Federalism and party organisational adaptation: a cross-national comparison.

Lori Thorlakson  
School of Politics  
University of Nottingham  
University Park  
Nottingham, NG7 2RD  
UK  
\textbf{T:} +44 (0) 115 951 4862  
\textbf{F:} +44 (0) 115 951 4859  
Lori.Thorlakson@Nottingham.ac.uk  
L.Thorlakson@lse.ac.uk

This paper examines vertical integration of parties in federations—the organisational linkages between the state and federal levels of parties. This encompasses many aspects of party organization, including membership, finance, decision-making, leadership and administration. Determining the strength of integrative ties between two levels of a party, and the ‘freedom to move’ of the sub-central levels of the party vis-à-vis the central party is important because it tells us how the party functions: whether as a strong central party which coordinates the activities of its sub-central branches, or a confederation of strong sub-central party organizations which co-operate at the federal level to compete as a single party. Vertical integration also allows us to make inferences about the nature of interest aggregation in the party, such as whether the party is a centralizing aggregator of interests or a conduit for the expression of interests aggregated at the level of the sub-central party organizations. The independence of action of the sub-central branches is an indicator of the potential for conflict between branches of a party, both vertically and horizontally. This information is theoretically important for making assumptions about whether a party is a multiple or unitary actor.

This paper turns to two institutional variables to explain and predict the degree of vertical integration in a party: the degree of centralization of resources and the method of power division. Together, these affect the location of competition in the federal state and the significance of sites of competition. After elaborating the effect that federal institutions have on party organisation and defining and developing the concept of vertical integration, this paper presents evidence of patterns of integration in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The organisational patterns in these European federations are consistent with the effects we would expect from their institutional configurations. Comparing the European federations to three non-European federations, including Canada, the United States and Australia, lends further support to the institutional explanation.

**Institutional influences on party organisation**

The method of power division in a federation is often used to explain the pattern of party organization. Dual federalism employs a jurisdictional principle of power division, resulting in a minimum of overlap and interaction between the two levels of government in the formulation and administration of policy (Watts, 1970:19). Independent, or dual federalism, is generally said to affect party systems by creating a tendency for decentralization of national parties (Scharpf, 1995:32; Chandler, 1987:157-158). Chandler suggests that split parties can thrive because they are not in direct competition with each other.

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1 Fritz Scharpf advances an ideal-typical definition of a dualist system, as those states in which ‘the spheres of responsibility, the resources, and the policy-making processes of the two levels of government are strictly separated’ (Scharpf, 1995:31).
other. For the federal level of the party, there are low political costs to a split organization with autonomous regional wings, and for the parties at the lower level, policy autonomy can lead to local vote maximization.

By contrast, joint decision systems (also referred to as ‘interlocking’), employ a functional division of powers in which ‘the central government is coordinating, assisting, subsidising, and using the capabilities of sub-national governments for purposes defined at the national level—but with the participation of these sub-national governments’ (Scharpf, 1995:32). Joint federalism encourages close links between the parties at the central and sub-central levels, creating a centralizing tendency (Scharpf, 1995:32; Chandler, 1987: 157-158).

Some features of joint federalism are more relevant for party organisation than others, however. It is necessary to make a distinction between two aspects of joint federalism: the high degree of co-operation required for policy implementation and the representation of the sub-national government in the central legislative arenas. While the former is present to degrees in most federal systems (as Scharpf points out), the latter remains a distinctive feature of German federalism, and creates the condition where both orders of government occupy the same arena of competition. Vertical integration of the party organisation is a desirable outcome for the party at the federal level, as it enhances the government party’s policy efficiency and the ability of the opposition party to block policy.

These predictions about the effect of federalism on party organisation encompass two closely related explanations. The first, most evident in Scharpf’s work, is logic of organisation, in which the organisation of parties mirrors the organisation of policy making, driven by the need for policy-making efficiency. The second is a logic of the location of competition, in which dual federalism maintains separate arenas of political competition for the two levels of the party. With each party level occupying its own arena of competition, flexibility for each level of the party is more useful than cooperation. Taking a conflicting stance to the federal level of the party may create greater payoffs to a sub-central party than cooperating and supporting the federal level of the party. Joint federalism, meanwhile, leaves both levels of the party in the same arena of competition. This happens when representatives of the sub-central governments are represented in the federal upper house, as in Germany.

There is another institutional variable which affect the location of competition, even in cases of cooperative federalism. The degree of centralization in a federation affects the relative importance of the central and sub-central political arenas. In dual federalism, decentralization increases the demand for policy freedom for sub-central levels of the party, as the sub-central governments have a greater capacity to act and create policy in a wide range of issues, increasing the chances that the sub-central branches of a party may come into conflict with central party organisations over party organisations. In a centralized dual federation, meanwhile, the federal government will have greater taxing and spending power
than the sub-central governments, and hence an increased capacity to act, which, in policy terms, means that the federal government will have greater influence over public policy than the sub-central governments. The most important policy areas for citizens are likely to be under federal jurisdiction. In this case, although the method of power division structures separate arenas of competition, there will likely be less pressure for the sub-central governments to ‘go their own way’ in public policy, creating policy conflicts with the central party organisation.

Table 1 ranks six federations by the average degree of centralization. Of the cases of joint federalism, Austria is centralized, Germany has a moderate degree of resource centralization, and Switzerland is a decentralized federation. The weak role of the Austrian Federal Council, the upper, means that the Austrian Länder exercise little influence over federal policy making, hence we can expect the joint federalism effect to be weak. In Switzerland, the upper house, the Council of States, possess significant legislative powers, yet the high degree of decentralization reduce the importance of the federal site of competition.

