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Bruges Political Research Papers / Cahiers de recherche politique de Bruges

No 60 / October 2017

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By

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Abstract

The paper passes in review the post-war steps to a parliamentary European Union and a party-political European Union and concludes that these are irreversible. It further considers the *Spitzenkandidaten*/Lead Candidate procedure, first used in 2014, and assumes, more debatably perhaps, that it, too, is probably irreversible. The paper acknowledges six 'known unknowns' that could have considerable consequences for the evolution of the Union's party-political system. The paper then considers some basic questions about the model the Union has cumulatively chosen before considering some of the 'discontents' of some party-political systems and their potential relevance to the EU's emerging system. The paper briefly considers whether the early evolution of the US party political system can shed any light on possible developments and identifies similarities. It concludes by pointing out that the existence of a parliamentary party-political system, with electoral linkage between the executive and the legislature, is a necessary but far from sufficient condition for viable governance – and opposition.

Introduction: 'a system appropriate to a continent'

In 1979, the British political philosopher and commentator David Marquand wrote a forward-looking analysis of the European Parliament on the eve of the first direct elections. Towards the end of his analysis, Marquand speculated about a 'Party Europe' and predicted that, ultimately, a nationalist-supra-nationalist system would evolve. This evolution would not be quick or tidy and would probably overlap 'in a puzzling and superficially illogical way' with the existing left-right system. However, what was under discussion was "the possible emergence of *a system appropriate to a continent*" (Marquand, 1979, p. 125, my emphasis). The aim of this paper is to engage in a 'thought experiment' by considering the possible ways in which the European Union's emerging party-political system might evolve in the longer term and the possible ramifications of such developments. What might a system appropriate for the European continent look like? The 'experiment' is based on three assumptions. The first is that the EU is irreversibly set on being a parliamentary Union. The second is that the EU is irreversibly set on being a party-political Union. The third, perhaps more debateable, is that the *Spitzenkandidaten*/lead candidate procedure is here to stay.

1. Irreversible steps towards a parliamentary European Union

In its post-war incarnation, European federalism always envisaged the establishment of a parliamentary pillar. It was a vision pushed particularly by British federalists such as William Beveridge, based on the United Kingdom's strong parliamentary tradition. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1948) was the first to emerge from that vision. Thus:

> Parliamentarians for the first time participated in (the external representation) of the State. Parliamentary action began to replace diplomatic action. This gradually changed relations in Europe from a character of foreign policy to a character of home policy, from international law to constitutional law (Posselt, 1992, p. 187).

With the creation of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (1952) and the European Parliamentary Assembly of the European Economic Community

(1957), several further significant steps were taken. In the first place, the Assembly (precursor of the European Parliament, of course) was granted the draconian power of being able to dismiss the European Commission. In the second place, it was granted the right to draft and adopt its own rules of procedure – a power that would come into its own after 1979. In the third place, it was largely deprived of any other power, being limited to a weak consultative role in the budgetary and legislative spheres:

> The result was that the European Community system contained a Parliament which, unlike most national Parliaments, did not regard itself as part of a finished institutional system, but as part of one requiring evolution or even transformation into something different, seeking to turn the Community from a largely intergovernmental system to one based more on parliamentary principles (Corbett, 1999, p. 90).

This vocation to promote constitutional change rapidly became ingrained, with the Parliament becoming an instinctively federalist body. Nowhere was that federalist fervour more intense than on the issue of direct elections. The process that led ultimately to the first direct elections in 1979 has been well-described (for example Scalingi, 1980; Westlake, 1994; Costa, 2001; Bardi and Ignazi, 2004; Judge and Earnshaw, 2003; Corbett and Jacobs, 2016); key dates include: the 9-10 December 1974 Paris summit, where the principle of direct elections was agreed; the 1-2 December 1975 Rome summit, where a single date for the forthcoming elections was first identified; the 12 July 1976 agreement on size and seats; the 20 September 1976 Convention; and, ultimately, the 7-10 June 1979 first direct elections to the European Parliament themselves. Meanwhile, the 1970 and 1975 budget treaties created what was tantamount to a bicameral budgetary authority. The 1975 treaty, in particular, foresaw a conciliation procedure between the Council and the Parliament and granted the latter the power to reject the draft budget.

The 1979 elections triggered over thirty years of 'catching-up', as the now directly-elected Parliament sought to play the role that had been denied it in 1957. Indeed, since 1979 the Parliament, with its new-found autonomy and electoral legitimacy, has evolved into the veritable twin arm of the Union's budgetary and legislative authorities through the following:

astute use of its rules of procedure; building on precedent; the occasional complicity of the other institutions (particularly the European Commission) and the member states; Court battles and rulings; inter-institutional agreements; sheer persistence and consistent constitutional vision; and, above all, through frequent Treaty change,. How rapidly that evolution occurred is well illustrated by the observations of two experts, writing less than ten years apart.

Writing in 1999, Pinder argued that, in the then-Community 'pillar' of the Maastricht Treaty, this process towards a parliamentary Union was far advanced. The main reform challenge concerned the Council, retaining

> A role, executive as well as legislative, that is more predominant than is, for such an indirectly elected body, compatible with the principles of representative government [but] the main changes that would bring the institutions of the Community into line with those principles are reformist rather than revolutionary: completion of the Parliament's right of co-decision with the Council; generalisation of the majority voting procedure and open legislative sessions in the Council; fuller executive competences for the Commission and a more normal accountability to the legislature (Pinder, 1999, p. 124).

With regard to the other two pillars, on the other hand, "the process of combining the adoption of common instruments with the enhancement of democratic elements in the institutions has scarcely begun" (*Ibid.*, pp. 124-125). Pinder foresaw a gradual transition from a 'pre-democratic Union' to a 'democratic federal Union'.

Writing less than ten years later in 2008, Priestley was to describe how:

> The Long March of the European Parliament to a form of institutional maturity is more or less at an end.[1] The Lisbon Treaty has filled in most of the gaps, ironed out some of the inconsistencies and completed the main foundations of what is the parliamentary dimension of Europe's construction. The European Parliament today meets the main classic conditions of what would be expected of a parliamentary body: it will decide on legislation (with the governments of the member states); it will determine, again with the governments, both the annual budget and the multi-annual financial framework; it appoints and controls the Executive, while operating in a system of separation of powers (Priestley, 2008, p. 203)[2].

