Serbia	94%	–	77%	9%
Democratic Party of Serbia	57%	20%	64%	24%
Democratic Party	25%	59%	46%	43%
Liberal Democratic Party	–	88%	8%	74%
Serbian Radical Party	58%	16%	–	–

Source: Politikum (2008), SMR (2008), B92 (2012b) (In 2008, respondents were asked if they would recognise Kosovo in return for EU membership, while in 2012 they were asked if they would prefer either Kosovo staying in Serbia or Serbian EU membership)

Finally, Table 5.4[2] provides a more comprehensive picture of voters' attitudes towards the EU (not Serbian EU membership), further suggesting their ambiguous and changeable stances. A large number of voters of almost all parties (again with the exception of the Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party) did not have an opinion or had a neutral stance, with many voters equally divided between those who had positive and negative stances on the EU.

How did parties, in general, react to such fluctuating trends among their core voters? Data from the tables suggest that the majority of parties did not face clear and consistent pressures from their electoral constituencies. As Pantić (2007) identified, EU issues very often divided voters of the same party and as a consequence, there was a discrepancy between parties' positions and the attitudes of their electorates (most evident in the case of the Serbian Radical Party in 2005, in Table 5.2). The majority of parties, therefore, had considerable space to manoeuvre on this issue. The lack of articulated core voter positioning on the EU was due to the fact that the EU was generally a 'difficult issue' for voters of Serbian parties. They had 'mixed' views about the EU and had difficulties expressing their definite and firm position that allowed parties to relatively easily change stances and policies on this issue. The striking volatility and variation in opinions on the EU within the electorate of the majority of Serbian parties was not surprising. It was due to a contradictory and complex relationship between the EU and Serbia (as discussed in Chap. 2), and the lack of wider political discussion (or consensus) on Serbian EU accession that did not provide a basis

Table 5.4 Attitudes of Serbian parties' core voters towards the EU

	DS				*SNS*				*SPS*				*DSS*				*LDP*				*SRS*			
	Euro-enthusiast	Euro-realists	Euro-sceptics	Euro-phobes	Euro-enthusiasts	Euro-realists	Euro-sceptics	Euro-phobes	Euro-enthusiasts	Euro-realists	Euro-sceptics	Euro-phobes	Euro-enthusiasts	Euro-realists	Euro-sceptics	Euro-phobes	Euro-enthusiasts	Euro-realists	Euro-sceptics	Euro-phobes	Euro-enthusiasts	Euro-realists	Euro-sceptics	Euro-phobes
January 05	37%	42%	–	–	–	–	–	–	0%	12%	47%	41%	17%	51%	24%	–	–	–	–	–	8%	20%	41%	31%
	Trust in the EU		No trust in the EU		Trust in the EU		No trust in the EU		Trust in the EU		No trust in the EU		Trust in the EU		No trust in the EU		Trust in the EU		No trust in the EU		Trust in the EU		No trust in the EU	
June 07	70%		4%		–		–		27%		33%		48%		9%		82%		2%		28%		38%	
	Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances	
December 07	51%	19%	30%		–	–	–		8%	66%	27%		18%	40%	42%		69%	15%	16%		3%	67%	30%	
April 08	81%	6%	13%		–	–	–		24%	60%	16%		30%	30%	40%		96%	1%	3%		11%	59%	30%	
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance
September 09	59%	3%	21%	17%	22%	27%	30%	21%	28%	21%	25%	26%	28%	26%	27%	19%	67%	3%	14%	16%	14%	40%	21%	25%

Sources: Media Gallup (2005), Pantić (2007), Cesid (2008, 2009)

for a more stable and informed voter's stance on this issue. In addition, there was a mismatch between the generally higher percentage of voters supporting Serbia EU membership (Table 5.2) and the lower percentage of those expressing positive sentiments on the EU (Table 5.4). Pantić (2007) also noticed this discrepancy—between relatively high support for Serbian EU membership and very low confidence in the EU, which has been consistently present in the Serbian public since the early 1990s. He argued that this was the consequence of conflict between the rational and emotional elements of Serbian voters' perceptions of the EU. While the former generated a rational perception of potentially significant benefits of EU membership (as he put it, 'the famous phrase of better life'), the latter resulted in predominantly negative sentiments about the EU.

The remainder of this chapter examines how individual parties determined positions on the EU. It particularly focuses on empirically interesting cases of parties that shifted positions on the EU and Serbian EU membership (the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia), while their core voters tended to adopt confusing and inarticulate views on this issue, as shown in the tables presented. The rationale behind this lies in the fact that, as discussed in Chap. 4, the first two of these parties strategically shifted positions on the EU and ideologically transformed, so one may expect that voters' preferences on Europe played an important role. Conversely, the Democratic Party of Serbia is explored as a case of principled response to European integration (see Chap. 3) and, as a result, one may expect that core voters' concerns about this issue and electoral incentives did not play an important role. Both prepositions are examined in the following sections.

Socialist Party of Serbia

The party of the former Serbian president Slobodan Milošević—perceived as nationalist and anti-Western in the 1990s—has transformed its ideology since 2000, and proclaimed the integration of Serbia into the EU as its strategic goal (see Chap. 4). Traditionally, this was a party of the rural and elderly supporters that were mainly poorly educated, conservative, and prone to nationalism (Stojiljković 2007); those defined as 'intolerant traditionalists' were found to be above average (Stojiljković and Spasojević 2015). In 2005, 67% of the party voters supported EU membership (Media Gallup 2005). However, an analysis of their attitudes towards the EU shows a high degree of Europhobia and Euroscepticism (88% of the party electorate) with, interestingly, no Euroenthusiasts at the same time

(Media Gallup 2005). Stances on other related issues further demonstrate the lack of enthusiasm for the EU. In an October 2006 survey, 94% of the Socialist core supporters opposed handing over Serbian citizens to the ICTY (Politikum 2006). In 2010, only 3% of the party's core voters would inform authorities of, at that time, the most wanted war crime fugitive Ratko Mladić's whereabouts (NSPM 2010).

Nonetheless, in 2008, the party leadership did a political U-turn and joined a pro-European government (Stojić 2013b). At that time, the majority of 49% of the party's electorate opposed Serbian EU membership, while 82% of them endorsed the closest ties with Russia (Politikum 2008). The same survey found that 94% of core voters refused to recognise Kosovo in return for EU membership. A year later, only 28% of the party electorate had positive attitudes towards the EU, but 65% were in favour of Serbian EU accession (Cesid 2009). However, in 2015, only 39% of the core voters endorsed, while 40% opposed EU membership (NSPM 2015). Overall, the party core electorate was leaning towards a Eurosceptic pole, prioritising the relations with Russia and the issue of Kosovo over Serbian EU membership. Therefore, the preferences of the party voters and those of its leadership, as Bandović and Vujačić (2014) also argued, were clearly at odds.

Why did the party leadership, which was presumably aware of these sentiments of its core voters, decide to abandon a Eurosceptic platform? This appears to be primarily a strategically motivated decision, yet the concerns of core voters were apparently ignored. The former party vice president Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011) explained that 'the party did not carry out a survey to find out what most of voters think about some issue and then, based on the results, puts (or not) something on the political agenda as a priority'. However, she emphasised that 'the party leader, Ivica Dačić, decided to support a pro-European agenda at the cost of misunderstanding among the electorate'. In his address at the party congress, Dačić revealed that it was a difficult decision by saying 'everybody was talking that it would be a wrong and disastrous decision for our party, and many of you expressed the same opinion […] However, I proposed such a decision and risked my position as party president' (SPS 2012). As a consequence, the party transformation was neither the result of core voters' aspirations for modernisation, nor their desire for Serbia to join the EU. On the contrary, the party leadership was faced with opposition from a considerable section of the electorate and many party members—still devoted to Slobodan Milošević's policy of nationalistic populism—when it decided to join the pro-European government (see Konitzer 2011). This seems to be a paradox given that the party appears

to be principally pragmatic and vote-seeking, which means that voters' stances should be among the crucial driving factor when formulating and changing policies.

This may be explained by the fact that the Socialists' supporters did not have a fully firm position on this issue, demonstrating both opposition and support for it at different times (as presented in the tables above). As Žegarac (2012, p. 159) found, this party's voters remained undecided on many issues and had 'an ambivalent attitude towards the EU'. For example, significant 21% of its core voters did not express any stance on Serbian EU membership in April 2015 (NSPM 2015). Therefore, on this matter, the party leaders did not face strong, coherent voter preferences that needed to be accommodated. In other words, the Socialists remained largely irresponsive to the preferences of their electoral constituencies, given a lack of articulated impulses regarding this issue that came from 'the bottom'. As a result, they assessed that a shift of stances on the EU would not cause a sharp decline in popularity or protest voting, and that the electorate would gradually accept the new direction. The fact that core electorates did not withhold their support may be also due to the party leadership's strategy. To explain and justify the radical shift of policies, they namely linked EU membership with the voters' concerns about their socio-economic status. The party emphasised that these issues could only be solved if Serbia joined the EU. Its strategy was to play on the electorate's dissatisfaction with the economic situation, not on their (pronounced) concerns for national issues, thus allowing for the party shift. This was reflected in the crucial 2008 election campaign, when the Socialists deliberately downplayed the issue of EU membership and did not elaborate a clear position on it in an attempt to not provoke dissent from the electorate (Stojić 2011). The party leaders successfully employed such strategy and rhetoric, and neutralised the eventual dissent among voters. Consequently, although the views of the party's core voters were more Eurosceptic than the pro-EU policies pursued by the party leadership—particularly after the party president, acting as a Serbian PM, signed a controversial agreement with Kosovo in 2013 in order to unblock Serbian EU integration—voters did not punish the Socialists because of their transformation; it remained one of the core Serbian parties, securing between 11% and 14 % of votes in the 2012, 2014 and 2016 elections (Serbian Electoral Commission 2017).

It appears therefore that strategic electoral incentives not directly related to core voters' stances on EU issue created conditions for the party transformation. As discussed in Chap. 4, as a 'pariah party' in Western circles, the party was effectively prevented from participating in the gov-

ernment alongside other pro-EU parties by influential Western governments and de facto the EU. The party therefore found it necessary to assume a more pro-European stance as all potential allies were themselves Euroenthusiastic. With the Eurosceptic and nationalistic political space firmly 'occupied' by the Serbian Radical Party, this party also faced a shrinking electoral support; in 2008, it secured only 7.5% of the total votes (Serbian Electoral Commission 2017). Finally, Serbian relations with the EU were relatively advanced by late 2000s and thus difficult to reverse, which further created disincentives for maintaining strong Euroscepticism.

Serbian Progressive Party

The Serbian Progressive Party was founded by a break-away group of senior officials of the Serbian Radical Party, led by its deputy president Tomislav Nikolić and the secretary-general Aleksandar Vučić. After almost two decades of nationalistic and anti-European policies, the leaders of a new party underwent an ideological reorientation and adopted a new pro-European stance (see Table 5.1). This strategically driven transformation was remarkable (Stojić 2013b), given a mismatch between the pro-European stances of (and policies pursued by) the party and Euroscepticism that permeated the party constituency. Stojiljković and Spasojević (2015) found it difficult to profile the typical voters of this dominant Serbian party, with a lower number of highly educated than the average being the only significant demographic characteristic. Žegarac (2012, p. 158) asserted that the party's voters were predominantly traditional, authoritarian and nationalist conformists that used to vote for the Radicals. On the other side, Marko Djurić (Interview 2011), a senior party official, argued that most members of the Serbian Progressive Party were people who were not members or did not vote for the Radicals, claiming that, according to party research, Radical voters constituted only 35–40% of the total electorate.

What is less debatable is Euroscepticism expressed by the party core electorate. At a time when this party was founded, in October 2008, 67% of its voters did endorse Serbian EU membership (SMR 2008). However, later surveys found a significant rise in Euroscepticism, which coincided with the party's pronounced pro-EU policies. The data in Table 5.2 shows that in 2012, 56% of the party electorate was against EU accession (NSPM 2012). In April 2015—almost seven years after the reorientation of the party leadership and pro-EU policies implemented by two consecutive Progressives-led governments—a majority of 41% of its core voters was against Serbian EU membership (NSPM 2015). Additionally, 57% of the

core constituencies in 2008 argued against EU membership if conditioned by the recognition of Kosovo (SMR 2008). In 2010, only 3% of them would have informed authorities of Ratko Mladić's whereabouts (NSPM 2010); this further highlights the discrepancy between the orientation of the voters and the party leadership.

It appears therefore that the party leadership was not concerned with voters' preferences when forming and pursuing firm pro-EU policies. At first glance this was a paradox, since this party is essentially vote- and office-driven, lacking ideological underpinnings, and as such it should be motivated by impulses coming from its voters. Žegarac (2012) also found that, although the party made it clear that it would continue negotiations on EU membership, its voters did not provide support for such a policy. Moreover, unlike the Socialists, this party even overplayed the issue of EU membership in domestic party politics. Pro-Europeanism was strongly emphasised by the new leadership until the mid 2010s due to the desire to distance themselves from their nationalist and Eurosceptic political legacy. It was *differentia specifica* that came to symbolise the party's break with its tainted political legacy and a sign of political legitimisation.

Other strategic incentives (discussed in Chap. 4) that this party faced outweighed its core voters' preferences. Specifically, although successful in securing votes, the Radicals were highly unsuccessful in obtaining power due to their lack of coalition potential. Its radical right ideology effectively isolated the party from the international community, and it never became an acceptable coalition partner for other Serbian parties. It was therefore necessary for the moderate leaders of the Serbian Radical party to break away from it, given that the Radicals repeatedly failed to get to power advocating anti-European politics. Crucially, the party leadership presumably assessed that predominantly Eurosceptic voters will vote for the party for other reasons—related to socio-economic issues, such as the failure of 'pro-democratic' parties to improve economy after 2000 and the Progressives' initially strong emphasis on the fight against corruption—not because of their support for EU accession. This was confirmed by Vučić (2012) who explicitly stated, '50% of the party electorate was against EU accession, 40% was in favour, while 10% did not have a stance on this issue, but they still voted for the party due to other reasons'. He specified that the party was not driven by the core voters' preferences since 'we made a clear decision, it is our job to say "we are going this way!" and to tell people things that they would not like to hear', without courting them. The new party also appeared to decide to expand its electoral bases to become a catch-all, mainstream party, and changing its attitude towards

the EU was crucial to the success of this transformation. It focused on new potential voters, coming from the broader public, that were mainly conservative and dissatisfied with the result of the political and economic transition, but at the same time not necessarily hard Eurosceptic.

What was also striking is the fact that 51% of the party's core voters expressed a neutral position on the EU or did not have any attitude towards it (Cesid 2009). Together with the fluctuating support and opposition to Serbian EU membership, this indicated a rather confusing position on the EU among its electorate. Similarly, a 2009 Cesid survey found that 16% of the party's electorate would not vote at a referendum on Serbian EU membership—the most of all Serbian parties—demonstrating they had difficulties forming a stance on this issue. There was therefore a significant division within this party's voters, with 'the dominance of those who are still confused and have undefined attitude' (Cesid 2009, p. 6). It seems that the EU was 'a difficult issue' for the voters of this party. They voted for the party standing for Serbian EU accession, considering it inevitable or economically desirable. Crucially, in line with the party underdeveloped ideology and pragmatic nature, Stojiljković and Spasojević (2015) found that here is no dominant value determination of party voters, except two indicative features—the absence of the 'tolerant modernists' and a significant presence of conformists. It was therefore no surprise that the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party found it easier to manoeuvre on this issue faced with the lack of articulated impulses coming from their rather conformist constituencies.

Democratic Party of Serbia

The conservative and moderately nationalist Democratic Party of Serbia supported and, as a ruling party, contributed to Serbian EU integration until 2008. However, following the proclamation of the independence of Kosovo and its recognition by a majority of EU member states, the party began to advocate opposition to EU accession until outstanding issues with the EU were resolved. In late 2011, the party went a step further by adopting the principle of political and military neutrality, and an outright cessation of further EU integration of Serbia as the core party policy. The question is therefore: what was the key factor that led to the change of its position on Serbian EU membership—while party ideology remained the same, and to what extent may this have been caused by stances on the EU expressed by its core voters? The transformation of the party position seemed to be primarily ideologically motivated. Its Euroscepticism was

the result of the proclamation of Kosovo's independence (de facto supported by the EU), to which the party responded ideologically and strongly opposed it. The core electorate's preferences about the EU (see Table 5.2) seem to not have any role in the formation of party stances on this issue.

The traditional supporters of this party were predominantly male—89% of males in the total number of supporters (Stojiljković and Spasojević 2015)—characterised by a religiosity, low trust in other nations and hostility to the ICTY. They were also characterised as predominantly 'intolerant nationalists' with above-average education (Stojiljković and Spasojević 2015). The party core electorate expressed a high level of support for EU membership, which in 2005 amounted to 86% (Media Gallup 2005). At the same time, the majority of its electorate had 'a realistic attitude' (51%), while others were somewhat restrained, without much enthusiasm towards the EU, but also without any Europhobia. This was fully in line with party policies in the mid-2000s. This was essentially a moderately pro-European, conservative party that has always given priority to national issues. It thus supported EU membership as long as it was not in opposition to crucial national interests, as it perceived them.

The key changes that occurred in 2008 appear to have not been motivated by core voter stances that, although expressed concerns for national issues, supported EU membership. In a 2008 Politikum (2008) survey, 61% of respondents were in favour of EU accession, while 73% endorsed the closest relations with Russia. At the same time, 91% opposed the recognition of Kosovo in return for EU membership, and 80% were against handing over Serbian citizens to the ICTY. In 2009, the overwhelming majority of party voters—precisely 72%—still endorsed Serbia's EU accession (Cesid 2009). The data from 2012 are inconclusive with surveys putting opposition to EU membership at between 29% and 60% of the party's core voters (Table 5.2). On the other side, the core electorate had ambiguous positions on the EU itself at the time of party's reorientation. According to the Cesid survey (2008), a similar percentage of voters expressed positive, negative and mixed attitudes towards the EU (30%, 30%, 40%). In 2009, 28% of core voters expressed positive, 26% negative and 27% neutral position on the EU. The party core electorate thus did not have a definite position on this issue at the time of the dramatic events of 2008, but also that there was no prevailing opinion that Serbia should stop its EU accession. Yet, the party adopted outright opposition to EU membership as a fundamental principle.

The Democratic Party of Serbia is therefore one more example of a Serbian party whose leadership decided to change its policy towards the EU largely independently of core voters' preferences. However, its specific position is reflected in the fact that it was not a strategic decision that in the long run should have brought tangible political results (as was the case with the Socialists and Progressives), but rather the expression of profound disagreement with the EU as well as a protest against the policy of *fait accompli* regarding the status of Kosovo, even at the cost of losing political power. The decision to take a new stance was the decision of the party leadership (primarily party former president Vojislav Koštunica), and was driven by the ideological belief that it was unacceptable to compromise on state sovereignty for the sake of 'eventual EU membership in the uncertain and rather distant future' as argued by the former party's vice president Slobodan Samardžić (Interview 2011).

Furthermore, the party strengthened its scepticism towards the EU considerably over the years. What could have been favourable to the party position was an increase in public opposition to Serbian EU membership since 2009 (Fig. 5.1), but the party did not capitalise on these sentiments. In the 2012 and 2014 election campaigns, it attempted to present itself as an outlier among Serbian parties, offering an alternative to voters' dilemmas on the country's foreign policy orientation—but was highly unsuccessful. Nevertheless, it did not 'soften' its position as a result of the logic of 'coalition building', a strong intention to come to power or EU pressures 'to accept the reality and move forward'. As a consequence, the party failed to win parliamentary seats in March 2014 (by strongly propagating the same Eurosceptic arguments), which was followed by the resignation of Vojislav Koštunica. Later that year, Koštunica left the party due to the disagreement with the newly elected party leadership which, as he argued, abandoned 'a clear and decisive Serb viewpoint and position that Serbia, while working with everyone, must under no circumstances become a member of the EU' (B92 2015). The resignation was however more a reflection of a deep intra-party conflict than any pro-EU orientation of a new party leadership which continued to strongly oppose Serbian EU membership. Following the election of the new (equally Eurosceptic) party leadership, the most dramatic decrease in support for Serbian EU membership occurred—in April 2015, only 10% of its core voters endorsed, while 84% opposed it (NSPM 2015). This may have prompted the party to remained hard Eurosceptic which eventually paid off—it secured parliamentary seats following the 2016 parliamentary elections.