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Source: Calculated by author from data in *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*, International Monetary Fund. The centralization index is calculated by taking the federal government’s share of revenues and expenditures to total (federal, state and local) revenues and expenditures.

**Vertical integration in multi-level parties**

Vertical integration of a party is the extent to which the party competing in the central arena and the party competing in the sub-central arena can be considered to be the same party, or considered to be closely cooperating. In this case, ‘party’ is used in a broad sense, referring to what Richard Katz and Peter Mair term the three faces of party organization: party as a membership organization, a governing organization and a bureaucracy (Katz and Mair, 1992:4).

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2 Note that Katz and Mair’s definition of the ‘governing’ face of the party differs from Kenneth Janda’s (Janda, 1980:99). Katz and Mair include party conventions, congresses, and meetings of the executive committee to decide policy or elect party leaders as part of the party as a membership organisation. Janda classifies these functions as part of the governing party. For Katz and Mair, the governing
Vertical integration in a party measures the extent of organizational linkages and cooperation between central and subcentral party organizations. As the number and strength of the linkages and the extensiveness of cooperation increases, the party can be said to be more vertically integrated. In a vertically integrated party, the central and sub-central levels are interdependent, (Huckshorn, et al, 1986:978)\(^3\) as a result of linkages such as a common membership base and representation of the sub-central party governing bodies on the central party governing bodies.\(^4\) Another type of linkage occurs when the two party levels have a common office: if, for example, the party office at the sub-central level also serves as the central party’s regional office, or if the same constituency organization serves as the basic unit of the sub-central and the central party organization. The two levels of party may also share the party’s financial and personnel resources. The interdependence of vertically integrated parties also stems from informal cooperation, such as campaigning assistance or, more generally, close relationships between leaders at the two levels. Finally, the policy distance between the two levels of the party can be used as a measure of the vertical integration of a party. Frequent and intense policy clashes indicate a low degree of integration, while policy congruence indicates a higher degree of vertical integration.\(^5\)

Party integration, then, is a multi-faceted concept with at least three distinct elements:

1. **Formal organisational linkages:**
   These linkages are established by the party constitution, and tend to be the most stable. Formal linkages may include common membership and constituency organizations, representation of sub-central party executives in the central party governing bodies, shared finances, and joint offices at the sub-central level.

2. **Cooperation:**
   These linkages are informal, and are likely to change over time depending on factors such as specific political contexts and personalities.

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organization refers to the legislative or parliamentary party, consisting of the elected members of the party (Katz and Mair, 1992:5).

\(^3\)In their investigation of the American case, Robert Huckshorn et al offer this definition of party integration: ‘Integration involves a two-way pattern of interaction between the national and state party organizations. Integration implies interdependence in the sense that neither level of party is necessarily subordinate to the other. Thus, conceptually, integration must be measured both in terms of state party involvement in national party affairs and national party involvement in state party affairs’ (Huckshorn, et al, 1986:978).

\(^4\)By a party governing body, I am referring to the party conventions, congresses, and executives that meet to decide party policy and elect leaders.

\(^5\)Rand Dyck includes these elements in his list of factors affecting vertical integration(Dyck, 1991:130). He also includes the electoral dimension, such as whether voters have consistent partisan identities. This thesis excludes the electoral dimension, to keep the concept of vertical integration a function of the party members and officers.
of party leaders. Cooperation can include campaign trail support from leaders, close personal relations between party leaders, and integrated career paths, indicating that leaders perceive both levels as part of the same party.

3. Policy distance:

This dimension captures the similarity of the ideology and policy programmes of the federal and state parties.

These measures of vertical integration can be interpreted as the degree to which the party at the sub-central and the central levels can be considered to be a unitary actor. When a party has a high degree of vertical integration according to the three criteria outlined above, it is an integrated party. An integrated party competes at both central and sub-central levels of competition and has close organizational linkages and cooperative relations. As these linkages are more numerous and stronger, the higher the degree of integration. A split party is one that competes at both levels of government, but with few or no organizational linkages between them, and, although the two levels of the party may form alliances, there is generally a low degree of cooperation. The truncated party is a third possibility, and occurs when no counterpart to the party exists at the other level of competition (Smiley, 1987; Dyck, 1991:129).

The strength of party organizational linkages can be conceptualized as a matter of degree, with the integrated and detached party as two ideal-typical endpoints on a continuum. Figure 1 depicts the party organizational linkages between the central and sub-central parties. The truncated party is included on the left, with no organizational counterpart at the other level of government. The strength of the linkages between the central and sub-central party organizations increase as one moves from the detached to the integrated party, as indicated by the vertical arrows in the diagram. Generally, the more numerous and stronger the organizational linkages between the central and the sub-central levels of the party, the more integrated the party is.

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6 Rand Dyck credits Donald Smiley (Smiley, 1980; 1987) with first making the distinction between integrated, confederal, and asymmetrical parties. Dyck, however, uses the term ‘truncated’ for the asymmetrical party. Both Dyck and Smiley use the term ‘confederal’ to describe detached parties. This is a misuse of the term. A confederation is a limited union of sovereign entities in pursuit of a limited common goal (Watts, 1996:8), which ‘remained dependent upon its constituent polities’ (Elazar, 1987:7). Applying this term to a party implies that the party at the central level is merely a sum of its sub-central parts, in other words, that the balance of organisational power rests with the sub-central components of the party. This in itself does not indicate whether a party has any linkages between the offices and executive of the party which contests seats in sub-central elections, and the sub-central offices and executive of the party that contests seats at the central level. Theoretically, a party could be
Differentiating between split and integrated parties tells us about the frequency and intensity of linkages between levels of the party. Looking at the autonomy of the central and sub-central party organizations and the degree of centralization of the party completes the picture by telling us about the relative power of the sub-central party organizations.