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[1] Less, Andrew Duff (tax raising and assent to treaty changes) and Francis Jacobs (appointment of judges) would argue. (6 August 2017 correspondence with Francis Jacobs and 10 August 2017 correspondence with Andrew Duff).

[2] In 2019, Parliament will be exercising another novel power – that of consenting to the UK's exit deal.

The ninth set of direct elections to the European Parliament will be held in May/June 2019. It can surely be asserted with absolute certainty that direct elections to the European Parliament are here to stay. And while an occasional minor reverse might occur,[3] it can surely be asserted with a similar degree of certainty that the powers the Parliament has accrued will not be reversed. For better or worse (and most democrats would unhesitatingly declare that it is for the better), the European Union has adopted an increasingly strong parliamentary dimension, not only as an integral and important part of its overall policy-making and legislative machinery but as a vital facet of its democratic identity. This is asserted robustly in Article 10 of the Treaty on European Union, which declares that "The functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy" (10.1) and that "Citizens are directly represented at Union level in the European Parliament" (10.2). Thus, since 1952, the European Union has inexorably evolved towards being a parliamentary Union, and it must be assumed that this trend is irreversible.

2. Irreversible steps towards a party-political European Union

Although pan-European parliamentary institutions have existed for over six decades: "The development of transnational structures encompassing members of like-minded national political parties has proved to be a relatively slow and tentative process" (Teasdale and Bainbridge, 2012, p. 405). Christian Democracy was initially as much an international as a purely European force (Papini, 1997), although it soon came to play a predominant role in the European integration process (Kalyvas, 1996; Kaiser, 2007) and was by far the most advanced

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[3] A rare example of such a reverse concerned Parliament's assent powers. As initially provided for under the Single European Act, an absolute majority was required for assent to be granted. This meant that the simple absence of such a majority could be used to delay and the Parliament wasn't slow to understand and exploit this unintended (or certainly unforeseen) nuance. The Maastricht Treaty's draftsmen quietly did away with the absolute majority requirement and thus weakened Parliament's powers. In the US Senate, by contrast, a two-thirds majority is required before the President can ratify any treaty. (See Westlake, 1994, 158 and Westlake, 1998, 26-27.) I am grateful to Richard Corbett for pointing to another rare example, in the domain of the Parliament's budgetary powers; under the Lisbon Treaty, the EP can no longer increase spending in any field without Council's agreement. (26 June 2017 correspondence with the author)

in establishing coordination mechanisms that would ultimately evolve into a party structure (Jansen, 2006, Fontaine, 2009). Initially more ambivalent about the European integration process, Socialist parties took longer to create similar coordination mechanisms (Lightfoot, 2005); the Liberals and associated parties took until the mid-1970s (Watson, 2010, 2015; Teasdale and Bainbridge, 2012, p. 405). None of these were yet recognisably parties (no direct membership or common manifesto, for example), but in institutional terms their representatives had consistently behaved in a particular fashion from the 1950s onwards; from its inception, the members of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community sat according to political affiliation rather than nationality, "a practice unhesitatingly taken over by the Parliamentary Assembly of the EEC and Euratom Treaties and, in 1979, by the first directly-elected European Parliament" (Westlake, 1994, p. 11). It was those first direct elections that acted as a catharsis, both directly and indirectly. Directly, parties from the same political families now fought on a trans-European battlefield, though they shrank back to the political groups within the Parliament once the election campaigns were over. Indirectly, for as the momentum for reform and further integration grew, the potential federalising role of such European political parties was increasingly appreciated. As a prescient David Marquand had put it in 1979:

> The Community's chances of moving beyond the narrow limits of the present *Europe des patries* depend crucially on the emergence of a *Europe des partis*, in which the political forces that matter at the national level are bound together by the need to fight for power at the Community level (1978, p. 124).

The coordination role of these emerging European political parties grew, particularly before European Council meetings, but the key would always be resources and, primarily, funding.

The breakthrough came with the Maastricht Treaty (1993). A new article (Article 138a) stated that "Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union".

It was the Maastricht Treaty that also enshrined the concept of the European citizen. As in many other areas, once the principle (of parties at European level) had been granted, further constitutional reforms consolidated and enhanced the concept. Thus, the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) paved the way for European political parties to be paid for out of the European budget, and the parties accordingly started to spend money. The Treaty of Nice (2001) provided that the Council and the Parliament should jointly lay down the regulations governing European political parties and particularly their funding. A subsequent Regulation (2003) defined what European political parties were and made it clear that funding had to remain at the level of the European political parties – that is, it couldn't be siphoned back to domestic political parties. This provision encouraged the European-level parties to organise themselves better. The 2003 Regulation was modified several times by Parliament Bureau decisions and amended in 2007 so as to enable the emerging parties to establish corresponding political parties at European level. The 2007 regulation also granted the European political parties exclusive responsibility to campaign for the European elections (the regulation forbade the corresponding political groups of the European Parliament from campaigning). A further Regulation (2014) updated and refined the 2007 Regulation's provisions, granting European Political Parties and Foundations legal status and establishing an Authority, a body of the European Union, for the purpose of registering, controlling and sanctioning European political parties and foundations. The Authority came into being on 1 January 2017.

These developments did not always go smoothly (see Teasdale and Bainbridge, 2012, pp. 405-409 for a fuller account), but there was always only one direction of travel. This concentration on the technical side of developments should not distract from the political and ideological manoeuvres that accompanied the several waves of enlargement that occurred from 1985 onwards. Indeed, there have been several fascinating accounts of how the European political parties were built up (see, for example, Martens, 2008 and Watson, 2010; for a more

strategic and tactical view, see Welle, 1997). Nevertheless, it was these technical developments that facilitated the political construction work. Although I have elsewhere argued that the draftsmen of the Lisbon Treaty generated (notably through Title II of the Treaty on European Union) a vision of a composite democracy, embodying elements of representative, participatory and direct democracy (Westlake, 2016, p. xiii), the vision of a party-based democracy (both the European Parliament and national parliaments) is clearly pre-eminent (TEU, Article 10.4).