Other Parties' Attitudes Towards the EU and Their Core Voters

A general mismatch between electorate and party preferences on the EU was also visible in the case of other parties. This was most evident in 2005, when 66% of voters of the Serbian Radical Party (Table 5.2) supported Serbian EU membership, although the party was traditionally and fundamentally hard Eurosceptic. The rise in support for EU membership among voters may be explained by the moderated rhetoric of the then-party leadership, which did not openly and vocally object to Serbian EU membership. On the other side, in 2008/2009, (following a major inter-party split) when a significant 47% of voters were in favour of Serbian EU accession, the Radicals formulated the policy of 'an absolute and unconditional opposition to Serbian EU integration', as explained by the former party's vice president, Dejan Mirović (Interview 2011). This party seems to confirm Mudde's (2007, p. 182) argument that 'populist radical right parties' do not appear to be particularly led by the views of their electorate, and that there are significant differences between the European positions of these parties and their supporters. In other words, ideological and principled reasons predominantly shaped the party's position on the EU, with its electorate largely Eurosceptic, but not as much as one would expect given the party's tradition of strong anti-Europeanism and anti-Westernism. It was the small traditionalist and nationally oriented party Dveri that had the most Eurosceptic electorate, since 81% of its voters opposed Serbian EU accession (BCBP 2012).

After 2008, however, this party had an incentive to maintain its hard Eurosceptic position, given a sharp rise in public Euroscepticism. Specifically, support for Serbia's EU integration dropped to 41% of citizens in 2012 and again in 2016; this was the lowest level since 2002 (Table 5.1). In an interview (2011), Mirović claimed that at least 30% of Serbian voters were absolutely against EU accession regardless of the EU's involvement in Kosovo's independence. He concluded that 'the party was practical, since that was a huge source of votes, which would only grow over time, given that people cannot be deceived by the EU and pro-European Serbian governments all the time'. The party therefore had pragmatic and strategic incentives to maintain its hard Eurosceptic stance. Nevertheless, 'the downward trend in support for Serbian EU accession may be seen as reinforcement, rather than a cause of party attitudes, given that it had essentially maintained such a policy even when the EU was more popular with Serbian voters' (Stojić 2013a, p. 143).

Finally, only two Serbian parties' voters had consistent and articulated stances on this issue. These were the most Euroenthusiastic Democratic

Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. Their electorates consistently expressed pro-European sentiments (although there has been a decrease in Euroenthusiasm of the Democratic Party voters since the mid-2010s, largely due to their dissatisfaction with EU benevolent approach to the increasingly authoritarian government of the Serbian Progressive Party), which were in line with the parties' positions. However, whether the drivers of the continuity in these parties' stances on the EU were voters' preferences or not was more difficult to assess. It appears that these were mostly ideologically Euroenthusiastic parties (as discussed in Chap. 3) that did not accommodate the rising public Euroscepticism after 2008, while core voters' positions may have just reinforced their viewpoints and policies on Europe.

Croatian Parties' Attitudes Towards the EU and Their Core Voters

Data on attitudes of core voters of the Croatian parties towards the country's EU accession[3] (Table 5.5) indicate their ambiguous stances on this issue. Core constituencies of the two dominant parties, the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian Democratic Union were consistently pro-EU. However, opposition to EU accession was significant too; around a third of the electorate of both parties opposed Croatia's membership. The hard-line nationalist and Eurosceptic Croatian Party of Rights had the least Euroenthusiastic voters—between 54% and 63% of them opposed Croatian EU membership. Surprisingly, the core constituencies of the Euroenthusiastic Croatian Peoples' Party along with the Croatian Peasant Party also harboured considerable opposition to EU accession. Significant opposition to EU membership across all parliamentary parties, including most Euroenthusiastic ones, therefore corresponded with the extensive public Euroscepticism since 2004.

Core electorate of the conservative and moderately nationalist Croatian Democratic Union, out of all parties, was consistently the strongest supporter of EU membership. Given the party's Eurosceptic political legacy and traditionalist ideology, it may seem to be a paradox that more voters of this party endorsed EU accession than the electorate of the persistently pro-European and modernist Social Democratic Party and the Croatian Peoples' Party. The latter party was a particularly interesting case given that at times more core voters disapproved than favoured EU membership—49% opposed it in 2009 (Ipsos Puls 2009). This may be attributed to the fact that the Croatian Democratic Union was a ruling party that was negotiating EU accession and largely monopolised this process.

Table 5.5 Attitudes of Croatian parties' core voters towards Croatian EU membership

	HDZ			*SDP*			*HSS*			*HNS*			*HSP*		
	In favour	*Against*	*Does not know*	*In favour*	*Against*	*Does not know*	*In favour*	*Against*	*Does not know*	*In favour*	*Against*	*Does not know*	*In favour*	*Against*	*Does not know*
September 2004	**60%**	27%	8%	**56%**	33%	5%	**53%**	30%	8%	**61%**	37%	2%	27%	**63%**	3%
October 2007	**61%**	29%	9%	**53%**	39%	8%	38%	**59%**	3%	**62%**	36%	3%	35%	**63%**	2%
October 2008	**66%**	28%	6%	**51%**	42%	6%	36%	**53%**	11%	43%	**46%**	10%	–	–	–
January 2009	**56%**	35%	10%	**54%**	40%	6%	47%	**49%**	4%	47%	**49%**	4%	–	–	–
September 2011	**69%**	25%	8%	**63%**	33%	4%	48%	**51%**	1%	**56%**	39%	5%	42%	**54%**	4%
January 2012	**66%**	29%	5%	**69%**	27%	4%[a]	–	–	–	**69%**	27%	4%	–	–	–

Sources: Ipsos Puls (2008, 2009, 2011, 2012) and author's personal collection (All data are from the Crobarometer, a regular monthly survey of the Croatian public conducted by Ipsos Puls. This allowed a cross-temporal comparison of long-term data series collected by the same method over a span of eight years. N=945. Marginal error: ±3.3%)

[a]'The Kukuriku Coalition': SDP, HNS, Croatian Pensioners' Party (*Hrvatska Stranka Umirovljenika*), Istrian Democratic Assembly (*Istarski Demokratski Sabor*)

This consequently gave rise to dissatisfaction among the essentially pro-EU voters of opposition parties that were not directly involved in this process. On the other side, the Croatian Democratic Union portrayed the completion of accession negotiations as its historic achievement, although many of the party's members and voters remained prone to nationally oriented Euroscepticism. The fact that ideologically pro-EU opposition parties had core voters that were often more Eurosceptic compared to the voters of the then-ruling Croatian Democratic Union may also be due to the nature of these parties' electorates. As Igor Kolman, former spokesman of the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats (Interview 2011), explained, 'the Croatian Democratic Union had a very disciplined electorate that blindly followed its leadership, while the voters of the Croatian Peoples' Party-Liberal Democrats by nature question everything'.

How did Croatian parties respond to electorates' viewpoints on this issue? As Table 5.5 indicates, the majority of parties had significant percentage of voters who were either in favour or against EU membership. Namely, no party had overwhelmingly Euroenthusiastic or Eurosceptic core voters—at least not to the extent seen in the markedly pro-EU constituencies of the Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia. As a consequence, Croatian parties, faced with the lack of clearly articulated impulses coming from their electorates, may have found it easier to manoeuvre on this issue. They could have maintained or shifted their stances driven by other factors, such as party ideology, preferences of party financiers, or considerations related to party membership in European party federations and (in)direct leverage of the EU. In other words, there were no strong strategic electoral incentives for parties to adopt positions of their constituencies and they could have ignored 'weak' preferences of their voters. Indeed, Croatian parties actually did not shift stances on EU membership between 2004 and 2017 (Table 5.1). Continuity in their responses to the EU may be explained by core voters' ambiguous positions on this issue. This may also account for why mainstream Croatian parties did not address the rise of general public Euroscepticism by adopting Eurosceptic positions. Specifically, public scepticism was spread across the whole political spectrum and no core party, with the partial exception of the Croatian Party of Rights, had overwhelmingly Eurosceptic electorates.

The Croatian Democratic Union did change its stances on the EU in an effort to transform from a nationalist to a moderate pro-European party due to strategic incentives in the early 2000s. These were primarily the 'trauma' of the 2000 electoral defeat that triggered intra-party friction in

which a pro-EU faction prevailed (Konitzer 2011) as well as the party's new leadership desire for international respectability (see Chap. 4). It is, however, difficult to assess to what extent this party was guided by the interests of its core voters. This would require an examination of voters' attitudes at a time when this conversion occurred—between 2000 and 2003. However, no surveys were conducted prior to 2004. What is certain is that, following the strategically driven transformation, this party faced no electoral incentives from its core electorate—which was rather supportive for EU membership (Table 5.5)—to change its pro-EU platform. Instead, the party had a very disciplined electorate that tended to stick with their party irrespective of its erratic changes (Konitzer 2014). In addition, this party had already 'invested' too much into its rebranding and dominated the accession negotiations that left no space for significant Eurosceptic sentiments.

The second dominant party, the Social Democratic Party, did not attempt to adjust its policies to occasionally significant Eurosceptic sentiments within its constituency. The party argued consistently for EU membership and its position appears to have been primarily grounded in its identity. Similarly, the Croatian Peoples' Party remained a strong supporter for EU membership despite at times Eurosceptic core voters. It proclaimed that EU accession should be an absolute priority, arguing that it was strongly committed to fulfilling the accession criteria (HNS 2011). These were therefore mostly ideologically driven pro-EU parties that did not compromise their pro-European orientation despite occasionally Eurosceptic electoral impulses, which were more a reflection of domestic party competition than of real concerns about EU membership. The broadly soft Euroenthusiastic Croatian Peasant Party appears to have most obviously ignored its fairly Eurosceptic constituency. However, it did often employ Eurosceptic rhetoric and has never been a hard enthusiast for EU membership. Its former vice president and MEP, Marijana Petir (Interview 2011) explained that this party supported joining the EU, but also expressed concerns that Croatia 'uncritically accepted everything that the EU demanded'. This stance was articulated mostly due to the party's core values, which were of a conservative and agrarian nature.

The only party that shifted rhetoric (rather than its underlying position) on Croatian EU membership was the hard-line nationalist and Eurosceptic Croatian Party of Rights. Its founding principles proclaimed

opposition to any inter-state unions or supranational organisation, arguing that 'any form of state union with other countries is unacceptable and unnecessary' (HSP 2010). However, it tactically toned down its opposition to it in the mid-2000s with the aim of becoming suitable coalition partner for other traditionalist and conservative parties that had become pro-European. This was in spite of its Eurosceptic core votes—63% of them opposed joining the EU both in 2004 and 2007 (Table 5.5). It shifted back to its initial position in 2011 and called on citizens to vote against EU membership at a referendum on EU accession. This change was again due to strategic challenges. Given the approaching election and referendum, it highlighted its uniqueness among Croatian parties as 'the only relevant party that opposed EU membership' and thus saw itself as guarding 'the core national interests' (HSP 2011). This may be interpreted a result of its voters' stances on this issue. However, at the time when this transformation occurred, 42% of them did support EU membership, while a slim majority of 54% opposed it (Ipsos Puls 2011). Its position on the EU seemed to be therefore primarily embedded in its nativist identity focused on the homogenous nation-state as discussed in Chap. 3.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the positions of Serbian and Croatian parties on the EU in relation to public and core voters' opinions on the EU. It specifically sought to assess whether parties have been cued by the general public and core voters when adopting and shifting policies on this issue. Contrary to the findings of Carrubba (2001) and Tillman (2004), this study found that, in general, parties tended to ignore and did not respond to public and voter preferences. In other words, there was no significant bottom-up impact on party positions on the EU. This was due to the nature of the attitudes towards the EU that were expressed by the public and core voters. Their stances were mostly volatile, inconsistent and unarticulated. As a consequence, this left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on this issue.

There was an apparent mismatch between the position of parties and public opinion on the EU. While the general public in both countries—and particularly in Croatia—became significantly Eurosceptic over time, political elites did not accommodate such sentiments; instead they

remained overwhelmingly enthusiastic about their countries' EU memberships. This was a rather surprising finding given an assumption in the comparative literature (Konitzer 2011; Vachudova 2012) that public support for EU accession played a vital role in pressuring Eurosceptic parties to adopt more pro-EU stance. Indeed, the reorientation of all three former Eurosceptic parties (the Socialist Party of Serbia, Serbian Progressive Party and Croatian Democratic Union) did coincide with relatively Euroenthusiastic public sentiments. However, a closer look at a number of other closely related issues—such as public support for handing over war crimes indictees to the ICTY—demonstrates a rather qualified public endorsement for the EU, primarily in Serbia. This points to two general implications of this study. First, looking at the mere public stances on the EU (or EU membership) only partially reveal their actual sentiments on this issue. A comprehensive examination of this issue warrants analysis of other related issues, particularly in the context of poorly informed and volatile public in EU's (potential) candidate states. Second, this study argues against the tendency to draw conclusions on individual party stances towards the EU based on general public opinion of the Union, given the apparent lack of any linear relation between the two. Looking at public opinion may give us only a very crude picture and may not indicate how parties actually formulate and change their stances on the EU in relation to electoral incentives.

The study thus also sought to assess the effects of core voters' opinions on the EU on party responses to European integration. It found that parties seem to have not been cued by their core voters when adopting and shifting policies on this issue. As Stojiljković (2008, p. 96) pointed out, the electoral bases of Serbian parties in general have a low motivation and potential, and their influence is limited and devoid of continuity. Remarkably, there was a particular mismatch between the position of parties that strategically shifted stances on the EU and their electoral constituencies. These parties were driven by strategic incentives that outweighed core voters' preferences, such as considerations pertinent to the logic of electoral competition, party's international affiliation or leverage of the EU (as discussed in Chap. 4). They changed policies largely regardless of the views of their core voters, who expressed opposing positions even years after they undertook a (pro-EU) reorientation, such as in the cases of the Serbian Progressive Party. This was due to the fact that party leaders did not face strong coherent reactions from voters on this

issue, given that the core voters of the majority of parties had rather ambivalent attitudes towards the EU. Occasional impulses coming from the party base were rather weak and diffuse, primarily as a reflection of the fact that 'Europe' has never been an easy issue for them. It has rather been a matter of contention, as they struggled to formulate firm stances. This was most visible in the percentage of neutral and non-stances on the EU as well as a similar percentage of support for and opposition to EU membership expressed by voters of the same Serbian and Croatian parties. It therefore appears that core voters of the majority of these parties had problems expressing their firm positions due to both the contradictory relations with the EU and the outstanding identity and statehood issues, which were directly related to EU political conditionality and as such strongly polarised these societies (see Chap. 3). Crucially, this allowed parties to mostly ignore core voters' preferences and, in some cases, change stances and policies on this issue. This tendency may also be a consequence of the generally very weak links between parties and their electoral constituencies in these countries. Although there were different social groups with objective social and economic interests, it appears that they were unable to politically articulate them. Consequently, it was difficult for these parties to identify and represent the long-term interests of clearly segmented constituencies in relation to the EU, although some of them have been severely disadvantaged by the process of integration with the EU.

This chapter also informs our understanding of party responsiveness in post-communist EU candidate countries. Namely, by not having reflected public interests on this important issue, parties weakened these already fragile representative democracies where a large swath of public remains distrustful of party and political systems. This confirms the arguments of Enyedi and Lewis (2006) who claimed that the apparent contrast between popular and party-based Euroscepticism is indicative of low quality of political representation in Central and Eastern Europe—primarily since Euroscepticism was generally under-mobilised in this region. Party unresponsiveness to public preferences also contributed to the further depoliticisation of the EU integration process where, as Konitzer (2014) argued, a race to membership hindered the development of political competition over crucial domestic issues and essentially removed any informed debate about the EU. Moreover, unrepresented and dormant public Euroscepticism may be exploited by hard-line nationalists (de Vries 2007)

at the time of unprecedented crises that the EU and (as a consequence) the Western Balkans encountered with all potentially dangerous ramifications for this still unsettled region.

Notes

1. This chapter does not examine how parties affected public support for the EU in a top-down manner; neither does it look at other factors that may drive public opinions on the EU. For this see Landripet (2012) and Franc and Medjugorac (2013).
2. Table 5.4 Notes:

   - Media Gallup (2005): Euroenthusiasts: 'Europe is very close to me and I think that we must do every effort to join it, which includes fulfilling all conditions that it sets'; Eurorealists: 'I cannot say that Europe is particularly close to me, but I think that the integration in the EU is necessary and that we must work on that'; Eurosceptics: 'I am doubtful about the intentions of Europe and the West in general, and I think that we must go very cautiously and slowly in possibly integrating into its structures'; Europhobes: 'Integration with Europe would mean the domination of European and other powers over our nation, Serbia does not belong to that world and so we should nurture our traditional values and not get caught up in the European rat-race'.
   - Cesid (2008): The respondents were asked to respond to the following statements: 'EU membership will bring us more benefit than harm'; 'NATO cannot bring any good to our country'; 'Europe and the world do not let us mind our own business'; 'the Western world is full of injustice, corruption and crime and the new world order wants to turn our country into a colony'.
   - Cesid (2009): The following statements were used to measure Serbian party voters' attitudes towards the EU: 'the EU is a guarantor of peace, stability and development of Serbia'; 'by joining the EU, we risk losing our identity and culture'; 'the EU is a system where rules are known, where it is well known who does what'; 'the EU is full of injustice and malice'; 'in the EU, people have solidarity, the rich help the poor'; 'the EU wants us only because of their own interests (cheap labour, healthy food and water)'; 'the EU wants to help us fight poverty and become "normal"'; 'it is in the interest of the EU that we become part of it, in order that they may control us more easily'; 'the relationship between the EU and Serbia should be built on clear interests of both sides'; 'the EU is just an idea, utopia, a dream that does not exist at all'.

3. Data on their stances towards the EU itself were not available to author.

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CHAPTER 6

Transnational Party Politics and Attitudes Towards the EU

This chapter[1] examines the final factors that may affect party positioning on European integration—transnational and bilateral party linkages. These linkages are an explanatory variable that has rarely been dealt with systematically in the existing comparative literature. However, this may have been an important driver of party changes in the milieu of the unsettled party systems of the Western Balkan countries, where some political actors tended to be susceptible to foreign influences. This chapter therefore seeks to examine how and to what extent party linkages with three external actors—European transnational party federations, EU institutions and foreign countries represented by their ambassadors—affected the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties towards the EU since 2000.

Transnational and bilateral party linkages generally did not prove to be a crucial driving force behind party stances on the substance of the European integration. Membership in European transnational party federations was a consequence rather than a cause of the positions expressed by Euroenthusiastic parties; hard Eurosceptic parties did not show any intention to join them and compromise their mostly ideologically motivated anti-EU positions. However, European transnational party federations had a considerable indirect impact on parties that were at an early (unlike late) stage of ideological transformation towards becoming credible mainstream and pro-European parties, after a long legacy of Eurosceptic and nationalist politics. These parties—the Croatian Democratic Union, Serbian Progressive Party and Socialist Party of Serbia—strove to obtain

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European legitimacy by becoming a member of one of the European transnational party federations and were, consequently, more willing to harmonise their positions with (potential) European partners. Finally, there was an important role for EU institutions, and particularly foreign ambassadors, but mostly in the case of strategically driven parties prone to foreign influences. These 'external veto players' exerted an influence on party EU stances in the context of weak institutions, fragmented party systems and political elites that generally did not pursue principled politics based on a clear set of fundamental values.

This chapter draws on a series of interviews with Serbian and Croatian politicians, as well as MEPs and officials of three leading European transnational party federations—the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES), and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE Party). It is also based on the content analysis of parties' programmatic documents and public statements of both Serbian/Croatian and European politicians. The presentation is as follows: first is a review of the comparative literature on party responses to the EU that takes their transnational linkages into account. This is followed in the second section by a proposed conceptual framework with a brief overview of the relations between European transnational parties and Serbian/Croatian parties. The core section examines these parties' stances on the EU as it relates to their international affiliations. The concluding section summarises key findings and draws possible implications from the Serbian and Croatian cases.

Does Transnational Party Politics Drive Party Responses to the EU?

