



## Democracy in the European Union from the Perspective of Representative Democracy

Dilek YİĞİT\*

### Abstract

*To what extent the European Union's political system is democratic has been receiving increased attention in academic research in recent decades, but the main question facing scholars is concerned with how to analyse democracy at the EU level. This article seeks to analyse the extent to which the European Union's political system is democratic from the perspective of representative democracy, that is, this analysis of democracy in the European Union is grounded on the basic principles of representative democracy; representative institutions, elections, political parties and political accountability.*

**Keywords:** European Institutions, Representative Democracy, Parliament, Elections, Political Parties

### INTRODUCTION

Democracy in the European Union has been a subject of much discussion in recent decades, and scholars have argued to what extent the Union's political system is democratic. Before analysing democratic quality of the Union's political system, we have to decide which model of democracy should be our reference point, for we can use several models of democracy such as representative democracy or participatory democracy<sup>1</sup>, each of which can emphasise different aspects of the Union's political system and can present many reasons for the democratic deficiency of the Union's institutions.

In this article, representative democracy will be taken as a reference point in analysing democracy in the European Union's political system, since the Union's ambition to be founded on representative democracy is clearly stated in Article 10 of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of

---

\* Chief of Division, The Department of European Affairs, the Undersecretariat of Treasury.

<sup>1</sup> For detailed information about models of democracy, H. Catt, *Democracy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

the European Union (post Lisbon).<sup>2</sup> First, the basic principles of representative democracy will be reviewed to discuss what kind of political system is democratic in terms of representative democracy. Second, an analysis of the European Union's political system will be undertaken so as to shed some light on the extent to which the Union's institutions are representative.

### **POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND THE PRINCIPLES OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY**

"Democracy" is defined in a general sense as "rule by the people."<sup>3</sup> But the understanding of what democracy is subject to a variety of definitions and periods. According to Dahl who defines democracy as a procedure satisfying the properties of popular sovereignty and political equality,<sup>4</sup> democracy has undergone three transformations over time. First is the transformation of nondemocratic city-states into democracies. Second is the transformation in which the idea of democracy was transferred to the nation state. Third is the transformation in which transnational systems such as the European Union develop.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence of the second transformation, "representation" has become a dominant idea,<sup>6</sup> as Dahl points out that: "What made the second transformation possible was an idea and set of practice we now tend to regard as essential to democracy-representation."<sup>7</sup>

Before analysing the political representation, it may be useful to define the concept of representation. Runciman defines "representation" as

*"it does not involve the granting of a literal presence to something: persons and things represented are not actually present but, ... must nevertheless be made present in some sense while not being present literally or fully in fact ... persons and things are granted a kind of artificial presence by the act of representation, which can be as real as the physical kind (the purpose of representation is to enable those who are literally absent nevertheless to make their presence genuinely felt)"<sup>8</sup>*

It is evident that Runciman's definition of "representation" is not directly related to politics. But this definition underlines the main purpose of

---

<sup>2</sup> Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 115, Vol. 51, 9 May 2008.

<sup>3</sup> J. Coultrap, 'From Parliamentarism to Pluralism: Models of Democracy and the European Union's Democratic Deficit', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol.11, No.1, 1999, p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> A. McGann, *The Logic of Democracy*, (USA: The University of Michigan, 2006), p.5.

<sup>5</sup> R.A. Dahl, 'A Democratic Dilemma: System Effectiveness versus Citizen Participation', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.109, No.1, 1994, p. 25-26.

<sup>6</sup> Although the second transformation of democracy made representation a dominant idea in modern politics, it is expressed that representation was known in the city-states, for certain tasks were delegated to elected magistrates. B. Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> R.A. Dahl, 'A Democratic Dilemma: System Effectiveness versus Citizen Participation', p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> D. Runciman, 'The Paradox of Political Representation', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol.15, No.1, 2007, p.94-95. For detailed information about representation, see also H. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

"representation", which is "to make present what is absent."<sup>9</sup> If all citizens can not participate in the decision-making process in modern states, this above-mentioned purpose of representation makes representation central to modern politics. In other words, what renders "representation" important in modern politics is an impracticability of direct democracy, and therefore representation is regarded as a second-best option to direct democracy<sup>10</sup> in modern states, where all citizens can not be entitled to make decisions. As Viera and Runciman state that:

*"What is distinctive about the modern world is the role that representation has played in shaping its politics. All modern states are representative states... it has become unavoidable as a way of doing politics. It is impossible to conceive of political institutions on the scale and of power of modern states without making use of the idea of representation."*<sup>11</sup>

They also hold that "representation" has evolved to design the modern state, and "without democracy, representation is just a word."<sup>12</sup> In a similar vein, Pollak and his colleagues put that representation was invented so as to render democracy possible in political communities.<sup>13</sup>

There are further claims that democracy did not mean direct rule, and it must involve representation. For instance, Hobson refers to Robespierre, who was critical of direct democracy and dismissed dominant understanding of direct democracy described without the concept of representation. He underlined that "for Robespierre democracy is a form of rule that necessarily involves representation."<sup>14</sup>

Because of the strong connection between the words *democracy* and *representation*, talking about modern politics is talking about representative democracy.

In the light of why the concept of representation is central to politics in modern states, political representation can be defined in a general sense as that the citizens are represented by their representatives<sup>15</sup> who take decisions on behalf, and in the name of them, for direct participation is not possible "in a large democracy (large here includes even the smallest modern nation-states)"<sup>16</sup> While giving the definition of "political representation", it's worth underlining

---

<sup>9</sup> J. Pollack, et.al., 'On Political Representation: Myths and Challenges', RECON Online Working Paper 2009/03, [www.reconproject.eu](http://www.reconproject.eu), (accessed December 12, 2009); H. Pitkin, *The Concept of Political Representation*.

<sup>10</sup> M. B. Viera and D. Runciman, *Representation*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.137.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60,123.

<sup>13</sup> J. Pollack, et.al. 'On Political Representation: Myths and Challenges'.

<sup>14</sup> C. Hobson, 'Revolution, Representation and the Foundations of Modern Democracy', *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol.7, No.4, 2008, p. 463.

<sup>15</sup> As Viera and Runciman point out, all modern states have two groups of people: the rulers-the representatives and the ruled-the represented. M. B. Viera and D. Runciman, *Representation*, p.126.

<sup>16</sup> A. McGann, *The Logic of Democracy*, p.125.

the distinction between "on behalf of the represented" and "in the name of the represented" put forward by Runciman, who says that "representation must entail some sense that the actions are being performed not just on behalf of the represented (that is, to promote their best interests) but also in the name of the represented (that is, giving them a stake in the action itself)."<sup>17</sup>

### **Elections and Elected Representatives**

When writing on the basic qualities of democracy, McGann points out that:

*"...a minimal requirement for democracy is that elections be free and fair, and that the decision-making process by elected officials also be procedurally fair."*<sup>18</sup>

This statement underlines firstly two concepts; "free and fair elections" and "elected officials." Why do we require elections and elected officials for procedures to be called democracy? As it is indicated above, direct participation is impossible in modern states. Hix puts "government by the people means government by the elected representatives of the people."<sup>19</sup>, Viera and Runciman state that "the nation needed representatives in order to be able to act. Representatives needed the nation in order to be entitled to act."<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein, Urbinati points out that "in a delegated political system ... the only thing the people are supposed to do is to appoint lawmakers."<sup>21</sup> How do the people appoint their representatives? The answer is "election", which enables the people to elect their representatives, who participate in the decision-making process in the name and on behalf of the people. Mansbridge holds that "direct electoral connections between representative and represented are real representation", and "electoral claims have real force, deriving from the formal strength of popular control that free and fair elections can deliver..."<sup>22</sup> That is, if democracy is defined as "rule by the people" in a general sense, it is evident that representatives have to be elected by the people through elections.