This whistle-stop review of developments since 1979 has shown how far and how fast the Union has come with regard to the concept of European political parties. As with the concept of a parliamentary Union, it is instructive to compare what commentators observed twenty years ago with the situation today. In the first edition of their seminal study, *Political Parties in the European Union*, Simon Hix and Christopher Lord considered specifically whether the EU was a "party democracy" (1998, p. 204). Their conclusion was that "some progress" had been made towards a "Europe of parties" (p. 213), but they identified a number of weaknesses – the gravest being the lack of electoral legitimacy – and proposed a number of reforms. Many of the latter have since been implemented, including, as was seen above, the creation of party foundations and, as will be seen below, the creation of a direct link between European elections and the presidency of the European Commission.[4] Only a uniform electoral procedure has so far yet to materialise, though one may well result from the work that the Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee has recently embarked upon. In conclusion, significant steps have been taken towards a *Europe des partis*; momentum has grown and developments have accelerated. If Priestley could still declare in 2010 that European political parties were the "missing link"

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[4] Although there is scope for research about the extent of the possibility of direct membership of European parties. I am grateful to Sir Graham Watson and Francis Jacobs for making this point. As Watson points out, "ALDE introduced it under my leadership and I believe the S&D had something similar. In ALDE's case there are now over 5000 individual members, not all of them members of ALDE parties at national level. They are given delegates' and voting rights and some rights in policy formation at meetings of Council and Congress" (7 June 2017 correspondence with the author).

(2010),[5] nevertheless, particularly since 1979, and even more so since 1983, the Union has inexorably evolved towards becoming a party-political Union and it must be assumed that the trend is irreversible (what those future parties might be is another matter).

3. The *Spitzenkandidaten*/Lead Candidate Procedure: an irreversible steps towards…?

Space precludes a detailed consideration of the origins and development of the *Spitzenkandidaten*/lead candidate concept and procedure, from the EPP's 2002 congress in Estoril onwards – or perhaps even before (see Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton, 2000 4th edition; Hobolt, 2014; Shackleton, 2014; Christiansen, 2015; Penalver and Priestley, 2015; Westlake, 2016a, for such accounts). The EPP maintained that the procedure had first been used in 2004, in anticipation of the draft Constitutional Treaty's provisions, and again in 2009, in anticipation of the Lisbon Treaty's similar provisions. On both occasions, the EPP won a greater number of MEPs than the S&D, and José Manuel Barroso, as a Christian Democrat, was therefore considered to be the candidate of the winning party and, indeed, was presented as such in the EPP's literature (Westlake, 2016, pp. 34-35). The use of the procedure before, during and after the May 2014 European elections nevertheless represented a significant development for three reasons, all related to the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. The first is the wording of Article 17.7 of the Treaty on European Union:

> Taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall propose to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission.

Thus, an explicit and direct electoral link had been established.

The second is the provisions of Declaration 11 that was appended to the Treaty on European Union:

> Prior to the decision of the European Council, representatives of the European Parliament and of the European Council will thus conduct the necessary consultations

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[5] And Fabbrini could write that "The transnational party organizations are more rhetorical than effective organizations" (2007, pp. 137-138).

in the framework deemed the most appropriate. These consultations will focus on the backgrounds of the candidates for President of the Commission, taking account of the elections to the European Parliament…

These 'consultations' are clearly intended to smooth the process of designation and make it absolutely clear that the European Council cannot decide unilaterally (as was previously the case), and again the electoral link is asserted plainly. The third development is the next sentence of Article 17.7: "This candidate shall be elected by a majority of its component members". The operative word here is 'elected' – not 'approved' or 'confirmed'. The article thus provides an additional electoral linkage to a majority – an absolute majority – in Parliament.

The first experience with the *Spitzenkandidaten*/lead candidate procedure in 2014 generated considerable academic and public interest. It was portrayed in the media in particular as a means of raising public awareness and hence of increasing electoral participation. When turnout in the May 2014 European elections remained stubbornly similar to the turnout at the previous European elections in 2009, this was seen, inevitably, as a failure. But those who fought for the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty to be fully implemented were not just concerned about increasing turnout – though electoral legitimacy was important to them (see, for example, Van Parijs, 2015). Rather, they saw the implementation of the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure as a deliberate choice of direction for the future democratic development of the European Union, seeking to establish not only an electoral linkage between the European elections and the presidency of the European Commission but a political linkage between a supporting majority in Parliament and the Commission President's political programme – tying in the executive to the legislative, in other words. Supporters of the procedure were not unduly disappointed by the turnout figures – they knew that the first time around would be problematic. For them, what mattered was the precedent, and the creation of expectations that the procedure would be

repeated, in such a way that it would become an established part of the institutional scenery.[6]

As one high-ranking official of the Parliament put it:

> The members of the European Council believed it wouldn't happen. Therefore, they were unprepared. For as long as it happens only once, they can regard it as an accident. But if it happens again, then it becomes a practice. The (European) Council is a practice-based institution... Therefore, the crucial battle will be next time (Interview with the author).

The working assumption of this paper is that that envisaged crucial battle will be won in 2019, and that the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure will occur again, and again in 2024, and so on, and thus becomes established practice in all succeeding European elections.[7] It would then, as the anonymous analyst suggested, become a practice and not simply a one-off accident. If the lead candidate procedure occurs again following the European elections in 2019, then the European Union will have made a decisive step *beyond* a governance system with strong parliamentary and party-political dimensions *towards* a system that could be described as a nascent party political parliamentary democracy, with an executive function relying on a parliamentary majority. To the supporters of the procedure, it will have introduced an important element of legitimacy:

> By doing this and by giving the citizens not only the choice on composition of the European Parliament but also the choice on who is running the Executive - the European Commission - the new process is dramatically increasing the legitimacy of the system (Welle, 2015b).

If this assumption proves to be justified, then the European Union, it may safely be said, will have definitively answered the question posed by the 15 December 2001 Laeken Declaration on the future of the European Union[8] (Bulletin of the European Union, 2001), will have turned its back definitively on the idea of a directly-elected President (as in the United

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[6] A strong corollary is, as Simon Hix has convincingly argued, that: '"European" public opinion – a European 'demos'? – will not exist until there is a genuine European-wide battle for political power at the EU level. The *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure is the start of this: (11 July 2017 correspondence with the author). See also Hix, 2008.
[7] It is possible that the battle might be lost although, with the imminent departure of the United Kingdom, which was ultimately the chief opponent of the procedure in 2014, the probability of success has surely been enhanced.
[8] 'How can the authority and efficiency of the European Commission be enhanced? How should the President of the Commission be appointed: by the European Council, by the European Parliament or should he be directly-elected by the citizens?'

