

# The Creation and Empowerment of the European Parliament\*

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## Abstract

Up until now we have lacked a systematic, theoretically guided explanation of why the European Union, as the only system of international governance, contains a powerful representative institution, the European Parliament, and why it has been successively empowered by national governments over the past half century. It is argued that national governments' decisions to transfer sovereignty to a new supranational level of governance triggers an imbalance between procedural and consequentialist legitimacy which political elites are fully aware of. To repair this imbalance, proposals to empower the European Parliament play a prominent though not exclusive role. Three landmark events are analysed to assess the plausibility of the advanced theory: the creation of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, the acquisition of budgetary powers (Treaty of Luxembourg, 1970) and of legislative powers through the Single European Act (1986).

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## Introduction

This article answers a question that has puzzled students of European integration since the European Coal and Steel Community's (ECSC) inception, and is equally interesting for general students of institutional design and change: why have national governments endowed the European Parliament (EP) with powers – supervisory, budgetary and legislative – that bear closer resemblance

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to those of national parliaments than to parliamentary assemblies of other international organizations? This article examines the three landmark decisions that delegated these powers to the EP: the 1951 Treaty of Paris, which created the Common Assembly and granted it supervisory powers *vis-à-vis* the 'executive' High Authority (forerunner of today's Commission); the 1970 Treaty of Luxembourg, which endowed the EP with limited budgetary powers; and the 1986 Single European Act (SEA), which bestowed Parliament with powers to influence legislation through the co-operation procedure.

The article proceeds as follows. Section I shows that extant approaches of delegation and institutional choice have neglected the question of why national governments created and empowered the EP. Section II then introduces an alternative theory, based on the assumption that, under certain conditions, political actors care about the consequentialist as well as the procedural legitimacy of institutional choices; it will then be demonstrated why the creation and delegation of powers to a parliamentary majoritarian institution may be one solution for enhancing the procedural legitimacy of a supranational polity. In Sections III–V, the explanatory power of this approach is shown in case studies of the three landmark decisions.

## I. The Limits of the Functional Theory of Delegation

Many accounts of institutional design and change assume that political elites act instrumentally when choosing between alternative sets of institutions. That is, political elites (try to) anticipate the effects or functions of alternative institutions and opt for those which best serve their interests (see, e.g., Keohane, 1984). This functional approach to institutional choice is now a standard one in efforts to explain principals' (Member States') decisions to pool and delegate<sup>1</sup> sovereignty to agents such as the Commission, the European Court of Justice and the European Central Bank (Moravcsik, 1991, 1998; Pollack, 1997, 2002; Tallberg, 2000), and to account for the design of elaborate mechanisms to control these supranational agents (Pollack, 1997, 2002; Franchino, 2000).

Such accounts of delegation and agency control all share the assumption that social action is driven by a 'logic of consequentialism':<sup>2</sup> principals calculate expected costs and benefits of delegation and delegate powers to agents only if the expected benefits of delegation exceed expected costs. More specifically, in international politics governments may choose to delegate powers to non-majoritarian institutions as this enables governments to pre-

<sup>1</sup> While pooling describes decisions by multiple principals to share decision-making competencies through adoption of (super)majoritarian decision-rules, delegation refers to the transfer of sovereignty from the domestic sphere to the supranational level, for example to non-majoritarian institutions.

<sup>2</sup> The *locus classicus* for the distinction between different logics of action is March and Olsen (1989, 1998).

commit credibly to a stream of future policy decisions by removing these decisions from the unilateral tinkering ('defection') of individual governments.<sup>3</sup> In this context, distinguishing between majoritarian and non-majoritarian institutions is crucial. Modern democratic polities encompass both types of institution. Majoritarian institutions, such as parliaments, derive their legitimacy from accountability to voters; elected representatives govern *pro tempore* and can be removed through periodic elections. The legitimacy provided by majoritarian institutions is essentially procedural: political decisions and outcomes are legitimate because they are taken by elected officials according to legal and socially accepted procedures.

In contrast, non-majoritarian institutions are, by design, not directly accountable either to voters or to elected officials: regulatory bodies such as independent central banks, cartel offices or the European Commission are thus non-majoritarian institutions (Majone, 1996). The legitimacy provided by these institutions is not procedural in nature, but derives from a judgement that non-majoritarian institutions can produce 'superior' public policies to short-term oriented, re-election-seeking officials (consequentialist or output-oriented legitimacy). Non-majoritarian institutions provide solutions to collective action problems identified by functional theories of delegation (non-decision and non-compliance), because delegation enhances the credibility of promises struck between different principals (Thatcher and Stone Sweet, 2002, p. 4).

Nonetheless, while the functional theory of delegation is important in explaining much about the design and change of EU institutions, it fails to illuminate the motivations for national governments' empowering a majoritarian parliamentary institution. Why would these 'principals' create and empower an institution that, by its very nature, displays all the problems which induce principals to delegate powers to non-majoritarian institutions in the first place, and which could, therefore, actually help to unravel the expected gains of delegation? Advocates of functional delegation theory readily concede that other factors must explain why national governments have empowered the EP.<sup>4</sup> These factors range from concerns about the 'democratic deficit' (Pollack, 2002) to different domestic traditions about legitimating policy-making in unitarily- or federally-organized polities (Moravcsik, 1998; Moravcsik and Nicolaïdis, 1999; Wagner, 2002). Yet, explanations of this kind have remained largely unsatisfactory: they invoke 'ideas' to mop up unexplained variance of

<sup>3</sup> For reasons why elected politicians may wish to remove certain decisions from majoritarian decision-making by creating and delegating powers to non-majoritarian institutions see, e.g., the overview by Mankiw (1990).