In addition to being a means of electing representatives, another function of elections is to make representatives authorised to act. This function of elections is mainly related to "giving consent to elected representatives",<sup>23</sup> for consent is

---

<sup>17</sup> D. Runciman, 'The Paradox of Political Representation', p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> A. McGann, *The Logic of Democracy*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> S. Hix, *What's Wrong With The European Union & How To Fix It*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.76.

<sup>20</sup> M. B. Viera and D. Runciman, *Representation*, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> N. Urbinati, 'Condorcet's Democratic Theory of Representative Government', *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol.3, No.1, 2004, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> J. Mansbridge, 'Rethinking Representation', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.97, No.4, 2003, p.515-528; M. Saward, 'Authorisation and Authenticity: Representation and the Unelected', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol.17, No.1, 2009, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> With regard to the relationship between the legitimacy of a political order and the people's consent, Manin indicates that "This belief that consent constitutes the sole source of legitimate authority and forms the basis of political obligation was shared by all Natural Law theorists from Grotius to Rousseau, including Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Locke", *The Principles of Representative Government*, p. 84.

regarded as a necessary condition of political authority<sup>24</sup> and a source of legitimacy. That is, election is a means of justification for representatives, consequently the political authority. In this context, Urbinati says that "elections ... transform sovereignty into a source of authorization."<sup>25</sup>

More interestingly, Urbinati also puts that "represented democracy" is an oxymoron and states:

*"Democracy can only be electoral ... but the function of election is not to make a democracy more democratic, but to make democracy possible. Once we admit the need for elections, we minimize democracy for we realize that the system can not be operated by the demos itself."*<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, in a representative democracy, the seats in parliaments are allocated to political parties according to the results of elections, as Pollack and his colleagues state "democratic representation means that votes for parties should correspond to the seats those parties win in the legislature."<sup>27</sup> That is to say, election is also a means of translating votes into the seats in parliaments.

Election as a mechanism of representation is also an instrument of control over politicians. This function of election is closely related to the concept of political accountability to which we return later.

Consequently, representative democracy is a system, which necessarily requires elections.

### **Political Parties**

While early democratic theory tended to pay little attention to political parties, and the first modern political parties did not emerge until the early nineteenth century,<sup>28</sup> democracy is defined as party democracy in the twentieth century. As Van Biezen points out "parties have put on extraordinarily strong mark on contemporary democratic politics."<sup>29</sup>

The reason why it is difficult to conceive of representative democracy without political parties in modern politics is many-faceted. Political parties are the natural intermediary between voters and decision-making process in democratic states. Sartori defines political parties as "the agency which typically communicates the demands of the society to the state, as the basic link or connector between a society and its government."<sup>30</sup> Political parties unite and

---

<sup>24</sup> T. Christiano, 'The Authority of Democracy', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol.12, No.3, 2004, p. 280.

<sup>25</sup> N. Urbinati, 'Condorcet's Democratic Theory of Representative Government', p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>27</sup> J. Pollack, et.al., 'On Political Representation: Myths and Challenges',

<sup>28</sup> S. Hix, A.G. Noury and G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> I. Van Biezen, *How Political Parties Shape Democracy*, UC Irvine:Center for the Study of Democracy, 2004, <http://escholarship.org>, (accessed November 11, 2009), p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> G. Sartori, 'Party Types, Organisation and Function', *West European Politics*, Vol. 28, No.1, 2005, p. 24.

organise the masses, aggregate and organise interests of voters, represent political preferences, formulate public policy, and enlist leaders for public offices.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, political parties have become the channels of representation.

Hix and his colleagues put forward that:

*"Without parties, voters have a hard time recognising serious and competent candidates from less serious and competent ones ... without parties, voters would have to find out, and politicians would have to supply, a huge amount of information about where each politician stands on the important issues of the day. In contrast, with established party labels, the information costs for voters and politician are considerably reduced."*<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, political parties are instrumental in transforming votes into the seats in parliaments, as stated above, the seats which parties win in parliaments should correspond votes parties win in elections. In parliaments, parties are also required to the functioning of legislative committees, and to setting the legislative agenda.<sup>33</sup>

Like elections, one of the political parties' functions is to help the citizens to exercise public control over the decision-making process. With regard to this function of political parties, C. Lord puts:

*"... the role of a well-functioning party system in linking citizens to the polity may be as vital to public control as free and fair elections and a representative body with day-to-day controlling powers."*<sup>34</sup>

Because we can not conceive of representative democracy without elections and political parties, Mair and Thomassen briefly put that " Who says democracy says elections; and who says elections says parties."<sup>35</sup>

From another viewpoint, the question of whether it is sufficient to have representative institutions which rest on free and fair elections to be considered a democratic polity should be asked. Schumpeter argues that to have representative institutions based on free and fair elections is not sufficient for a polity to be democratic. As Manin states, Schumpeter defines democracy as that "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions, in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the

---

<sup>31</sup> S. Hix, A. G. Noury and G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46-47.

<sup>33</sup> P. Mair, *Political Parties and Democracy: What Sort of Future*, [www.ics.ul.pt](http://www.ics.ul.pt), (Accessed: November 12, 2009), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> C. Lord, 'Some Indicators of the Democratic Performance of the European Union and How They Might Relate to the RECON Models', *RECON Online Working Paper 2008/11*, [www.reconproject.eu](http://www.reconproject.eu), (Accessed: December 12, 2009), p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> P. Mair and J. Thomassen, 'Electoral Democracy and Political Representation in the European Union', Paper prepared for the Conference on Representation, Immigration and the 2009 Election to the European Parliament, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2008, p. 15.

people's vote."<sup>36</sup> In a similar vein, Hix holds that there must be a competitive political system in which there is an electoral contest over executive office, and the direction of the policy agenda.<sup>37</sup> He also puts that "competition guarantees that outputs cannot stray too far from voters' preferences."<sup>38</sup> That is, scholars underline that representative democracy requires competition over representative institutions, consequently the decision-making process. In this context, political parties should be regarded as a means of providing effective competition in elections; therefore political parties are essential to make elections and a political system more competitive, consequently makes democracy work better.

### Parliaments and Executives

In a representative democracy, the central political institution is the parliament as an elected legislative assembly, since what is needed for representative democracy in modern states is the representative institution composed of representatives elected by the people themselves. As Andersen and Eliassen point out that "the core of every representative system is its parliamentary institution."<sup>39</sup> The reason why parliaments are so crucial to democracy is clearly explained by Weale, who puts that:

*"A central principle of representational government is that major decisions should be taken by political representatives meeting in a legislative chamber, who reflect in their characteristics and opinions a wide variety of views and experience. The idea in this conception is that, for various reasons largely to do with size, we should not expect the people to rule directly."*<sup>40</sup>

In a representative democracy, the construction of the executive and the relationship between the executive and the parliament are also important questions, and the answers to these questions distinguish presidential and parliamentary systems, which are two pure forms of democratic government.