Party autonomy is related to the idea of party integration. It measures the party’s ‘structural independence from other institutions and organizations’ (Janda, 1980:91). The more autonomy the sub-central units of the party have, the greater flexibility they have to select candidates and leaders, and formulate and adjust policy without the intervention of the central party. Central party organizations can be said to have a high degree of autonomy if they are not controlled by the party organizations of the states or Länder, and their leaders.

The highest degree of autonomy is found in split parties, where the sub-central party organizations exist separately and in parallel to the organizational units of the central party. The central party has little or no influence over the sub-central parties, and the sub-central parties have little or no influence over the central party.

Autonomy can vary in integrated parties, depending on the degree of centralization. Centralization measures the location of power (Duverger, 1963:52) or decision-making authority (Janda, 1963:52) of the central party. Only in an integrated party, in which the central and sub-central parties function as a single, unified party, does it make sense to use both integrated and confederal, if the central party organs were weak compared to the sub-central organs.
centralization of power as a measure to locate the balance of power between the central and sub-central arenas. If the party is detached, then two ‘powers’ exist, not one.9

A decentralized party is one in which the local organizational units are the most structured and in which the balance of decision-making power resides, while a centralized party is one in which the balance of power lies with the national executive committee at the top of the party hierarchy. The extensiveness of the organization at the central and sub-central level, and the location of decision-making power in the party are ways of measuring centralization. Parties are centralized if the central party organization is most extensive, wields the greatest power over the central party, and constrains the sub-central party organizations. Parties are decentralized if the location of power (whether measured by decision-making, control over finance, or resources) is at the sub-central party units.

Decentralization of power in a political party does not necessarily yield powerful parties in the provinces or Länder; power may instead be devolved to the local or district level, or be devolved to functional groups (such as the leagues in the ÖVP). An integrated party with relatively powerful sub-central (state, provincial or Land) parties results when the sub-central parties both have a high degree of autonomy and when power in the party is decentralized to the sub-central level, giving the sub-central organizations a high degree of influence over the central party through representation in the governing bodies of the central party organization.

Indicators and operationalization

This paper focuses on the first dimension of formal vertical integration, measured by formal organizational linkages, such as common party membership, finances and joint offices. It supplements the formal organizational measures with information on integration measured by cooperative linkages, such as personnel, campaign assistance, integrated career paths for politicians, and integration measured by policy distance, where available. Parties that only compete at the central electoral level are classified as truncated parties. Extremely weak or absent formal organizational linkages denote a split party (although informal cooperation may occur). Finally, a party with formal organizational linkages between the central and sub-central levels is classified as an integrated party. The number and strength of these linkages determine the degree of vertical integration. The parties are also assessed according to the relative autonomy of the sub-central units of the party, and the locus of decision-making power. Taken together, these affect whether a party has a highly integrated and centralized structure, an integrated a federalized structure, a weakly integrated confederal structure, or a

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9 In split parties, where central and sub-central party organizations exist side by side, centralization can
split structure. The classification of a federation into a category of high, medium or low integration is based upon the range of the federation's parties on these organizational measures.

The development of party organisations in European federations

Austria

Austrian parties are highly integrated and centralized parties. The Socialists (SPÖ) have been the most centralized party, followed by the slightly less centralized Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP). The Freedom Party (FPÖ) is the least organizationally centralized. The Socialist and People’s Party combine a territorial principle of representation with a functional principle of representation through the privileged role the parties afford to representation of interest groups, particularly from the three corporatist chambers, representing business, agriculture and labour. Power is dispersed among functional leagues as well as the territorial Land party organisations. The decentralized nature of the web of societal actors in the Catholic-conservative Lager contributes to the decentralization of the ÖVP (Luther, 1992:69).

The Austrian parties underwent a process of decentralization starting in the 1960s, which shifted power toward the Land party organisations (Müller, 1992b:122), most markedly in the People’s Party, but also to the Socialists to a limited extent. Not surprisingly, the SPÖ is the most centralized party in Austria, exercising ‘hierarchical control of the socialist Lager’ (Luther, 1992: 69). Its near-continual presence in the central government coupled with its electoral weakness at the Land level has meant that the dominance of the central level of the party has gone largely unchallenged from below. Although party reforms in 1967 introduced representatives of Land party organisations to the National Executive, the Erweitertes Parteipräsidium (Müller, 1992a:71), the party has been largely resistant to decentralization (Luther, 1992:69). The ÖVP introduced decentralizing reforms to its party executive in 1958 and 1969, which increased the autonomy of the Land organizations. Although the National Executive’s control over the Land party organizations was initially quite extensive, this has decreased over time. By 1969, it had rescinded its power to appoint and dismiss the Land party secretaries, a key post in the Land party organization (Müller, 1992a:78). The decentralizing trend was halted, first by party reforms in 1980 which increased national party control over candidate nomination (Stirnemann, 1989:409), and again in 1991 by party

only be measured within each party 'level' because its term of reference is within its own organization.

10 Political cleavages in Austria have given rise to two main political sub-cultures, or Lager, the Catholic conservative Lager, which includes farming, free enterprise and Catholic interests, and the Socialist Lager, which includes industrial, white collar and secular interests. Each lager consists of a network of auxiliary organisations (Luther, 1992:52-53).
reforms introduced to centralize control of the party, strengthen the decision-making powers of the party institutions and decrease the fractious influence of the leagues (Luther, 1992:71).