This section discusses arguments derived from the comparative literature on parties' stances on the EU in relation to their transnational linkages. Most scholars found evidence that European transnational parties have had an impact, but only to a limited extent. Ladrech (2002, p. 399) discovered that 'relations beyond the national party system' were important, since they may lead to 'new organizational and programmatic activities and innovation'. Later, Ladrech (2008) argued that European transnational federations are in general marginal to the pursuit of national party goals and that their role may be more significant only in the lowering of transaction costs for party elites to gain insight into European-level decision-making. Similarly, Haughton (2009) found that participation in European transnational party

federations simply as a way to gain a 'badge of approval' had induced no fundamental changes into the programmes of national parties in Central and Eastern Europe. Haughton (2009, p. 417) thus concluded that there was 'a low to medium impact of European transnational parties on parties in Central and Eastern Europe', given 'very little evidence of any borrowing, or evidence of policy borrowing only on explicitly European issues'. Furthermore, Holmes and Lightfoot (2011, p. 50) identified 'attempts [by the Party of European Socialists] to impact the policy of parties in Central and Eastern Europe in relation to attitudes towards the EU'. They noted that this was not problematic for this party federation, because the majority of social democratic parties were relatively Euroenthusiastic. As a result, this European party federation was not compelled to intervene in the national party's attitudes towards the EU to any substantial extent. But Holmes and Lightfoot (2011, p. 52) also argued that social democratic parties largely perceived EU membership instrumentally, as a tool and 'a means to an end', without sharing a deep common understanding of the EU. These authors thus concluded that the PES's role has been superficial, since it has not contributed to deep programmatic change or to change of any other kind. Timuş (2014) similarly found that although the commitment to a federal model of Europe represented a major element in the European People's Party political programmes, none of three Ukrainian applicant parties made specific reference to the model of a united Europe. Timuş argued that this has perhaps contributed to the lack of a clear EU membership perspective for Ukraine, reducing the importance of this requirement.

Conversely, Dakowska (2002) noted that European transnational federations affect the identity of political elites from Central and Eastern Europe. She argued that this was an important channel for the socialisation of political elites, one that critically shaped their perceptions and decisions. Dakowska (2002, p. 275) concluded that an essential function of transnational party cooperation has been 'to socialise important anti-European parties'. Pridham (2002, p. 29) made the strongest case for the importance of transnational party relations. He argued that there is 'a quasi-organic link' between parties' transnational affiliation and their general approach to European integration. Pridham (2008, p. 100) specified that conditions based upon European integration have existed since the early days of transnational party cooperation; with other conditions, they have had 'a powerful influence and served to produce formal but also real changes in party positions and behaviour, including by Eurosceptic parties'. Orlović (2008, p. 212) similarly argued that 'membership in

European transnational party federations can represent a crucial mechanism of programme and value standardization of Serbian parties'. Fink-Hafner (2008, p. 178), however, posited that 'the impact of Europarties on Serbian parties should not be overestimated, especially not in relation to domestic factors'. The lack of this impact, she claimed, is primarily a consequence of the weak, very recent start of the European socialisation of the Serbian party elite. Mikucka-Wójtowicz (2016, p. 250) also found some impact of transnational of socialisation of Croatian parties, primarily in terms of the standardisation of their programmes, but she also wondered to what extent this was a permanent phenomenon since some parties 'later experienced visible ideological vacillations or deviated from the changes introduced'. A review of the existing literature thus points to significant differences among scholars on the extent to which transnational party linkages have impacted national party stances and policies on the EU. But the majority of scholars have concluded that there is some, albeit meagre, influence. This chapter attempts to contribute to this debate by looking at Serbian and Croatian national parties. To do so, it utilises the concept of direct and indirect impact.

Transnational Party Politics: Direct and Indirect Impact

The general influence of the EU on political parties is a complex phenomenon that poses a challenge for researchers attempting to analyse it. There are significant difficulties in analytically separating out the impact of Europe from national-level explanatory factors, and any attempt to assess the impact of the EU raises the problem of causality (Haughton 2009). This analysis faces the same challenges, particularly given that European transnational party federations lack many easily identifiable instruments to influence national parties. The key questions that arise in the analysis are: how does one assess the relationship between a party's EU stance and the potential effect of European transnational party federations, how is this influence measured, and what indicators should be employed? To address these issues, the notion of the direct and indirect impact of transnational party federations is utilised (Table 6.1). This notion is well recognised in the comparative literature on both the Europeanisation of political parties and the factors that shape party positions on Europe (Mair 2000; Dakowska 2002; Enyedi and Lewis 2006; Timuş 2011).

Table 6.1 Indicators of the influence of European transnational party federations on national party attitudes towards the EU

Type of impact	
Direct impact	*Indirect impact*
Changes in party programmes and policies on the EU as a result of requirements stated in programmatic documents of European transnational party federations	Subtle, gradual changes in party policies and EU rhetoric because of the long-term influence of policy education and assistance from European transnational party federations and their political foundations (socialisation and persuasion)
Mode of analysis	
Analysis of programmatic documents of European transnational party federations (requirements related to the 'EU commitments' of member parties) Analysis of programmatic documents of national parties, EU rhetoric and parliamentary voting on EU issues	Analysis of the rhetoric and policy education of European transnational party federations aimed at influencing member parties' attitudes to the EU Analysis of changes in national party policies and EU rhetoric

Sources: Adapted Mair (2000), Dakowska (2002), Fink-Hafner (2008)

The chapter aims to assess the extent to which parties have reacted to the requirements of European transnational party federations by developing or changing stances on the EU. A number of possible influences attributable to European party federations are differentiated into two categories on the basis of direct versus indirect impact, as outlined in Table 6.1. The model builds upon the study of EU conditionality, which differentiates between two motives for party transformation: (i) as a result of strict, clearly spelled-out conditionality and tangible material incentives, or (ii) as a consequence of the socialisation and persuasion that gradually changed the perception of elites' identities and interests. A direct impact is conceptualised as one involving a set of formal written obligations placed by European party federations upon potential members. The chapter seeks to assess how strictly 'EU commitment conditionality' has been employed. In other words, the goal is to trace potential programme adaptations by Serbian and Croatian parties back to the requirements imposed by European transnational party federations. An indirect impact is conceptualised as one involving long-term influence of a diffuse nature exerted through policy education on EU affairs, political training and assistance provided by European transnational

party federations and their political foundations. This link, often perceived as socialisation, is recognised by scholars (Dakowska 2002; Fink-Hafner 2008; Pridham 2008) who argue that the socialisation effects of transnational parties may significantly impact party stances and policies.

The logic underpinning the model is that it is party leaders who decide a party's policies and general attitudes towards the EU (particularly in view of the fact that parties in the Western Balkans have predominantly been 'leadership parties'). They may be motivated by strategic calculations or (presumably rarely) ideological adherence to the founding principles of the European transnational party federation, and a direct impact may occur when they change programmatic documents to meet the requirements imposed under membership preconditions. Following the decision by party elites, party members follow suit with greater or lesser enthusiasm. That is when the role played by European transnational party federations in transforming party members' attitudes to the EU may be significant. An indirect influence is aimed at the party as a whole, not only at political leaders. It may result in subtle, gradual changes visible in party rhetoric and policies rather than programmatic documents. Therefore, indirect influence is assessed primarily by analysing the rhetoric and policies of both European transnational party federations and Serbian/Croatian parties.

Serbian and Croatian Parties and Their Transnational Relations

This central section examines the pattern of transnational cooperation of Serbian and Croatian parties. It looks at how the direct and indirect impacts of the leading European transnational party federations that have members in the Western Balkans shaped the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian members. The transnational relations of parties that aspire to join European transnational party federations and parties without such intentions are also addressed. Compared to other Central and Eastern European parties, Serbian and Croatian parties' history of relations with international and European transnational party federations is brief. There were almost no contacts until the 1995 Dayton peace agreement (Pridham 1999), which ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Socialist International and its member parties in Western Europe were the first that showed an interest, but there was little progress in cooperation with parties in Serbia and Croatia until the early 2000s because of their authoritarian regimes. For example, Milošević's Socialist Party of

Serbia was a distinctly pariah party in transnational circles throughout the 1990s (Pridham 1999). The first contacts were established after the democratic changes in both countries; by the mid-2010s, the majority of relevant Croatian and some Serbian parties managed to secure transnational affiliations.

The transnational affiliations of Serbian and Croatian parties in 2017 are shown in Table 6.2. The most striking aspect here is that some relevant, parliamentary Serbian parties either did not have any international affiliations or had very troublesome relations with party federations, while all relevant parties in Croatia were fully integrated into transnational party organisations. In addition, radical right parties, characterised here as hard Eurosceptic, across both countries did not have international affiliation and maintained only bilateral relations with other similar national parties. The table shows that the European People's Party was the most coveted partner in the region and a federation that attracted the largest number of parties, while the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe gathered most pro-EU parties from both countries that also closely cooperate between each other; this however was not the case with other European party federations whose former Yugoslav members had difficulties in maintaining any mutual bilateral relations. The case of the Serbian and Croatian parties also suggests that national parties in Central and Eastern Europe tend to join European transnational party federations primarily for pragmatic and strategic reasons, while ideological closeness or loyalty to the principles that underlie these party federations were of secondary importance. This was, inter alia, most evident in the strategic decision of the Democratic Party to join the Party of European Socialists. Finally, the table shows the limited direct impact of European transnational party federations on the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties towards the EU, with more significant indirect impact in the cases of former hard Eurosceptic parties struggling to obtain European legitimacy after years of nationalist and anti-European policies.

The European People's Party (EPP)

The European People's Party had two associate members from Serbia—the Serbian Progressive Party and the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina, a minority party of Hungarians from Serbia—and two full members from Croatia—the Croatian Democratic Union and the Croatian Peasant Party.

Table 6.2 Transnational affiliation of Serbian and Croatian parties and its impact on party attitudes towards the EU in 2017

Serbia *Political party*	*Relations with European transnational party federation*	*Relations with party internationals*	*Impact on party attitudes towards the EU*	
			Direct	*Indirect*
European People's Party[a]				
Serbian Progressive Party	Associate member since 2016 Member of the EPP's group in the Council of Europe since 2013	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Intention to join the European People's Party may have contributed to party transformation since 2008
Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina	Observer member (2007–2015) Associate member since 2015	It has no affiliation	–	–
Party of European Socialists				
Democratic Party	Associate member since 2008 Observer members (2006–2008)	Socialist International Full member since 2008 Observer member (2003–2008) Progressive Alliance Member since 2013[b]	Low impact	Low impact
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe				
Liberal Democratic Party	Associate member since 2008	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Low impact
No affiliation				
Socialist Party of Serbia	It wants to join the Party of European Socialists	It has no affiliation It wants to join the Progressive Alliance	Low impact	Intention to join the Party of European Socialists has contributed to party transformation since 2008
Democratic Party of Serbia	It withdrew from the European People's Party in 2012 Associate member (2005–2012) Observer member (2003–2005)	International Democrat Union Member since 2005	Low impact	Low impact
Serbian Radical Party	It has no intention of joining any transnational party	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Low impact

(*continued*)

Table 6.2 (continued)

Croatia *Political party*	*Relations with European transnational party federation*	*Relations with party internationals*	*Impact on party attitudes towards the EU*	
			Direct	*Indirect*
European People's Party				
Croatian Democratic Union	Full member since 2013 Associate member (2004–2013) Observer member (2002–2004)	International Democrat Union members since 2005 Centrist Democratic International member	Low impact	Significant impact of the European People's Party on reinforcing party's pro-European attitudes in the early 2000s
Croatian Peasant Party	Full member since 2013 Associate member (2007–2013) Observer member (2002–2007)	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Low impact
Party of European Socialists				
Social Democratic Party	Full members since 2013 Associate member (2004–2013)	Socialist International Full member Progressive Alliance Members since 2013	Some impact on party stance towards the substance of EU integration	Low impact
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe				
Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats	Member since 2001	Liberal International Observer member until 2009	Low impact	Low impact
Istrian Democratic Assembly	Member since 2006	It has no affiliation	–	–
Croatian Social Liberal Party	Associate member since 1994	Liberal International Full member	–	–
Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists				
Croatian Conservative Party[c]	Member since 2015	It has no affiliation	–	–

(*continued*)

Table 6.2 (continued)

Croatia *Political party*	*Relations with European transnational party federation*	*Relations with party internationals*	*Impact on party attitudes towards the EU*	
			Direct	*Indirect*
No affiliation				
Croatian Party of Rights	Intended to join the European People's Party in the mid-2000 No intention of joining any transnational party since that time	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Low impact

[a]The small, conservative New Serbia expressed intentions to join this party federation and sent a formal membership request in 2011, but the EPP did not reply

[b]The small Social Democratic Party in Serbia, founded in 2014 by the former leader of the Democratic Party Boris Tadić, is also a member of Progressive Alliance

[c]Croatian Party of Rights—Dr Ante Starčević (HSP AS) was on the Croatian Democratic Union (EPP) slate for the EP elections in 2013 and 2014. It applied for membership in the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (AECR) in early 2014, but lost international affiliation following the resignation of the party president and only MEP. Former party president joined the Croatian Conservative Party in 2015 as a member of the AECR

Sources: Interviews with senior party officials

G17 Plus/United Regions of Serbia was also an associate member of this party federation. However, following the failure of this party to enter the parliament in 2014 elections, it ceased to exist and consequently lost a membership in the European People's Party. The Democratic Party of Serbia withdrew from the European People's Party in 2012. Furthermore, while the nationalist and Eurosceptic Croatian Party of Rights abandoned its efforts to join this party federation, another party from the same political tradition, the Croatian Party of Rights—dr Ante Starčević, successfully competed on the Croatian Democratic Union (thus the EPP) slate for the European Parliament. This party later affiliated with the Eurosceptic Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (AECR), but it lost its international affiliation when the party president and only member of the European Parliament (MEP), Ruža Tomašić, resigned in late 2014. Given a variance in relationship between the European People's Party and Serbian/Croatian parties, the examination of these linkages may provide insights into the extent to which transnational parties can affect party responses to the EU and how parties determined their stances on the EU in the context of their transnational affiliations.

At the programmatic level, this chapter found no evidence of any direct impact of the European People's Party on these parties' stances on the substance of the European integration. This may be because this European transnational party federation did not directly require (potential) members to explicitly endorse the model of the EU that it advocated in their programmes.[2] While the statute (EPP 2015, p. 4) stated that the European People's Party members have an obligation 'to promote the process of unification and federal integration in Europe as a constituent element of the European Union', it did not elaborate further on party members' obligations in this regard. More importantly, it seems that the European People's Party itself struggled to formulate its preferred model for European integration and, as a result, did not strictly impose this requirement on applicant parties. Its previous 1992 programme (EPP 2011) specifically called for 'a gradual, but resolute, transformation of the European Community into a genuine political union on a federal model'. In line with its traditionally federalist view of Europe, the programme stated that 'a federal Europe is now more than ever a necessary and realistic political objective' and that 'only a federal organization of Europe can match the aspirations and interests of Europeans who want to share a common destiny' (EPP 2011). However, the 2012 party platform (EPP 2012) is more cautious on the issue and contains no direct reference to a

federal Europe. Instead, it puts emphasis on the role of national states and the principle of subsidiarity, since 'the European Union must also restrict itself' to those tasks which cannot be adequately dealt with at lower levels (EPP 2012, p. 27). The European People's Party now calls only for 'gradual—but resolute—progress towards a genuine political union' and that the Union and the Member States should exercise more powers jointly (EPP 2012, p. 27). This shift away from a clearly stated federalist model may be motivated by the difficulty in getting a growing, diverse membership to agree on this model, as well as the unpopularity of the federal concept following the 2008 economic crisis and the rise of public Euroscepticism across the continent.

Serbian and Croatian members have never fully elaborated their stances on the substance of the European integration (see Chap. 3). The Croatian Democratic Union's 2002 programme included a brief reference to the principle of subsidiarity, saying nothing about a federal model of Europe. It specified that, 'like other European peoples' parties, it advocates that the devolution of powers to supranational institutions or organizations can be realized only on the principle of subsidiarity, so that national competencies would not be unnecessarily internationalized' (HDZ 2002, p. 28). However, after these early attempts to determine its position, the party has not dealt with this issue in its subsequent programmes. Mikucka-Wójtowicz (2016) also asserted that there was no reference to the federal vision of Europe in the manifestos of the Croatian Democratic Union. Similarly, the Croatian Peasant Party did not have an elaborated position on the substance of European integration, although it often employed Eurosceptic rhetoric and expressed a sceptical attitude towards the common agricultural policy of the EU. However, some senior party members also argued for greater European monetary integration and control of the banking system, as well as stronger fiscal integration and control of the budgetary policies of Member States, (Novotny 2012). It is however unlikely that this conservative party actually subscribes to these principles that would bring the EU much closer to a full-fledged federal state.

The key issue for these parties was, however, their stance on their countries' membership in the EU. Even though the programmatic documents of the European People's Party did not directly require members to expressly advocate EU membership, this was an important precondition for aspiring Balkan members. For (potential) candidate states, stances on joining the EU were essentially what Pridham (2008, p. 80) called 'a

commitment to European integration', rather than allegiance to a federal Europe. As elaborated in the previous chapters, at the programmatic level, all members of the European People's Party from Croatia advocated EU accession and thus met this criterion. However, the EU stances taken by these national parties were less likely the consequence of the party federation's requirements. They either resulted from a more or less firm ideological commitment to soft Euroenthusiasm irrespective of the European People's Party (the Croatian Peasant Party), or were mostly strategically driven and reinforced by its indirect leverage (the Croatian Democratic Union). Serbian former and current members of this party federation were much more problematic in this respect—while the Democratic Party of Serbia gradually became a hard Eurosceptic party, opposing Serbian EU membership, the Serbian Progressive Party transformed in the opposite direction, from Eurosceptic to broadly Euroenthusiastic party, which proved to be a key condition for this party to secure affiliation with the European People's Party.

When it comes to indirect impacts, this party federation started early with an attempt to influence parties in both countries. To that end, it set up the Western Balkan Democracy Initiative in 1999, aimed at establishing a channel of communication and cooperation, and assisting and encouraging the strengthening of democratic structures and the party-building process (Karamanlis 2006). Specifically, this party federation utilised four key instruments: fact-finding missions, seminars, inter-regional conferences and publications. The European People's Party, therefore, offered regional parties a channel to transmit EU experience and practices, aimed at getting them acquainted with EU policies and ultimately impact their stances and activities. But the results were rather varied. There are indications that this party federation played an important role in the transformation and European socialisation of the Croatian Democratic Union in the early 2000s and, to some extent, the Serbian Progressive Party a decade later. In stark contrast, it failed to exert any influence on the Democratic Party of Serbia and the party's negative attitudes post-2008 towards Serbian EU membership.

From Fascination to Regression: The Croatian Democratic Union and the European People's Party

The European People's Party and its members have proven to be an important factor in the ideological transformation of the Croatian Democratic

Union in the early 2000s. During the 1990s, the Croatian Democratic Union was largely perceived as a nationalist party with questionable democratic and European credentials. It did not explicitly oppose Croatian EU accession, but did pursue a nationalist political agenda and had a pronounced negative stance on EU policy towards Croatia and the Western Balkans, as well as the conditions for Croatian accession to the EU (Jović 2006). As such, it found it difficult to develop relations with parties from the EU, although it became a member of the European Union of Christian parties in 1995 (Fink-Hafner 2008), a conservative European party organisation that merged with the European People's Party in 1999. Following the electoral defeat and the death of its autocratic founder, Franjo Tudjman, the party embarked on a gradual ideological transformation led by its new, moderate leader, Ivo Sanader. Until 2002, Sanader maintained a rather nationalist political outlook and strongly opposed cooperation with the ICTY, which was the key precondition for Croatian EU accession. However, after emerging victorious from an intra-party conflict with the hard-line nationalists, he declared accession to the EU the party's principal goal. The new pro-European rhetoric that started to emerge in the run-up to the 2003 election was in stark contrast to the previous nationalistic rhetoric and actions pursued by Sanader, such as a massive 2001 rally against war crimes indictments.