Presidential system requires the division of power between the executive and the parliament and the president to be independently elected by direct popular election. In contrast, in the parliamentary system, the electorate chooses the legislature, the legislature in turn chooses the executive, and maintains the power over the executive via a vote of no confidence.<sup>41</sup> That is to say, the head of the executive is elected in a presidential system, whereas the head of

---

<sup>36</sup> B. Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, p. 162.

<sup>37</sup> S. Hix, *What's Wrong With The European Union & How To Fix It*, p. 77.

<sup>38</sup> S. Hix, 'Possibilities for European Parties: 2004 and Beyond', Policy paper prepared for an on-line discussion on the future of EU democracy, organised by Open Democracy, 2004, [www.lse.ac.uk](http://www.lse.ac.uk), (Accessed: August 7, 2009)

<sup>39</sup> S.S. Andersen and K.A. Eliassen, 'Introduction: Dilemmas, Contradictions and the Future of European Democracy', in S.S. Andersen and K.A. Eliassen (ed.) *The European Union: How Democratic Is It?* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> A. Weale, *Democracy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> J. N. Druckman, 'Dynamic Approaches to Studying Parliamentary Coalitions', *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol.61, No.3, 2008, p. 479.

executive is "selected" by the legislature in a parliamentary system.<sup>42</sup> With regard to parliamentary system, Lijphart notes that;

*"...the chief executive ... and his or her cabinet are responsible to the legislature in the sense that they are dependent on the legislature's confidence and that they can be dismissed from office by a legislative vote of no confidence or censure."*<sup>43</sup>

### **Political Accountability**

What is meant by accountability? Bovens defines accountability in a narrow sense as:

*"a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor may face consequences."*<sup>44</sup>

Mulgan points out that "accountability has come to stand as a general term for any mechanism that makes powerful institutions responsive to their particular publics."<sup>45</sup>

Accountability can be well understood in the context of principal-agent model, which means the principal has the right to hold the agent to account, that is, this concept denotes the relationship between the principals and the agents if "there are instruments available to political principals enabling them to discern and sanction the behaviour of institutional agents."<sup>46</sup> Principal-agent relationship from the perspective of representative democracy means, as Bovens points out that:

*" the people, who are the primary principals in a democracy, have transferred their sovereignty to popular representatives, who, in turn have transferred the drafting and enforcement of laws and policy to the government. The ministers and secretaries of state in government subsequently entrust the execution of their tasks to the many thousands of public servants at the ministries, who proceed to delegate part of their tasks to more or less independent bodies and institutions"*<sup>47</sup>

That means there is the accountability chain in a democratic political system, and as Bovens states "at the end of the accountability chain are the

---

<sup>42</sup> A. Siaroff, 'Comparative Presidencies: The inadequacy of the presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentary distinction', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2003, p. 288.

<sup>43</sup> A. Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-one Countries*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 68.

<sup>44</sup> M. Bovens, 'Analysing and Assessing Public Accountability. A Conceptual Framework', *European Governance Papers* (EUROGOV), No. C-06-01, 2006, <http://www.connex-network.org/eurogov>, (accessed February 2, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> R. Mulgan, *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> M. Laver and K. A. Shepsle, 'Government Accountability in Parliamentary Democracy', in A. Przeworski, S.C. Stokes and B. Manin (ed.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 279.

<sup>47</sup> M. Bovens, 'Analysing and Assessing Public Accountability. A Conceptual Framework', p.25.



citizens."<sup>48</sup> But, how do citizens as the primary principals enable to hold representatives to account? To answer this question requires drawing a distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems, though it is apparent that the main instruments of accountability are elections in both systems since voters can render representatives accountable at elections time.<sup>49</sup> In presidential systems, an incumbent president can be removed in elections, that is, Gerring and his friends observe "there is no way to remove a sitting president in between elections, which are usually held at fixed intervals."<sup>50</sup> And the executive is not politically responsible to the parliament in presidential systems.<sup>51</sup> In parliamentary systems, the executive can be removed at any time by parliamentary vote or general elections, for elections can be held at any time. Therefore, in parliamentary systems more common than presidential systems, the executive is accountable to the parliament, the parliament is accountable to the people, consequently the executive is indirectly accountable to the people. Laver and Shepsle point out that:

*"Although citizens in parliamentary democracies have no recourse to sanctioning a government directly, they can change the composition of parliament, which, in turn, may force changes in the composition of the cabinet."*<sup>52</sup>

In spite of this difference between parliamentary and presidential systems, it is apparent that elections are the main means of political accountability in both systems, and Manin and his colleagues point out that:

*"Accountability representation occurs when (1) voters vote to retain the incumbent only when the incumbent acts in their best interest, and (2) the incumbent chooses policies necessary to get re-elected."*<sup>53</sup>

Because of the fact that political accountability mainly occurs through elections, and we can not conceive of political accountability without elections in a representative democracy, elections can be defined as a "mechanism of political accountability."

---

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> J. Gerring, S.C. Thacker and C. Moreno, 'Are Parliamentary Systems Better?', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2009, p. 333.

<sup>51</sup> A.Siaroff 'Comparative Presidencies: The Inadequacy of the Presidential, Semi-presidential and Parliamentary Distinction', p. 289.

<sup>52</sup> M. Laver and K. A. Shepsle, 'Government Accountability in Parliamentary Democracy', p. 279.

<sup>53</sup> B. Manin, A. Przeworski and S. C. Stokes, 'Elections and Representation', in A. Przeworski, S.C. Stokes and B. Manin (ed.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 40.

## **THE EUROPEAN UNION'S POLITICAL SYSTEM IN THE LIGHT OF BASIC PRINCIPLES OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY**

### **Council**

The Council is composed of twenty-seven ministers, one from each member state, and it is one of two legislative institutions in the Union. The Council meets in different configurations according to subject being discussed.

Concerning the Council's capacity to represent the European people, it would be inappropriate to assert that the Council is not a representative institution in the Union's political system, though ministers in the Council are not elected directly by the European people. What makes the Council a representative institution is that the ministers in the Council are also the members of their national governments, and are accountable to domestic electorate via national parliaments; hence it can be pointed out that the Council's capacity to represent the European people derives from the member states. But, if the Council's capacity for representation derives from the member states' governments, the question of whether each elected government of member state enjoys significant controlling powers over Union's decisions<sup>54</sup> should be answered. When answering this question, we should analyse how decisions are taken in the Council to see whether all member states have the equal voice. In the Council, two principles are mixed in order to represent the member states and their citizens. First principle is "parity" which means that the member states have the equal weighting regardless of their size. Second principle is "proportionality", which means that the member states have certain number of votes corresponding to their size,<sup>55</sup> in other words, there is a weighted voting system based on the member states' population. There are three types of vote in the Council depending on the issue; simple majority (for procedural decisions), qualified majority (for many decisions regarding the internal market, economic affairs and trade), and unanimity (for foreign policy, defence, judicial and police cooperation, and taxation).<sup>56</sup>

More interestingly, Lord and Harris put that "member states prefer to decide by consensus ... consensus may be formed in the shadow of majority voting." by relying on a key data set compiled by Mattila and Lane, who shows that "voting is unanimous in between 75 and 85 per cent of cases per year, even where Qualified Majority Voting is available" during the period 1994-1998.<sup>57</sup> This tendency can be supported if unanimity is regarded as a remedy for the democratic deficiency at European level, but it also can be criticised from the perspective of social choice theory which suggests that making a decision

---

<sup>54</sup> C. Lord and E. Haris, *Democracy in the New Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 69.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>56</sup> Council of the European Union, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>, (Accessed: February 10, 2010)

<sup>57</sup> C. Lord and E. Harris, *Democracy in the New Europe*, p.69; M. Mattila and J.E. Jane, 'Why Unanimity in the Council? A Roll-Call Analysis of Council Voting', *European Union Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2001, p. 31-53.

democratically requires using majority rule in legislative situations. In this context, McGann points out that:

*"If we diverge from majority rule, then we must either privileged some voters over others, or privilege some alternatives over others. If we use any form of weighted voting, we clearly advantage some voters. If we use a supermajoritarian voting system, we advantage the status quo (and those who like it)."*<sup>58</sup>

That is to say that there can be several reasons and theoretical bases to criticise the decision-making procedures in the Council, since which decision making procedure is the best in the Council is a contentious issue. We can regard unanimity, in other words, veto power of each member state in the Council as an element strengthening democracy at European level, because each elected government of the member states can control the Council's decisions. But we can also criticise unanimity, for unanimity privileges member states which prefer status quo and renders making decisions in the Council more difficult.