The organizational influence of the *Land* party units in the ÖVP is due in part to the relative electoral strength of the *Land* parties (Müller and Steininger, 1996:89). This was particularly true when the ÖVP was in opposition federally, from 1970 to 1987, triggering a further decentralization of the ÖVP:

> already significant ÖVP party decentralisation became even more pronounced, as successful *Land* party organisations, like those of Lower Austria and Tyrol, pursued strategies independent of the central party and made individual deals with SPÖ federal governments. (Luther, 1992:71).

Because the ÖVP *Land* organisations were in a position to make deals with the federally governing Socialists, they demanded, and received, greater autonomy within their own party organizations. This process was most pronounced in the ÖVP, but occurred to a limited extent in the SPÖ when they became the opposition party in 1966. Periods of electoral weakness at the federal level have now occurred for both main parties, with the consequence that:

> leaders of *Land* groups now exercise a considerable hierarchical control over the party’s territorial subdivisions, especially when they are simultaneously the *Landeshauptmann*, that is to say, head of the provincial government. In many such cases, they aspire to be *Landesvater*, or to put it less charitably, to the position of the local party ‘boss’ (Luther, 1992:71).

Generally, the party remains integrated, yet over time, internal power has shifted, to the benefit of the *Land* groups. There is one dimension along which the party has become slightly less integrated, however: the policy dimension. *Land* parties are willing to clash with the federal party on matters of policy for the sake of *Länder* economic interests: ‘[o]ne example of this would be state subsidies to nationalised industries which are rejected by the national party but demanded by the *Land* party organisations of those *Länder* in which these industries are concentrated (Müller and Steininger, 1996:89). Maximising provincial gains is the most rational strategy for these parties, as they had low chances of federal electoral success.

While the *Land* organizations are important units in the ÖVP, they are not the loci of power in the party, as is the case with the Freedom Party (FPÖ). It has a federal structure,

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11 With the exception of the Socialist stronghold of Vienna.
organized on territorial, rather than functional lines (Luther, 1990:19-20). The Freedom Party is vertically integrated, yet more decentralized than either the SPÖ or the ÖVP—the Land party organizations do not pay membership fees to the central party, and Land parties retain the final veto over any changes the central party may make to its candidate list.\textsuperscript{12} It has traditionally operated as a ‘party of notables, with political power traditionally decentralised among the leaders of the Land organisations of Upper Austria, Styria, Carinthia and Salzburg, which together have consistently provided three quarters of the party’s total membership’ (Luther, 1990:19; 1992:69). Accordingly, finances and membership lists are controlled by the Land party organizations. The leader of the party has, with one exception, come from one of the party’s core Länder.\textsuperscript{13}

The pattern of integrated career paths within the Freedom Party reflects the importance of territorial power bases, and conflicts in the party ‘tend to be power struggles based on personalities and regional interests’ (Luther, 1992:69). Generally, however, the Austrian parties have less integrated career paths than German parties. While the head of a German Land may well go on to a top position in the federal party, this rarely happens in Austria. Rather than serving as a stepping-stone to federal politics, the Land governorship is most often a career peak. While being minister-president of a German Land provides an ambitious politician with a federally highly visible and influential platform to ‘prove’ him or herself, the Austrian Länder yield only provincial influence and visibility (Nick, 1989:315-316). The Austrian Länder are less influential than the German Länder, due to the limited competences of the Austrian Länder, the weakness of the federal upper house, and the competing influence of the functional interests in the Austrian parties.

In summary, the general trend in Austria has been one of decentralisation, which has increased the relative power of Land party organisations. Both the Socialists and People’s Party were initially highly centralised. Functional representation within the party has been a nationalising or centralizing force. In the Freedom Party, where functional representation has been rejected, the organisational power base is most strongly regional. The territorial units of the party have competed with functional units, and have sometimes strategically taken advantage of inter-league conflict to unite in pursuit of policy goals. The gains from this were limited, however. The need for effective campaigning in the 1990s brought pressure for further centralisation, intended combat inter-league conflict. Patterns of political opposition are particularly important in explaining the location of power in Austrian parties. Being in opposition federally has preceded decentralising reforms in both major parties. Generally, the

\textsuperscript{12} Yet the FPÖ national executive has the authority to set up ‘specialized functional and territorial subunits’ (Müller, 1992a:85).

\textsuperscript{13} The exception was Norbert Steger, who was chairman from 1981 to 1986 (Luther, 1992:69).
weakest parties federally, the ÖVP and especially the FPÖ, have altered the organisational balance of power by developing regional power bases.

**Germany**

All of the German parties are integrated, with unitary membership structures, membership fees collected by the local or district party organizations and shared with the Land and federal party organizations (Poguntke, 1992:331), and representation of lower organizational units in the decision-making bodies of the central party. Article 21 of the Basic Law requires all German parties to maintain internally democratic organisations, guaranteeing a certain degree of similarity and decentralization in the parties' internal organization (Poguntke, 1993:139). What sets the parties apart is the influence and autonomy of the Land organisations and the location of organisational power. In the relatively decentralised Free Democratic Party (FDP) and Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Land level is influential. The Land organizations send delegates to the central party conferences (Poguntke, 1992: 341-348). In the FDP, the Land organisations are particularly influential in the central party organisation. For the Greens and the SPD, the local or district level of the party are influential. The Green party is the most decentralized, with greater possibilities for initiatives stemming from lower levels of the party organization (Poguntke, 1993:141). The Social Democratic Party (SPD) is one of the most centralized. In its internal structure, the district or Bezirke, rather than the Land organization, sends representatives to the central party conferences.