<sup>4</sup> However, Hix (2002) argues that the EP not only has to 'rely' on Member State delegation, but can make use of its discretion – under certain circumstances – to advance its own powers by interpreting the treaty rules.

institutional choices, offer propositions which are not subjected to empirical tests, and/or rely on single case studies to support their claims.

How can we more adequately account for the creation and empowerment of the EP? A logical starting point is the literature on the democratic deficit. Claims that the EU polity suffers from a democratic deficit have been advanced increasingly by political elites, the media and academics since the Maastricht Treaty was signed. The academic literature is mainly concerned with assessing whether and to what degree Community governance meets certain, pre-defined, democratic standards. In whatever way Community democracy is measured – whether emphasizing the procedural and consequentialist dimensions of the concept of democratic legitimacy<sup>5</sup>– the democratic deficit (as one extreme value of the democracy variable) is typically conceptualized as a dependent variable. But this obscures the potential explanatory power of the concept for the behaviour of political elites, that is, that political elites may care about the democratic credentials of the Community. If the democratic deficit is a real concern to political elites (and not just ‘cheap talk’), why should it not carry behavioural implications by influencing the way political elites think about and act upon questions of institutional design and reform?

## II. A Theory of Delegation to Majoritarian Institutions

In this section, I consider why and under what conditions political elites care about the effects of international co-operation on the democratic credentials of Community institutions. In other words, when will political elites perceive a democratic deficit *and* feel compelled to do something about reducing it?

### *The Behavioural Implications of the Democratic Deficit*

Democratic theorists suggest that the legitimacy of political order and, hence, actor compliance with a governance system is founded on procedural and consequentialist legitimacy.<sup>6</sup> As the Community’s policy-making powers have grown, ‘Europe’ has come to exercise functions that, traditionally, belonged to nation-states. Against this background, Robert Dahl has observed that European integration presents European publics and their political leaders with

<sup>5</sup> Many democratic theorists argue that the maintenance of and compliance with political orders is ensured by balancing the procedural and consequentialist legitimacy of these political orders (see, e.g., Weber, 1968; Scharpf, 1970, 1999). Procedural (or input-oriented) legitimacy emphasizes that ‘[p]olitical choices are legitimate if and because they reflect the “will of the people” – that is, if they can be derived from the authentic preferences of the members of a community’ (Scharpf, 1999, p. 6), while consequentialist (or output-oriented) legitimacy highlights that ‘political choices are legitimate if and because they effectively promote the common welfare of the constituency in question’ (Scharpf, 1999, p. 6).

<sup>6</sup> See previous fn.

a 'fundamental democratic dilemma' (Dahl, 1994, p. 23). When democratic polities face significant external socio-economic or security challenges that cannot be managed unilaterally, political elites face a trade-off between, on the one hand, enhancing the capacity of their polity to deal with these challenges effectively by increasing the size of their political unit (through inter- or supranational co-operation) and, on the other hand, citizens' and their representatives' ability to influence government (which decreases with unit size).

In the context of the EU, Schmitter (1996) and Donahue and Pollack (2001) have shown that 'centralization' of policy-making at the EU level has increased remarkably since the origins of European integration, amidst the development of increasingly influential and powerful supranational institutions such as the European Commission and the European Court of Justice. Yet the pooling and delegation of national sovereignty to deal with security or socio-economic problems has challenged democratic processes. Bernhard Wessels suggests that this 'naturally raises the democratic question of how the system of institutions exercising this power is to be controlled and held accountable' (Wessels, 1999, p. 2). Given the far-reaching competencies of Community institutions, the democratic legitimacy of the evolving Community polity is considered a key concern by national political elites. A 1996 survey found 50 per cent of respondents among national Members of Parliament (MPs) from 11 Community countries to be 'not very satisfied' (40 per cent) or 'not satisfied at all' (10 per cent) with the workings of democracy in the Community. In contrast, when asked about the workings of democracy in their own countries, only 20 per cent of MPs were similarly unsatisfied (Wessels, 1999, Table 1; see also Commission, 1998).

These arguments suggest that European integration puts in jeopardy the equilibrium between procedural and consequentialist legitimacy. While Community Member States were predominantly concerned with the delegation and pooling of sovereignty to enhance the Community's problem-solving capacity, citizen participation and popular self-determination came increasingly under stress as democratic processes in the Member States were challenged by such decisions. If delegation, or the transfer of sovereignty from the domestic sphere to the supranational level, occurs, the following concerns about procedural legitimacy are likely: Who are supranational actors accountable to? Who will control them? Can delegation be justified solely by reference to material gains (economic, security, etc.)? If pooling (or the sharing of decision-making competencies through adoption of majoritarian decision-rules) occurs, other procedural legitimacy concerns arise: How does pooling affect the channels of democratic participation, e.g. parliamentary prerogatives? Who are national governments accountable to when portions of their decision-mak-

ing powers are pooled? Proposition 1 summarizes the relationship between pooling and delegation, on the one hand, and consequentialist and procedural legitimacy, on the other.

*Proposition 1:* Pooling and delegation of national sovereignty produces an asymmetry between consequentialist and procedural legitimacy (and thus a democratic or legitimacy deficit<sup>7</sup>).