There are strong indications that the European People's Party and its members played an important role in the party's ideological transformation, given that Sanader forged unusually strong links with this party federation that in turn impacted the stances he took and the policies he pursued. Although it is difficult to assess whether these linkages triggered or reinforced the party's reorientation process, they certainly contributed to it (Table 6.2). The linkages grew out of the European People's Party's interest in expanding its influence in the Western Balkans, as well as the Croatian Democratic Union's strong intention to obtain European legitimisation. However, the key reasons for Sanader's intention to get closer and forge strong relations with this party federation and its members was the important role played by these 'external veto actors', to the extent they could have effectively prevented the party from coming to power had it not transformed. The same mechanism seemed evident in the transformation of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party in the late 2000s.

The enthusiasm of the European People's Party to 'transform' this Croatian party was not a surprise given that, at that time, the European

party federation had no members in the region. As Karamanlis (2006, p. 58) argued, after the democratic changes in Serbia and Croatia in 2000, the European People's Party promptly realised that the future of the Western Balkans lay with the EU and that the transformation of these societies into well-functioning democracies should be its foremost priority. At a result, it amended its statutes in 2001 and, for the first time, permitted the non-EU parties to join. Importantly, this party federation also strategically supported Sanader in the intra-party conflict with nationalist factions in 2002. As a result, a few months later, the Croatian Democratic Union became an observing member and eventually, in 2004, an associate member of this party federation. It became a full member when Croatia joined the EU in 2013.

The importance of transnational links became evident when the Croatian Democratic Union decided to start formally advocating EU membership and fulfilling all the conditions. Croatian minister of foreign and European affairs and senior party official, Marija Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011), explained that the party clearly stated for the first time that it absolutely supported Croatian EU integration in November 2002. This was when Gordan Jandroković, later Croatian minister of foreign affairs, informed the European People's Party and its German party members about a new party orientation, following Sanader's instruction to reveal the party's adjusted position. She stressed that this was a key moment, after which the party adopted new rhetoric and policies regarding the EU and publicly declared its new orientation. She pointed out that Sanader personally played a key role in developing strong ties with national parties that were members of the European People's Party. The success of the party's transformation was directly related to these linkages, since, as Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011) explained, 'Sanader fascinated the counterparts from the European People's Party by strong charisma and consequently managed easily and swiftly to prove the new party orientation to members of this party federation'. Moreover, as Mirjana Mladineo (Interview 2011), a former political advisor to former Croatian president Ivo Josipović, argued, 'Sanader was essentially the project of the European People's Party' and further specified that Sanader had 'absolutely fantastic relations with this party federation and its members, which strongly influenced the Croatian Democratic Union in the early 2000s'.

Sanader (2006) himself argued the Croatian Democratic Union had used its years in opposition to undertake internal reform, with the aim of bringing the party in line with standards of the European People's Party. He

pointed out that the conferences and seminars organised by this party federation helped the party renew itself and re-emphasise its European orientation, which was conducive to its victory in the 2003 parliamentary elections. Moreover, the strong links forged with members of the party federation, especially the German Christian Democrats and the Austrian People's Party, helped facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise to the Croatian Democratic Union (Sanader 2006). In other words, close bilateral relations, in the framework of the European People's Party, played an important role in re-socialising some of the party's nationalist and Eurosceptic officials, who felt betrayed by a Europe that had not done enough to support the Croatian independence war. However, as Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011) pointed out, some party members still strongly disagreed with the ICTY and thus continued to express negative attitudes towards Croatian EU accession. But this appears not to have been a problem in the party, since there was strong inter-party discipline and party members were obliged to follow the decisions of the leadership. Factions opposed to EU accession either toned down their objections or left the Croatian Democratic Union to form a new party. Therefore, the indirect impact of this party federation on the Croatian Democratic Union was important at an early stage of its transformation; however, it would be inaccurate to see it as the only driver of change. As Haughton and Fisher (2008) claimed change was rather driven by a combination of defeat at the polls and a desire for international respectability that led the party to rethink its political orientation and to re-brand itself as a mainstream European centre-right party.

The case of the Croatian Democratic Union, however, also points to the limited impact of European party federations on their full members from EU member states. After it secured full membership in the European People's Party and Croatian membership in the EU, the party led by Tomislav Karamarko readopted nationalist rhetoric, returning to the original principles of its founder Franjo Tudjman. This shift to the right was particularly noticeable in relation to the party's policy towards the Serbian minority, relativisation of crimes committed during the WWII Croatian state as well as cooperation with the radical right parties. Although there was no significant shift in the attitudes towards the EU itself, the Croatian Democratic Union formed a joint slate for the 2013 and 2014 European parliament (as well as for the 2015 national parliamentary) elections with the nationalist and largely Eurosceptic Croatian Party of—Dr Right Ante Starčević. This caused a reaction of the European People's Party whose president, Joseph Daul, warned that 'candidates on the EPP's list must share the

same values. And people on our list must join our political group in the EP [European Parliament]' (Daul 2014). He added that 'she [Ruža Tomašić, former president of the Croatian Party of—Dr Right Ante Starčević] cannot be elected on the list of the EPP. You cannot be elected based on values that you do not defend. If you are a Eurosceptic, you have to be elected on the list of Eurosceptics. You cannot be elected in accordance with European values and then move to the side of Eurosceptics' (Daul 2014). Nevertheless, after the Croatian Democratic Union resisted these pressures, given the popularity of Tomašić with the Croatian electorate, she remained on the joint slate, secured an MEP position and affiliated with the Eurosceptic AECR group in the European Parliament.[3] Mikucka-Wójtowicz (2016, p. 249/251) therefore concluded that the EPP-induced transformation process was 'somewhat superficial, and mostly encompassed the (then) party elites', concluding that the Croatian Democratic Union 'made a visible regression in this respect'.

Yet, in a surprising twist, an indirect impact of the European People's Party once again came to the fore when a Croatian EPP MEP Andrej Plenković became leader of the Croatian Democratic Union in 2016. Plenković, who joined the Croatian Democratic Union only in 2011, was also the vice-chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs. As 'a Europeanized Brussel bureaucrat', Plenković strongly emphasised the party's links with this party federation in an attempt to steer it back towards the centre and away from the hard nationalism—although rhetorically remaining devoted to Tudjmanism (HDZ 2016). The case of the Croatian Democratic Union, therefore, demonstrates that the European People's Party has limited and less effective leverage on parties from EU member states (particularly compared to those in candidate states that seek membership), while internal party dynamics crucially determines the nature of national parties' international affiliations as well as the scope and depth of their (European) transformations.

A Rebellious Member: The Democratic Party of Serbia and the European People's Party

On the other side, the Democratic Party of Serbia is a prime example of a party that, from the very beginning, was immune to transnational influences. In other words, this party shows the limitations of the influence of European transnational party federations on their member parties (even in EU candidate states). This party obtained observer status in the European People's Party in 2003 relatively easily and associate membership status in

2005. As one of the leading parties behind the overthrow of the Milošević regime in 2000 and an advocate for Serbian EU membership, this party did not have to prove its democratic and pro-EU credentials. It was also ideologically closed to this party federation, since the fundamental party principles included: support for the Serbian Orthodox Church; preservation of traditional moral values as the foundation of the family, society and the state; protection of national identity; and the strengthening of national cultural institutions (DSS 2010).

However, following the 2008 recognition of Kosovo as an independent state by major EU countries, the party started to oppose Serbian EU membership. Furthermore, in 2011, the Democratic Party of Serbia adopted a policy of military and political neutrality (DSS 2012a). This had a significant negative impact on the party's international relations and the party found itself, as its former vice president and MP, Slobodan Samardžić (Interview 2011), explained, 'in international isolation or semi-isolation'. It had a particularly troublesome relationship with the European People's Party. The main issue was the fact that this party believed that, given the EU's position on Kosovo, Serbia should remain outside the process of European integration. On the other hand, leading members of this party federation expressed strong support for Kosovo's independence. They called on Serbia to 'free itself from the illusions of renewed influence over Kosovo that hold it back, and instead go down the road towards Europe' (Posselt 2010). As a result, the Democratic Party of Serbia had long been on the verge of suspension and expulsion from the European People's Party, and it finally decided to withdraw its membership in early 2012. On that occasion, the party stated:

> The Democratic Party of Serbia is no longer able to be member of the European People's Party, because of our decision that Serbia should declare political neutrality [given that the EU implements the policy of an independent Kosovo]. Our formal abandonment of the European People's Party means that the Democratic Party of Serbia will co-operate with European centre-right parties on a new basis, taking into account our mutual interests. (DSS 2012b)

This was the culmination of the long 'misunderstanding' between the two sides. On one hand, the party argued that it is 'a fundamentally pro-European party, which respects the core European and democratic principles that the European People's Party rests upon' as argued by its

former international secretary and MP, Nikola Lazić (Interview 2011). He pointed out that the main values of this party federation are indisputable, given that one of the key European values is respect for territorial integrity. Therefore, the party argued that its position on Kosovo issues was in line with the key principles of the European People's Party; however, the party federation abandoned this principle only when it came to Serbian territorial integrity, according to Lazić. He added that 'although it is desirable that the attitudes of the members of the European People's Party are well coordinated, parties do not have to go to Brussels to get their opinion'. Consequently, the former party vice president, Samardžić (Interview 2011), claimed, 'the Democratic Party of Serbia has been under suspicion, because it does not want to play by the rules imposed by the EU'.

On the other hand, important members of the European People's Party perceived the Democratic Party of Serbia 'as a nightmare' and regretted having allowed it to be become a member, as explained by its former German MEP and former chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for the South Eastern Europe, Doris Pack (Interview 2011). She specifically argued that the Democratic Party of Serbia has never been pro-European, 'although the [then] party leader Koštunica gave the impression that he would respect reality and I thought we should give him a chance'. Pack further explained that:

> By being an observer member of the European People's Party, this party should have gotten the smell of Europe. They had a chance to speak with other leaders and that should have opened up their minds, but they behaved autistically. It did not work. They did not use the chance they had. It was lost time and lost efforts. It makes me furious. We have to kick them out.

In other words, 'European socialisation' which, as perceived by the European People's Party, de facto includes acceptance of the Kosovo independence, did not work in the case of this party. The then-president of the European People's Party, Wilfried Martens, tried to influence the party's policies on a number of occasions. After the 2008 election, Martens (2008, p. 211) argued that 'despite the reservations expressed during the emotionally-charged election campaign over EU foreign policy decisions', Koštunica would accept the European choice that was clearly expressed by the citizens of Serbia. Martens added that Koštunica is 'a great patriot' who 'will make the patriotic choice, which is the European choice' (Martens 2008, p. 211).

However, this party remained impervious to the influence of the European People's Party, and its perception of the national interest was in direct opposition to the policies pursued by the majority of members of this party federation. This points to the limited impact of transnational party federations when faced by parties with principled, ideologically driven stances on what European values entail, as well as members for whom transnational party membership is not a high priority. Specifically, as discussed in Chap. 3, the position of the Democratic Party of Serbia regarding the EU and Kosovo was a principled one. This party even compromised its electoral performance because of its Kosovo politics, and the weak incentives from being a member of the European People's Party certainly did not outweigh the party's convictions. Unlike most other Serbian parties, this party did not feel the need to prove its loyalty to the principles of democracy and European values or to get European legitimacy by being a member of a European transnational party federation. The Democratic Party of Serbia did not attach great importance to its membership in the European People's Party. Its president, Miloš Jovanović (Interview 2011), criticised other Serbian parties that wanted to join European transnational party federations at any price, by saying that 'nobody has ever heard of European party federations in other countries, while it is only in Serbia where the membership in these organisations is perceived as important, additional legitimacy for political parties'. But the party forged links with international partners that either shared its position on Kosovo (the major Russian parties) or its Euroscepticism (the European Conservatives and Reformists Group and the UK's Conservative Party).

Membership at Long Last: The Serbian Progressive Party and the European People's Party

Since 2008, the Serbian Progressive Party has undergone a rapid fundamental transformation in both its ideology and its attitudes towards the EU (Chap. 3). Even though party leaders had avowed pronounced Euroscepticism within the Serbian Radical Party, they became advocates of Serbian EU membership. After its ideological reinvention, the party expressed its intentions to join the European People's Party. In 2013, it was admitted to the political group of the European People's Party in the Council of Europe, and it was finally granted membership in this party federation in late 2016. This was, however, a long and difficult process, as its potential European partners, particularly those from the former Yugoslavia, showed a high level

of scepticism towards the party leaders, given that they had long advocated nationalist, anti-European politics. As a consequence, the party found it very difficult to prove its European orientation and to become a legitimate centre-right member of the leading European party federation. The Croatian Democratic Union thus abstained from voting on the Progressives' admission to the European People's Party, while the Croatian Peasant Party, which even considered leaving this party federation if this Serbian party becomes its member, was silent on this issue (Krasnec 2016).

On the other hand, the European People's Party carefully monitored the actions and attitudes of the Serbian Progressive Party. Pack (Interview 2011) argued the Progressives' policies were what were most important. She said in 2011, 'the EPP will be very careful. We should wait and see. Their membership was not an immediate question. We made a mistake with Koštunica, because we believed that it would help to learn a bit more about Europe. We should not make a second mistake'. However, by 2016, the prevailing position in the European People's Party was that the party president Aleksandar Vučić and his party 'are leading a policy which is in line with the values of the party federation' and that it would be beneficial for Europe that Serbia has a party that is a member of the European People's Party (Krasnec 2016). The membership was thus secured but, as the party foreign secretary Jadranka Joksimović (2016) explained, only 'after two years of talks, preparations and visits that they made to our party, missions to get to know the work, structures and programs'.

The decision by the party leaders to take a radically new position and start advocating Serbian accession to the EU was highly pragmatic and strategic, as discussed in the previous chapters. Although there was no indication that this was due to the party's intention to join the European People's Party, this factor may have contributed to the party's overall ideological reorientation. As a strategically driven party, it was inclined to accommodate foreign demands, although, as we shall see, this was more related to the pressures of Western ambassadors than demands by the European People's Party. Following the party's reorientation, the need to become a legitimate European party became an important driver of further transformation. Joining this party federation was the ultimate proof of its transformation. As a result, the Serbian Progressive Party, compared to other Serbian parties, was rather prone to accept foreign influences, since it clearly wished to prove that it was a new, pro-European party that had nothing to do with the nationalist Serbian Radical Party. As explained by Damjan Jović (Interview 2011), a member of the party's executive committee, 'the party specifically

strove to present itself as a predictable, everyday partner to EPP members, as well as to eliminate the prejudice and antagonism due to the ignorance of some of its members'. This stemmed from the party's pro-European commitment—along with its democratic and post-Yugoslav commitments related to the party's overall position on the legacy the post-Yugoslav wars—being called into question by its potential European partners.

It is, however, unlikely that this party federation exerted any profound transformative impact on this party, which (similar to the Croatian Democratic Union) remained to harbour conflicting values. As recently as 2011, the Serbian Progressive Party signed an agreement with the national conservative and hard Eurosceptic Austrian Freedom Party that envisaged 'the creation of a Europe of free nations and self-determined people in the framework of a grouping of national sovereign states' (SNS-FPO 2011). It even provided for the establishment of a new political party at the European level—'A free European movement', which was in stark contrast to its self-proclaimed pro-EU vocation and newly secured international affiliation. When in 2017, the party invited a war crimes convict to speak at its panel discussion, an EPP spokesman Siegfried Mureșan (2017) stated that all member parties must be aware of 'the historical circumstances' and warned 'that the Serbian Progressive Party must distance itself from such personalities as well as to refrain from any action that might create tensions and potential conflict situations between neighbours'. It appears this was one more case of a strategic quest for membership pursued by a party devoid of genuine commitment to the principles of the European People's Party, which has itself become rather pragmatic when dealing with its (potential) members.

The Party of European Socialists (PES)

The Party of European Socialists had two members from these countries, the Democratic Party in Serbia and the Social Democratic Party in Croatia. Unlike the European People's Party, the Party of European Socialists had more straightforward relations with its Serbian and Croatian members. European commitment has never been an issue for these parties, given that both members have always been pro-European parties that advocated their country's membership of the EU. Ideological closeness was, however, the issue for the Democratic Party due to the party's liberal political legacy.

The Social Democratic Party of Croatia became a member of the Socialist International in the early 1990s and gained associate status of

the Party of European Socialists in 2004. Unlike the Democratic Party in Serbia, this party was ideologically close to a social democratic pole and the Party of European Socialists has been its natural international partner. The Democratic Party was founded as a centre-right and liberal party, which started shifting towards the centre-left after coming to power in 2000. It became an observer member of the Socialist International in 2003 and a full member in 2008 as well as an associate member of the Party of European Socialists in 2008. The then-party president, Zoran Djindjić, personally pushed for the strengthening of social-democratic values in the party. Doris Pack (Interview 2011) emphasised that it was a decision made personally by Djindjić, under the influence of Gerhard Schroeder, then the German chancellor and a leader of Social Democratic Party. Well known as a pragmatic politician, Djindjić decided to join this European party federation assuming that membership of the Party of European Socialists—which, at that time, had a majority in the European Parliament—would bolster the Democratic Party's credibility. Senior party official Zoran Alimpić (Interview 2011) revealed that Djindjić's decision to apply for membership in the Social International and the Party of European Socialists came as a surprise even to senior party officials. The case of the Democratic Party is thus one more example of a party that joined a transnational party group for strategic rather than ideological reasons.

The Party of European Socialists 'wants to redesign the European Union so that it becomes a Union of Solidarity' (PES 2013). Its 2013 Fundamental Programme stated that cooperation inside the EU implies the creation of 'a European society and a European democracy in which people, communities and countries act responsibly towards one another', calling for 'strengthening internal economic, social and territorial cohesion'. However, its statute did not contain direct requirements that member parties should endorse any particular form of European integration. Consequently, the Democratic Party has never elaborated its position on the substance of European integration. The Social Democratic Party of Croatia did however attempt to elaborate its position on this issue. It advocated a social-democratic vision of the EU and expressed 'principled opposition to a Europe of unbridled capital as well as support for a Europe of social solidarity' (SDP 2007a, p. 42). It stood for the interests of preserving social solidarity and responsibility, without allowing 'the market economy to become a market society that only favours the rich' in Europe

(SDP 2007a, p. 42). It therefore seems that the party formulated its stances based on its international partners, although it is questionable to what extent it adhered to these 'borrowed' principles. As its former international secretary and MP, Karolina Leaković (Interview 2011), specified, discussing a desirable form of the EU is simply not a topic and 'nobody defines what being a pro-European party entails, since political parties often do not have the capacity for such discussion'.

On the other hand, although the Party of European Socialists statute did not specifically foresee that members must support their countries' membership of the EU, it is clear that a European orientation was the key prerequisite for parties wishing to get membership status. The Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party have always advocated their countries' membership in the EU, which was clearly stated in all programmatic documents (DS 2009; SDP 2007b). It may be thus concluded that the Party of European Socialists had some impact on the Social Democratic Party's vision of European integration, while support for EU membership was adopted initially by both parties long before they joined the Party of European Socialists. In other words, the direct impact was limited and, in the case of the Democratic Party, rather weak.

With regard to the indirect impacts, the Party of European Socialists has been proactively involved in the Western Balkans since the mid-1990s and has built solid networks with socialist and social democratic political parties and movements (PES 2010). However, in terms of socialisation and impacts on the attitudes of the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party towards the EU, it appears that the Party of European Socialists did not play an important role, given that their European credentials have never been questioned. Leaković (Interview 2011) specifically explained that this transnational party has never sent a fact-finding mission to Croatia, and that it did not scrutinise the party's attitudes towards the EU since its pro-European orientation was adopted in the 1990s. Leaković thus concluded that 'the Party of European Socialists has never imposed its views or asked the Social Democratic Party to change or adopt particular policy'. Conversely, the former Democratic Party's international secretary, Miloš Jevtić (Interview 2011), argued that the Party of European Socialists applied very rigid monitoring. However, he explained that this party federation primarily analysed whether this party was ideologically eligible for a membership (not its pro-European orientation), given its long tradition of cooperation with the European People's Party members as well as its liberal and right-leaning ideological legacy.

An Eternal Candidate? The Socialist Party of Serbia and the Party of European Socialists

A peculiar feature of Serbian party politics is that several core Serbian parties had troublesome relations with European transnational parties, finding it difficult to secure international affiliations. While the Serbian Progressive Party managed to do so in 2016, the Socialist Party of Serbia has been thus far unsuccessful in fulfilling its long-term goal—membership in the Party of European Socialists. The space for direct or indirect influence by European transnational party federations appears to have been greatest in the case of such parties, which sought membership primarily as part of a search for European legitimacy.