The influence of the Land party organizations in the German parties is derived as much from the personal power of the Land party leaders as from the formal organizational competencies which party constitutions assign to the Land branches. Länder parties can gain influence due to their position as the personal strongholds of party leaders or leadership contenders, while at the same time, the integrated career paths link the levels of the party together (Davis, 1998:107).

The Christian Democratic Union emerged as a group of largely autonomous regional parties, due to the Allied control of post-war re-establishment of party organisations and the traditional Christian Democratic values of freedom and subsidiarity (Pridham, 1977:244). The party formally established a central party organisation in 1950. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the federal extra-parliamentary organisation was weak, and the Land parties exercised a great deal of influence. Since the late 1960s, however, the party has gradually centralised organisational power. Reforms in 1967 reduced the representation of Land party organisations
in the National Executive (see Poguntke, 1992:351-354). They also created a post of party general secretary (Broughton, 1996:104) which gained a role in the appointment of Land party managers and issuing instructions Land organization in the running of federal election campaigns (Poguntke, 1993:150). Although the Land party organisations remain an important organisational unit, ‘the focus of power within the party has shifted markedly towards the parliamentary group and national party apparatus’ (Broughton, 1996:105). The Christian Social Union, the Bavarian sister party of the CDU, maintains its regional distinctiveness within the Bundestag fraktion that the CSU shares with the CDU, by maintaining its own Landesgruppe, with its own leader and executive (Pridham, 1977:306). This maintains the distinctiveness of the CSU parliamentary party from the CDU parliamentary party.

The Social Democrats (SPD) have an integrated organisation that is more centralised than all but the communist party. Over time, power in the party has gradually shifted, and the influence of party secretaries has slightly diminished while the influence of the rank and file membership has grown (Schellenger, 1968:192). In balance, the centre of power rests firmly with the federal leadership. The SPD is integrated both in formal organisational terms and in terms of inter-party cooperation and policy distance, although events since unification have strained the latter two forms of integration. In its extra-parliamentary organizational structure, the SPD has a common membership and financing of the federal party and its sub-central units. Reforms in 1958 were intended to integrate the party by coordinating policy in the Bund and the Länder, and create a greater role for the Land party organizations, with greater freedom (Schellenger, 1968:152-155).

Close linkages of intra-party cooperation and policy unity contribute to the integration of the SPD. Like the CDU, intra-party cooperation stems from the existence of an integrated career path that links the Land and federal organizations; leaders of the SPD tend to be drawn from the top of the Land party organizations, rather than from within the SPD federal parliamentary party (Davis, 1998:107-108). Policy unity was fostered consciously through the 1958 reforms mentioned above, and through the existence of bodies such as the Party Council (Parteirat), which is responsible for coordinating policy between the Land and federal policies (Poguntke, 1992:350). Also, national issues are discussed at the Land conferences, and Land campaigns sometimes feature national issues, such as Willy Brandt’s emphasis on foreign relations during the 1958 Berlin elections (Schellenger, 1968:164, 167).

Unification has strained SPD policy unity and the degree of party integration as regional party organizations, particularly in the Eastern Länder, have challenged the federal party organization over the right to independently choose their own coalition partners. Mecklenburg West-Pomerania SPD chairman Harald Ringstorff was stopped by the SPD

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14 The Party Council, which meets less often than the National Executive, is composed of
national executive when he attempted to break off the coalition with the CDU in 1996, over economic policy conflicts. Later, in the 1996 Mecklenburg West-Pomerania party congress, Ringstorff declared that the party would choose its coalition partner ‘on the basis of objective criteria and issues’ (Jesse, 1997:92), preparing the ground for entering into a coalition that depended on PDS support. The Thuringian SPD party chairman followed suit (Jesse, 1997:93), despite the fact that national party chairman Rudolf Scharping had declared coalitions with the PDS at the federal or regional level to be out of the question (Jesse, 1997:92).

The Free Democrats (FDP) have an integrated party organisation. The *Land* party organizations, which until the 1950s were more powerful than the national party organization (Braunthal, 1996:80), remain influential:

In the FDP, power resided in the eleven semi-autonomous *Land* associations, which have roots in local politics and supply candidates for state and federal offices. The party established local party organizations, but most have been inactive or have been too scattered and small to be effective (Braunthal, 1996:80).

Cooperative linkages between the *Land* and federal party organizations contribute to the integration of the party. Christian Søe notes that for the 1991 election campaign the FDP established a small campaign headquarters in Bonn, led by the federal party manager (1995:187). However, ‘[a]fter the middle of 1993, the headquarters intensified contacts with the state party organizations in order to promote an integrated campaign, conduct regional conferences, and sponsor strategy seminars’ (Søe, 1995:188). After the 1995 election, the new general secretary of the FDP, Guido Westerwelle included the improvement of intra-party communication as one of his commitments (Søe, 1995:195).

The Green party is an integrated but decentralised party. Unlike the FDP, which has strong Länd party organisations, power in the decentralised Green party resides at the constituency rather than at the *Land* level. The *Land* organisation does not influence selection of constituency candidates, but a *Land* general assembly selects the *Land* list by secret vote (Poguntke, 1992:371). Party reforms in 1991 replaced a federal executive with a state council to increase the voice of the state party organizations (Betz, 1995:206). *Land* organisations do not have a free hand in the party. In the event of ‘severe violation of statutory or representatives from the *Land* parties, elected by the *Land* party congresses (Poguntke, 1992:353).

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15 It is interesting to note that Westerwelle is a former leader of the Young Liberals, rather than a former *Land* party leader.
programmatic principles’ (Poguntke, 1992:368) the National Executive (Bundesvorstand) has the power to apply for the dissolution of a Land organization, which the Congress can rule on with a 2/3 majority (Poguntke, 1992:360).