States or France) and thus also on the presidential model even if, confusingly, the leader of the European Commission will still be called 'President'. Equally, the Union will have definitively turned its course towards some form – no matter how hybrid – of parliamentary government, characterised by, variously, a collegial government, reliant on the confidence of the legislature, with the possibility of dismissal by the legislature, and selected/elected by the legislature (see Lijphart, 1992, pp. 1-27, for a comparative analysis of the two basic models). As Welle has put it:

> If the Commission is now based on a parliamentary majority, then we may have what we call traditionally 'parliamentary democracy' in the European Union. That is not a small thing. That is not a small thing at all. So, it may well be that with this new Commission based on a parliamentary majority we are just starting the transition towards parliamentary democracy in the European Union (Welle, 2014).

4. 'Known unknowns'

This paper engages in some speculation about possible developments in the evolution of European Union political parties and party systems, but to keep the 'experiment' relatively simple, no attempt is made to take into account six sets of probable or possible future developments. As such, these developments are 'known unknowns', flagged up here but not considered further because they would add too much complexity to an already complex exercise.

The first 'known unknown' concerns the future geographical dimensions of the European Union. Even if the current Juncker Commission has frozen the possibility of accession during its mandate (and ruled out the possibility of Turkey acceding), the longer-term perspective taken by this paper implies strongly that further accessions to the EU will have taken place, particularly from among the current candidate countries (Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey) and those waiting in the wings (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo). In the case of each of those countries, political parties and party-political systems have evolved, and will continue to evolve in distinctive and

idiosyncratic fashion, and they would bring their own specific identities into the Union. It is impossible to speculate about the effects such parties and systems might have, though the prevalence of nationalisms and regional concerns suggest that such accessions would have some, if not considerable, impact.

The second concerns the structure and institutional arrangements of the European Union in general. An Intergovernmental Conference might seem highly unlikely in the immediately foreseeable future, but what about in twenty or thirty years' time?[9] For the time being, the Union may prefer to find alternative ways of re-ordering its affairs – perhaps through hybrid extra-treaty arrangements in some cases (defence, for example) – but in the longer run, amendments to the Treaties will surely be necessary (some Treaty amendments may well already be necessary to deal with Brexit). Again, it is difficult to speculate about exactly what those might be and how they might impact on the evolution of a future Union parliamentary party-political system.

The third 'known unknown' more specifically concerns governance of the eurozone. Consolidation of the eurozone, whether along the lines initially set out in the 'Five Presidents' Report' (Juncker et al, 2015) or the European Commission's follow-up *Reflection Paper on the Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union* (European Commission, 2017b) or according to the visions set out in President Emanuel Macron's 26 September 2017 Sorbonne speech (and for which he has a specific electoral mandate – Münchau, 2017) or possibly in some other way is a political and economic imperative that all have recognised (including, it should be noted, the 2015-2017 British government and its predecessor). The draft February 2016 Settlement for the United Kingdom within the European Union (European Council, 2016), if it had been implemented, would have enabled such consolidation to go ahead. Through its March 2017

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[9] Though Angela Merkel did not rule out such a possibility in her 15 May 2017 summit meeting with new French President Emmanuel Macron, Andrew Duff believes that "the next IGC, and hopefully Convention, will take place before 2024 – not least to tackle eurozone governance, adjust post-Brexit, tackle immigration competence and electoral reform and seat apportionment" (10 August 2017 correspondence with the author). See also Duff, 2015c.

White Paper on the Future of Europe, the European Commission has effectively launched a reflection process about whether other means can be found to achieve the same aims, particularly for scenarios 4 – doing less more efficiently – and 5 – doing much more together (European Commission, 2017a). In its follow-up *Reflection Paper*, the European Commission considers how a strengthened EMU architecture can be anchored in terms of democratic accountability. It considers equipping the European and national parliaments with "sufficient powers" of oversight (p. 27) but rightly ventures no further in considering whether a specific configuration of the European Parliament might be appropriate. Chang and Hodson (2017), on the other hand, suggest that a dedicated Sub-Committee of the European Parliament with appropriate membership might be the best structural response. With or without such reforms, calls for democratisation of the eurozone have been increasing (see, e.g., Piketty, 2017; Henette et al, 2017 and Magnette, 2017).

It is simply too early to be able to know how such consolidation and democratisation will take place and in what way, although the creation of some sort of 'core' eurozone with some sort of parliamentary arrangement would have consequences for the way in which European Union political parties evolve – in terms both of substance and structure. The point could be made more broadly with regard to any differentiated architecture, which is surely one of the reasons why, in his 2017 State of the European Union address to the European Parliament, Jean-Claude Juncker robustly rejected the idea in declaring, "The Parliament of the euro area is the European Parliament" (Juncker, 2017, p. 16).[10]

A fourth 'known unknown' concerns the evolution of the European Council and of the Council of Ministers. Space precludes a substantive treatment of this issue, but questions would

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[10] On the other hand, as Sir Graham Watson has pointed out, "Political parties can deal with differentiated architecture. For example, the ALDE Party had a debate (at a Council meeting in 2013) about whether congress delegates from non-EU member states should have the right to vote in elections to choose the ALDE *Spitzenkandidat*. We decided they should, for 2014, but I can see this question being posed again in the future" (7 June 2017 correspondence with the author).

include the consequences of a consolidated *Spitzenkandidate*n procedure for the competences of the Commission and the European Council: would it force 'purity' on them both? Would the Commission have to shed its 'neutral' functions (competition, anti-fraud,[11] etc) and become 'only' an executive? Would the European Council/Council have to shed its executive functions? What sort of relationship might evolve with the Council and the European Council, and how might those two bodies evolve in the same context? And what if, as Jean-Claude Juncker recently proposed in his State of the European Union address, the two Presidencies would somehow be combined (Juncker, 2017, p. 18)? And how, in any case, would an emerging party-political system cope with the unsynchronised electoral systems of the member states?