The Socialist Party of Serbia was long perceived as an anti-democratic, anti-European and nationalist party that opposed Serbian EU integration, and consequently it was isolated internationally. For a long time, the Socialists were not deemed suitable for membership of any transnational party organisation and the party did not have any activities in this regard. Pridham (2008, p. 92) noted that, as a party not welcome in EU circles, it cultivated some links with the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and with the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, in the sense of mutual attendance at party congresses and visiting delegations. However, after becoming soft Euroenthusiastic—with occasionally Eurosceptic rhetoric though (Dačić 2016a, b)—in 2008, the party expressed an intention to join the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists. This became the key goal explicitly stated in the party programme:

> The Socialist Party of Serbia is ready and open for cooperation with all parties and movements of democratic, progressive and in particular socialist, social democratic and leftist orientation in the country and the world. It is particularly interested in membership of the Socialist International as well as the Party of European Socialists. (SPS 2010, p. 49)

However, the values and principles upon which the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists were founded appear to have not been of great importance for this party, which perceived its potential membership as merely instrumental in obtaining European legitimacy. The party's international secretary, Nataša Gaćeša (Interview 2011), thus pointed out that membership in the Socialist International 'may bring legitimacy to the party in the eyes of the west. That is the key

reason for our intention to join the Socialist International, while all other reasons are absolutely less relevant'.

The party has not, at the time of writing, secured membership in the Party of European Socialists. Moreover, faced with insurmountable obstacles, the Socialists dropped its bid for the Socialist International membership in 2014. Gaćeša (2014) thus specified that 'the Socialist International has run out of time' and that the Socialists now intend to join the newly created and increasingly influential Progressive Alliance, pragmatically assessing it as a necessity. The party transformation was noted by potential international partners, who argued, 'the reforms of the Socialist Party of Serbia and all developments related to the party should be closely followed. The party has strongly expressed its willingness to become a modern pro-European party and positive developments in this direction have been noted' (Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialist and Democrats 2010). Kristian Vigenin (Interview 2011), former Bulgarian foreign affairs minister and a head of the Party of European Socialists' Balkan task force, further specified that this party federation closely monitored the Socialists' rhetoric and politics, since the Socialists need to have 'a positive track record' in order to join the Party of European Socialists. A former advisor on international relations for the Party of European Socialists, David Capezzuto (Interview 2011), similarly argued that 'nothing goes unnoticed' and that the Socialists 'have made enormous progress'. Nevertheless, the party particularly found it difficult to develop good relations with Western Balkans members of the Party of European Socialists, since they still 'find it difficult to admit that the Socialist Party of Serbia has transformed' (Vigenin, Interview 2011). Gaćeša (Interview 2011) also confirmed that 'scepticism towards the Socialist Party of Serbia is still very present, since they perceive the Socialists as if it is still 1991'.

Getting international legitimisation was, therefore, an important factor that contributed to strategically driven party transformation. Although it is unlikely that it triggered the transformation, the intention to join the Party of European Socialists and (initially) the Socialist International was a reinforcing factor that played an important role in the party's decision to alter itself. As later discussed, Western ambassadors were aware of this and pressured parties to change, promising international party affiliation in return (Kralev 2012). In other words, parties seeking international legitimisation were susceptible to foreign

pressures which, together with the strategic incentives discussed in Chap. 4, induced the party's reorientation in 2008.

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE Party)

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe had a number of members in these countries—the Liberal Democratic Party from Serbia, and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, the Istrian Democratic Assembly and the Croatian Social Liberal Party. The Liberal Democratic Party has been a member since 2008, while the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats joined the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party in 2001.

The statute of this party federation (ALDE 2004) provided that membership was open to all political parties in Europe that accepted the policy programmes of the association and the Stuttgart Declaration. The Stuttgart Declaration (1976), as a key programmatic document of this party federation, set out the basic liberal principles for the creation of a common Europe, such as the protection and promotion of the rights and freedoms of the individual, and, as stated in its preamble, that 'peace, freedom and prosperity in Europe can best be assured if the European Community progresses towards a European Union'. There were, however, no requirements for party members to directly endorse any particular concept of the EU. As a result, the programmes of the Serbian and Croatian members did not say anything about the model of the EU for which they stood. However, their limitless support for their countries' EU membership was clearly spelled out in their programmes. All members of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe were perceived as the most pro-European parties in these countries. It therefore appears that there was no direct link between these parties' attitudes towards the EU and their transnational affiliation, given that these parties have always been pro-European and it has been a core part of their ideologies and 'world views'. With regard to the indirect impact, Mikucka-Wójtowicz (2016) found that the cooperation of the Croatian People's Party with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats had a visible influence on the party's policy standardisation and socialisation, most visible in the work of the party's political academy responsible for the political education of its members. It appears, nonetheless, that the socialisation and political training provided by this party federation might have only reinforced—and certainly would not have caused—their consistent, ideologically driven pro-EU stances.

In 'Comfortable Isolation'? Radical Right Parties and Transnational Party Politics

Two radical right and hard Eurosceptic parties that opposed Serbian and Croatian EU membership, the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights, had no relations with European party federations and only maintained bilateral contacts with ideologically similar national parties. The Serbian Radical Party was generally not inclined to maintain close relations with foreign parties, especially from the EU. This party opposed transnational multilateral party cooperation and was therefore not a member of a European transnational party federation. It has never expressed any intention to join them, which was in line with its negative stance towards the EU. Former MP and deputy president of the parliamentary group, Aleksandar Martinović (Interview 2011), explained, 'this party did not seek membership of European transnational party federations, because they function within EU structures. It would be contradictory to argue against the EU and be in favour of a membership of these parties'.

The party compensated for this lack of multilateral party cooperation through bilateral cooperation with similar parties from the EU and, more notably, Russia. The absolute priority of the party was close cooperation with Russian parties. The closest partner of the Radicals was Just Russia. They signed an agreement on cooperation in 2010, based 'on the principles of social justice, human rights, and preservation of equal and multipolar global relations' (Levichev 2010, p. 5). The intention of the two parties was to undertake joint efforts to preserve and strengthen the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia and Serbia in accordance with the norms of international law and to provide for the independent economic development of Serbia (Levichev 2010). The Radicals maintained bilateral contacts with two parties from the EU, the Slovak National Party and the French National Front—the latter being 'the last resort of right extremist parties from post-communist countries' (Pridham 2008, p. 98). The Radicals thus had failed to establish any meaningful and strong bilateral or multilateral cooperation with other parties.

Similarly, the Croatian Party of Rights did not develop any significant multilateral or bilateral relations. The party had no international party affiliation, although in 2006 it did apply for membership in the European People's Party a request this party federation never answered. Former

party president Daniel Srb (Interview 2011) claimed, 'although the party federation was extraordinarily influential', his party was no longer seeking membership. Srb explained that 'obtaining membership is an arduous process. It hangs on the biggest member in the country, that is, the Croatian Democratic Union, and the Croatian Party of Rights does not wish to depend on it'. Srb also argued that it cooperated symbolically with the Freedom Party of Austria and the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), although its most desirable partners would be the Polish Law and Justice Party and the Czech Civic Democratic Party. In the run-up to the Croatian EP elections in 2013, the party was directly supported by the French National Front, namely its vice president Bruno Gollnisch (Gollnisch 2013).

The Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights were, therefore, typical radical right, hard Eurosceptic parties that cooperated bilaterally with ideologically similar parties, without having any international or European party affiliations. The Serbian Radical Party perceived European party federations as a symbol of the 'evil' West and it has never tried to become a member of them, nor did it ever maintain contacts with mainstream political parties from the EU. Unlike some other Serbian parties, it did not seek European legitimacy and felt rather comfortable in isolation from the West—cooperating instead with leading Russian parties, with whom it shared fundamental values. Even if it wanted to, the Serbian Radical Party essentially could not meet the criteria for membership of European transnational party federations. The party was, therefore, immune to Western impact, and its strong, ideologically driven opposition to the EU remained a constant element of its politics. Similarly, after a failed attempt to join the European People's Party, the Croatian Party of Rights had no intention to apply again. Instead it has strengthened its traditional Euroscepticism since 2011 and focused on cooperation with other radical right parties that voiced the same hard Euroscepticism.

Parties' Relations with EU Institutions and Foreign Governments

This section looks at Serbian parties' relations with EU institutions and foreign governments and their positions on the EU. It is argued that whether parties had principled positions on the EU or not was a key

factor in explaining party behaviour. Namely, parties with principled and ideologically driven positions on the EU were rather unreceptive to these influences, while there is evidence that this was an important factor in the positions of strategically motivated parties or parties that did not have a firm stance on the EU.

There were direct links of communication between the European Commission and the European Parliament on one side, and both ruling and opposition parties in Serbia on the other. Specifically, the European Commission's officials responsible for Serbian EU accession, including the Enlargement Commissioners, had close and regular contacts with senior party leaders. In addition, the European Parliament and individual MEPs maintained contact with relevant parties, primarily in the form of study visits of the Parliament's delegations to Serbia. To what extent were these linkages important for party positions on the EU?

On one hand, it appears that EU institutions and officials did not explicitly and directly attempt to influence the policies and stances of Serbian political parties. They did not formulate policies and instruments to do so, and there was no direct conditionality regarding (potential) candidate countries' politics and individual political parties. An authoritative official of the former European Commission's Directorate-General Enlargement (Interview 2011) directly responsible for Serbian EU integration argued that the European Commission did not have any active policy towards Serbian parties and particularly emphasised that it did not attempt to influence their policies and stances on the EU.

On the other hand, the overall unofficial impact of EU institutions, primarily the European Commission, has been rather strong. Specifically, none of the hard Eurosceptic parties had any relations with EU institutions and it appears that scepticism towards the EU in the context of candidate countries in reality de-legitimised and disqualified such parties from having any associations with the EU. In other words, a domestic political consensus on EU integration may have been an unofficial aim of EU institutions in candidate countries and minimising the political significance of Eurosceptic parties may have been in their interest. EU leverage was therefore indirect and most visible in the fact that EU officials did not have any contacts with Eurosceptic (and often nationalist) parties; this may be seen as an unofficial policy of isolating such parties, which in some cases produced results (as in the case of the small, traditionalist New Serbia). Crucially, the EU effectively blocked hard Eurosceptic parties from gov-

ernment participation in these countries. This contributed significantly to the transformation of some Serbian parties, particularly the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia.

The mere lack of contact sent a clear and strong message to Serbian political parties, most visible in the case of New Serbia. This party adopted politics of opposition to Serbian EU membership in 2008 following the de facto EU-supported proclamation of Kosovo's independence. As a consequence, the party found itself in unofficial isolation, since 'nobody wanted to talk to the party officials', as its former vice president, Dubravka Filipovski (Interview 2011), emphasised. Fearing permanent political marginalisation, the party again shifted position and started supporting Serbian EU accession in 2010, which was partly due to the lack of international contacts. Filipovski argued, 'although no one pressured the party to take a pro-European stance (including EU institutions), the fact that nobody contacted, or showed an interest to talk to the party officials strongly contributed to its re-transformation'. She further specified, 'the party had to change, although there were no pressures. However, as soon as the party shifted policies, the contacts with EU institutions and foreign ambassadors were re-established'.

Similarly, the fundamental transformation of the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party may be seen in relation to their contacts with EU institutions. Having been in isolation for almost two decades, which included the ban on travelling to the EU at the height of their nationalist and anti-European politics in the late 1990s, the leaders of this party started maintaining close contacts with EU officials in 2009. Although it is difficult to assess the extent to which this contact contributed to the party's transformation, the European Commission was undoubtedly interested in reaching as broad a consensus as possible in candidate countries on their EU accession, and the transformation of the then-leading opposition party was an important development. Specifically, the new orientation of the Serbian Progressive Party was immediately noticed by the European Commission, which perceived it as 'a clear example that Serbia has normalised, since it is important that the [then] two biggest parties [Democratic Party and Serbian Progressive Party] support Serbian EU accession' (EC official, Interview 2011). While in 2007, the then EU enlargement commissioner, Olli Rehn, warned that 'the election of an ultra-nationalist as Serbia's parliamentary speaker [Nikolić] is a worrying sign' (RFE 2007), in 2010 the then EU enlargement commissioner, Štefan Füle (2010), stated after his

first meeting with the Progressive's leader that he 'encouraged Mr Nikolić and his party, as well as all Serbian political actors eager to advance Serbia's European aspirations, to act constructively and responsibly'. The impact of EU institutions on moderate members of the Serbian Radical Party to break away and form a new pro-European party should not be underestimated. This was particularly important given the pragmatic reorientation of this party that lacked firm, ideological beliefs and as such was rather receptive to foreign influences.

Conversely, parties with firm Eurosceptic stances remained unaffected by the lack of contact with EU institutions and were generally not prone to shifting or even moderating their positions. The most striking is the case of the Democratic Party of Serbia. This party adopted a policy of political and military neutrality and opposition to Serbian EU membership in reaction to the de facto EU-supported, unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008. As a consequence, the party has been in unofficial isolation from Western countries and EU institutions ever since, although the European Commission did not have any formal policy of non-cooperation with the party. An official of the former European Commission's Directorate-General Enlargement (Interview 2011) specifically claimed, 'the representatives of the Democratic Party of Serbia are most welcome if they ask for a meeting'. This official further specified that the European Commission did not perceive this party as anti-European or nationalist, since 'it did not declare itself against the EU *per se*'. She explained, 'this party has always supported Serbian EU accession, but it disagrees with the way that the EU treats Kosovo'. However, in practice, the European Commission did not maintain any relations with this party's officials, who had contributed significantly to Serbian EU accession and closely cooperated with officials of the Commission until 2008. This, however, had no effect on the party's policies, unlike its long-term coalition partner, New Serbia. Furthermore, the party itself decided to detach itself from EU institutions that, as its former vice president, Samardžić (Interview 2011), argued, 'sponsored the fake state of Kosovo'. Samardžić further explained that 'the lack of contacts was not only the result of the Western countries' decision to distance themselves from this party, but also the consequence of a mutual desire for distancing'. He added, 'this was also the way for the party to protest against EU's policy towards Kosovo'.

Similarly, the Serbian Radical Party has always been in isolation from the West and EU institutions. The policy of non-engagement with this party, aimed at its political isolation as an ultra-nationalist party, has been

strictly enforced by the USA, whose officials have rigorously adhered to that strategy since 2000 (Spoerri 2008, p. 27). The EU did not formulate any similar policies, although the European Commission did not maintain any contact with the Radicals. As an official of the European Commission (Interview 2011) explained, 'the European Commission primarily reacts on a reactive basis and does not have an active policy towards approaching the Radicals'. Former head of the Serbian EU integration office and G17 Plus MP, Ksenija Milivojević (2007, p. 110), also revealed that the EU refused to communicate with the Serbian Radical Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia in the mid-2000s, since these parties were not reformed and continued to support the policies of Milošević's regime. She further specified that, during the 2004–2007 parliament term, EU's institutions did not cooperate with the so-called anti-European forces, while the Serbian Radical Party refused to send its representatives during visits of the Serbian parliament's delegations to EU member states. Neither did the Radicals ever request a meeting with officials of the European Commission. Former deputy president of the Radicals' parliamentary group, Aleksandar Martinović (Interview 2011), explained that this was because 'the European Commission provides direct support to pro-European parties in Serbia'. The Radicals thus mostly boycotted the meetings with the European Commission and the European Parliament's delegation during their regular visits to the Serbian parliament (EC official, Interview 2011). As a European People's Party MEP, Doris Pack (Interview 2011), put it, 'the Radicals did not want to be convinced. I did not want to lose my time. Their representatives were sometimes present at the meetings, but I do not think that they were listening'. The cases of the Democratic Party of Serbia and the Serbian Radical Party thus demonstrate the importance of specific motivations in a party's response to the EU. Both parties expressed strong, principled opposition to the EU, and not only were they not susceptible to EU influence, they also pursued policies of either boycotting or deliberately distancing themselves from EU institutions and officials.

On the other hand, foreign governments, represented by their ambassadors to Serbia, proved to be an important factor that impacted some parties' policies and stances on the EU. Their general influence on domestic party politics appeared to be unusually strong in Serbia, particularly in the case of pragmatic parties that did not have firm ideological positions on the EU. Stojiljković and Spasojević (2015, p. 65) specified that the foreign 'veto players' —namely the representatives of international economic

and political associations, governments and business associations of the key states as well as supranational party federations—play 'an extremely important role' in Serbia. This may be seen as a consequence of the weak institutions, fragmented party system and political elites that generally did not pursue principled politics based on the clear set of fundamental values. This, in turn, created conditions for foreign ambassadors to take the role of key external 'veto players' that were often in a position to significantly affect the outcomes of political processes in the country. The 2008 post-election government formation process appeared to be one such moment when foreign ambassadors played an important role.

It was, specifically, then-US ambassador Cameron Munter that took initiative to shape the result of the early elections at the height of the Kosovo crisis in mid-2008 and importantly 'persuade' the Socialist Party of Serbia to shift its stance on the EU. As Kralev (2012, p. 3) argued, 'Munter had helped behind the scenes to engineer the election loss of former Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica, after evidence emerged that he had approved an attack that burned down a part of the US Embassy in Belgrade, following Washington's recognition of Kosovo's independence'. As Kralev argued, Munter determined that the key to weakening Koštunica's re-election chances was taking away the support of the Socialist Party of Serbia. In other words, the US intention to 'punish a disobedient' prime minister that stubbornly refused to accept the *fait accompli* policy of an independent Kosovo, as well as to strengthen more cooperative pro-EU forces, led to direct US pressure on the Socialists. As previously explained, this party had already begun the process of transformation, but the US role in the post-2008 election contributed to its decision to fully reorient and form a government with a long-term political foe, the traditionally pro-EU Democratic Party. The Socialist leader Ivica Dačić, interested in obtaining international legitimacy, was susceptible to foreign influences and, as Munter argued:

> We got him to flip over and join the pro-Europeans. We didn't pay him off, we just persuaded him. What he really wanted was international legitimacy. So we got [José Luis Rodríguez] Zapatero, the Spanish prime minister at the time, and George Papandreou, the future Greek prime minister, who ran Socialist International at the time, to invite Dačić to visit them abroad, where they wined and dined him. They told him they would let him in [to the Socialist International] if he joined the pro-European forces, and he did (see Kralev 2012, p. 81).

Dačić (2016c) himself confirmed a significant foreign influence over the formations of Serbian governments, claiming that 'the entire Western Hemisphere' called on him to support the Democratic Party in 2008—including George Papandreou, president of the Socials International; Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Jean Asselborn, German and Luxemburgish foreign ministers; as well as Miguel Ángel Moratinos, then Spanish foreign minister. After the 2012 elections, Dačić apparently received calls from Catherine Ashton, the then High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Philip Reeker, then-US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State.

This therefore points not only to the important role of Western ambassadors, but also to the fact that legitimacy obtained by securing international affiliations was an important factor in the transformation of formerly nationalist and Eurosceptic parties in Serbia. The role of ambassadors, particularly in the fundamental reorientation of the Serbian Socialists, was recognised by a number of the interviewed country experts. Political analyst Željko Cvijanović (Interview 2011), for example, stressed that there was no doubt that ambassadors were an extremely important driver of party policies on the EU and that Serbia became 'a banana republic'. Stojiljković (2008, p. 494) concluded that foreign actors played an extremely important role in the Serbian party system, since they directly and indirectly favoured certain parties, coalitions and leaders as well as impacted upon their policies and stances. The former Democratic Party of Serbia's vice president, Samardžić (Interview 2011), also argued that the 'foreign factor fully interfered in the making of the 2008 government. They converted Dačić and his party, which was a big surprise to us. It was actually quite a big surprise that they interfered to such an extent'.

Conclusion

Few studies in the comparative literature have systematically investigated the patterns of party transnational linkages as a factor shaping the response of contemporary parties to the EU. This chapter specifically set out to do so, by conducting a comparative analysis of the positions of Serbian and Croatian parties on European integration in the light of their international affiliations. The most important empirical and conceptual findings are summarised in this section.