The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), was formed from the former communist SED party of East Germany, organised on principles of democratic centralism. The national organisation of the PDS exists alongside Land, district and communal regional party organisations (Kleinfeld, 1995:225). However, ‘it was only with the reintroduction of the Länder in October 1990 and the development of strong regional forces in the Land groups, particularly since 1994, that we start to see counterbalances to the dominance of the party leadership in Berlin’ (Barker, 1998:10). Organising along territorial lines took precedence over functional organisation (Barker, 1998:11).

Switzerland

The Swiss parties generally have a low degree of integration, and power is weighted toward the cantonal parties. The parties are confederal in their organization. With the exception of the Social Democrats, which have a top-down organizational structure, the federal parties, or ‘Landesparteien’ are chiefly umbrella organizations for the cantonal parties, with a high degree of autonomy (Gruner, 1969:204). The central organs of the political parties are weak—most do not even have insight into cantonal membership data (Linder, 1999:89). Membership in the federal level parties is collective—the affiliated cantonal and local parties are members (Gruner, 1969:201).

The loose cantonal-federal linkages within the party reflect both the history of the parties and the tradition of a confederal (eidgenössischen) style of politics. Most Swiss parties began as cantonal parties before establishing confederal organizations. The first party, the Social Democrats, was founded only in 1888, forty years after the founding of the Swiss federal state (Linder, 1999:83). The Swiss People’s Party, formed in 1971 from several cantonal parties, is a more recent example. Only the three largest governmental parties are truly national parties and exist in all cantons (Linder, 1999:83).

Apart from the more centralized social democrats, the autonomy of the cantonal parties is ‘sacrosanct’ (Linder, 1999:89). They not only have a high degree of autonomy over their own affairs, but also have a great deal of influence over the confederal parties (the Landesparteien). Within the confederal party, the cantonal sections have a high degree of

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16 The reforms also reduced the federal executive committee, created a political manager, reduced the number of party officials and abolished the rotation principle, in which representatives were required to resign after two years to be replaced by other candidates on the Green list. See Edwards, 1998:157.
17 Only, exceptionally, when cantonal or local organizations do not exist, is membership in the Landesparteien, the national-level umbrella organizations, held individually (Gruner, 1969:201).
autonomy in the consideration of federal policy (Gruner, 1969:30; Linder, 1999:89). This can be seen in the official policy line taken by the cantonal parties and their confederal party organizations in federal referendums. Between 1949 and 1964, approximately 20 per cent of the cantonal parties from the four major parties pursued a policy line that differed from the national party. The rate of divergence was greatest in the Radicals (FDP), one of the less coherent parties, where cantonal parties diverged in approximately 40 per cent of the cases, and lowest in the Social Democrats, a more coherent party, where parties diverged in approximately 14 per cent of the cases (Gruner, 1969:33).\footnote{These figures are from Gruner, 1969:33, based on a thesis by D. Fortmann et al.}

Internally, the parties have a low degree of organization and professionalization when compared to other European parties. This, and a ‘federalization of their internal structures’ contributes to the weakness of the central party organizations, with an understaffed, underfinanced, and underdeveloped central organization (Kerr, 1987:162). Full time staff are used chiefly for administrative tasks. In 1987, Kerr reports that the total number of permanent full-time staff for the cantonal and federal levels in each party to be 28 for the Social Democrats, 24.5 for the Christian Democrats, 25 for the Radicals and 10 for the Swiss People’s Party (Kerr, 1987:163). In 1996, the parties had approximately 80 full time employees at the cantonal level, and 50 at the federal level (Linder, 1999:90). Budgets are similarly low. The budgets of the Swiss parties in 1995 were five to ten times lower than the budget levels of the three largest Dutch parties (Linder, 1999:90, citing Kriesi, 1995:150). A greater professionalisation of the Parliament with greater contributions to the Fraktionen (parliamentary parties) was rejected in a referendum in 1992. We lack data on how the parties are financed beyond the above (Linder, 1999:90). In short, the Swiss parties share, in organizational terms:

- weak infrastructures in personnel and resources, weak central control and strong localist traditions, diffuse patterns of leadership and recruitment, and complex networks of associational ties with auxiliary organizations….Command and control functions are widely diffused, indeed territorially ‘federalized’….internal power relations are ‘balkanized’ (Kerr, 1987:162).

Pressure to conduct more effective electoral campaigns and respond to voter realignment have led to increased professionalization of the Swiss parties since 1968. From the late 1960s to the late 1970s, the budgets of the central party organizations has more than doubled for the Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and the Swiss People’s Party, an ‘almost spectacular’ increase in central party resources. The parties have also attempted to
improve central coordination, and promote adherence to national party programmes by cantonal parties during federal campaigns (Kerr, 1987:165).

**Comparing European parties in a wider context**

When the patterns of party organization in German, Swiss and Austrian parties are compared with a broader group of six federations, Canada, the United States and Australia, the institutional effects emerge more clearly. Three groups of countries emerge, despite the expected inter-party variations within each federation. Austrian and German parties generally exhibit a high degree of vertical party integration, Australian parties generally exhibit a medium degree of integration, and the Canadian, Swiss and American parties generally exhibit a low degree of integration. As one moves from the first group of countries (Austria and Germany) to the second group, the linkages between the parties decline in their strength and number, but more markedly, there is a shift in the power within the parties. Integrated parties have federal or confederal structures. The integrating linkages preserve a great deal of autonomy for the sub-central parties. In the third group of countries, power shifts further toward the sub-central level within weakly integrated parties, yielding confederal parties (Switzerland), or else the integrating linkages disappear entirely, and central and sub-central party organizations exist autonomously in split or truncated parties.