Even if it were possible to conjecture from empirical evidence that political elites perceive a legitimacy deficit, we do not yet know the content of the proposals to be advanced for its remedy. Will these proposals uniformly stress the importance of the EP? The next section will address this question.

### *Alternative Proposals for the Democratic Deficit*

National governments and political parties may offer fundamentally different proposals as to how the legitimacy deficit should be reduced. Shared beliefs about what constitutes a legitimate governance structure play an important role. As Jachtenfuchs *et al.* observe, these beliefs are based on ‘convictions about the rightfulness of governance shared by actors in the political system’. These convictions are not uniform or consensual but may differ widely among different groups or corporate actors, for ‘there are always contending structures of meaning, and hence contending polity-ideas’ (Jachtenfuchs *et al.*, 1998, p. 413). These ‘legitimizing beliefs’ are likely candidates to guide actors’ preferred institutional choices, as they ‘express a world view that influences behaviour not only directly, by setting standards of appropriateness for behaviour, but also indirectly through selective prefabricated links between values that individuals or collectivities habitually rely upon to address specific problems’ (Katzenstein, 1993, p. 267).

Recent scholarship has provided us with extensive material to establish a typology of different legitimating beliefs and their prescriptive thrusts. Jachtenfuchs *et al.* have developed a typology of different legitimating beliefs, based on qualitative content analysis of party manifestoes (Jachtenfuchs *et al.*, 1998). These beliefs guide actors’ evaluation of the Community’s democratic credentials. Four analytically distinct polity ideas are presented – federal state, intergovernmental co-operation, economic community and network governance – which allow us to derive propositions concerning the responses political elites are likely to make when confronting a perceived legitimacy

<sup>7</sup> The two terms will be used interchangeably.

deficit.<sup>8</sup> Conditional on the legitimating belief different political elites hold, alternative solutions to the democratic deficit will be advanced.

For those adhering to a federal state legitimating belief, legitimacy is expressed through a dual popular sovereignty – split and shared across different levels of governance (state and union level). The federal state legitimating belief therefore combines communitarian and individualistic elements of democratic legitimacy and is implemented through a system combining popular representation and state representation at the federal or union level. In contrast, the intergovernmental co-operation legitimating belief is based on the communitarian principle, or social legitimacy, vesting legitimate rule in the nation.<sup>9</sup> Inter-state co-operation and integration is desirable provided it is *autonomieschonend* (protective of a national democracy's autonomy) and does not undermine national democratic processes. The legitimating belief of an economic community bases the legitimacy of a supranational polity on effective solutions to allocative problems that are best solved either via market mechanisms or through delegation to non-majoritarian institutions like independent regulatory agencies.

It follows that supporters of a federal state legitimating belief are likely to seek a reduction of the legitimacy deficit in the empowerment of the EP as compensation for the weakening of national parliaments' legislative and control function, whereas supporters of the economic community legitimating belief will not perceive the relationship between consequentialist and procedural legitimacy as particularly asymmetric provided pooling and/or delegation promotes enhanced economic and decision-making efficiency. Adherents of the intergovernmental co-operation legitimating belief will emphasize that procedural legitimacy originates from national parliaments (see Table 1 for an overview).

The juxtaposition of alternative legitimating beliefs suggests that a legitimacy deficit will not be uniformly perceived among political elites. Consequently, answers as to how it should be reduced will probably differ substantially. Proposition 2 summarizes the main theoretical claims of this section.

*Proposition 2:* Alternative proposals to create and reform institutions to reduce the asymmetry between procedural and consequentialist legitimacy (the legitimacy deficit) are likely to reflect differences in legitimating beliefs held by different political elites.

<sup>8</sup> The discussion in this article will be limited to the first three legitimating beliefs (excluding the network legitimating belief) because, thus far, they have provided the most prominent signposts for political actors' preferences towards institutional design and reform (see Jachtenfuchs *et al.*, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> For a distinction between communitarian and individualistic conceptions of legitimacy in systems of international governance, see Schimmelfennig (1996).



Table 1: Legitimizing Beliefs and Readings of Democracy, Legitimate Governance and the Nature of the Community's Legitimacy Deficit

	<i>Federal State</i>	<i>Intergovernmental Co-operation</i>	<i>Economic Community</i>
Source of legitimacy	Popular sovereignty at state and union level of governance; communitarian and individualistic principles	National sovereignty (sovereignty indivisible); communitarian principle	Economic efficiency
Conception of democracy at the inter-/supranational level	Parliamentary assemblies at state and union level	Population size -adjusted inter-governmental institutions	No (procedural) democratic legitimacy requirement
Nature of the legitimacy deficit and remedies to reduce it	Delegation/pooling produces accountability gap weakening national parliaments, representative element at Community-level is too weak /EP should be empowered	Delegation/pooling produces accountability gap weakening national parliaments/ legitimacy deficit has to be solved domestically (e.g. increasing scrutiny powers for national parliaments)	Economic effectiveness (substance) and efficiency (means) guarantee legitimacy/ indifferent to EP empowerment as long as it does not hamper effectiveness and efficiency

Two caveats must be entered. First, the theory advanced above offers an account of *why* and *when* national governments opt to reduce the legitimacy deficit, and how they are likely to propose reducing the asymmetry between consequentialist and procedural legitimacy. I do not, however, offer a comprehensive explanation of the bargaining outcome once actors' preferences have been established. Secondly, the theory is a candidate theory. An important stage of inquiry before theories are comprehensively tested is exploring the plausibility of such candidate theories (Eckstein, 1975, p. 108). Hence, the three cases examined here can be viewed as 'plausibility probes', to see whether more extensive data-gathering, theory refinement and, ultimately, theory testing can thus be justified (Bennett and George, 1997). In the following sections, the propositions elaborated above are subjected to empirical scrutiny.