Moreover, another point receiving attention about the Council is that there are some claims that bureaucrats as unelected officials are more active than ministers in the Council, which is thought to be a reason for the democratic deficiency in the Union's political system from the perspective of representative democracy. By relying on quantitative data, Hage shows that "35 percent of the legislative decisions in the Community pillar were taken by the ministers themselves, about 22 per cent on the level of Coreper and the Special Committee on Agriculture, and approximately 43 per cent by working parties".<sup>59</sup> With regard to the role bureaucrats play in the Council, scholars distinguish technical and political issues tackled by the Council to indicate that technical issues are left to bureaucrats and political issues are left to ministers.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, even if technical issues are tackled by bureaucrats, this does not necessarily mean that there is a problem about representation in the Council, for bureaucrats work under instructions from their elected national governments. Besides, even in modern democratic states, not all organs of democratic government are elected.<sup>61</sup> And the existence of European bureaucracy in the Council should not be regarded as a problem in terms of accountability, if there is the accountability chain in the Union as we see in modern states.

Regarding the Council's capacity to represent the European people, it can be asserted that the Council represents the European Union's citizens on behalf

---

<sup>58</sup> A. McGann, *The Logic of Democracy*, p. 62.

<sup>59</sup> F. M. Hage, 'Who Decides in the Council of the European Union?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3., 2008, p. 554.

<sup>60</sup> E. Foulleux, J. De Maillard and A. Smith, 'Technical or Political? The Working Groups of the EU Council of Ministers', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2005, p. 609-623.

<sup>61</sup> Manin, B., Przeworski, A. and Stokes, S.C. 'Introduction', in A. Przeworski, S.C. Stokes and B. Manin (ed.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1999, p. 19.

of the represented for three reasons, relying on the distinction between "representation on behalf of the represented" and "representation in the name of the represented" put forward by Runciman. First, the Council is not elected directly by the European people through European elections. Second, to be a member of the national government is a precondition for representing the member state in the Council. Third, the ministers in the Council act under the control of their elected governments, and try to promote the member states' common interest.

Although the Council has capacity for representation in an indirect way, for the ministers in the Council are representatives of, and accountable to their national governments, there is a question regarding to the construction of the Council if we look through the prism of representative democracy: Does the Council meet another criterion for being democratic, which is that there must be an electoral contest for political authority? That is to say, is there an electoral competition for being a minister in the Council which is "the major decision-making body"<sup>62</sup> of the Union? In practice, it seems possible to argue that the Council meets this criterion indirectly, since the national governments which the ministers in the Council represent are elected in competitive national elections, though these elections are contests over national offices and the direction of the national policy agenda rather than European issues and offices.

### **European Parliament**

The other legislative institution is the European Parliament. As the Parliament is a central institution to representative democracy, the European Parliament has received more attention than other European institutions in academic studies of democracy at European level.

The members of the European Parliament have been elected directly once every five years by the European people since 1979. The reason for the members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the member states' citizens is to strengthen democracy at European level. Leo Tindemans put in 1975 that: "Direct elections ... will give this Assembly (Parliament) a new political authority (and) reinforce the democratic legitimacy of the whole European institutional apparatus."<sup>63</sup>

In a representative democracy, as stated above, the head of executive is elected directly by the people or the executive depends on a majority of the Parliament. In this sense, an analysis of the relationship between the European Parliament as an institution directly elected by the European people and the Commission as an executive institution of the Union is necessary in order to shed some light on the extent to which the Union's political system is democratic. The European Commission as an executive is not drawn from the

---

<sup>62</sup> The Council of the European Union, [http://europa.eu/institutions/inst/council/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/institutions/inst/council/index_en.htm), (Accessed: January 20, 2010)

<sup>63</sup> J. Lodge, 'The European Parliament', in S.S. Andersen and K.A. Eliassen (ed.) *The European Union: How Democratic Is It?*, (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 189.

European Parliament, that is to say, the Parliament does not form a government, and the head of the Commission is not elected by the people. Although the Union's political system does not resemble a parliamentary system or a presidential system in terms of the construction of the executive, the European Parliament exercises democratic control over the Commission, which leads scholars to define the European political order as a semi-parliamentary system. I will return to this issue later.

The Parliament which does not form a European government is also fully independent from the Commission and the Council. In this regard, Hix writes that:

*"The European Parliament cannot be dissolved by the Commission or the Council, and there are no ministerial carrots the Commission can offer the members of the Parliament"*<sup>64</sup>

Consequently, "the relationship between the Commission and the Parliament is far removed from a parliamentary system or a system of party government."<sup>65</sup>

Concerning the Parliament's capacity for representation, it can be stated that in contrast to the Council, the European Parliament represents the European Union's citizens directly and also "in the name of the represented", since every European citizen can be a member of the European Parliament. That is to say, the presence of the European people is felt directly through the European Parliament, for the Parliament provides for public participation in the European legislation. Hix and his colleagues state "the European Parliament ... operates as the voice of the people in the EU governance system."<sup>66</sup> In a similar vein, Mair and Thomassen put that "citizens acquire voice at Union level through the European Parliament in the sense of being directly represented"<sup>67</sup>

Although the Parliament is the only directly elected institution, there are four relevant facts for consideration in this regard.

First, there is an existing argument that the European Parliament elections are "second-order national contests", for European elections are fought on national issues rather than European issues,<sup>68</sup> and are used by the European people to punish their governing parties and to influence the subsequent national election.<sup>69</sup> In this regard, Reif and Schmitt state that "European elections are determined more by the domestic political cleavages than by

---

<sup>64</sup> S. Hix, *What's Wrong With The European Union & How To Fix It*, p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> P. Mair and J. Thomassen, 'Electoral Democracy and Political Representation in the European Union', p. 22.

<sup>66</sup> S. Hix, A. G. Noury and G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> P. Mair and J. Thomassen, 'Electoral Democracy and Political Representation in the European Union', p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> S. Hix, 'Dimensions and Alignments in European Union Politics: Cognitive Constraints and Partisan Responses', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.35, No.1, 1999, p. 69-106.

<sup>69</sup> S. Hix and M. Marsh, 'Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections', *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 2007, p. 495.

alternatives originating in the EC<sup>70</sup>, and similarly Weber puts that “political representation by the European Parliament is dominated by a systematic bias whose roots lie in the logic of party competition in the national arenas.”<sup>71</sup> Due to the fact that European elections are thought to be fought mainly on national issues by national political parties, there have been concerns about elections for electing the members of the European Parliament in terms of representation at European level.