*Table 2: Institutional features and patterns of vertical integration of party organisations in six federations.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTRALIZATION</th>
<th>STYLE OF POWER DIVISION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JOINT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>AUSTRIA (weak joint effect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highly integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>GERMANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highly integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>SWITZERLAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Split/ weakly integrated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**High degrees of integration: Austria and Germany**

In Austria and Germany, all of the parties are integrated through formal organizational linkages, although the degree of centralization and the autonomy of the *Land* organizations vary from one party to another. All of the parties employ a common membership, where membership in the *Land* organization implies membership in the federal party. The *Land* parties are constitutive units of the central party organizations, although in the social democratic parties, the parties are built of district rather than *Land* units. In the Austrian and the German parties, the central party organizations retain a fair degree of control over the sub-central units of the party, with decision-making power over the structure of the sub-central party levels, and the power to intervene in the sub-central parties. Candidate selection generally rests with the sub-central level, although the central party often retains limited veto power. The various levels of the party are financially linked, with the lower levels of the party collecting membership fees and passing on a share to the central party, although the power of the central party to autonomously determine this share varies from party to party. Finally, the central party organizations tend to be fairly extensive, and are strong. Beyond the legal organizational structure, a typical career path linking *Land* and federal politics serves to integrate the German parties. In both Germany and Austria, policy conflicts between *Land* and central parties can be a source of intra-party strain.

**Medium degree of integration: Australia**

The Australian parties share some of the integrative features of the German and Austrian parties—a common party membership, and representation of the sub-central (State) parties in the central party legislative and governing bodies. In the Australian parties, however, the organizational structure of the parties is more confederal than in the Austrian and German parties. The state parties have greater influence in the central party organizations, and a higher degree of autonomy. This is particularly true for the Liberal and National parties. The two levels of party organization compete for funding. Central party intervention is possible in the most integrated party (Labor) but is rare in the Liberal party and impossible in the National Party. Instead, when a State branch seriously breaches party rules, the central party expels the party. Expulsion, rather than intervention, is a feature shared by some of the Canadian parties with extremely weak integrative links. Finally, the central party organization is less extensive vis a vis the sub-central organizations in Australian parties than in German or Austrian parties.
Low degree of integration: Canada, Switzerland, the United States

Canada, Switzerland and the United States have the lowest degree of party integration. Ranking the cases is difficult, because the organization of American parties differs a great deal from the Canadian and Swiss parties. In Canada, there are several 'split' parties, where there are no linkages of membership or party office between the two levels of the party, leaving considerable room for maneuver. Two new parties are truncated, competing only at the central level. The confederally organized Swiss cantonal parties are highly autonomous, essentially behaving as split parties. Membership is a weaker integrative linkage in these parties. Many Canadian parties have separate memberships at the provincial and federal levels of the party. In Switzerland, meanwhile, the framework parties (Rahmenparteien) are collective members of the federal umbrella parties. The central party sometimes has no access to the membership lists of the cantonal parties.

The low integration of the American parties partly stems from the weakness of party organization. There are no membership linkages because the American parties are not membership parties. Formal representation of the state party chairs in the national committees of each party provides a weak linkage between state and central parties. This has little effect however because the party’s organizational activities are fragmented and such traditional party activities such as campaigning are candidate-centered and contracted out to professionals. The Democratic Party regulates the party structure and candidate selection procedures. In both parties, however, candidate selection is perhaps the most influential role, and this has been devolved to the state electorates, through the use of primaries. The central party has little or no control over the state parties; the linkages that exist are through voluntary aid in terms of funding, personnel and professional services.

Trends over time

Over time, there has been a convergence trend within European federations. Among the German parties, the weakly integrated and decentralised CDU has gradually developed integrative linkages and has undergone centralising reforms. Professionalisation of the Green party has centralized power in the party. In Switzerland, the Liberals, traditionally a confederal party, has built integrative linkages through the adoption of modern, leader-centered campaigning techniques. The parties which were initially most integrated and centralized, such as the German SDP and the Austrian SPÖ and ÖVP have decentralized somewhat over time. The final level of integration in these federations is consistent with what we would predict from the federations’ institutional configurations. The party organisational changes that have occurred over time can be categorized as political development effects and modernization effects.
Political development effects

Changes in party organisation over time can be the response of parties to the institutionally-structured opportunities and constraints. This can be termed a political development effect. For example, Swiss parties have had little incentive to develop integrative linkages, as the location of power is at the level of the canton, as well as with the citizen through the exercise of direct democracy. Similarly, parties in the Canadian provinces, the most decentralized federation of the six, have faced incentives over time to distance themselves from their counterparts at the federal level. By contrast, the German parties at the federal level of government faced a high requirement for cooperative policy making with the Länder governments in the Bundesrat, necessitating parties to develop integrative links. The political development effects result in convergence among parties within a federation, and a rank ordering of party integration consistent with institutional predictions.

Modernization effects

Modernization effects are due to the changing nature of campaigns, brought about by pressure for professionalisation of the party, new methods of communication and personality-centered campaigns. Modern campaigning elevates the role of the party leader, and promotes the use of a single, centrally coordinated ‘message’. Over time, all parties have been subject to pressure for professionalisation, and centralisation, both leading to increased integration. The least integrated parties, those in the United States and Switzerland, have shown the most marked change. Integrative linkages between the state and national parties have developed in the United States since the mid 1960s. In Swiss parties, (and particularly in the Liberal party), there has been a movement toward personality-centered campaigning and the development of central party resources over the past 20 years (Kerr, 1987:165). This can also be seen in the most decentralised party in Germany, the Green party. It has augmented its central party organisation in an attempt to boost the effectiveness of its campaign machine and has accepted professionalisation of a party by introducing salaries. The exception to the trend of increased centralisation and integration has been Canada, where over time, integrated parties have split, and new party entrants are truncated.