### III. The Birth of a Parliamentary Institution: The Common Assembly

The principle of supranationality is usually portrayed as a novelty in the history of international politics which had its breakthrough in the 1950s with the creation of the ECSC (Thiemeyer, 1998). The Schuman Plan combined economic- and security-induced motives for a new form of supranational interstate co-operation.<sup>10</sup> In his memoirs, Jean Monnet (1978) referred to the plan as a ‘bold, constructive act’, and Duchêne labels it a ‘break with the past’ mirrored in the proposal for a supranational organizational form (Duchêne, 1994, p. 205). The *conditio sine qua non* of the plan was that prospective Member States of the ECSC accepted the idea of the delegation of sovereignty in specific policy sectors to a supranational High Authority with the power to make decisions binding on Member States.

#### *Delegation and the Perceived Legitimacy Deficit*

One of the central aims of the Schuman Plan was to overcome the paralysis of unanimity by delegating sovereignty to a supranational body. Consequently, it would surely *not* make sense if the newly designed supranational body were to be controlled by those whose independent decision-making power it should overcome. It was, hence, the question of the accountability of the new supranational organ, the High Authority, which caused the most debate. The accountability question was most resolutely advanced by the Belgian and Dutch governments. Dirk Spierenburg, leader of the Dutch delegation, warned his government about the potential role of the High Authority, claiming that it was likely to represent a congregation of experts exercising a dictatorship over national coal and steel industries (Griffiths, 1990, pp. 265–6). Similar reactions echoed from Brussels where it was demanded that the High Authority could not go uncontrolled (Küsters, 1988, pp. 78–9). These concerns, voiced prior to the beginning of the negotiations, led Monnet to reflect more intensely on control mechanisms *vis-à-vis* the High Authority (Lappenküper, 1994, p. 418). He saw clearly that transfers of sovereignty would be unacceptable without adequate mechanisms to control the ‘executive’ High Authority (Küsters, 1988, p. 79), a view shared by Robert Schuman.<sup>11</sup>

But the question of control of the High Authority was far from settled. That this question proved so nagging for all participants showed that (partial) delegation of sovereignty to a supranational body was perceived to constitute a new layer of governance, which had to be subject to democratic control and

<sup>10</sup> Lynch stresses, however, that besides the economic importance of Monnet’s plan, the political and even moral aspects of the plan were rather more crucial (Lynch, 1988, p. 124; see also Monnet, 1978, pp. 289–92).

<sup>11</sup> MAEF.DECE: Déclarations à la Presse anglo-américaine, 8 June 1950.

accountability. Yet governments participating in the Schuman Plan negotiations were far from agreed on the appropriate form of control mechanisms. Whereas German and French responses to the accountability problem were guided predominantly by a federal state legitimating belief, Benelux institutional responses were strongly influenced by socio-economic objectives and an economic community legitimating belief.

### *How to Tackle the Legitimacy Deficit?*

One member of the German delegation to the Schuman Plan's legal affairs committee stated that 'during the course of the first days of the conference of delegates it became apparent that ... the grand issues of constitutional politics must not be neglected: the distribution of functions between governing organs ... the necessity to control the High Authority was immediately obvious. All governments were parliamentary democracies' (Mosler, 1966, p. 369, author's translation). Monnet, in a similar vein, argued that '[i]n a world where government authority is derived from representative parliamentary assemblies, Europe cannot be built without such an assembly'.<sup>12</sup> Time and again, Hallstein, Ophüls and other prominent members of the German delegation justified their institutional proposals by taking recourse to the federal state legitimating belief.<sup>13</sup> The French delegation was not guided by an equally well-defined *Leitbild* (legitimating belief); although, on a number of occasions, Monnet underlined that the ultimate goal was a federal institutional structure,<sup>14</sup> the German delegation lamented that this took little notice of federalism proper.<sup>15</sup> The federal state legitimating belief was exemplified in the German delegation's proposal for a unicameral or bicameral 'Montan-Kongress' which should be the counterweight to the executive High Authority (Gerçek, 1998, pp. 108–9) and possess real (budgetary and legislative) powers.<sup>16</sup> French scepticism regarding the powers of the assembly (as well as concerning the 'second' federal element, the Council of Ministers representing individual states' interests) thus must be seen against the background of (a) a lack of familiarity with federal institutional structures, and (more importantly) (b) their strong preference for a largely unconstrained High Authority.

For the Benelux governments, the new supranational polity derived legitimacy essentially from the prospect that delegation would provide effective solutions to economic interdependencies. At the same time, interference with domestic socio-economic policy by the High Authority had to be ruled out

<sup>12</sup> AA/PA.SFSP – 62, 11 July 1950 (author's translation).

<sup>13</sup> AA/PA.SFSP – 62, 27 July 1950.

<sup>14</sup> AA/PA.SFSP – 102, 26 July 1950.

<sup>15</sup> AA/PA.SFSP – 102, 10 August 1950.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., AA/PA.SFSP – 102, 10 August 1950 and AA/PA.SFSP – 103, 20 July 1950.