European party federations regularly checked the programmatic 'EU commitments' of their (potential) members, which proved to be a precondition for deepening or developing any meaningful relations with national parties from (potential) EU candidate countries. They specifically analysed national parties' programmatic documents, and scrutinised their politics and rhetoric against certain requirements and standards—which, however, were often not clearly spelled out in the documents of European transnational parties. They were also closely scrutinised according to a set of democratic principles (democratic conditionality). Ideological closeness proved to be of secondary importance, both due to the flexibility of European transnational parties and the lack of firm ideological underpinnings among Western Balkan parties. An additional region-specific requirement entailed that candidates have good relationships with neighbouring former Yugoslav parties from the same European transnational party federations as well as their overall position on the legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars. This 'post-Yugoslav principle' proved to be of great importance, in particular for several Serbian parties that have so far been unsuccessful in pursuing membership in European party federations or have withdrawn their applications because of conflicting views over the consequences of post-Yugoslav wars (precisely the status of Kosovo).

Party stances on the EU were in most cases not the result of international party linkages, but rather the opposite: their stances on the EU appear to have had significant effects on their international relations. In other words, parties that became associate members of European transnational party federations in the mid-2000s and maintained close bilateral relations with similar parties from the EU had formed pro-European stances long before they joined transnational parties (see, e.g., the Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party and Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats). Membership in European transnational party federations was rather a consequence than a cause of their initial firmly established and consistently pro-European orientation.

Similarly, Euroscepticism (particularly the hard Euroscepticism) precluded parties with such stances from having transnational relations, while their bilateral relations with similar parties from the EU also tended to be limited and scarce. They expressed no intentions to join European trans-

national party federations (see the Serbian Radical Party), or following an unsuccessful attempt to join, expressed no further interest in doing so (the Croatian Party of Rights), or withdrew from membership after adopting a policy of opposition to Serbian EU membership (the Democratic Party of Serbia). The role of transnational linkages was rather limited in the majority of these Serbian and Croatian parties that appear to have formed stances on the EU based on their fundamental ideological principles, regardless of their international affiliations. They did not pragmatically compromise or modify their negative positions on the EU for the sake of the gains that may have resulted from cooperation with European counterparts or European transnational party federations.

Regarding the direct and indirect impact model employed in this study, the former was rather limited given the lack of the clear requirements of European transnational party federations, particularly in relation to national parties' attitudes towards the substance of European integration. In other words, the chapter was unable to detect any programmatic adaptations that may have been seen as a result of the direct impact of European transnational party federations, except in the case of the Social Democratic Party in Croatia, which appeared to have adopted (yet not fully internalised) the Party of European Socialists-induced vision of the EU. When it came to national parties' attitudes towards EU membership, European transnational party federations mostly did not formally require their members to express an affirmative programmatic stance on this issue, even though in reality they carefully monitored parties' pro-EU commitment. However, no significant direct impact on party stances on EU membership has been identified in the majority of parties. This seeming lack of influence may be due to the fact that most national parties formed their stances on EU membership long before joining European party federations. European transnational parties did not, therefore, have motives or reasons to influence their (potential) members on this issue, with the few notable exceptions of former Eurosceptic (and therefore 'suspicious') parties, which were closely scrutinised and somewhat influenced in this regard.

Although indirect effects were more difficult to disentangle, such leverage over party attitudes towards EU membership and their overall ideological underpinnings seemed significant for some Serbian and Croatian parties. As shown in Table 6.2, these were former Eurosceptic parties that

strategically abandoned their positions, reorienting themselves towards the pro-European pole. Although it was difficult to assess whether the wish to obtain an international affiliation motivated party shifts or whether they stemmed from previous decisions to change, the data strongly suggested that indirect impact of European transnational parties was one of the crucial drivers of change for the Croatian Democratic Union, as well as an important factor that contributed to the transformation of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party. These parties appear to have been motivated largely by a strong intention to break away from long-term international (semi-) isolation, to establish contacts with mainstream European parties and, most importantly, to join one of the European party federations to obtain European legitimacy and international respectability. Crucially, since key members of European party federations were essentially 'external veto players'—that is, influential officials of Western governments and the EU—by forging close relations with them, former Eurosceptics in both countries effectively forestalled their being cut out of government participation. Additionally, the strategic decision of European transnational parties to expand their membership and bring out their influence in new regions proved important, as demonstrated in the case of the European People's Party, which did not have members from the Western Balkans until the transformation of the Croatian Democratic Union led to its membership in 2002.

Party transnational linkages were thus an important factor at an early stage of the strategically motivated transformation of former Eurosceptic parties towards being credible, mainstream and pro-European parties. The case of the Croatian Democratic Union, however, suggests that at later stages reversible changes are indeed possible when illiberal party factions take over, leaving European transnational parties with little leverage to influence their full members not being driven anymore by obtaining international recognition. In other words, it remains questionable to what extent transnationally induced socialisation genuinely changed the perception of party elites' identities and interests.

Finally, the leverage of EU institutions seems to be primarily indirect and most visible in the fact that EU officials did not maintain contacts with Eurosceptic parties, which may be seen as an unofficial policy of isolation of such parties. Moreover, the EU effectively blocked hard Eurosceptic parties from government participation in these countries, which significantly contributed to the transformation of some of them, particularly the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of

Serbia. Foreign governments, represented by their ambassadors, proved to be an important factor that impacted upon the policies and stances of some strategically motivated political parties, as demonstrated in the case of the Socialist Party of Serbia. It appears that a reorientation towards a pro-EU position of former Eurosceptic core Serbian parties was in the interest of Western governments that, at the same time, broke all contact with the Democratic Party of Serbia following the party's adoption of a policy of opposition to Serbian EU membership. Foreign influence on domestic party politics seemed to be rather strong in Serbia, which was due to the weak state institutions, fragmented party system as well as political elites that generally did not pursue principled politics based on a clear set of fundamental values. This created conditions for foreign ambassadors to take the role of key 'external veto players' that were often in a position to significantly affect the outcomes of political processes in the country.

Notes

1. Part of this chapter was published as an article 'Transformation or defiance: The impact of the European People's Party on Serbian and Croatia parties', *Czech Journal of Political Science*, 2015(2), p. 147–167.
2. The European People's Party used to have a list of membership criteria, which included requirements that a party needs to have 'a special reference in the party programme to European integration based on the federal model' and that it must acknowledge the principle of subsidiarity. These requirements were introduced in 1996, but they were later abolished (Timus 2011, p. 8).
3. The Croatian Party of—Dr Right Ante Starčević officially applied for membership in the AECR in April 2014. Tomašić left this party in November 2014 and joined the Croatian Conservative Party, becoming its president in March 2015. As a result, the Croatian Party of—Dr Right Ante Starčević lost its representation in the EP as well as membership in the AECR.

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CHAPTER 7

Transformation, Opposition or Defiance in the Western Balkans?

'Europe' has never been an easy issue for political parties and their voters in Serbia and Croatia. All the crucial political and social contradictions as well as statehood and identity dilemmas, which have dominated the public realms of these countries since the fall of communism, have been reflected in the notion of 'Europe'. Moreover, there are very few countries in Europe that have experienced such dramatic developments in their relations with the EU and domestic politics over the last two decades. These two countries have undergone dynamic and contradictory relationships with the EU, ranging from an armed conflict with most EU member states to the membership negotiations in the Serbian case, and from unofficial isolation to becoming an EU member in the case of Croatia. At the same time, both countries have endured the full force of the internal difficulties stemming from their post-communist and post-conflict transformation—facing the ever-present legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars, agonising dilemmas related to political and state fragmentation, fragile democratic underpinnings of their societies and deeply polarised party systems. It was under these circumstances that political parties in both countries formed and shifted their broad, underlying attitudes towards the EU and their countries' membership in the EU.

This book aimed to provide insight into how political parties responded to the EU by examining the case studies of Serbia and Croatia. Conceptualised as a comparative qualitative study of two party systems, the book sought to identify and categorise the stances on the EU of rel-

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evant parties, and examine how they adopted, and why some of them shifted, their views on European integration since 2000. To understand the underlying motives behind party positions on this issue, the study explored the effect of four explanatory variables: party ideology, party strategy, party relations with general public and core voters, and transnational party linkages. It analysed the extent to which party views could be attributed to each of these factors, examined in the context of the dynamic party politics in both countries, their post-conflict transformation as well as their peculiar role as the latecomers to the process of European integration. It also aimed to understand how the European issue played out through these party systems and how parties used 'Europe' in domestic political contestation.

This concluding chapter summarises the most important findings of the study by discussing each of the explanatory variables examined as well as interactions between them. It also draws implications for the comparative literature from the Serbian and Croatian cases, discusses how the crisis of European integration affected party responses and proposes avenues for further research.

Conceptualising Party Responses to the EU

The conceptualisation and classification of party stances on the EU remains one of the most contentious issues in the comparative literature, which consequently led to fundamental disagreement about the nature of individual parties that have been differently classified by various authors (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002; Flood and Usherwood 2007). This may be the result of the fact that many parties have complex attitudes towards the EU (Enyedi and Lewis 2006), but also that most classification models required parties' nuances stances on different aspects of the EU to be operationalised (see Chap. 1). Yet, general knowledge about the EU among the party elites and the public in candidate states was very low, as they were almost exclusively focused on EU membership. Several interviews with senior party officials conducted in 2011 indicated a high level of ignorance among both Serbian and Croatian political elites. In other words, discussing a desirable form of the EU was simply not an issue 'since political parties often did not have the capacity for such discussion' (Leaković, Interview 2011). Moreover, the nature of the debate on the EU in (candidate) states examined here was fundamentally different compared to (old) member states. It was not only predominantly couched

in terms of political conditions for EU membership, but was essentially conducted through proxy issues—such as cooperation with the ICTY and the status of Kosovo.

Taking into consideration the specific nature of EU issues in these states, the study classified the broad, underlying positions of Serbian and Croatian parties on the EU into four categories: hard and soft Euroscepticism, and hard and soft Euroenthusiasm. The applied model, combining the existing classification frameworks, was conceptualised as an ordinal axis of dynamic party views on the EU, ranging from principled support to principled opposition, as outlined in Table 7.1.

As expected, a large majority of relevant parties in both countries were Euroenthusiastic. Four of them were characterised as hard Euroenthusiasts—the Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia, as well as the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats in Croatia. These parties consistently expressed a principled pro-integration position by strongly advocating their countries' EU membership, while few of them also expressed a relatively elaborated support for European integration and the EU in principle. Their responses to the EU were largely ideologically motivated; they seem to have adopted principled Euroenthusiasm as a core element of their overall liberal and modernist identity and 'world view'. Moreover, there were four par-

Table 7.1 Party positions on the EU in Serbia and Croatia in 2017

Hard Euroenthusiasm	*Soft Euroenthusiasm*	*Soft Euroscepticism*	*Hard Euroscepticism*
Principled pro-integration	*Contingent pro-integration*	*Contingent anti-integration*	*Principled anti-integration*
Serbia			
Democratic Party Liberal Democratic Party	Serbian Progressive Party Socialist Party of Serbia	–	Serbian Radical Party Democratic Party of Serbia Dveri
Croatia			
Social Democratic Party Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats	Croatian Democratic Union Croatian Peasant Party	–	Croatian Party of Rights Human Shield

Sources: Adapted Conti (2003), Rovny (2004), Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a)

ties classified as soft Euroenthusiasts—the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Croatian Democratic Union and the Croatian Peasant Party. Most of these parties underwent a fundamental ideological transformation and shifted their underlying attitudes towards the EU driven by strategic electoral considerations (see Chap. 4). Pragmatism was particularly an important trait of the Serbian Progressive Party, which lacked any ideological convictions, while its enthusiasm for Serbian EU membership was couched in instrumental and utilitarian terms. This party was also characterised as populist Euroenthusiast (see Chap. 3). The Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union adopted more elaborated ideological principles. However, there was limited evidence that their soft Europeanism reflected deeper ideological beliefs. The Croatian Peasant Party appeared to be somewhat more driven by its traditionalist and national ideologies that predisposed it towards contingent support for the EU.

Table 7.1 demonstrates the strong overall presence of hard Euroscepticism in the Serbian party system, while such sentiments, although consistently present, were mostly limited to political periphery in Croatia. Traditional suspicious and scepticism towards Europe and the West in general in Serbia—unlike in more Western-oriented Croatia—has been a constant feature of a considerable part of Serbian society and politics over the last two decades. Moreover, different nature of party systems in these countries created different opportunities for parties to express Eurosceptic or Euroenthusiastic sentiments, with a highly fragmented and polarised system in Serbia being more conducive to the sharp contestation of EU issues and consequently the emergence of more pronounced Euroscepticism (Stojić 2017). Therefore, the Serbian Radical Party, the Democratic Party of Serbia and Dveri were classified as hard Eurosceptic in Serbia, while in Croatia such parties were small and peripheral such as Croatian Party of Rights and Human Shield. What characterised most of these parties was their nationalist or radical right ideology, which shaped their principled opposition to the substance of European integration and EU membership. Given that the principles of supranational cooperation run essentially counter to their nativist and nationalist identity, the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights expressed mostly ideologically driven, hard Euroscepticism. The Democratic Party of Serbia and Dveri were classified as hard Eurosceptic, although they did not express radical right ideology. Rather, they were traditionalist parties concerned with identity and statehood issues which predisposed them to adopt rejectionist stance on the supranational nature of

European integration and to strongly criticise EU's policy towards Serbia in the light of the proclamation of Kosovan independence. In contrast, the Croatian Human Shield was a rare case of a party rejecting the EU, predominantly based on its anti-establishment and radical left identity.

The study did not identify any relevant soft Eurosceptic parties in these countries lending support to Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2016) assessment that contingent Euroscepticism may not be a feasible position any more, given that leaving—or not joining the EU at all—became a more viable option after 'Brexit'. This was even more so in the countries on European periphery where the debate on the EU was almost exclusively centred around EU membership. As a result, all Eurosceptic parties were hard due to their opposition to EU membership, which was the most important dividing line between parties. This accords with Skinner's (2013) findings in West European non-EU member states which followed the same pattern of widespread hard Euroscepticism. Contingent opposition to the EU and EU membership proved to be therefore a rare and transitory phenomenon. Specifically, the national conservative Democratic Party of Serbia and the Croatian Peasant Party were close to this position since there were ideologically inclined to doubt, although not necessarily reject, the underlying principles of European integration. Yet, faced with the major issues of Kosovo, the Democratic Party of Serbia hardened its position and turned to hard Euroscepticism rejecting Serbian EU membership—but also legitimising and moving hard Euroscepticism, for the first time, beyond the fringes of the party system. At the same time, in the absence of similar major statehood issues in Croatia, the logic of coalition politics largely kept scepticism of the Croatian Peasant Party at bay. The Serbian Progressive Party and the Croatian Democratic Union were also by nature inclined to adopt this position; however, the necessity to prove and affirm their pro-EU credentials after moving away from a nationalistic and hard Eurosceptic position in the context of EU accession negotiations made such stance unsustainable.

What Drives Party Responses to the EU?

This section discusses the effect and the interaction between the factors that shaped party responses to the EU. Figure 7.1 schematically presents the observed relation between the dependent and four independent variables. In terms of the key question raised in Chap. 1 regarding the most important factors that may induce party stances on the EU, this study

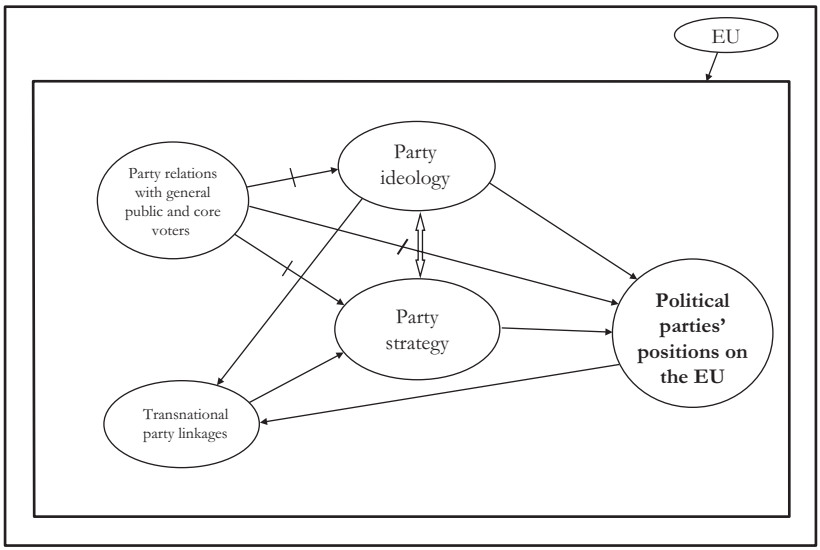

Fig. 7.1 The drivers of party positions on the EU

accords with the comparative literature arguing that party ideology and strategy predominantly affect party responses to the EU. Party ideology proved to be the key determinant for most Serbian and Croatian parties. This may come as a surprise as these were generally weakly ideologically grounded parties. Yet, they have been rather consistently advocating standpoints on ethnonational issues, with many parties building a strong national component into their identity. Therefore, they responded to the EU primarily motivated by their fundamental stances on identity issues since EU integration was closely related to crucial identity and statehood dilemmas in these post-conflict societies (Chap. 3). Consequently, they were largely unresponsive to public opinion and core voter preferences on the EU, or concerns related to their international affiliations and transnational links, as outlined in Fig. 7.1. Strategic electoral incentives coming from the domestic party system—such as other parties' positions on this issues, aspirations to become more 'coalitionable' or the peripheral status within the party system—did not fundamentally determine their underlying views on European integration, although they did shape the way these parties translated EU issues in domestic party competition.

Conversely, some parties deliberately started advocating pro-European policies without having the ideological predisposition to do so motivated

by strategic incentives. They even altered their ideologies to make them more mainstream and EU-compatible, as demonstrated in Chap. 4. This volte-face was a strategically driven response to electoral incentives in the context of dynamic electoral competition and a strong EU presence in candidate countries, aimed at maximising the chances of securing executive office. Nevertheless, their initial ideological predispositions did impact the scope of their transformations as they found it difficult to fully abandon their EU-incompatible nationalist background and turn into principled supporters for European integration. Moreover, they were generally susceptible to external pressures as the 'external veto players'—the EU and European party federation—appear to have somewhat affected their views on the EU. Surprisingly, however, they were broadly unresponsive to general public and core voters' preferences on this issue, as shown in Fig. 7.1.

Generally, public and core voters' concerns about European integration did not prove to be significant driving forces behind underlying party stances on this issue. Parties—including those that were strategically motivated—tended to ignore and did not respond to public and core voters' preferences, as outlined in Fig. 7.1. While the public in both countries—and particularly in Croatia—became significantly Eurosceptic over time, political elites did not accommodate such sentiments; instead they remained, or even came to be, overwhelmingly enthusiastic about their countries' EU memberships, as discussed in Chap. 5. This was due primarily to the fact that (although increasingly Eurosceptic) the impulses coming from the general public and their core voters were unarticulated, which consequently left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on this issue. The EU was particularly a 'difficult issue' for voters of Serbian parties, who had difficulties expressing their definite views given Serbia's contradictory relations with the EU, the lack of wider political consensus on EU membership, and the outstanding identity and statehood issues directly related to EU conditionality.

The effect of party transnational linkages was mediated through party ideology and strategy. Specifically, it proved to be less relevant for parties that appeared to have ideologically driven views on the EU. They either had no intention to become members of European transnational parties (hard Eurosceptic parties) or had formed stances long before joining European party federations (hard Euroenthusiastic parties). Instead, as outlined in Fig. 7.1, a pro-EU agenda and moderate ideology affected parties' transitional relations given that these were key preconditions for parties to develop meaningful international affiliations. On the other

hand, this factor may have accounted for the strategically motivated transformation of former Eurosceptic parties. They were largely driven by a strong aspiration to break away from their long-term international isolation and join one of the European party federations in order to obtain European legitimacy and the possibility to participate in government, as discussed in Chap. 6.