Moreover, because the relationship between the Parliament and the Commission is strange to both presidential and parliamentary systems, it is apparent that European elections do not function as national elections do. In this regard, Coultrap points out that:

*“Unlike elections in nation-states, they do not allow electors to choose a government, they do not help determine the direction of public policy, and they do not provide a recognizable human face in the form of a president or prime minister.”<sup>72</sup>*

Second, there has been a decline in voter turnout, since, as Moravcsik states, the average European people pay little attention to what the Union does,<sup>73</sup> and, as Hix and Marsh put, there is a lack of strong incentives for people to vote.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, levels of turnout in European elections are lower than levels of turnout in national elections.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> K. Reif and H.Schmitt, 'Nine Second-Order National Elections: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1980, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> T. Weber, 'Campaign Effects and Second-Order Cycles: A Top-Down Approach to European Parliament Election', *European Union Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2007, p. 532.

<sup>72</sup> J. Coultrap, 'From Parliamentarism to Pluralism: Models of Democracy and the European Union's Democratic Deficit.', p. 113.

<sup>73</sup> A. Moravcsik, *Another Angle: Few Voters Know or care about the European Union*, 2008, www.princeton.edu, (accessed August 13, 2009)

<sup>74</sup> S. Hix and M. Marsh, 'Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections', p. 496.

<sup>75</sup> S.B. Hobolt, J.J. Spoon and J. Tilley, 'A Vote Against Europe? Explaining Defection at the 1999 and 2004 European Parliament Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2008, p. 94. With regard to turnout in national elections, Mair points out that 'average turnout in national elections in western Europe had remarkably stable, with a mean of 84.3 per cent in the 1950s, 84.9 in the 1960s, 83.9 in the 1970s, and 81.7 in the 1980s. In the 1990s, however, average turnout fell to just 77.6 percent, a figure that proved substantially lower than during any other postwar decade, and fully 4 per cent below that recorded during the 1980s.' P. Mair, *Political Parties and Democracy: What Sort of Future*, p. 4.

### Turnout at the European Elections<sup>76</sup>

1979	% 61.99
1984	%58.98
1989	%58.41
1994	%56.67
1999	%49.51
2004	%45.47
2009	%43

Although direct elections for the European Parliament have been supposed to reinforce democracy at European level, Hix puts that:

*"... direct elections have not facilitated the development of a new European democratic identity, continent wide political parties, and a stronger connection between voters' electoral choices and EU policy outcomes"*<sup>77</sup>

Third, there is no single electoral system for electing the members of the Parliament, the member states has their own election rules,<sup>78</sup> consequently this fact makes development of transnational political parties impossible.<sup>79</sup>

Fourth, the European Parliament lacks transnational political parties. National political parties which do not compete on mainly European issues in European elections establish the "political groups" in the European Parliament. Nonetheless the existence of the political groups in the Parliament does not mean the existence of transnational political parties. The lack of transnational political parties makes political competition over political authority at European level impossible, and do not allow citizens to identify different political preferences. As Mair and Thomassen point out that:

---

<sup>76</sup> *Turnout at the European Elections* (1979-2009), [http://www.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout\\_en.html](http://www.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout_en.html), (accessed August 7, 2009)

<sup>77</sup> S. Hix, *Electoral institutions and legislative behavior: explaining voting defection in the European Parliament*, London, 2004, p.195, LSE Research Online, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000637>, (Accessed: August 7, 2009)

<sup>78</sup> S. Hix and S. Hagemann shows that 'Eleven member states, who elect 286 MEPs (36 percent), already use relatively small districts. Eight member states, who together elect 188 MEPs (24 percent), use medium-sized districts. And, eight member states, who elect 311 MEPs (40 percent), use either fully-open or semi-open ballots, while the remaining nine member states, who elect 467 MEPs (59 percent), use a closed-ballot structure. Put another way, 267 MEPs (34 percent) are already elected in relatively small districts and under some form of preferential voting, while 260 MEPs (33 percent) are elected in large districts under a closed-ballot structure.' S. Hix and S. Hagemann, 'Could Changing the Electoral Rules Fix European Parliament Elections', *Politique europeenne*, No.28, 2009, p. 34.

<sup>79</sup> J. Lodge and V.Hermann, *Direct Elections to the European Parliament: A Community Perspective*, (London: Macmillan, 1982).

*"According to the party government model, political parties are supposed to supply different policy platforms for the voters to choose from. At the European level they do not."<sup>80</sup>*

Concerning the non-emergence of transnational political parties, another point which should be underlined is that to what extent the political groups in the Parliament cause party cohesion. Hix and his colleagues put that voting behaviour of the members of the Parliament is based on party rather than nationality, but they also accept that the inability of the Parliament to control agenda on which the Commission has the exclusive right may reduce party cohesion.<sup>81</sup> They put that "...the parties are slightly more cohesive on non-legislative issues, which are initiated internally in the Parliament, than on legislative issues, which are initiated externally."<sup>82</sup>

Consequently, it can be argued that the political groups in the European Parliament can not function as national political parties do in domestic politics.<sup>83</sup>

And, due to the non-emergence of transnational political parties, it is impossible to allocate the seats in the European Parliament to political parties in a direct way. The seats in the European Parliament, firstly, are allocated to the member states,<sup>84</sup> and then allocated to national political parties according to votes that they win in European elections, henceforth national political parties form the political groups in the European Parliament.

Moreover, as stated above, there is an absence of a system of party government in Union's political system, this absence also can be regarded as an issue related to the non-emergence of transnational political parties, that is, due to the non-emergence of transnational political parties, strong connection between the political groups in the European Parliament and the Commission can not be established.

The non-emergence of transnational political parties has become a serious cause for growing concern over democracy in the Union; hence transnational political parties are desirable for better democracy at European level.

---

<sup>80</sup> P. Mair and J. Thomassen, 'Electoral Democracy and Political Representation in the European Union', p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> S. Hix, A.G. Noury and G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> S.S. Andersen and K.A. Eliassen, 'Introduction: Dilemmas, Contradictions and the Future of European Democracy', p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> According to Article 14 of Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the Union, 'The European Parliament shall be composed of representatives of the Union's citizens. They shall not exceed seven hundred and fifty in number, plus the President. Representation of citizens shall be degressively proportional, with a minimum threshold of six members per Member State. No Member State shall be allocated more than ninety-six seats.'



**MEPs by Member State<sup>85</sup>**

Belgium	22
Bulgaria	17
Czech Republic	22
Denmark	13
Germany	99
Estonia	6
Ireland	12
Greece	22
Spain	50
France	72
Italy	72
Cyprus	6
Latvia	8
Lithuania	12
Luxembourg	6
Hungary	22
Malta	5
Netherlands	25
Austria	17
Poland	50
Portugal	22
Romania	33
Slovenia	7
Slovakia	13
Finland	13
Sweden	18
United Kingdom	72
	<b>736</b>

---

<sup>85</sup> MEPs by Member State and Political Group, 7th parliamentary term, [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu), (accessed November 17, 2009)

**MEPs by political group<sup>86</sup>**

Group of the European People's Party	265
Group of the Progression Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the EP	184
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	84
Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	55
European Conservatives and Reformists	54
Confederal Group of the European United Left-Nordic Green Left	35
Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group	32
Non-attached Members	27
Total	<b>736</b>

In terms of political accountability, the European Parliament is accountable to the European people, since the members of the Parliament are elected directly by the European people in European elections, which are the instruments of control over politicians at European level. Nonetheless the European people have no recourse to sanctioning the Commission as an executive, for parliament-executive relations in the Union's political system do not allow the European people to determine who holds executive office in the Union.