(Rittberger, B., 2001, pp. 691–4). Given the Benelux governments' focus on the potential socio-economic effects of the ECSC, the legitimacy deficit was perceived differently for France and Germany: it was evaluated with reference to potential implications for policy-making effectiveness and decision-making efficiency. The Common Assembly, if endowed with legislative powers – as proposed by Germany – might impede efficiency. In addition, the High Authority had to be held at bay, so as not to interfere with domestic policy objectives; hence the role of national governments in a ministerial council was emphasized.<sup>17</sup> The Benelux countries ultimately accepted the Common Assembly on condition that it had no legislative powers and hence could not affect policies in a potentially unpredictable manner. The Benelux countries accepted the Franco-German argument that the partial delegation of sovereignty embodied by the new supranational High Authority required control by a supranational body, a parliamentary assembly.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, a parliamentary body that possessed 'executive' control powers (censure motion) was considered unproblematic or even beneficial because it provided an additional check on the High Authority. A parliamentary institution endowed solely with control powers was not costly and was expected to play a negligible role in the Community's institutional set-up.<sup>19</sup>

#### **IV. Budgetary Powers: The Luxembourg Treaty of 1970**

An irony in the European Community's development is that the Member State pressing most strongly for the completion of a common market for agricultural products, France, was the most reluctant to accept the institutional consequences of this common market. Whereas the creation of an 'own resources' system for the Community (stemming from levies on agricultural imports) was accepted as a necessary corollary of a common market for agricultural products, another seemingly logical corollary was contested vehemently: extending the EP's budgetary powers in the light of the decline of national parliaments' budgetary powers.

##### *Delegation and the Perceived Legitimacy Deficit*

Despite public rhetoric about French 'grandeur', one of Charles de Gaulle's primary policy objectives was securing financial advantages for French agriculture within a common European market for agricultural products

<sup>17</sup> See AAPD – 1949/50, No. 84, 3 July 1950 and AA/PA.SFSP – 62, 11 July 1950.

<sup>18</sup> See AAPD – 1949/50, No. 89, 11 July 1950.

<sup>19</sup> JMDS.A-07.02-000073: Schuman Plan and the Belgian Response, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Fonds van der Meulen 5216, jan–juin 1950, Schuman Plan; Cabinet du Jurisconsulte, Note de J. Mûuls).

(Moravcsik, 1998, p. 179, 2000). Following the Council's request, the Commission presented proposals for the creation of a system of own resources to the Council in March–April 1965.<sup>20</sup> The Commission's proposals affirmed that the creation of own resources would render necessary a re-examination of the budgetary procedure laid down in Article 203 EEC, in particular provisions affecting the EP's role in the budgetary procedure. When the Council met to discuss the Commission's proposals in late June, no agreement was reached. At a late night session on 30 June–1 July 1965, the French representative walked out, triggering what became known as the 'empty chair crisis' (see, e.g., Lambert, 1966; Newhouse, 1967).<sup>21</sup>

Following de Gaulle's resignation in summer 1969, France immediately launched an initiative to achieve a permanent settlement for the common agricultural policy (CAP). On 16 July 1969, the Commission again proposed replacing Member States' national contributions with an own resources system, together with alterations to the budgetary procedure. At their meeting in the Hague on 1–2 December 1969, heads of government of the 'Six' agreed the creation of a system of own resources (according to Article 201 EEC Treaty) and concomitant reform of the budgetary procedure (Article 203 EEC Treaty). A final agreement on own resources and associated treaty changes was not reached until April 1970. The agreement foresaw that, from 1 January 1975 onwards, 'all agricultural levies and customs duties will be paid directly to the Communities' budget' (Coombes, 1972, p. 27). The so-called Luxembourg Treaty signed the following day (22 April 1970) amended the original Treaty, providing for a reformed budgetary procedure.<sup>22</sup>

As soon as discussion about the creation of own resources surfaced, calls for an extension of the EP's budgetary powers came to the forefront. The Commission, Parliament and most national governments advocated a link between own resources and the empowerment of the EP in the budgetary sphere. The Dutch permanent representative to the European Communities made it clear that, with the creation of the EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund), national parliaments would lose control of considerable monies that would become genuine Community expenditures. Given this looming legitimacy deficit, arising from an asymmetry between consequentialist legitimacy and procedural legitimacy, it was considered necessary to establish a supranational approval and oversight over these funds, exercised by the EP.<sup>23</sup> Yet the French government continuously disputed this

<sup>20</sup> EP (1970, pp. 71–82) provides a synopsis of the different proposals.

<sup>21</sup> See also AAPD, 1965 [No. 248, 265, 266, 267, 272].

<sup>22</sup> Extracts from both documents can be found in Coombes (1972, pp. 91–102).

<sup>23</sup> MAEF.DECE-05.02, MAEF 1124, 18 December 1963; see also AAPD, 1965 [No. 243] for a reference to a resolution adopted by the Dutch Second Chamber calling for the extension of the EP's budgetary powers once a system of own resources was introduced.

link.<sup>24</sup> After de Gaulle's resignation, President Pompidou pushed to resume talks on the creation of permanent financing for the CAP. In the aftermath of the Hague summit, the discussion regarding the EP's budgetary powers ceased to centre on *whether* there should be an extension, and became one in which questions of degree prevailed. France had accepted the logic, yet its exact implications remained in dispute: what role should Parliament play in the budgetary procedure?