Patterns by party type

Institutional forces do not operate on a blank canvas. The historical form of party organisation has a path dependency effect, leaving its imprint on the modern party. The organizational structure of parties and the strength and extent of integrative linkages within parties varies according to party type. Liberal parties, with their origins as parties of loosely
associated notables, have readily adapted to a federal state form. Their associations between the regional parties and the centre remain loose; they have generally developed as parties with local or regional power bases. In relatively centralized joint federations, such as Austria and Germany, these remain integrated parties with a federal structure, but in the most decentralized and dual federations, these parties are confederal or split. Like the liberal parties, protest parties tend to be highly decentralized, and confederal in their organization, with a strong role for state, provincial, or Land organizations. The values of subsidiarity and democracy inherent in Christian Democratic ideology of Christian Democracy facilitated internal party democracy and decentralization, yet the combination of functional and territorial representation counterbalanced tendencies toward strictly regional power bases. These parties, in Austria and Germany’s joint style of federalism, have maintained an integrated structure. Socialist parties, by contrast, emerged as mass membership parties with a branch structure and strong central leadership. They are organisationally extensive and tend to be the most integrated and centralized parties within their party systems. When we compare social democratic parties cross-nationally, we can observe the predicted institutional effects. The parties in the joint federations are most integrated and centralized. Australia’s Labor party is less integrated and less centralized, and the socialist parties in decentralized Switzerland and Canada are the least so, with the greatest autonomy for the cantonal and provincial parties. Finally, Green parties tend to have a highly decentralized grassroots structure. The decentralization of the party does not necessarily lead to strength of the sub-central party. Success at the sub-central level, due to lower thresholds, is more likely the source of strength behind the strength of state party organizations.

When we compare within party families cross-nationally, the predicted institutional effects emerge. While social democratic parties are generally more integrated than liberal parties, the degree of centralization and method of power division in a federation can still explain why some social democratic parties are more integrated than others. Organisational adaptation occurs within a constrained environment. The initial party organisational structure and the historical origins of the party should be viewed as a set of constraints within which the modernization and political development effects operate.

Conclusion

The general level of vertical integration in parties in federations is influenced by the structure of institutional opportunities and costs. Two institutional variables can explain the organisation of parties in federations. The first is the way in which federal institutions allocate

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19 This tendency for Liberal and protest parties to have strong state, provincial or Land organizations may be due to local party notables relying on the resources of sub-central government to build a party power base.
resources in a federation, indicated by each level of government’s share of revenue and expenditures. The second variable is the method of power division in the federation—whether levels of government exercise their powers jointly, in the same arena, or independently, in separate arenas. Together, these two federal institutions shape the opportunities and constraints that parties face, thus affecting the organisation of power in the party. As decentralization increases the relative importance of the state level of competition, parties at the state level will value increased autonomy and flexibility, while a centralized party structure could limit the success of competition at the state level. This makes it more likely that parties will adapt over time by developing (or maintaining) weak integrative linkages, or even split organizations. The second institutional variable, joint federalism which requires a high level of participation by the state governments in federal level policy making, creates a strong incentive for federal parties to cultivate integrative linkages. This makes intergovernmental cooperation, and policy making, more efficient.

The three European federations examined here—Germany, Austria and Switzerland—fit the predicted patterns of party organisation predicted by the institutional thesis. These findings hold when this group is compared to a non-European group of western industrialised democratic states. The need for intra-party cooperation in policy making created by joint federalism leads to integrated parties, characterised by a high degree of coordination and cooperation between the levels of the party, and ultimate central party control over the sub-central party levels. This can be seen in the two cases of joint federalism in this study. Both Austria and Germany have integrated parties, although Germany’s public finances are more decentralised. The findings suggest that joint federalism and its institutionalised requirement for cooperation between the federal and state government has a stronger integrating and centralising effect on power than the allocation of resources. Perhaps joint federalism has a stronger centralising effect on power than shifting taxing and spending to the central level. Among the cases of dual federalism, the two highly decentralised federations (Canada and Switzerland) have low degrees of integration. The United States, with a medium degree of decentralisation of its public finances, also has parties with weak linkages between the central and sub-central parties.20

The historical circumstances surrounding the creation of parties have left their imprint on modern parties, and we can identify organisational patterns by party family. These historical origins constrain party responses to the institutional environment, but they do not prevent them from occurring. This paper has identified both a political development effect, which refers to gradual party adaptation in response to the opportunities and constraints of the

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20 The American case should be treated with some caution, as its constitutional separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches (and, unlike Switzerland, with direct competitive elections for both) serves as a further institutional factor that fragments the party system.
institutional environment, as well as a political modernization effect, which refers to party adaptation in response to the demands of modern, media-centred campaigning. Modernization affects all parties, but we can see the adaptation to modernization pressures most clearly in the weakly integrated and fragmented parties in the most decentralized federations. Parties in Switzerland and the United States, which previously had highly autonomous cantonal and state organisations, have over the last few decades developed stronger integrative linkages to take advantage of central party resources. Despite the development of these linkages, the American and Swiss parties maintain an overall low degree of integrative linkages, consistent with the institutional environment. The role of institutions should best be seen as a long run force, which, despite the constraining role of the historical origins of parties, and periodic pressures exerted by societal changes, serves to generally yet visibly shape the patterns of integrative linkages in parties.

References