The fifth 'known unknown' concerns the specific case of the future of the seventy-three seats in the European Parliament that will be freed up as of 2019 if the United Kingdom exits the European Union as foreseen. More particularly, a number of actors have called for the seats to be reallocated to create a pan-European Union constituency (De La Baume, 2017; Kalcik and Wolff, 2017), echoing, notably, the recommendations set out in then MEP Andrew Duff's 2011 report to the European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee (Duff, 2011; see also Duff, 2015b).[12] Again, the new French President, Emmanuel Macron, incorporated such an idea in his presidential programme (Macron, 2017). Duff's basic idea, though it would require Treaty change, would create a "joint constituency" to elect the European Commission president, with lists headed by each political party's candidate. Macron's more simple idea (though it would still require Treaty change), shared by many (including former MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit, for example), is simply to create a trans-national, trans-European list of 73 seats, a possibility recently endorsed by Jean-Claude Juncker in his 2017 State of the European Union

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[11] The creation of the European Public Prosecutor's Office would to some extent achieve this already.
[12] Although the concept of some sort of European political constituency is as old as the directly-elected European Parliament itself, if not older. I am grateful to Francis Jacobs for pointing this out.

address.[13] It is impossible to predict how this issue might turn out (though, since Treaty change would be required, it would seem a safe bet to assume that nothing, even if decided, would be implemented by 2019).

The sixth, related, 'known unknown' concerns whether, and how, the European Parliament might finally react to the German Constitutional Court's June 2009 ruling regarding the legality of the Lisbon Treaty and, in particular, the criticisms made about the legitimacy of the Parliament, given that its members are not elected by a uniform system, and given also that the number of MEPs per member state is apportioned through the principle of degressive proportionality (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*, 2009) – a principle enshrined in TEU Article 14.2. As Duff describes:

> If each MEP does not have an equal vote, is each citizen equally represented at the European Union level, as the Treaty requires? The Court points out that the change made by the Lisbon treaty to the mandate of MEPs – becoming 'representatives of the Union's citizens' rather than, as previously, 'representatives of the peoples of the States' – is flatly contradicted by the fact that seats are still apportioned entirely per member state. Moreover, the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* does not believe that the vague federalist concept of degressive proportionality amounts to a serious method of distributing seats. In the Court's view, in spite of the Union's pretensions to European citizenship, the European Parliament is in fact made up of national contingents. (Duff, 2015b, see also Westlake, 2016, pp. 41-42)[14]

Decisions about the composition of the European Parliament and about the allocation of seats between member states are notoriously difficult. According to Art. 14.2 of the Treaty on the European Union, the composition of the Parliament is adopted through a special legislative procedure, whereby a European Council decision is taken upon an initiative of the European Parliament and requires its consent (by simple majority). Andrew Duff has cogently argued that the only "intelligent approach" in the longer run would be the so-called "CamCom" method of apportionment (see Duff, 2015a, pp. 105-107 for a succinct presentation of this methodology). What is clear, in any case, is that the European Council decision concerning the composition of

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[13] Although, as Geoffrey Harris points out, in the longer run, "the assumption that a special EU-wide list for the 73 ex-UK seats would mostly go to federalists is a risky one" (4 July 2017 correspondence with the author).

[14] On the other hand, if the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure is consolidated in 2019, then the Court's argument about the non-justification for a threshold will surely be weakened because of the consolidated linkage to the executive.

the current (2014-2019 Parliament) is about to be reviewed – a revision foreseen before the

2016 referendum result in the United Kingdom:

> This decision will be revised again before the 2019-2024 parliamentary term upon an
> initiative of the European Parliament to be presented before the end of 2016. The aim
> will be to establish a system which will in the future make it possible, before each new
> election to the European parliament, to allocate seats between member states in a fair,
> objective and transparent manner, taking into account any potential change in the
> number, as well as any demographic trends, in the respective populations of member
> states (European Council, 2013).

At the time of writing (September 2017), the European Parliament's Constitutional

Affairs Committee is deliberating a draft report and resolution (the co-rapporteurs are the

Committee Chair, Danuta Hübner (EPP), and the Committee's Vice-Chair, Pedro Silva Pereira

(S&D)), Parliament's work having been badly delayed by the Brexit process--the Committee

was authorised to begin work on the substance of the file only after the UK lodged its

notification under Article 50 TEU. The current draft report adopts a pragmatic approach in

proposing a reduction Parliament's membership to 700, a redistribution to ensure greater

proportionality, and a 'reserve' of 51 seats for possible future enlargements and/or a joint

constituency. The draft report argues that the latter issue, however, should be dealt with in the

context of the European electoral law (Hübner and Silva Pereira, 2017).

5. Some basic questions

As has been seen, the European integration process opted, by default, to adopt a parliamentary

model. The parliamentary system of government, increasingly wedded to universal suffrage,

had only really come into its own after the First World War but would have seemed the obvious

choice in the immediate post-war period. It is generally compared favourably with presidential

systems of government. In it, the absence of the purist separation of powers in presidential

systems is counter-balanced by a diffusion of powers and easier and more rapid passing of

legislation. But will the parliamentary system of government still be considered favourably

twenty or thirty years hence? In many countries parliaments are currently regarded critically;

various corruption cases involving individual parliamentarians have added to the critical mix. Is the parliamentary model an enduring one, and will it still seem appropriate by, say, 2059?

And what, in the same context, of political parties? Funding scandals in various Western systems have undermined the legitimacy of many mainstream, well-established political parties. But beyond the peccadilloes of individual parties and their office holders, there would also appear to be more systemic problems concerning the way in which modern political parties, no longer benefitting from mass membership and reliant on public funding, leading to dependent bureaucratic structures (see Mair, 2013, for a trenchant, and sustained, critique of the 'hollowing out' of democracy), have somehow smothered the very political dialogue that they are supposed to foster and facilitate (see Nothomb, 2017, for a recent outburst).

What, moreover, of party government as a system? Already in the 1980s – soon after the first direct elections to the European Parliament had been held, scholars were beginning to question the merits and the potential of party government, especially given the decline of some of the phenomena on which it had been predicated, such as mass party membership, strong party loyalty, low volatility in voting patterns, and strong class identification (Castles and Wildenmann, 1986; Wildenmann, 1986). Are parties truly fulfilling an aggregation function, and are they still able to provide a stable basis for government whilst also ensuring democratic legitimacy? The sudden rise of non-parties and movements and the collapse of support for traditional parties, as has occurred most recently in the 2017 French presidential elections but as has also occurred in Italy and Greece, suggest that they may not – or not automatically, in any case.

And what of the mainstream party families that currently exist at the Union level? In 1967, Lipset and Rokkan, grandfathers of post-war political science, observed that "the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s" (1967, p. 50). Their conclusion was:

> The dominant electoral alternatives then prevalent in Western Europe were the outcome of a complex interaction between historically defined social cleavages and particular patterns of institutional development… European political parties acquired a virtually independent momentum, consolidating a set of political terms of reference which seems almost as immutable as the very languages in which they were expressed (Mair, 1983, p. 405).