### *How to Tackle the Legitimacy Deficit?*

Addressing the National Assembly on 4 November 1969, French Foreign Minister Maurice Schuman pointed to the importance of establishing a permanent CAP financing arrangement before accession negotiations with the UK could begin. But the government did not mention the potential institutional consequences of a new Community financing arrangement, and no reference was made to enhancing the EP's budgetary powers.<sup>25</sup> While, in private, questions of procedural legitimacy of the new financing arrangement were addressed,<sup>26</sup> the government downplayed them in public. MPs from the governing Gaullists Union des Démocrates pour la République (UDR) were openly critical of the potential institutional implications of the objectives agreed at the Hague. They did not view the empowerment of a supranational parliamentary institution as a solution to the legitimacy deficit. Governments in the Council had to remain the key decision-makers, especially since *they* were ultimately responsible to national MPs.<sup>27</sup> But under Pompidou's Presidency, the Gaullist government was primarily interested in locking in sectoral commitments, such as a favourable arrangement on the CAP<sup>28</sup> even if this involved the selective delegation of sovereignty. To avoid upsetting 'rank and file' Gaullists, the institutional implications of such decisions (more 'supranationality', weakening of the domestic parliament) had to be downplayed. Yet, on proposals for enhancing the EP's budgetary powers, the Gaullists remained supporters of an intergovernmental co-operation legitimating belief, viewing EP participation as an obstacle to rather than a source of procedural legitimacy.

Prior to the Hague summit, governments of the other five Member States committed themselves to an extension of the EP's powers. In Germany, for

<sup>24</sup> AAPD, 1965 [No. 219]. In privately held meetings, the French took a more 'nuanced' approach (MAEF.DECE-05.02, MAEF 1124, 10 May 1965).

<sup>25</sup> *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, debate of 4 November 1969, p. 3301.

<sup>26</sup> MAEF.DECE-05.02, MAEF 1124, 10 May 1965.

<sup>27</sup> *Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, debate of 4 November 1969 (see Jacques Vendroux's contribution).

<sup>28</sup> AAPD, 1969 [No. 319].

example, all political parties represented in the Bundestag – Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), Social Democrats (SPD) and Liberals (FDP) – agreed on a German policy towards Europe and its ultimate goal, a *federal* Europe organized according to principles of parliamentary democracy.<sup>29</sup> When the question of Community reform surfaced in the second half of 1969, both the opposition (CDU/CSU) and government coalition (SPD and FDP) parties supported an extension of the EP's powers and a 'democratization' of the Community's institutional structure in the context of the proposed delegation of budgetary powers to the Community.<sup>30</sup> West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and Foreign Minister Walter Scheel supported the argument that a direct link existed between the creation of own resources and reform of the budgetary procedure and the extension of the EP's powers.<sup>31</sup> The major political parties in the Netherlands were even more outspoken supporters of a 'democratization' of European governance. Foreign Minister Joseph Luns committed himself and his government to a far-reaching extension of the European Parliament's competencies, not only in the budgetary but also the legislative sphere. Throughout the 1960s, the Dutch position regarding Community reform was characterized by a consistent commitment to democratizing Community decision-making, with a particular focus on the powers of the EP.<sup>32</sup> The 'Five' had very different assumptions about European governance to the Gaullists. One marked contrast was the assumption that sovereignty was not indivisible but could be shared across levels of governance (a notion to which Pompidou was more receptive than de Gaulle). Shared sovereignty required the creation of European level democratic control and accountability mechanisms. Consequently, the Five considered that the legitimacy deficit could best be resolved by strengthening the EP.

How could the two views, the intergovernmental co-operation legitimating belief held by the French government and the federal state 'legitimizing belief held by the other Five, be reconciled? Following the Hague summit, the question of the EP's budgetary powers continued to be subject to extensive debate, although France had accepted the logic linking the creation of own resources and some form of EP participation. Although bilateral talks between the Prime Minister Chaban-Delmas and Chancellor Brandt in the aftermath of the Hague confirmed the divergence between France and the Five, Chaban-Delmas agreed that the EP should be given control competencies, but insisted that the Council's role had to be respected and 'financial

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., resolutions 4/1104 of 15 May 1964, 4/1660 of 23 November 1963, 4/2211 and 4/2212 of 28 April 1964.

<sup>30</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, questions of 6 November 1969, pp. 279 and 283.

<sup>31</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, debate of 3 December 1969 (contributions by Brandt and Scheel).

<sup>32</sup> MAEF.DECE-05.02, MAEF 1124, 3 December 1964 and EP (1971, pp. 174–6)

demagogy' prevented. Most importantly, the 'Strasbourg Assembly' should not be able to demand powers exceeding those of national parliaments.<sup>33</sup> Brandt stated that the question of the EP's powers could not be oversimplified, pointing to the trouble he could incur *vis-à-vis* the Bundestag if he devoted insufficient attention to the issue.<sup>34</sup> A solution was found by the Council in February 1970. A distinction introduced by the French between expenditure items that followed directly from Community legal acts (compulsory expenditure) and expenditure that did not, such as administrative expenses (non-compulsory expenditure), was accepted, albeit grudgingly by some delegations (the Dutch delegation most notably) as it gave the EP a final say over only about 4–5 per cent of the entire Community expenditure (that is, non-compulsory expenditure).<sup>35</sup>