Ideology, Strategy and Party Responses to the EU

Ideology clearly predisposed parties to more sceptic or enthusiastic views of the EU. Parties found it difficult to disregard their ideologies and fundamental stances when determining a position on the EU. In line with previous research (Enyedi and Lewis 2006; Marks et al. 2006), the liberal party family (the Liberal Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party) closest to the cosmopolitan pole stood out as principled hard Euroenthusiasts. Together with the social democratic party family (the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party), they found it easier to accept both the supranational principles underpinning the process of European integration and the (political) conditions for their countries' EU membership. This was, however, a difficult issue for conservative and traditionalist parties given their pronounced concerns for national issues, such as the preservation of sovereignty, national culture and traditional values. While none of these parties were firmly pro-EU, some of them pragmatically adopted soft and contingent Euroenthusiasm (the Serbian Progressive Party, the Croatian Democratic Union). Other more ideologically driven conservatives (the Democratic Party of Serbia) remained true to their fundamental values, expressing more sceptic, if not hostile, stances on the EU. The radical right parties characterised by nationalism and strong ethnocentric worldviews (the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights) adopted principled hard Eurosceptic positions, standing out against both the principles of the supranational European integration and their countries' EU memberships.

This pattern of support for and opposition to the EU was largely the result of the structure of party competition. Namely, party responses to the EU seem to be almost entirely structured by a single dominant dimension of contestation—that is, between nationalism (nativism) and cosmopolitanism. In other words, although traditional, conservative and often authoritarian, Serbian and Croatian hard Euroscepticism drew dominantly on the nationalist ideology, in opposition to cosmopolitanism that was advocated

by Euroenthusiasts. Conversely, party location on the conventional socio-economic left–right axis—between market liberalism and state interventionism—proved to be less relevant for their positioning on the EU as they did not perceive the EU in socio-economic terms. This holds true across party spectrum in both countries as all analysed parties seem to have followed this pattern (with the exception of hard Euroscepticism of Human Shield based on the socio-economic radical left world views). This is somewhat at odds with other Central and Eastern European countries where both axes were found to drive party positions as there was a systematic relationship between Euroenthusiastic pro-market cosmopolitans and Eurosceptic egalitarian nationalists (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006; Vachudova and Hooghe 2009). In contrast, the weak potential of socio-economic left–right to drive party politics in general, and party stances on the EU in particular, in Serbia and Croatia, reflected the sheer dominance of identity politics in the specific post-Yugoslav context. In other words, the key conditions for EU membership were closely related to fundamental state-building and identity issues—such as the status of Kosovo, cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation and reconciliation—and parties predominantly adopted views from their standpoint on ethnonational issues.

European issues did not appear to constitute a new dimension of political conflicts in these party systems. The issue of Europe can, in principle, generate new political conflicts that did not exist prior to countries' intention to join the EU—such as to what extent the centre of decision-making should be transferred to a supranational EU level—bringing about repositioning of the parties or even reshaping the cleavage structure (Kriesi et al. 2006). In Serbia and Croatia, however, European issue was rather a function of the existing politicised conflicts on ethnonational issues. For example, the controversial issue of Kosovo, which has traditionally polarised political parties in Serbia, has further deepened this divide and demarcated parties on the identity axis when normalising relations with—and arguably the recognition of—Kosovo became a major condition for EU accession. In other words, the issue of the EU did not have the potential to structure party politics in a new way. Serbian and Croatian parties therefore largely assimilated and exploited European issues within their existing ideologies, which corresponds to some Central and Eastern European counties (such as most of other Balkan states and Hungary) also characterised by dominant identity politics dimension.

Although most parties responded to the EU in accordance to their fundamental world views on identity issues, those more strategically driven

were clearly responsive to electoral incentives. Strategic considerations proved to have a transformative effect upon a group of former Eurosceptic parties—the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union (Chap. 4). These parties underwent fundamental ideological reorientation, including shifting of their stances on the EU, aiming to maximise chances of coming to power. The key internal strategic drivers of change were both related to the inter-party relations (domestic party system) and intra-party relations (relations within the party), in addition to the external factors. Specifically, some of these parties faced strategic disincentives to compete on the Eurosceptic space that was already 'occupied' by stronger political competitors expressing such views. Confronted with falling electoral support as its voters turned to the Serbian Radical Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia did have particularly strong reasons to move away from the Eurosceptic political space (see Bochsler 2008). Other parties pragmatically transformed in reaction to repeated exclusion from government participation (the Serbian Progressive Party) or the shock of losing elections for the first time (the Croatian Democratic Union). Moreover, Eurosceptic and nationalistic parties were effectively prevented from participating in the government alongside other pro-EU parties by influential Western governments and de facto the EU (Chap. 6). Euroscepticism was therefore a 'costly' political platform for parties faced with a strong EU involvement in domestic party politics and they found it necessary to transform. In other words, they were 'compelled' to tone down and eventually change their negative views on the EU, aimed at becoming 'suitable coalition partners' for other pro-EU parties. This logic of coalition building significantly influenced the reorientation of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party, which were unacceptable coalition partners for other parties due to pressures from the West, and their nationalist Eurosceptic ideology.

A party's inability to form a government seems to have also resulted in growing discontent within the party, which created conditions favourable to factionalism and fundamental change. Specifically, the reorientation towards the pro-EU pole was clearly a top-down process initiated by new party leaders following the leadership change, which is generally found to be one of the key drivers of change (Harmel and Janda 1994). The transformation was the result of either the successful 'neutralisation' of Eurosceptic hard nationalist factions ('de-Miloševisation' in the Socialist Party of Serbia and 'de-Tudjmanisation' in the Croatian Democratic

Union) or unsuccessful attempts to do so, due to strong resistance to change from hard-line nationalists (the Serbian Radical Party), which led to the foundation of a new moderate party, such as the Serbian Progressive Party (see Konitzer 2011). The strong leadership able to force the new views upon party ranks or at least temper any scepticism towards the EU, proved to be an important catalyst for change.

It is, nevertheless, important to notice that parties' initial ideological predispositions and historical origins did impact the scope and depth of their transformations. This was most evident in the case of the Croatian Democratic Union that found it difficult to genuinely abandon EU-incompatible 'ideological baggage' of illiberal nationalism that fundamentally shaped this party and permeated its ranks. The Serbian Progressives and Socialists, sharing the same political legacy, appeared to be somewhat more opportunistic and devoid of deeper ideological principles, particularly the former one. Yet, none of these parties turned into a strong and principled enthusiast for the EU, and often appeared reluctant to pursue EU-induced policies that contradicted the practices and values they broke with.

Party ideology, therefore, was not a fixed category and proved to be a changeable phenomenon, particularly in the context of unsettled post-communist party systems in transition and the lack of politically articulated social and economic interests of different social groups (Chap. 3). Moreover, the transformation of ideology can be strategically driven. This arguably does not happen often and parties find it difficult to do so, given the potentially high political cost and fear that core voters would not accept such a fundamental shift. However, when a set of strong strategic incentives comes into play, parties may embark upon ideological transformation that inevitably implies altering or shifting of stances on the EU. This is likely to happen in the case of predominantly office- and vote-seeking parties that, in general, have an instrumental approach to politics, unless they primarily seek votes and office to implement policies (Müller and Strøm 1999). Thus, party ideology can be a function of political strategy, as demonstrated in the cases of the Serbian Progressive and Socialist parties.

In most cases, however, strategic considerations seem to have only shaped the way parties translated EU issues in domestic party competition—but did not fundamentally determine or alter parties' underlying views on European integration. This was most visible in the case of the hard Eurosceptic parties that moderated their rhetoric in the mid-2000s

without changing their overall negative stances on the EU for purely tactical and electoral reasons. The softened nationalistic and anti-EU rhetoric of the Serbian Radical Party is a case in point. The party ideologically grounded in anti-Europeanism tactically responded to electoral concerns and tempered its opposition to EU membership due to the popularity of the EU with the Serbian electorate. Similarly, the pressure of coalition politics created conditions that led to the moderation of the rhetoric of the Croatian Party of Rights (Chap. 4). This was a pragmatic decision of the party that aimed to move from the fringe of the party system and become 'suitable coalition partners' for other conservative parties that had become pro-European. When in the run-up to the EU membership referendum strategic incentives ceased to exist, this party shifted back to its initial position and, in line with its radical right ideology, argued for the rejection of Croatian EU membership. On the pro-EU pole, this was a less common phenomenon. A small liberal Serbian Enough Is Enough (Dosta je bilo), although not essentially Eurosceptic, advocated a one-year suspension of Serbian EU membership negotiation in 2016. This was an expression of dissatisfaction with EU's approach to the Western Balkans since the EU 'turned a blind eye to the collapse of its own values in Serbia' (DJB 2016a, b), but also a tactical decision aimed to delegitimise the Serbian Progressive Party and to point to the lack of genuine 'European' vocation of this party. This broadly accords with Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2008b) arguments that strategic incentives predominantly impact party rhetoric as well as how parties translate issue in the domestic party competition. It also lends support to Szczerbiak's (2008) argument that parties may approach in particular the issue of EU membership purely strategically. In other words, party stances on EU membership proved to be more practical issue and, as such, easier shifted than party underlying positions on the EU itself (Stojić 2013a).

The post-Yugoslav Euroscepticism generally did not prove to be 'a deliberate strategic choice' (Sitter and Batory 2008) or a product of party competition (Sitter 2001). All parties characterised here as hard Eurosceptic—the Serbian Radical Party, the Democratic Party of Serbia, the Croatian Party of Rights and many peripheral parties—expressed core values that largely ran in counter to the principles of European integration. The ever-present issues of nationhood, statehood and identity, in the post-Yugoslav context crucially affected their positions. Serbian party-based Euroscepticism in particular proved to be a conse-

quence of the traditional, deep-seated animosity and suspicion towards Europe and the West in general (Serbian Radical Party) as well as the principled disagreement with policy of the EU towards the former Yugoslavia (the Democratic Party of Serbia) (Stojić 2013a, p. 134). In other words, the dominance of identity politics provided strong ideological foundations for post-Yugoslav Euroscepticism that—apart from the Croatian Human Shield—drew exclusively on the national conservative or nationalist ideology. This broadly corresponds to other Central and East European countries where Euroscepticism was mostly located close to the authoritarian pole of the political spectrum (Enyedi and Lewis 2006).

Public, Voters' and Party Responses to the EU: 'Blatant Misrepresentation'?

The study found the general mismatch between the stances and policies pursued by political parties, on the one hand, and both public opinion and core voters' concerns on the EU, on the other. Specifically, as public Euroscepticism grew—particularly since 2008 in Serbia and 2003 in Croatia—partied did not seem to follow this trend by adopting more Eurosceptic views. On the contrary, some former Eurosceptic parties fundamentally shifted stances and adopted Euroenthusiastic positions, as discussed in Chap. 5. In other words, it appears that most parties did not formulate policies based on public opinion and largely ignored impulses coming from the public. This lack of synchrony between elites and citizens may be explained by elite assessment that EU membership would be economically beneficial, or that Euroscepticism was a 'costly' political platform given a strong EU involvement in domestic politics and thus the necessity to consistently prove pro-EU credentials. The observed trend may be also due to the low salience of European issues for the general public as most surveys indicated, which allowed parties to determine positions on this issue irrespectively of public preferences. This was a rather surprising finding given the assumption in the literature that the transformation of former Eurosceptic parties can be, to a great extent, explained by the pressure of an overwhelming pro-EU public. Vachudova (2012) asserted that the popularity of joining the EU in candidate states compels most major parties to become more pro-European. Konitzer (2011) similarly argued that pro-EU public was the key factor that induced parties'

transformations in Serbia and Croatia. The study's finding, rather, lends support to those scholars who argued that parties are generally unresponsive to Eurosceptic sentiments of the public (Ray 2007; Hellström 2008) and that the level of party-based Euroscepticism is not necessarily correlated to levels of popular Euroscepticism. General public preferences appear therefore not to be a reliable indicator of how parties determine their stances on the EU; the study thus argues against the common tendency in the comparative literature to draw conclusions on party stances based on general public opinion of the Union. Looking at public opinion may give us only a very crude picture, and may not indicate how individual parties actually formulate and change their stances on the EU in relation to electoral incentives.

Examining core voters' stances on the EU that parties are more likely to accommodate may provide a more comprehensive picture of the nature of the relationship between political elites and publics. Surprisingly, however, most parties were not found to be cued by their core voters' preferences on the EU. They were largely irresponsive to preferences of their electoral constituencies and this was the case even with former Eurosceptic parties that fundamentally changed their stances and became pro-EU, clearly motivated by electoral concerns. Yet their core voters remained significantly Eurosceptic or at least had ambivalent stances, and were certainly not Euroenthusiastic (Chap. 5). This may be explained by the fact that impulses coming from core voters were weak and unarticulated, which consequently left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on this issue and in some cases, to change stances. This somewhat corresponds to other Central and Eastern European countries where 'citizens generally have an amorphous, though largely positive orientation towards the EU', so 'parties are free to occupy specific positions on the various issues' (Enyedi and Lewis 2006, p. 244). The apparent lack of linear relationship between party and core voters' stances on this issue may be also due to the fact that, as Enyedi and Lewis argued, parties anticipated voters' future stances and acted accordingly. However, unlike some Central and East European parties (for instance, the Czech Civic Democratic Party that in 2003 amplified its criticism of the EU hoping that its Euroenthusiastic voters are likely soon to be disappointed with EU membership), there seems to be 'blatant misrepresentation' (Enyedi and Lewis 2006, p. 244) in reverse in Serbia and Croatia, with some parties seeking to anticipate future pro-EU orientation of their largely Eurosceptic core voters.

The External Impact on Party Responses to the EU

Parties not only reacted to the internal impetus arising from domestic party competition, as expected and discussed in the literature (Sitter 2001; Sitter and Batory 2008), but, importantly, to the external incentives that created conditions for potentially fundamental changes in their stances on the EU. An examination of domestic factors needs therefore to be supplemented by an analysis of 'external stimuli' for change (Harmel and Janda 1994). The external factors, beyond the party control, that proved to have some transformative power were threefold: the 'external veto players', European transnational parties and the country's level of integration with the EU.

The concept of the 'external veto players' has widely been used in the comparative, primarily EU conditionality, literature. Konitzer (2011) argued that external veto actors (i.e., the EU) played a significant role in creating pressure for Serbia and Croatian parties to adopt more pro-EU stances. Vachudova (2006, 2012) similarly claimed that major political parties respond to EU leverage by embracing agendas that are consistent with EU requirements. This study looked at the linkages between Western ambassadors as well as officials of the European Commission and the European Parliament with Serbian and Croatian parties. Western ambassadors proved to be an important factor that impacted the policies and stances of some strategically motivated political parties, as demonstrated in the case of the Socialist Party of Serbia. Their strong (almost transformative) influence was surprising given that the comparative literature has so far not focused on this issue. On the other hand, EU institutions and officials, as expected, had a rather significant effect in the context of these countries' European integration. However, no direct, deliberate impact on party systems and parties aimed at the transformation of party systems and (Eurosceptic) parties have been found. As argued in Chap. 7, the European Commission specifically did not have any active policy towards these parties aimed at influencing their stances on the EU. Instead, its influence was indirect and channelled through policies aimed at the democratisation and stabilisation of these post-communist and post-conflict societies. Rather than intending to change Eurosceptic politicians, the EU officials appear to have sought to marginalise Eurosceptic parties whose political strength and activities would, they felt, be detrimental to the post-conflict stabilisation of the former Yugoslav region, which was their primary concern.

The EU therefore exerted indirect influences on party-based Euroscepticism across both countries in two ways. First, it constrained the party competition and intervened effectively in government-opposition relations by blocking hard Eurosceptic parties from government participation (see Kasapović 2003; Goati 2006). Given the EU's influence on mainstream Euroenthusiastic parties, these parties were effectively 'forbidden' to negotiate government formation with nationalist and hard Eurosceptic parties—specifically, with the Serbian Radical Party in 2007 and the Croatian Party of Rights in 2003. Consequently, hard Eurosceptic parties were practically excluded from the government formations, which made them essentially non-coalitionable. This, therefore, crucially contributed to the pro-EU transformation of some of them. Second, the EU effectively delegitimised Euroscepticism as a political stance in these countries by pursing an unofficial policy of international isolation of such parties, creating 'pariah' parties in international circles and aiming at their political relegation. The Serbian Radical Party, for instance, has always been in unofficial isolation from Western countries and the EU (see Chap. 6). Until the Democratic Party of Serbia adopted hard Euroscepticism in the late 2000s, Euroscepticism (including soft one) was not felt to be a politically legitimate stance since it was advocated by un-reformed parties with a questionable democratic outlook and was closely related to nationalist and radical right values.

Furthermore, although transnational party relations did not prove to be a crucial driver of party stances on the EU (Enyedi and Lewis 2006; Ladrech 2008), international party organisations can have some transformative role (Haughton and Fisher 2008; Orlović 2008b; Pridham 2002). Party transformation induced by international affiliations may occur under two particular conditions, namely when parties become susceptible to requirements of European transnational party federations and highly value tangible benefits from membership of these groups, and when European transnational parties decide strategically to spread influence on parties from the new regions of the European periphery by providing credible benefits in the form of associate membership status as well as an institutional framework for facilitating these parties' further 'European socialisation'. Transnational relations can therefore induce the transformation of primarily strategically driven Eurosceptic parties that, in the process of reorientation towards the pro-European pole, strive to avoid international isolation by joining European party federations. The key motive behind this was utilitarian—securing Western legitimacy and international respectability. Obtaining membership in European party

federations would be the final proof of their successful transformation and an indicator of a stable pro-European orientation. More importantly, since key members of European transnational parties were essentially 'external veto players' (i.e., influential officials of Western governments and the EU), by forging close relations with the European parties, former Eurosceptics effectively prevented these veto players from blocking their government participation.

Finally, distance from EU membership proved to be a factor that framed party views on the EU. It appears that a country's level of integration with the EU and the intensity of these ties had an important transformative effect on some Eurosceptic parties in (potential) candidate countries. In other words, the more advanced the EU integration process, the more pressures there were on parties to clearly position themselves on this issue and, in some (not all) cases, to become more pro-European. This tendency seems to be the result of two simultaneous processes. First, strong economic links with the EU gradually forged by consecutive pro-EU governments made these countries economically dependent on the EU and vulnerable to its demands. Consequently, Eurosceptic politicians found it very difficult to ignore this fact and economically unviable to reverse the trend. Furthermore, as argued in Chap. 4, perceiving that EU integration was in the interests of parties' supporters was an important driver of change, which was closely related to this tendency. Specifically, a more advanced level of EU integration changed parties' perception of their supporters' interests. In other words, trade links with the EU, which, over time, became practically irreversible, led the leadership of Eurosceptic parties to start assessing them as economically important, beneficial and difficult to curtail, in spite of ideological scepticism and even hatred towards the West. Second, the mere scope of significant institutional changes and legal harmonisation introduced during the process of EU integration, even long before the formal commencement of EU membership negotiations, created a momentum that was difficult to reverse. As demonstrated in Chap. 4, Eurosceptic politicians realised that 'so much has been done over the years' and 'everything would be in vain' if the process is stopped (Nikolić 2012). As Grabbe (2006) found in other Central and Eastern European countries, policy-makers became committed to the process because they had already invested considerable political capital into aligning with EU policies, so it became very expensive to withdraw.

This 'path dependence' therefore created strong incentives for parties to change and adapt to the 'new reality'. Both the traditionally Eurosceptic

parties in Serbia did not 'withstand' it. They either adapted to new circumstances (the Socialist Party of Serbia) or experienced an intra-party split on this issue (the Serbian Radical Party) in 2008, by which time the country had built strong economic ties with the EU while the process of association with the EU, although quite slow, was relatively advanced. The same was the case with the Croatian Democratic Union in the early 2000s. Therefore, once that process become effectively irreversible or had advanced considerably, parties found it difficult (unless they were ideologically firmly Eurosceptic) to 'resist' and thus 'adjusted to the structural changes in the world and the changed historical conditions in the country' (SPS 2010, p. 47). This argument is, however, different from the common assumptions of the EU conditionality literature. Whereas these authors (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Vachudova 2006, 2008, 2012; Subotić 2010) mostly looked at the set of tangible political conditions that the EU imposes on candidate states and changes this may induce, this study argues that the EU did not directly aim to change the positions of Eurosceptic parties. The observed 'path dependence' tendency was not the result of the EU's direct pressure on these parties to transform. Instead, it was the overall presence of the EU in these countries as well as the economic and institutional ties between the two sides that created the momentum and conditions conducive to the pro-EU transformation of pragmatic Eurosceptic politicians.