This 'freezing' phenomenon meant – and still means to a considerable extent – that Western European party-political systems were dominated by an oligopoly – Christian Democrats, Socialists, Social Democrats, Liberals, Communists – that was of declining relevance to the real cleavages, to the extent that they existed, in Western European countries' societies. Of course, there have been plenty of new arrivals – the Greens and various Eurosceptical and further right parties in particular – but it is perhaps surprising how much the Union's party politics, at EU level, is still dominated by an oligopoly that, at member state level, corresponded to the classic cleavages of the 1920s.[15] The last section of this paper will briefly consider other possible future cleavages.

What, also, of alternation? Most democratic systems are based on the logic that the electorate should, at some stage, be able to 'throw the rascals out', although there doesn't need to be an intention of reproach or of punishment for an electorate to opt for change. Some European party systems (for example, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark) are used to the permanence of coalition governments, but there is an understanding that the composition of the coalitions may change – the 'rascals' may not be out altogether, in other words, but there will be change – alternation – of a sort. Other systems – Germany, Austria – seem comfortable with rule by 'grand coalitions', but such arrangements are regarded as being time bound and may

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[15] Writing in 1979, Marquand flatly declared: "The Community's embryonic party system is an artificial construct, which reflects national rather than Community realities: (1979, p. 124). However, Hix points out that "the historical evidence is that political parties mainly form INSIDE rather than OUTSIDE parliaments – by elites breaking away from other parties, rather than by voters spontaneously starting a new movement. This is relevant for the European party system, as it suggests that at some point in the future 'new' parties/party formulations could form if a 'European party system' was truly independent from national parties. For example, could a 'European progressive alliance' of MEPs, EP Groups, and national party leaders, emerge to agree a common candidate for the Commission President. Now that really would be a truly European party system" (11 July 2017 correspondence with the author).

collapse (Austria currently being a good case in point) so that, once again, change – alternation – is possible. National systems may throw up centrist movements or parties or coalitions of parties. Tony Blair's 'New Labour' was a good example of a party that had captured the electoral centre ground. Emmanuel Macron's *En Marche!* movement, now converted into a party of sorts, provides a more recent example. But where centrist governance is structural, then there can be no real alternation.[16] Thus, whilst the following reasoning makes sense from a punctual, transitional point of view (the word 'unique' is important), such an arrangement would be democratically unhealthy[17] in the longer run if it were to deny the European electorate the possibility to insist on change:

> The newly elected President of the European Commission represents the political centre: the political centre which exists in the current European Parliament and the political centre which exists in the European Council as well. I would not go as far as to say that Juncker is situated left of the EPP and right of the social-democrats, because if you try finding such a territory you might not succeed. But it may be fair to say that Juncker might be on the left of the EPP or on the right of the social-democrats. To me, he is exactly occupying this kind of political space which allows him to bring the different political forces of the Parliament together… This means that he is well placed at the centre of the system and has a unique chance to work as a unifier. And this would not have been the case had he just come from one winning party and thus being the representative of only one political wing of the European political spectrum (Welle, 2014a).

Lastly, and linked to the importance of alternation, the existence of viable opposition within the system is as important as the possibility for viable governance. Peter Mair has written persuasively on this subject (2007, 2013). As Albert Hirschman had pointed out in the 1970s, in the absence of any possibility for "voice", the only alternative is "exit" from the system altogether (Hirschman, 1970). Luuk Van Middelaar has been a more recent proponent of the same argument (2017). If Euro-scepticism as a viable force is somehow not permitted within the system, then it risks being transformed into anti-Europeanism (or anti-EU-ism, at least).

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[16] However, whilst space precludes a proper treatment here, it should be pointed out, at least in passing, that some authors argue that the Swiss model of non-alternation (so nobody can be thrown out) might be more relevant to the EU (see, for example, Van Parijs, 2015 and 2017). Richard Corbett has argued: "The Commission would appear to be edging towards a hybrid of Swiss-style collegiality in its overall composition, but with a more majoritarian approach to designating its President" (in Kenealy, Peterson and Corbett, 2012).

[17] Sartori, among others, pointed a warning finger to the unhappy fates of the French Fourth Republic and Weimar Germany (Hanning, 1984, p. 437).

These 'basic questions,' as they have here been termed, require careful reflection and deliberation as the embryonic European parliamentary party-political system starts to emerge. In short, we cannot be certain that parliamentary party-political democracy is the most enduring of systems nor necessarily the most appropriate system for the future European Union (what can we know about future political developments, particularly as technology is evolving so rapidly?). But it is what the Union has, cumulatively, opted for. [18] The challenge will be to ensure that it functions sufficiently well to ensure not only good governance but also good opposition; not only stability but also alternation; not only aggregation, but also relevance. Rising to that challenge requires, in turn, careful reflection on the implications and consequences of each step on the way. In particular, the strategic long-term objective of good and viable governance and opposition should not be inadvertently prejudiced by short-term tactical considerations. This will perhaps particularly apply to the European Parliament's current reflections on a common electoral system. As Sartori recalled, electoral reform is as much about the effects of parties on electoral systems as the other way around (1983) or, as Hanning more baldly put it, "it would be fruitless to estimate the effects of the new electoral system without reference to *the reasons for its introduction*" (1984, p. 434).

6. Party political systems and some of their discontents

Giovanni Sartori was one of a number of Italian political scientists who could see plainly, from the way Italy's democracy functioned in the 1960s and 1970s, that party political systems of themselves did not guarantee effective governance or legitimacy. Some of the discontents that he and his contemporaries identified are potentially of relevance to a future European Union party political system and are here considered briefly.

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[18] Although it might be, to echo Churchill's famous dictum, the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

A first concerns the phenomenon of *bipartismo imperfetto*, a term coined by Giorgio Galli (1967). Galli's theory was later dismissed for being nostalgic about a system (a two-party system with regular alternation) which, with the exception of the United States and the United Kingdom, didn't really exist – at least, not at that time (see, for example, Sassoon, 2013). However, part of Galli's analysis concerned the situation in which a large party, the Communist Party (PCI), was excluded from governance, and the effects that this had on the balance of the overall system and its legitimacy and governability. Could a future Union party political system contain a large party that, for one reason or another, might be considered beyond the pale? What would happen if such a party were to win a majority in European elections?