### V. Legislative Powers: The Single European Act (SEA)

The introduction of the co-operation procedure finally endowed the EP, some 35 years after its creation, with the right to influence legislation after previously being merely 'consulted'.<sup>36</sup> The events leading to the adoption of the SEA are well documented and will not be repeated here (see, e.g., Corbett, 1987, de Ruyt, 1989, Moravcsik, 1991, 1998, Budden, 1994). Yet, to explain the decision by national governments to agree to bestow a 'conditional agenda-setting power' on the EP in the newly designed legislative procedure, it is essential to examine those treaty changes which induced governments to reconsider the EP's powers. The application of qualified majority voting in the Council to virtually all matters relating to the internal market was a central feature of the SEA. National governments concluded that this large pooling of sovereignty was acceptable and desirable given the objective of passing almost 300 pieces of Community legislation by the end of 1992, the target date for completion of the internal market. Political elites in the Member States expected pooling to accelerate the legislative process by, on the one hand, making it more difficult to block progress in the Council and, on the other, enabling Member States to commit themselves credibly to advancing the in-

<sup>33</sup> AAPD, 1970 [No. 30].

<sup>34</sup> AAPD, 1970 [No. 30].

<sup>35</sup> One may ask whether the EP's influence over the allocation of these 4–5 per cent of the Community budget is significant. The remarkable net increase as well as the relative increase of non-compulsory expenditure as part of the Community budget would not have been realized over time if the EP had not been endowed with an initial, albeit seemingly small, 'lever' on the Community budget as a result of the Luxembourg Treaty of 1970 (see Lindner and Rittberger, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> According to Tsebelis (1994), the co-operation procedure presented the EP with 'conditional agenda-setting power', i.e. the opportunity to adopt amendments during the second reading stage of the procedure which, if the Commission took them on board, were easier for the Council to accept (by qualified majority voting) than to reject (unanimity).



ternal market programme (Moravcsik, 1998, ch. 5). Thus, pooling was a crucial underpinning of the Community's 'relaunch' in the mid-1980s.

Although certain national governments, members of national parliaments and the EP had, throughout the 1980s, consistently criticized the Community for a democratic deficit (Corbett, 1998), it was the potential impact of pooling (the introduction of qualified majority voting) and the ensuing prospect of EEC treaty reform that made the legislative empowerment of the EP increasingly likely. Domestic political elites were well aware of the link between proposals for pooling and concomitant challenges to procedural legitimacy. For example, at the European Council summit meeting in Fontainebleau in June 1984, an ad hoc committee appointed by the Member State governments was created to discuss the issues of deeper co-operation and institutional reform (the so-called 'Dooge Committee'). In its final report to the Brussels European Council in late March 1985, the Dooge Committee advocated, *inter alia*, the creation of a 'fully integrated internal market' and simultaneous institutional reform in order to achieve these policy goals. A plea was made for more 'efficient' but also more 'democratic' institutions. A majority of Member State representatives wanted the EP to become more prominent in the Community legislative process once Member States opted for the pooling of sovereignty.<sup>37</sup> Parliamentary debates and resolutions in many national parliaments also reflected the awareness that increased pooling would exacerbate the legitimacy deficit.<sup>38</sup> Overall, a number of national governments, pressured by domestic political parties and the European Parliament alike, invoked the need to compensate for the expected loss of national parliaments' capacity to hold national executives to account under qualified majority voting, by strengthening the legislative powers of the EP.

### *How to Tackle the Legitimacy Deficit?*

With the legitimacy deficit potentially exacerbated by qualified majority voting, national governments advanced different proposals, guided by alternative legitimating beliefs, to remedy the problem. Addressing the EP plenary in May 1984, President Mitterrand indicated French government support for widening integration by including new policy areas and for deepening through institutional reform. Mitterrand picked up on the notion of 'European Union' and committed himself to convening an intergovernmental conference (IGC) among interested Member States, yet he remained silent on the 'democratization' of Community governance, while expressing support for improved coordination between the Council and the EP (Gaddum, 1994, p. 239). Despite

<sup>37</sup> *Agence Europe*, 16 March 1985.

<sup>38</sup> See Corbett (1998, pp. 185–94) for an analysis of the debates in national parliaments prior to the SEA.

such rather vague statements from the President, the French Socialist Party showed consistent support for EU level ‘democratization’ (Jachtenfuchs, 2002, p. 102). Prior to the launch of the IGC, MPs (and some government officials) claimed that pooling necessitated accountability mechanisms compensating at the European level for the loss of national parliaments’ influence.<sup>39</sup> Whereas the Socialist Party was guided by a federal state legitimating belief, the French government and President shied away from committing themselves to the EP’s empowerment (Budden, 1994, pp. 326–7).<sup>40</sup>

In Germany, prior to the adoption of the SEA, the governing CDU/CSU–FDP coalition called on the government, *inter alia*, to ‘1. take irrevocable decisions towards the creation of European Union, 2. enhance the legislative powers of the European Parliament, 3. apply the Rome Treaties and enhance the scope of majority decision-making.’<sup>41</sup> German political elites agreed that democratization of policy-making at the European level could only materialize through empowering the EP. In contrast to the vagueness on the part of the French government, Chancellor Kohl repeatedly expressed support for the empowerment of the EP and committed himself to pursue that path during the IGC.<sup>42</sup>