**Commission**

As stated above, the construction of the executive and the relationship between the executive and the parliament are important issues in terms of representative democracy. Therefore, the construction of the Commission which is the executive institution in the European Union's political system, and the relationship between the Commission and the European Parliament have become major research questions in attempting to analyse democracy in the Union. In contrast to representative democracy where the head of executive is elected directly or the executive depends on a majority of the parliament, the president of the European Commission is not elected directly by the European people, and the Commission does not rely on a majority in the European Parliament.<sup>87</sup> The president and the members of the Commission are nominated by the member states. As Hix puts it:

<sup>86</sup> MEPs by Member State and Political Group, 7th parliamentary term, [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu), (Accessed: November 17, 2009)

<sup>87</sup> S. Hix, *Electoral institutions and legislative behavior: explaining voting defection in the European Parliament*, p. 201.

*"The Commission is neither a government nor a bureaucracy, and is appointed through what appears to be an obscure procedure rather than elected directly by the votes or indirectly after a parliamentary election."*<sup>88</sup>

The Commission as an executive of the European Union's political system is strange to the tradition of political representation regardless of whether presidentialism or parliamentarism.

From the perspective of representative, especially parliamentary democracy, the quantitative distribution of portfolios in the Commission and the distribution of cabinet portfolios in states may be compared. This comparison does not mean disregarding the fact that the members of the Commission are not elected, but it is necessary to indicate to what extent the Commission as an executive of the Union differs from national executives in many respects. Ministerial portfolios are distributed among coalition parties according to their proportions of parliamentary seats; this means that the composition of the executive corresponds the result of the election. Due to the fact that Commission is not elected institution, and not based on a majority of the European Parliament, there is no problem concerning how to distribute portfolios in the Commission in quantitative terms, and the Commission is composed of commissioners, one from each member state. Nonetheless, the qualitative distribution of portfolios in the Commission and the selection of the president are political choices subject to negotiations. With regard to the selection of the president, Hix indicates "... the Commission President is appointed through top-secret negotiations and horse-trading between the EU heads of government."<sup>89</sup> Regarding the qualitative distribution of portfolios in the Commission, Franchino states "a member state would ... prefer its Commissioner to hold more rather than fewer portfolios, or more salient one..."<sup>90</sup>

So, if we regard the Commission as a government of the Union, as stated above, we should admit that there is the absence of a system of party government at the European level, since the system of party government requires the party or coalition of parties winning the elections to take over the government.<sup>91</sup> In this context Mair and Thomassen note:

*"If the formation of the government and the policies adopted by the government were not derivative of the elected parliament, there would be no direct linkage between the will of the electorate and government policy."*<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> S. Hix, *What's Wrong With The European Union & How To Fix It*, p. 71.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77-78.

<sup>90</sup> F. Franchino, 'Experience and the Distribution of portfolio payoffs in the European Commission', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 48, No.1, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> P. Mair and J. Thomassen, 'Electoral Democracy and Political Representation in the European Union', p. 6.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Consequently, it is difficult to link the will of the European people and the construction of the Commission, and its policies in the European Union political system.

Nonetheless, even if the European Parliament does not form a government,<sup>93</sup> the Parliament has the power to approve the Commission. The Parliament invites each nominated commissioner to hearings before the relevant parliamentary committee, and the members of the Commission including the president are subject to a vote of approval by the Parliament. That is to say, the Parliament has the important role in determining the qualitative portfolio distribution within the Commission<sup>94</sup> and can disapprove the entire college.<sup>95</sup> For instance, the European Parliament forced Barroso the president of the Commission to replace the Italian and Latvian Commissioners and to reshuffle the College in 2004.<sup>96</sup> In addition, the Parliament can remove the Commission, as we see in the case of resignation of the Santer Commission.<sup>97</sup> Due to the fact that the Parliament exercises control over the Commission, scholars argue that the European political system is evolving towards a parliamentary model, and the Union's political system may be called as a semi-

---

<sup>93</sup> It is worth noting here that relations between the European Parliament and the Commission have been governed by a Framework Agreement since 1990, which is updated every five years. This Agreement aims to define the responsibilities of each institution towards the other and to lay down rules for information flows between the Parliament and the Commission. *Framework Agreement between the Parliament and Commission*, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>, (accessed February 8, 2010). With regard to this Agreement, Beukers writes that '(This agreement) complements the Treaty provisions and governs the bilateral relations between Commission and Parliament but falls outside the legal framework of the Union *stricto sensu*.' T. Beukers, 'The Barroso Drama Enhancing Parliamentary Control Over the European Commission and the Member States; Constitutional Development Through Practice', *European Constitutional Law Review*, Vol. 2, No.1, 2006, p. 39.

<sup>94</sup> F. Franchino, 'Experience and the Distribution of portfolio payoffs in the European Commission', p. 24.

<sup>95</sup> Although the Parliament can approve or disapprove the Commission as a College, thanks to the Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission of 2000 and its revised version of 2005, the Parliament created a mechanism to hold each Commissioner accountable for his/her actions. To hold a individual Commissioner to account is not possible directly through a motion of censure, as Beukers points out, 'It will have to go through the President of the Commission, who will be called upon to act by dismissing the Commissioner in question or explaining a refusal to dismiss. Through this mechanism a vote expressing lack of confidence in an individual Commissioner will only be effective if the importance attached to it is such as to provoke a motion of censure on the whole Commission in case the President of the Commission does not follow-up on Parliament's vote. The President of the Commission will have to make that assessment.' Beukers, 'The Barroso Drama Enhancing Parliamentary Control Over the European Commission and the Member States; Constitutional Development Through Practice', p. 52.

<sup>96</sup> F. Franchino, 'Experience and the Distribution of portfolio payoffs in the European Commission', p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> After the resignation of Santer Commission, many scholars argue that this resignation caused a fundamental shift in the interinstitutional balance among the European institutions to take place, and emphasised the power of the European Parliament over the Commission. D. Judge and D. Earnshaw 'The European Parliament and the Commission Crisis: A New Assertiveness?', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, Vol.15, No.3, 2002, p. 345.

parliamentary system, in which the executive and the Parliament do not overlap, but the Commission needs to be approved by the Parliament.