A second, related phenomenon is that of a so-called dominant party system (Sartori 1976). This could best be defined as a system in which one political party predominates, has won successive elections, and seems unlikely to lose any elections for the foreseeable future. The phenomenon, and its risks, had already been identified by Maurice Duverger in the 1950s, with Sartori later considering the Italian case in particular (Duverger, 1954; Sartori, 1976). Contemporary examples of dominant party systems would include Sweden (the Social Democrats), Japan (the Liberal Democrats) and India (the India National Congress). In the sophisticated case of the Italian Christian Democratic Party, the pseudo roles of government and opposition came to be carried out by factions (so-called *correnti*) within the party (Jacobs, 1989, p. 178) and these, to a considerable extent, gave centre voters at least the illusion of alternation. A critical case concerns South Africa and the African National Congress Party (ANC), which has never scored less than 62% in the five national assembly elections to date and where there seems little probability that it will be out of power in the near future (see Suttner, 2006, and particularly his dismissal of the party dominance theory). Could a future Union party political system contain a predominant party or coalition of like-minded parties that would deny the perception of alternation?

A third, and again related phenomenon, is that of polarised pluralism, a term coined by Sartori. This can perhaps best be understood as a bimodal distribution of support where a relatively empty centre ground is flanked by two 'peaks' of support for relative extremes. Pre-1933 Germany provided a good example of this phenomenon, with strong support for the Communists on the left and the national socialists on the right. In the case of Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the Communist Party (PCI) could not accede to power and even after the 1973 *compromesso storico* was limited to state positions, but not political power. In Italy, the central vacuum was gradually filled in by the Socialist (PSI), Liberal (PLI) and Radical (PRI) Parties, but the existence of such polarized pluralism created severe governance challenges, leaving the country never far from an existential challenge. Also of potential relevance in Sartori's various analyses are the presence of anti-system parties (how does a system cope with its potential nemesis?), bilateral oppositions (a dominant party astride the centre ground condemned to remain dominant because of extreme parties to its left and right)[19] and irresponsible oppositions – parties that were not interested in governing, but only in bringing about change. Again, could a future Union system throw up a similar situation and similar challenges (some would argue that it already has done)?

7. A possible precedent and a pointer

Can other countries and continents tell us anything about how the European Union's parliamentary party-political system might evolve? The most obvious historical examples (and perhaps the only directly comparable ones) are those of the American First and Second Party Systems. These were the systems Marquand had in mind, both descriptively and also normatively, when he considered the consequences of the first direct elections in 1979. Facile

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[19] *A propos*, as Pierpaolo Settembri has pointed out, "A possible long-term scenario is one where 'opposition parties' command, if not a single majority, at least several blocking minorities in the European Parliament, thus preventing the formation and the operation of a grand coalition. …" (5 June 2017 correspondence with the author).

comparisons should be avoided, of course, but the object of the exercise is simply to look for possible pointers. Marquand argued that analogies with existing state systems in EU member states were misleading. Rather, the right analogy was with United States party politics in the 1830s and 1840s. Then, the American Whigs and Democrats were

> loose coalitions of state parties, which usually operated at the state level, but which came together once every four years to contest presidential elections. They were held together, to the extent that they were held together at all, by their views on federal questions. Their views on state questions were often not merely different, but opposed (Marquand, 1979, p. 125).

Though Marquand acknowledged that the American analogy could not be pushed too far, he insisted that it was a useful backdrop. Seen against it,

> The divisions within the nationalist and supra-nationalist camps in present-day Europe are neither particularly surprising nor particularly deep: If they come into being they will be coalitions of national parties. They will be divided at the national level though united at the Community level: so were their American counterparts in the days of Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren. The Members returned under their banners, if and when they contest elections in their own right, will not always vote on party lines: nor did American Whig and Democratic Congressmen in the 1830s and 1840s. Sometimes, they will vote on national lines instead: in exactly the same way, American Whig and Democratic Congressmen often voted on state lines (Marquand, 1979, p. 126).

What the early American experience seems to indicate is that federal parties and party systems evolve out of loose coalitions between parties that may compete at state level, and that those parties tend to coalesce around the twin binary issues of more-or-less central government and more-or-less central budget. What Europeans would consider as traditional ideologies, on the left-right scale, are less salient at federal level than at state level in the US. The big difference is that state-based parties in the US did not evolve along left-right lines and didn't evolve out of socio-economic adjustments to industrialisation and class, and in Europe there was no general division over slavery and no civil war. Notwithstanding these differences, Fabbrini's seminal study has demonstrated how European Union-level politics:

> Has become constantly characterized by sectional rather than class or religious cleavages. Certainly, within the EP, traditional divisions are apparent, such as the division between the left … and the right … However, the structural division in the EP, as well as within the … Council of Ministers, is not between left and right (Fabbrini, 2007, p. 137).

In becoming more sectoral, and in becoming increasingly about whether there should be 'more' or 'less' Europe, EU-level politics is becoming more like American politics, despite those very different beginnings.

There may be other pointers closer to today including, elements from the 2016 United Kingdom referendum debate. During the referendum campaign, voice was also given to what might be termed enlightened left-wing critiques of the European Union and arguments therefore in favour of leaving the Union. Such arguments strongly echoed left-wing critiques of the European integration process voiced in the early 1950s and 1960s. For example:

> We voted Leave because we believe it is essential to preserve the two things we value most: a democratic political system and a social-democratic society. We fear that the European Union's authoritarian project of neoliberal integration is a breeding ground for the far right. By sealing off so much policy, including the imposition of long-term austerity measures and mass immigration, from the democratic process, the union has broken the contract between mainstream national politicians and their voters. This has opened the door to right-wing populists who claim to represent 'the people', already angry at austerity, against the immigrant (Johnson, 2017).

This enlightened left-wing case frequently refers back to Friedrich Hayek's argument in favour of 'inter-state federalism' as a way of weakening nation-states' interference in the workings of the free market (Hayek, 1939). To favour federalism (meaning European integration) is therefore to fall into the Hayekian trap. This critique goes on to argue that the only defence against the sort of 'neo-liberal integration' referred to above is by maintaining strong nation states, which is where the true *demos* is to be found (on this point, as Philippe van Parijs has illustrated, this brand of the left and Margaret Thatcher would make common cause – van Parijs, 2016). Thus

> Democracy needs a *demos*, a people for whom government is of, by and for. Without one, all you have is inter-elite management, treaty law and money grubbing. But how will 'the people' be constructed? Politics will decide. A left populism will not seek to define the people as the far right does, in opposition to the immigrant other, but in opposition to those powerful neoliberal elites that are no longer able, as Professor Streeck says, 'to build a social framework around the hot core of capitalist profit making' (*Ibid*.)