Party Responses to the EU in the Post-Yugoslav Context

This study has argued that it is necessary to employ a case-sensitive approach when analysing party responses to European integration in different countries, given that the same explanatory factors may have varying significance in different national settings. Specifically, most of the factors examined that proved to exert an effect on party positions on the EU were largely context-dependent. The peculiar post-Yugoslav context (Chap. 2) significantly influenced Serbian and Croatian party responses to the EU. In other words, the legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars, the nature of these countries' domestic political and party systems, and their controversial relations with the EU created conditions that were specific, although not completely unique since other Balkan (and some Central and Easter European) states faced similar challenges in their post-communist transition.

Despite all differences, most visible in the fact that Croatia became an EU member state in 2013, while Serbia started membership negotiations only in 2014, both countries exhibited strikingly similar characteristics in relation to most of the examined variables. What is most remarkable is that essentially the same pattern of transformation of once hard Eurosceptic parties occurred in both countries, driven by the same strategic factors, as discussed throughout the book. In addition, the reorientation of hard Eurosceptic parties that induced the transformation of party systems from polarised to more moderate pluralistic (Sartori 1990) (accompanied with a narrowing of ideological distance among relevant parties and more consensual nature of the EU membership debate), as well as a sharp rise of public Euroscepticism in Serbia in the late 2000s, followed the same or very similar pattern in Croatia from the early and mid-2000s.

Furthermore, the nature of European issues and their translation into party politics in the context of these post-conflict societies was rather specific as the issues resulting from the violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia were closely intertwined with EU conditionality. Therefore, the EU integration debate was, in both countries, largely centred on the issues stemming from the dissolution of the former federation, rather than the EU iself and EU membership, respectively. Public debate on the EU has been essentially conducted through proxy issues, with the issue of Kosovo status (as a condition for EU membership) being by far the most important one in Serbian party politics. For example, the readiness to compromise on the Kosovo issues was mapped on to party attitudes towards the EU and EU membership, with the most co-operative parties also being the most Euroenthusiastic and vice versa. Other proxy issues that characterised the EU debates across both countries were cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation and reconciliation, and overall attitudes towards the legacy and consequences of the post-Yugoslav wars.

Another general consequence of their specificity is that some of the Western concepts of comparative politics employed in this study, such as party–family classification (Von Beyme 1985), 'the cleavage theory of party responses to Europe' (Marks and Wilson 2000) and core-periphery concept (Katz and Mair 1995), have a limited explanatory power in the settings of these two party systems. The concept of party families had limited applicability in the cases examined, given the parties' slow ideological profiling and the lack of firm stances on the social and economic issues that gave rise to many of these groupings. Also, traditional social and political groupings based on classical political cleavages were distorted by growing

nationalism and a war at the time these parties emerged, which significantly influenced their ideological profiles (Stojić 2013b). It therefore made social democracy or conservatism context-driven and different from the same party families in Western Europe, although some convergence can be noticed since the late 2000s. Also, the Serbian system was particularly unsettled, polarised and fragmented, which made it rather difficult to differentiate the political core from periphery (Stojić 2017). However, as both countries move away from the difficult legacy of the 1990s and their interactions with the EU assume a more technocratic nature, their party systems are more likely to become less idiosyncratic resembling other European states. This has been already discernible in Croatia following its EU accession, while Serbia seems to have finally entered a more 'peaceful' phase of its European integration largely devoid of emotionally charged rhetoric. Overall, the more 'technical' nature of their relations with the EU seems to have somewhat depoliticised the issue of 'Europe'.

The Crisis of European Integration and Party Responses to the EU

How did a series of crisis within the EU affect party attitudes in Serbia and Croatia? The 2008 financial crisis significantly changed the context under which these countries accede to the EU as it largely eroded the allure of the EU. For many (not only hard Eurosceptic) parties, the EU ceased to be the only and unquestionable model of economic development, and the desirability of joining the EU in economic terms became less obvious. Moreover, the EU itself showed reluctance to accept new member states. Driven by internal economic crisis, 'enlargement fatigue' plagued many member states, and they subsequently became more cautious about taking new members. This additionally discouraged Western Balkan political elites from implementing the reforms required for EU accession.

Under these circumstances, one may expect the rise of Eurosceptic sentiments within political elites. Yet, the euro zone crisis had a limited effect on party positioning on EU integration. It specifically did not discourage Euroenthusiasm among pro-European parties. On the contrary, as the crisis spread throughout the continent in the late 2000s, the two long-term hard Eurosceptic parties (the Socialist Party of Serbia and some leaders of the Serbian Radical Party) fundamentally shifted their position and adopted pro-EU policies. It appears that developments within the EU did not significantly affect party stances on this issue primarily due to the

lack of an informed discussion on the economic benefits and costs of EU accession. The EU was viewed in political, rather than economic, terms and these parties largely ignored the causes and consequence of the crisis that plagued the continent. The impact of the crisis was somewhat more evident in the rhetoric of Eurosceptic parties as the outbreak of the euro crisis prompted them to use it to further oppose the EU on more economic grounds. As explained by the former Radicals' vice president Dejan Mirović (Interview 2011), the EU was 'an economic corpse', underlying the experience of the 'economically failed EU member states' such as Greece or Portugal. Similarly, Croatian Eurosceptics started pointing out 'the enormous cost' of Croatian EU accession to economically ruined EU (Bošnjak Interview 2011; Srb Interview 2011). The anti-establishment and radical left Human Shield particularly sharply criticised the neoliberal nature of austerity policy pursued by the EU and the European Central Bank, emphasising the negative economic consequences of Croatian EU membership (Živi Zid 2015).

Furthermore, a failure of the EU to deal effectively with the 'migrant crisis' in 2015 and the British decision to leave the Union in 2016 sent powerful shockwaves across the continent, throwing the Union into 'an existential crisis' and causing a period of unprecedented uncertainty and confusion over its future. The 'migrant crisis' particularly highlighted the still fragile relations between Serbia and Croatia as well as the lack of basic communication between their political elites (Stojić 2016). Yet, the fundamental dilemmas most EU countries and political elites were faced with did not appear to significantly affect these parties on the European periphery; they remained predominantly concerned with domestic political issues and largely incapable of reflecting on and formulating effective responses to the global challenges (Stojić 2016). In contrast to many European countries, Serbia and Croatia did not witness the surge in Euroscepticism driven by anti-immigration or radical right ideology, despite the fact they that the hundreds of thousands of migrants transited through both countries. Eurosceptic parties did call for a more restrictive policy towards migrants, but they were primarily critical of the governments' handling of the crisis. Serbian Dveri argued, for instance, that Serbia may become the biggest asylum centre in Europe as a result of the failed EU migration policy and the government policy only aimed at satisfying the EU (Dveri 2016), while the Croatian Party of Rights advocated building a wall to stem the flow of migrants and preventing Croatia turning into a 'European ghetto' and an Islamic state (HSP 2015). However, the migrant crisis did

not become a major issue in the party politics primarily because very few migrants sought asylum in these countries. Nationalist Eurosceptic parties ideologically prone to harsh anti-migration stances were therefore not able to capitalise on this issue. Although some of them returned to Serbian parliament following the 2016 elections, they remained to be on the fringe of party politics (Serbian Radical Party, Dveri) or divided by internal conflicts (Democratic Party of Serbia), and thus unable to present a serious alternative to the Euroenthusiastic governments.

By contrast, the 'migrant crisis' paradoxically contributed to the rise in 'populist Euroenthusiasm', most apparent in the Serbian Progressive Party. Although expressing features often associated with an increasingly present phenomenon of populism, the Serbian Progressive Party did not adopt a Eurosceptic political platform, as discussed in Chap. 3. At the time of a sharp rise in anti-migrant rhetoric and policies across Europe, it pursued a pro-migrant policy in order to show and prove itself as 'truly European'. The case of the Serbian Progressive Party therefore demonstrated that Euroscepticism is not necessarily a key trait of overwhelmingly populist parties. On the contrary, strategically motivated Europeanism can also be linked to such parties, particularly in the context of EU candidate states where the grand debates on the nature of the EU—that polarise and divide member states—do not resonate with domestic publics and voters.

Conclusion

This book examined how political parties in the context of post-communist and post-conflict transformation responded to the increasingly controversial process of European integration. This book's conclusions are inevitably tentative particularly in the light of dynamic party systems in Serbia and Croatia as well as their ever-changing and advancing relations with the EU. It, nevertheless, found that the interplay between ideological or strategic motivations in the specific national contexts may account for their underlying positions on the EU as well as their use of European issues in domestic party competition. The degree to which each factor affects parties proved to be dependent on their inherent features—that is, whether a party was more policy-seeking or office-/vote-seeking (Müller and Strøm 1999). Although all parties act in response to electoral considerations, the study demonstrated that some parties found the principles of EU integration compatible with their world views; they were therefore ideologically inclined to support close (supranational) political and

economic cooperation of European nations and firmly advocated their countries' EU membership. In the party systems of Serbia and Croatia, dominated by ever-present issues of identity and ethnicity and thus 'moved' towards the right pole, this was comparatively a small number of mostly liberal and cosmopolitan parties. Similarly, the fundamental conservative and traditionalist beliefs of (arguably a few) party leaders and a value-based approach to politics made some Eurosceptic parties rather unwilling to compromise on the issue of 'Europe' and thus unresponsive to strategic incentives coming from the domestic party system and considerable external pressures. Such parties remained loyal to their world views and sceptical of the benefits of supranational cooperation between sovereign European nations. Finally, the parties expressing more radical right, nationalist and nativist views openly defied the EU, advocating alternative models of social organisation and development, largely irrespective of electoral considerations.

Seeking to secure votes and access to executive office, parties may also be driven by strategic and tactical motives, and thus prone to change their positions under internal or external influences. This study demonstrated that under a set of specific conditions pertaining to the political milieu of (potential) candidate countries, a group of former nationalist and Eurosceptic parties fundamentally transformed their ideologies and long-term positions on the EU, motivated by strategic electoral incentives stemming from the logic of domestic party systems and external stimuli. They, however, did not convert into the genuine and firm advocates of EU integration and expressed soft—and in some cases populist—Euroenthusiasm, finding it difficult to fully relinquish their EU-incompatible political legacy.

This book examined factors found to have impact on party responses to the EU in the comparative literature. However, there are other potentially important drivers that we know little about and that deserve further scrutiny. The linkages between parties' positions and business have been particularly under-researched. Yet, there is a widespread perception that business interests are privileged in Central and Eastern European countries, where the boundaries between legitimate lobbying and illegal pressures are often blurred and unclear (Copsey and Haughton 2009, p. 282). The murky impact of financial lobbies and big businesses on party politics, primarily through non-transparent financing political parties—particularly in Serbia—has been widely recognised among scholars and country experts interviewed (Bakić, Interview 2011; Cvijanović, Interview 2011; Pešić, Interview 2011). Krstić (2012) argued that there was a 'tycoonisa-

tion of Serbian politics' where 'political actors are just pawns of domestic and foreign tycoons'. Bakić (2013) also made the case that oligarchs have close links with the leaderships of political parties and the fact that the anti-monopolies act was only passed in 2008 was the best illustration of this linkage. Pešić (Interview 2011) specifically noted that there was a mutual dependence between the political and business elite, since the tycoons helped sustain parties' political existence by financing them. In return, Pešić argued that the ruling parties protect economic markets, fix tenders and auctions, and pass favourable legislation for the tycoons.

It is more difficult to assess the extent to which financial lobbies specifically impacted party stances on the EU and their interests in this respect. Orlović (2008a), for example, argued that tycoons and oligarchs were among the most vigorous opponents of Serbian EU integration as it creates a system where 'the rules of the game are respected'. Cvijanović (Interview 2011) hypothesised that financial lobbies had different interests at different stages of EU accession. Initially, at a time when they created monopolies, they were opponents of the EU memberships of their countries, since 'European consolidation' and the creation of systems with firm rules was not in their economic interests. As this process advanced, though, they became proponents of joining the EU, given that their positions would be strengthened and the initial gaining of capital legitimised, while further economic expansion required the political stability and legal predictability that EU membership could bring. It is therefore highly likely that financial lobbies had some impact on party policies on the EU as EU integration had a direct tangible impact on their economic interests, which made them rather sensitive to changes. Further research to substantiate these claims is needed, both in the case of these two countries and other Central and Eastern European countries. In other words, are similar mechanisms at play in other unsettled, post-communist societies and party systems? It is, however, important to note that it would be difficult to directly trace back party positions to the apparently strong influence of organised economic interests due to the sensitive nature of this issue and the limited available data.

Similarly, national churches may also affect parties' responses to European integration. Significant segments of both Orthodox and Catholic churches in Serbia and Croatia have been vocally Eurosceptic, motivated by concerns for the national identities and traditional values that may be endangered by EU membership. They

may exert their influence either indirectly through political parties ideologically close to these churches' worldview, or directly aimed at shaping the debate on this issues. This study did not find evidence that churches exerted significant impact on political parties; even parties based on Christian values with connections to clergy (such as the Democratic Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union) appear to have formed stances irrespective of this factor. However, this is an under-researched aspect of contemporary politics in Central and Eastern Europe (see Guerra 2017), and further research into this relationship may allow us to better understand party responses to the EU and party politics in general.

Finally, one of the findings of this study is that Western governments, represented by their ambassadors, appear to have possessed significant unofficial channels of influence on overall party stances, including those related to the EU. Specifically, there are strong, although limited, indications that these governments have played an important role in the transformation of former Eurosceptic parties in Serbia. However, this explanatory factor has been neglected in the existing comparative literature and there is room for further study of this variable. Future research is needed to examine the extent to which this is a phenomenon of the politically and institutionally unsettled post-communist countries. Is this a context-related finding due to a strong overall influence of the West in Serbia, and arguably other Western Balkan countries? Or is it the general context of (potential) candidate countries, which are subjected to considerable influences from the EU?

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Appendix A: List of Interviewees

Serbia

Politicians

Alimpić Zoran	Member of the presidency, Democratic Party	Belgrade, February 2011
Andrić Ivan	Former vice president, Liberal Democratic Party	Belgrade, April 2011
Čomić Gordana	Vice president of the Serbian Parliament, general secretary, Democratic Party	Belgrade, February 2011
Djukić Dejanović Slavica	Former president of the Serbian Parliament, vice president, Socialist Party of Serbia	Kragujevac, January 2011
Djurić Marko	Vice president, Serbian Progressive Party	Belgrade, March 2011
Filipovski Dubravka	Former vice president, New Serbia	Belgrade, March 2011
Gaćeša Nataša	International secretary, Socialist Party of Serbia	Belgrade, February 2011
Gamser Dušan	Former international secretary, member of the political council, Liberal Democratic Party	Belgrade, February 2011
Glišić Vladan	Former member of the leadership, Dveri	Belgrade, April 2011
Grubješić Suzana	Former deputy Prime Minister for European integration, former vice president, G17 plus/ United Regions of Serbia	Belgrade, April 2011
Jevtić Miloš	Former international secretary, Democratic Party	Belgrade, February 2011

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Jovanović Miloš	President, Democratic Party of Serbia	Belgrade, March 2011
Jović Damjan	Member of the executive committee, Serbian Progressive Party	Belgrade, March 2011
Lazić Nikola	Former international secretary, Democratic Party of Serbia	Belgrade, March 2011
Marić Jovan	Vice president, New Serbia	Belgrade, April 2011
Martinović Aleksandar	Former deputy president of the parliamentary group, Serbian Radical Party	Belgrade, April 2011
Mirović Dejan	Former vice president, Serbian Radical Party	Belgrade, April 2011
Prokić Nenad	Former MP and member of the presidency, Liberal Democratic Party	Belgrade, April 2011
Samardžić Slobodan	Former vice president, Democratic Party of Serbia	Belgrade, March 2011
Vukomanović Dijana	Former vice president, Socialist Party of Serbia	Belgrade, February 2011

Country experts

Bakić Jovo	Political sociologist, Faculty of Philosophy	Belgrade, April 2011
Cvijanović Željko	Political commentator and journalist	Belgrade, February 2011
Dereta Miljenko	Former president of NGO 'Civic initiatives'	Belgrade, May 2011
Orlović Slaviša	Political analyst, Faculty of Political Science	Belgrade, March 2011
Pešić Vesna	Former MP—Liberal Democratic Party, Political analyst, former MP, Liberal Democratic Party	Belgrade, March 2011
Vuletić Vladimir	Political analyst, Faculty of Philosophy	Belgrade, March 2011

Croatia

Politicians

Bošnjak Marjan	Vice president, Only Croatia	Zagreb, May 2011
Grubišić Boro	Former MP and member of the executive committee, Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja	Zagreb, May 2011
Kolman Igor	Former MP, Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats	Zagreb, May 2011
Leaković Karolina	Former MP and international secretary, Social Democratic Party	Zagreb, May 2011
Lugarić Marija	Former MP, Social Democratic Party	Zagreb, May 2011
Mondekar Daniel	Former MP, Social Democratic Party	Zagreb, May 2011
Pejčinović Burić Marija	Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, Croatian Democratic Union	Zagreb, May 2011
Petir Marijana	Former vice president, Croatian Peasant Party	Zagreb, May 2011
Srb Daniel	Former president, Croatian Party of Rights	Zagreb, May 2011
Škare Ožbolt Vesna	Former political adviser of former Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, Croatian Democratic Union/ Democratic Centre	Zagreb, May 2011
Vrbat Tanja	Former MP, Social Democratic Party	Zagreb, May 2011

Country Experts

Jović Dejan	Former chief political adviser to former Croatian president Ivo Josipović	Zagreb, May 2011
Mladineo Mirjana	Former political adviser to former Croatian president Ivo Josipović	Zagreb, May 2011
Raos Višeslav	Political analyst, Faculty of Political Science	Zagreb, May 2011

Brussels

Capezzuto David	Former adviser responsible for non-EU member parties, International unit, Party of European Socialists	Brussels, July 2011
EC official (Anonymous)	Former DG Enlargement, Serbian Unit, European Commission	Brussels, July 2011
Frantz Joakim	Manager, ALDE Party	Brussels, July 2011
Kacin Jelko	Former MEP, ALDE Party/Slovenia, European Parliament special rapporteur for Serbia	Brussels, July 2011
Pack Doris	Former MEP, EPP/Germany, chair of the EP Delegation for the South Eastern Europe	Brussels, July 2011
Tanahatoe Daniel	Communication adviser, ALDE Party	Brussels, July 2011
Vigenin Kristian	Former minister of foreign affairs of Bulgaria, head of the PES Western Balkan task force	Brussels, July 2011

Appendix B: Interview Questions (Template)

I. **Party attitudes towards the EU/EU membership**

1. What do you (your party) think about the EU?
2. What do you think about ideas underlying the process of European integration (such as the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institutions such as the EU)?
3. Do you think that Serbia/Croatia should become a member of the EU and why?
4. What is your opinion on political and economic preconditions for Serbian/Croatian EU accession?

II. **Party ideology and identity**

5. How would you characterise the ideology of your party? What are the core values that constitute the identity of your party?
6. Do you think that a state/government should play an active role in the economy?
7. What is your stance on traditional and family values and the role of church in a society?
8. Do you think that Serbian/Croatian national identity, culture and sovereignty could be endangered by the EU?

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III. **Party strategy and tactics**

9. Has your party changed attitudes towards the EU/EU membership since 2000? If so, why?
10. Did you formulate position on the EU due to electoral considerations?
11. Did attitudes of other political parties towards the EU influence the position of your party on this issue?
12. Did party's opposition/ruling position within the party system have an effect on party stances on the EU?

IV. **Relations with core voters**

13. Did preferences of core voters affect party stances and policies on the EU?
14. Do you think that EU membership is in the interest of party's core voters?
15. Did any socio-economic group (business group, non-governmental organisation, trade union or national church) influence or seek to influence party's position on the EU?

V. **Transnational and bilateral party linkages**

16. Do you maintain contacts with European transnational party federations, EU institutions and foreign ambassadors?
17. Did you have to change or adjust position on the EU as a result of international contacts or in order to obtain international affiliation?

VI. **Other questions**

18. Do you think that Serbia should recognise the independence of Kosovo if that is a precondition for its EU accession?
19. Are there any internal conflicts within your party over the issue of Europe?
20. How important is the issue of European integration for your party?

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