There is another question facing the European Union political system; "Does an increase in the Parliament's powers over the Commission have unintended implications for the European political system?" Whereas the Parliament's increasing power in European political system is regarded as a step to make the Union more democratic, there are some concerns about the Parliament's power over the Commission, for the Commission must be independent institution. In this context, Majone points out that:

*"the progressive parliamentarization of the Commission risks compromising its credibility as an independent regulator, without necessarily enhancing its democratic legitimacy."*<sup>98</sup>

And Majone argues that balance between the Parliament and the Commission has been changed radically by Treaty reforms because of the desire to reduce the democratic deficit in the Union.<sup>99</sup> In a similar vein, Hix states that:

*"...relations between the Commission and the other two institutions began to be politicised in the mid 1990s with the Santer Commission and continued to be highly political during the Prodi and Barroso Commissions, as divided majorities gave way to a unified centre-right majority across all three institutions."*<sup>100</sup>

In terms of accountability, the question of whether the Commission is accountable should be asked. If we look from the perspective of presidential system, it is so clear that the Commission is not accountable to the European people directly, since the president of the Commission is not elected by the

---

<sup>98</sup> G. Majone, 'The European Commission: The Limits of Centralization and the Perils of Parliamentarization', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, Vol.15, No.3, 2002, p. 375. Majone holds that the EU is a regulatory state, for the member states have delegated regulatory policy competences to the EU level and EU policy-making is about Pareto-improving outcomes; hence the EU as a regulatory state should not be democratic in the usual meaning of the term. G. Majone, 'The European Community: An "Independent Fourth Branch of Government"?', EUI Working Paper SPS No.94/17, Florence, European University Institute, 1993. Nonetheless Follesdal and Hix question Majone's claims, and they point out that 'At an empirical level, Majone's argument that EU policy-making is or should primarily be about Pareto-improving outcomes is thus either implausible, or requires a drastic reversal of many competences back to the member states. Majone provides good reasons why certain EU policies, such as competition policy or food safety regulation, should be delegated to independent, non-majoritarian, institutions. But his arguments do not apply to policies which allow choices with distributive or even redistributive effects. He offers no reason why they should be isolated from democratic contestation. Where there are short-and long-term winners and losers, Majone's argument does not diminish the need for democratic, responsive and accountable decision-makers.' A. Follesdal and S. Hix, 'Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik', *European Governance Papers (EUROGOV)* No. C-05-02, <http://www.connex-network.org/eurogov/pdf/egp-connex-C-05-02.pdf>, (Accessed: January 14, 2010)

<sup>99</sup> G. Majone, 'The European Commission: The Limits of Centralization and the Perils of Parliamentarization', p. 384.

<sup>100</sup> S. Hix, *What's Wrong With The European Union & How To Fix It*, p. 136.

European people. If we look from the perspective of parliamentary system, the issue is getting complicated by the fact that the Commission does not depend on a majority of the Parliament, but is accountable to the Parliament, as we see this accountability in the resignation of Santer Commission in 1999, and Barroso Commission reshuffle in 2004.

Another fact for consideration in this regard is that the Commission as an executive has far too much power in the European decision-making process, since the Commission has a monopoly on the initiation of legislation. As Hix puts it: "significant agenda-setting power has been delegated to the Commission"<sup>101</sup> and "the Commission president is the most powerful office in the EU ... in practice no legislation can be proposed without the agreement of the Commission President."<sup>102</sup> This fact raises two problems. First, European citizens are not able to influence the policy agenda at European level via European elections. Second, there is an increase in the power of the executive relative to the European Parliament in the European Union decision-making process, even though successive reforms in the Union increased the power of the European Parliament.

## CONCLUSION

The democratic deficiency of the European Union's political system is one of the preoccupations cited in analyses of democracy at the European level, for the institutional structure of the Union does not resemble exactly the national systems of representative democracy.

There is a received wisdom that only the European Parliament among the European institutions is a representative institution. In fact, the Council is also a representative European institution, since the ministers in the Council are representatives of their governments, and answerable to both their national parliaments and the citizens. Hence, democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament and the Council derives from their capacities to represent the European people in terms of representative democracy. Nonetheless, it would be useful to distinguish the way the European Parliament represents the European people and the way the Council represents the European people.

The European Parliament represents the European people directly, and in the name and on behalf of the European people for at least three reasons. First, the members of the Parliament have been directly elected by the European people in European elections. Second, every European citizen has the right to be a member of the European Parliament, that is to say, European citizens are given a stake in the European decision-making process through the European Parliament. Third, if the European citizens object to what their representatives do in the European Parliament, this objection is supposed to have repercussions for the subsequent elections for both national parliaments and the European Parliament, that is, the European people can hold the Parliament

---

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

to account via elections as mechanism of political accountability. Consequently, the European Parliament is accountable to the citizens directly.

The Council represents the European people indirectly, and on behalf of the European people more than in the name of the European people at least for four reasons. First, the ministers in the Council are not elected directly by the European people. Second, each minister in the Council is a member of his/her national governments, and empowered to commit his/her government, that is, the ministers in the Council represent their national governments, and what is done in the Council is to promote the member states' interests. Third, the ministers in the Council acting under the control of their national governments are accountable to national governments, national parliaments and also domestic electorate via national elections. Fourth, if the European citizens object to what their ministers do in the Council, this objection is supposed to have repercussions mainly for the subsequent elections for national parliaments.

The European Commission as an unelected executive is strange to the tradition of political representation. The construction of the Commission and the relationship between the Commission and the European Parliament are not in line with both presidential systems and parliamentary systems. The head of the Commission is not elected by the European people directly, and the Commission does not depend on a majority of the European Parliament, consequently there is the absence of direct relationship between the composition of the Commission and the outcome of elections for the European Parliament. Because the Parliament exercises democratic control over the Commission, it can be pointed out that the Commission is accountable to the Parliament. Nonetheless, the Commission of which composition does not depend on the results of European elections is not accountable directly or indirectly to the European people, which leads to a critical discussion about the Commission's democratic deficiency.

## **REFERENCES**

- Andersen, S.S. and Eliassen, K.A. 'Introduction: Dilemmas, Contradictions and the Future of European Democracy', in S.S. Andersen and K.A. Eliassen (ed.) *The European Union: How Democratic Is It?*, (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p.1-12.
- Beukers, T. 'The Barroso Drama Enhancing Parliamentary Control Over the European Commission and the Member States; Constitutional Development Through Practice', *European Constitutional Law Review*, Vol. 2, No.1, 2006, p. 21-53.
- Bovens, M., 'Analysing and Assessing Public Accountability. A Conceptual Framework', European Governance Papers (EUROGOV), No.C-06-01,2006, <http://www.connex-network.org/eurogov>, (accessed February 2, 2010)
- Catt, H, *Democracy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
- Christiano,T., 'The Authority of Democracy', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol.12, No. 3, 2004, p. 266-290.

- Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 115, Vol. 51, 9 May 2008.
- Coultrap, J. 'From Parliamentarism to Pluralism: Models of Democracy and the European Union's Democratic Deficit', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1999, p. 107-135.
- Council of the European Union, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>, (accessed: February 10, 2010)
- Dahl, R.A. 'A Democratic Dilemma: System Effectiveness versus Citizen Participation', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.109, No.1, 1994, p. 23-34.
- Dahl, R.A. *On Democracy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
- Druckman, J. N., 'Dynamic Approaches to Studying Parliamentary Coalitions', *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol.61, No.3, 2008, p. 479-483.
- European Parliament, *Report on the Moderation of Procedures for the Exercise of Implementing Powers-Comitology (Aglietta Report)*, Brussels, 1998, p. 6.
- Follesdal A. and Hix, S., 'Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik', European Governance Papers (EUROGOV) No. C-05-02, <http://www.connex-network.org/eurogov/pdf/egp-connex-C-05-02.pdf>,(accessed: January 14, 2010)
- Fouilleux, E., De Maillard, J. and Smith, A. 'Technical or Political? The Working Groups of the EU Council of Ministers', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2005, p. 609-623.
- Franchino, F., 'Experience and the Distribution of portfolio payoffs in the European Commission', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 48, No.1, 2009, p. 1-30.
- Framework Agreement between the Parliament and Commission*, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>, (accessed: February 8, 2010)
- Gerring, J., Thacker, S.C. and Moreno, C., 'Are Parliamentary Systems Better?' *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2009, p. 327-359.
- Golub, J., 'In the Shadow of the Vote? Decision Making in the European Community,' *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 1999, p. 733-764.
- Hage, F.M. 'Who Decides in the Council of the European Union?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3., 2008, p. 533-558.
- Hix, S., 'Dimensions and Alignments in European Union Politics: Cognitive Constraints and Partisan Responses', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1999, p. 69-106.
- Hix, S. *Electoral institutions and legislative behavior: explaining voting defection in the European Parliament*, London, 2004, LSE Research Online, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000637>, (accessed August 7, 2009)
- Hix, S., 'Possibilities for European Parties: 2004 and Beyond', Policy paper prepared for an on-line discussion on the future of EU democracy, organised by Open Democracy, 2004, [www.lse.ac.uk](http://www.lse.ac.uk), (accessed: August 7, 2009)
- Hix, S. - Marsh, M., 'Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections', *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 2007, p. 495-510.
- Hix, S., Noury, A.G. and Roland, G., *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- Hix, S. *What's Wrong with the European Union & How to Fix It*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).