Leaving aside the recent work on 'demoicracy' (that is, the writings of those who argue that there is no need for a single *demos*), there would appear to be two logical weak points in such argumentation. The first is that the existence of strong nation states does not by itself guarantee left-wing government nor defend against neo-liberalism at the nation state level. The second, of more relevance to this analysis, is that a cooperative inter-relationship between nation states involving inter-governmental, confederal and federal elements need not necessarily result in a dominantly neo-liberal policy mix. Indeed, there is a strong prescriptive left-wing case arguing precisely the opposite. To take Van Parijs again:

> But if the utopian project we need is to have any chance of being realized, it will have to protect itself against the pressure of globalization… Above all, it will need to strengthen its federal institutions and develop the EU-wide demos required to make them work (Van Parijs, 2016, p. 7).

In other words, Van Parijs argues, the answer is not less integration, but more.

At the least, proponents of both the left-wing and the right-wing cases are to be found on both sides of the European integration process. Put another way, cogent cases can be made both for and against European integration on both the left and the right. Hayekian capitalists might argue in favour of integration because it weakens the interfering state. The reformist Labour Party of the late 1980s came to accept European integration as the best defence against the policies of a Hayek-inspired Conservative government *within* a Member State. If there were only nation states, Labour and Conservative supporters would happily exist on opposing sides of the political divide. But pro-European Labour and pro-European Conservatives find themselves together, no matter how uncomfortably, on the same side of the political divide at pan-EU level (a divide that will surely continue even after Brexit has occurred). The process is even more evident when anti-integration parties arise outside the mainstream parties, whether on the left or the right, since they push the pro-European parties (Social Democrats and Christian Democrats, Socialists and Republicans) into political space where they broadly agree. It is surely one of the reasons why it so hard for the mainstream parties to find distinctive

political stances on EU issues in the European elections and also the reason why in such contests they tend to fall back on domestic politics, where the distinctions between them are clearer and more legible to the electorate. *Pace* Reif et al (1984, 1985), that is *also* the reason why European elections tend to be second-order national elections.

If we look, as it were, through the other end of the telescope, at the emerging consequences of globalisation, then other trends would also appear to be increasingly salient. Marchetti (2016, especially pp. 154-158), for example, considers the possibility of a new political cleavage, more appropriate to a globalised world, of globalism versus localism. Beyond the arguably stale notions of left and right, this new division would

> Take us into the framing debates of neo-liberalism (is free trade a good thing? are international markets?), cosmopolitanism (aren't we all globe-trotters now, even if we never leave our sitting rooms and computer screens?), localism (the world of 'traditional values' and the menace of 'the other'); and – ugly term – civilisationism (are we all advancing with the onward progress of civilization together, or are there rather 'clashes' between different civilisations?) (Westlake, 2017, p. 2).

It is perhaps to this emerging alternative political cleavage that Welle looks when he argues:

> There is also a conflict between a more national and a more internationalist viewpoint. Based on this traditional conflict in the political arena, I think that what we are seeing for the moment is that this quarter of the political matrix, which is defined by a combination of social and national viewpoints, this quarter is for the moment the growth market for political parties. We have a surge of political parties which can be described as **'social nationalist'**. We have in France Mme. Le Pen. We have Mr. Wilders in the Netherlands. We have a major party in Denmark. We have the AfD party in Germany. And we have Mr. Trump in the United States. For me, all of them build on a strong need for protection. They are 'social' in the sense that these parties put a very strong stress on protection. Protection is also interpreted by them in the nationalist sense of the word as a protection against international or internationalist influence. So this is a movement which is directed against liberalisation, against Europeanisation and against globalisation. At the same time 'identity politics' is back (Welle, 2016).

So far, the traditional state-based systems have reproduced themselves at EU and European level, where they exercise oligopolistic powers. But some similarities with the US experience would nevertheless seem to be emerging, including the emergence of loose coalitions of parties for and against greater central government and greater central budgets. Indeed, perhaps the most obvious precedent is the Union itself. For what, it might be asked, was the so-called 'technical

agreement' in the European Parliament, and what is the current EPP-S&D pro-Juncker Commission coalition now, if not a 'loose coalition' – at times, even an electoral coalition? Are we not witnessing Marquand's prediction gradually becoming a reality? It is neither quick nor tidy, but maybe, just maybe, Europe's pro-integration parties – whatever their ideological divides in the domestic political context – are increasingly engaging in loose political coalitions at the EU level.[20] The questions then arise (if we believe in the democratic healthiness of alternation of parties in power and of strong opposition as well as government): what faces them, or what *should* face them?

8. Conclusion: a parliamentary party-based democracy - but what sort?

The citizens of today's European Union surely want their children, and their children's children, to live in a democratic Union. But as the Union continues to evolve, and as the integration process seems likely to continue, it is surely increasingly important also to go beyond that simple (and perhaps simplistic) assertion and ask, 'what sort of a parliamentary party-based democracy?' As I have argued elsewhere, commentators and analysts of the European Union tend to oversee the long term 'wood' (in terms of trends and their consequences) in favour of the 'trees' (punctual events, such as Treaty change and the European elections themselves) (Westlake, 2017, p. 37). The Union will always remain a *sui generis* organisation, as much a process as a fixed end state, but by opting for the *Spitzenkandidaten*/lead candidate procedure in May-July 2014 (and assuming the procedure occurs again in 2019), the European Union has taken a decisive step in a particular direction – namely, towards a parliamentary, party-based democracy. Towards exactly what *sort* of parliamentary, party-based democracy, though, is still

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[20] Note that already "There is growing evidence of a shift in the critical political cleavage at national level in Europe, from left-right to pro-globalisation vs anti-globalisation. This has been accompanied by a shift in the socio-demographic basis of party choice from social class to age and education. I would expect this to be gradually replicated at EU parliamentary level, although it will not always align itself with the further integration vs no further integration division" (18 June 2017 correspondence with Sir Ivor Crewe).

not yet clear, but it surely does no harm to start wondering. It is in any case as well to be aware that the existence of a parliament and of political parties and, now, of an executive-legislature electoral link guarantees neither a functioning democracy nor an effective party-political parliamentary system.

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