

Summary

Political scientists had the rare opportunity to study the birth of Party systems in the new democracies of Eastern Europe after 1989. After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe the foundations for the formation of democratic parties were at hand however their institutionalisation has proven to be a complicated process. As Poland approached European Union membership it was already on the way to having a developed Party system. The entry of Poland to the European Union offered the opportunity to test various Hypotheses that attempt to explain the structural and political factors of modern Party politics.

This Dissertation will on the one hand describe the developmental framework of the Polish political system, on the other hand it will describe the coagulation of its conflict structures. Questions regarding the conflict lines that helped form the Party system will be discussed intensively. The explanation of the development of rival Parties through socio-structural conflicts (cleavages) is one of the most established theories within modern Political Science. This theory primarily goes back to the work of Lipset/Rokkan (1967). In this Treatise the political positions of the Polish political parties, how they are embedded in the social structure as well as their political viewpoint regarding Europe will be analysed. Furthermore the relationship between the Polish parties cleavage-positions and their EU-positions in the Parliamentary elections of 1997 and 2001 will be examined.

The results of this study point to the cleavages determining the EU positions to a high degree. Whereas the economic dimensions contribute little to explaining the EU positions, the culturally loaded conflicts have a higher ability to explain these positions.