- Hix, S. and Hagemann, S., 'Could Changing the Electoral Rules Fix European Parliament Elections', *Politique Européenne*, No. 28, 2009, p. 27-41.
- Hobolt, S.B., Spoon, J.J. and Tilley, J., 'A Vote Against Europe? Explaining Defection at the 1999 and 2004 European Parliament Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.39, No.1, 2008, p. 93-115.
- Hobson, C., 'Revolution, Representation and the Foundations of Modern Democracy', *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2008, p. 449-471.
- Jolly, M.E., 'Debating Democracy in the European Union-Four Concurrent Paradigms', Paper delivered at the EUSA Eighth Biennial International Conference, 27-29 March 2003, Nashville, Tennessee, 2003.
- Judge, D. and Earnshaw, D., 'The European Parliament and the Commission Crisis: A New Assertiveness?', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, Vol.15, No.3, 2002, p. 345-374.
- Laver, M. and Shepsle, K.A., 'Government Accountability in Parliamentary Democracy', in A. Przeworski, S.C. Stokes and B. Manin (ed.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 279-296.
- Lijphart, A., *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-one Countries*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).
- Lijphart, A., *Parliamentary Versus Presidential Government*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- Lodge, J., 'The European Parliament', in S.S. Andersen and K.A. Eliassen (ed.) *The European Union: How Democratic Is It?*, (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 187-214.
- Lodge, J. and Herman, V., *Direct Elections to the European Parliament: A Community Perspective*, (London: Macmillan, 1982).
- Lord, C. and Harris, E., *Democracy in the New Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
- Lord, C., 'Some Indicators of the Democratic Performance of the European Union and How They Might Relate to the RECON Models', *RECON Online Working Paper 2008/11*, [www.reconproject.eu](http://www.reconproject.eu), (accessed December 12, 2009)
- Mair, P., *Political Parties and Democracy: What Sort of Future*, [www.ics.ul.pt](http://www.ics.ul.pt), (accessed: November 12, 2009)
- Mair, P. and Thomassen, J., 'Electoral Democracy and Political Representation in the European Union', Paper prepared for the Conference on Representation, Immigration and the 2009 Election to the European Parliament, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2008.
- Majone, G., 'The European Community: An "Independent Fourth Branch of Government"?' , EUI Working Paper SPS No. 94/17, Florence, European University Institute, 1993.
- Majone, G., 'The European Commission: The Limits of Centralization and the Perils of Parliamentarization', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2002, p. 375-392.
- Manin, B., *The Principles of Representative Government*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Manin, B., Przeworski, A. and Stokes, S.C. 'Introduction', in A. Przeworski, S.C. Stokes and B. Manin (ed.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 1-26.

- Manin, B., Przeworski, A. and Stokes, S.C., 'Elections and Representation', in A. Przeworski, S.C. Stokes and B. Manin (ed.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 29-54.
- Mansbridge, J., 'Rethinking Representation', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No.4, 2003, p. 515-528.
- Mattila, M. and Jane, J.E., 'Why Unanimity in the Council? A Roll-Call Analysis of Council Voting', *European Union Politics*, Vol. 2, No.1, 2001, p. 31-53.
- McGann, A., *The Logic of Democracy*, (USA: The University of Michigan, 2006).
- MEPs by Member State and Political Group, 7th parliamentary term, [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu), (accessed: November 17, 2009)
- Moravcsik, A., *Another Angle: Few Voters Know or care about the European Union*, 2008, [www.princeton.edu](http://www.princeton.edu), (accessed: August 13, 2009)
- Mulgan, R., *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies*, (Basingstoke:Palgrave, 2003).
- Pedersen, M.N., 'Euro-parties and European Parties:New Arenas, New Challenges and New Strategies', in S.S. Andersen and K.A Eliassen (ed.) *The European Union: How Democratic Is It?* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 15-40.
- Pitkin, H., *The Concept of Representation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
- Pollack, J. et.al., 'On Political Representation: Myths and Challenges', RECON Online Working Paper 2009/03, [www.reconproject.eu](http://www.reconproject.eu), (accessed: December 12, 2009)
- Rasmussen, M. K., 'Another Side of the Story: A Qalitative Case Study of Voting Behaviour in the European Parliament', *Politics*, Vol.28, No.1, 2008, p. 11-18 .
- Reif, K. and Schmitt, H., 'Nine Second-Order National Elections: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.8, No.1, 1980, p. 3-44.
- Runciman, D., 'The Paradox of Political Representation', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2007, p. 93-114.
- Sartori, G., 'Party Types, Organisation and Function', *West European Politics*, Vol. 28, No.1, 2005, p. 5-32.
- Saward, M., 'Authorisation and Authenticity: Representation and the Unelected', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 17, No.1, 2009, p. 1-22.
- Siaroff, A., 'Comparative Presidencies: The inadequacy of the presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentary distinction', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 42, No.3, 2003, p. 287-312.
- Urbinati, N., 'Condorcet's Democratic Theory of Representative Government', *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 3, No.1, 2004, p. 53-75.
- Van Biezen,I., *How Political Parties Shape Democracy*, UC Irvine: Center for the Study of Democracy, 2004, <http://escholarship.org>, (accessed: November 11, 2009)
- Vieria, M.B. and Runciman, D., *Representation*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).
- Weale, A., *Democracy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
- Weber, T. 'Campaign Effects and Second-Order Cycles: A Top-Down Approach to European Parliament Election', *European Union Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2007, p. 509-536.
- Weiler, J.H.H., Haltern, U. and Mayer, F., *European Democracy and Its Critique: Five Uneasy Pieces*, The Jean Monnet Centre for International and Regional Economic Law & Justice, 1995, <http://centers.law.nyu.edu>, (accessed: November 12, 2009)

The Council of the European Union, [http://europa.eu/institutions/inst/council/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/institutions/inst/council/index_en.htm), (accessed: January 20, 2010)

Turnout at the European Elections (1979-2009), [http://www.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout\\_en.html](http://www.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout_en.html), (accessed: August 7, 2009).



**FROM CRISIS TO RECOVERY:  
QUO VADIS TURKISH ECONOMY?**

February, 2008

36 pp.,  
978-605-0044-02-7

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

**FROM CRISIS TO RECOVERY:  
QUO VADIS TURKISH ECONOMY?  
USAK Reports**

ULUSLARARASI STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR KURUMU  
USAK, AYTEN SOKAK, NO: 21 MEBUSEVLERİ, TANDOĞAN, ANKARA  
TEL: 0312 212 28 86 FAKS: 0312 212 25 84 WWW.USAK.ORG.TR