The British Conservative Party had a very different vision of what constituted desirable reform of the European polity. In her memoirs, Margaret Thatcher summarized the Conservative Party’s ideal Europe as a ‘free enterprise *Europe des patries*’ (Thatcher, 1993, p. 536). A memorandum distributed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office rejected the ‘submerging’ of sovereignties under the label of a ‘United States of Europe’, and supported ‘greater unity’ as long as this meant ‘Europe united as a single market’. The Conservatives were willing to ‘relegate’ institutional issues to the realm of the ‘practical’ (‘which procedures are most likely to help the realisation of the internal market?’) rather than treat them as ‘dogmatic’ issues (‘the national veto must be kept at all costs’) although many backbenchers opposed qualified majority voting on internal market issues. The government repeatedly gave assurances that the Luxembourg Compromise would remain intact and, thus, the sovereignty of Westminster would be unaffected.<sup>43</sup> While a majority in the Conservative Party and government were willing to accept selective use of qualified majority voting, the view that the EP had to be empowered to

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., the contribution by Foreign Minister Roland Dumas in the National Assembly (*Journal Officiel*, Assemblée Nationale, debate of 11 June 1985, p. 1573).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Philip Budden, 23 April 2002 (see also Gaddum, 1994).

<sup>41</sup> Bundestag, Drucksache 10/3569 of 26 June 1985 (author’s translation).

<sup>42</sup> See, e.g., the Bundestag debate of 27 June 1985, p. 11098.

<sup>43</sup> Margaret Thatcher emphasized after the Milan European Council that the internal market be completed, ‘but I think it can be completed keeping the unanimity rule’ (Hansard, House of Commons, debate of 23 April 1986, p. 384).

render Community decision-making more democratic was openly rejected; enhanced consultation and participation seemed acceptable as long as it did not hamper decision-making efficiency. An increase in the EP's powers would not enhance decision-making efficiency (rather the contrary), nor 'democratize' Community decision-making in the eyes of the Conservative government.<sup>44</sup> Unlike the French Socialists, and the coalition in Germany, the Conservative Party rejected the view that the EP could be a source of democratic legitimacy, reflecting the UK government's adherence to the economic community legitimating belief. Empowering the EP would not reduce the legitimacy deficit, and could slow down decision-making. But despite UK (and Danish) government opposition, the final treaty outcome represented a substantial increase in the EP's legislative powers. Those national governments, most notably Germany and Italy, which were domestically committed to a federal state legitimating belief pressed strongly for Parliament's empowerment. Given the substantial benefits of the internal market programme, the UK government acquiesced over EP empowerment, which, according to one commentator, ultimately constituted only a 'minor inconvenience'.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

The empirical evidence presented here generally corroborates propositions 1 and 2. In all three cases under scrutiny, national governments pooled or delegated sovereignty in a manner that exacerbated concerns about possible asymmetries between consequentialist and procedural legitimacy. Political elites perceived a legitimacy deficit. Although elites from the different Member States were all equally exposed to pooling and delegation, they advanced different proposals as to how it should be tackled, inspired by different legitimating beliefs.

There is thus strong support for the argument that an explanation of the creation and empowerment of the EP has to go beyond the functional theory of delegation. We must ask why and under what conditions political actors care about the construction of institutions that seek to reduce the asymmetry between procedural and consequentialist legitimacy. I am not disputing that the functional theory of delegation offers powerful tools to explain institutional design choices. However, it fails to consider that explanations of the construction of institutional orders in which substantial portions of national sovereignty are pooled and delegated must take account of institutions and procedures that ensure the procedural legitimacy of adding a new layer of

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Memorandum of 26 March 1985 for the House of Lords Select Committee on The European Communities, in House of Lords (1985, p. 3).

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Philip Budden, 23 April 2000 (see also Budden, 1994, pp. 364–6).

governance (through pooling and delegation), unless political elites (of democratic states) want to risk being accused of openly violating key principles of democratic governance. Academic literature has, so far, overlooked the potential behavioural implications of the democratic deficit as it is perceived by political actors. Thus, this article sheds new light on the debate about the EU's democratic deficit. By turning the concept on its head, specifically by treating it as an independent rather than a dependent variable, it was not only demonstrated that it matters to political elites, but also that it triggers the search for (institutional) solutions for its remedy. This search is guided by alternative legitimating beliefs which prescribe appropriate governance structures in the light of the problem. It has also been shown that legitimating beliefs differ cross-nationally and across political elites and, consequently, it is by no means certain that all national governments who perceive the legitimacy deficit as problematic will wish to increase the EP's powers.

The argument advanced here also helps explain why, so far, other international institutions do not include strong representative or majoritarian elements. While other institutionalized forms of international co-operation are some distance away from pooling or delegating major portions of their sovereignty, recent calls by globalization sceptics, the media, academics and politicians to alleviate democratic deficits inherent in the functioning of the World Trade Organization and international financial institutions may, in the future, pave the way for further regional or even global majoritarian institutions (epitomized by a 'global parliament' suggested by Falk and Strauss, 2001; see also Rittberger, V., 2000). Once (democratic) states engage in the pooling and delegation of sovereignty to supranational institutions, questions of democratic accountability and representation are likely to loom large; we can therefore expect, for example, the type and strength of parliamentary assemblies in international political orders to correlate with the degree to which states pool and delegate sovereignty. The EP, in this sense, is an 'outlier' because the Community is an outlier. But the EP is likely to have its majoritarian followers as the new millennium unfolds.

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