Essay

Politics in Europe: From National to Supranational Governance*

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Introduction

I am very glad to be here and I will talk about Politics in Europe – the title is: From national to supranational governance. I will start with some methodological remarks about how to do comparative politics and then I will briefly talk about the differences between the traditional way of looking at political systems: the distinction between presidentialism and parliamentarism. I will also talk about the principal-agent perspective that is another way of looking at the same thing and I will then talk more about a more innovative approach to understanding how political systems work. It was given to political science by Arend Lijphart and is about majoritarian and consensus democracy. I will conclude with two sections that are based on my own work. I will ask two questions: First, what does the European integration process, what does the European Union actually mean for the way government works in this part of the world? Second, from a more general perspective, are there trends towards the presidentialization of modern democracies? Let me start with the boring part, with methodological remarks.

Some Notes on Typologies

Why do we do classifications and typologies? It is a very simple tool, but it is worth reflecting why we do it. We want to reduce and simplify the bewildering empirical reality to a manageable level of complexity; hence it is a reduction of information. What we do is to compare objects of analysis and try to identify similarities and differences. Basically it is an ordering exercise not different from what natural sciences do. We think about the relevant aspects we want to look at when we compare political systems, what matters and what does not matter. It does not matter for us as political scientists whether the flag of a country is red or yellow. This does not tell

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anything about the power relations – instead we identify relevant empirical dimensions.

That is the general idea behind it and the simplest way of doing this is a classification. It is the first brick of a more complicated intellectual building. Basically, a classification is an exercise in assigning all objects that I want to study to separate distinct categories. I used to say – that is no longer politically correct - that identifying men and women is exhaustive. As we know in the age of Facebook, we have many more different genders, so we have moved on there, but initially you could assign people to either men and women and this is an important simple classification, and it is still widely used. Basically you have two classes which are separate, they are clearly distinguishable - and that is, of course, the debate nowadays - but originally you could assign everybody to one of the two classes. That is the simplest version and we know more complicated classifications. Of course, you can use income, you can use all the kinds of things.

Often this is not enough, so we go one step further and combine classifications in order to build typologies that are based on several dimensions. Socioeconomic status is one of these typologies. You have social background, you have income, maybe you have education and then you combine these different dimensions to say certain people are in a higher socioeconomic category and others are in a lower socioeconomic category. You can do the same with political systems, and I will show you the example in a minute.

Theoretically and conceptually there are different variations of types. The most important one that goes back to Max Weber is the ideal type, that is a theoretical construct. This is important, because we often see in the literature that this gets confused with empirical types. An ideal type is a theoretical construct and we know that it does probably never and nowhere exist, but it is a heuristic - something that we use to understand reality. Furthermore, there are different empirical types like modal types - those which are most frequent - or polar, another word is extreme, types. Now what is a problem with a typological approach?

In the first instance, typologies are mainly descriptive - not necessarily, some are, some are not - but typologies are not necessarily very theoretically guided. In addition, there is a tendency in the literature to confuse ideal types with the empirical reality, i.e. to confuse theoretical constructs with the real world. Also, they are fairly static by their very nature because

they are based on a system of classes. They are not well suited for capturing dynamism like change over time, and of course there are the general measurement problems.

The change of classes and types over time is a problem. When do you go from one type to the next, where exactly are the boundaries? In addition, this problem is quite frequent, especially in my field in party research, we find many typologies which are not really typologies but which are mainly talking about certain main or modal types. Even some of the most important contributions to the literature like the cartel party thesis or the literature on the mass party and the catch-all party thesis – if you really look at them conceptually they are only talking about the modal types. They don't provide a full typology which allows us to assign all parties in the party system to one type within this typology. As I used to tell Richard Katz and Peter Mair, they were very silent about my favorite subject when I was younger, which were the Green parties. If you read the cartel party thesis, you do not really know where the Green parties fit. This is not a fundamental criticism; it is just a remark that if you really want to do a typology, you should theoretically be able to put all cases in there.

Regime Types

So far for my methodological remarks – I will now briefly talk about an application of a typology and I start with something that is most likely familiar to you, the distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems. Here you see that three dimensions are combined - this goes back to basic work by Arend Lijphart who said, when we want to distinguish a parliamentary from presidential system we need to know, first, how the executive is dismissed. You cannot get rid of the President for political reasons. In the United States, they tried to get rid of Donald Trump through an impeachment, but this was not for political reasons. Even though this process needs a qualified majority in the Senate, they need to show that the President has done something legally wrong. It is not about political confidence, whereas the Prime Minister and cabinet in a parliamentary system depend on the confidence of parliament; they can be sent home for political reasons. If the majorities change, if the majority party falls out with the Prime Minister, they can send him home for political reasons. The second dimension is the emergence of the executive and that is very important. The President is elected by the voters. It can be indirect as in the United States, where it goes through an Electoral College, but it is a vote and the legitimation by the people.

The Prime Minister, on the other hand, is selected by the legislature. Not all parliamentary systems require an active vote for the Prime Minister to assume office - some parliamentary systems function on the basis of toleration. This means that the Prime Minister stays in office as long as he or she is not voted out. Frequently, the Prime Minister is simply appointed by the monarch. The third dimension concerns the form of the executive. Conceptually, the President is the government and all his cabinet members are - literally - secretaries. They derive their power, their competence, their legitimacy from the President while, in a parliamentary system, the ideal is that there is a collective executive, the cabinet governs, not the Prime Minister alone. I have already mentioned the word ideal, I am talking about ideal types and now we take this typology and see how well the reality fits this typology, and that is how we use these typologies: To analyze the reality, and I will now talk about the strengths but also the limitations of this method.

In the world of ideal types there is simply the parliamentary system on one side and presidential system on the other side. In the former, the voters vote for the legislature, and executive and cabinet are part of the legislature. There is no separation between the executive and the legislature. In an ideal-typical presidential system there are two chains of legitimacy. One goes to the legislature and one to the President, and the President simply appoints his secretaries, that means his cabinet. However, beyond this strict institutional separation of powers there must be – in the real world – functional interlocking, which means that the powers have to do things together, otherwise the system of government will not function. However, this interlocking does not always function well.

Now, when we look at the at the real world, there is an almost ideal-typical example of a parliamentary system and this is the political system of the United Kingdom. Her Majesty's Government is part of Parliament and the electoral legitimation goes from the voters to the House of Commons and the House of Commons selects the Prime Minister. The monarch, we have seen this in the crisis of over Brexit, the monarch is purely ceremonial. At the end of the day, there is no real power with the monarch who is directed by the Prime Minister to do what he or she wants or what the majority of the House wants. The Prime Minister acts for the House as long as he is tolerated by the House, that means, as long as there is no vote of no-confidence. If you look to Britain during the Brexit crisis, you see that right from the beginning of his government, Boris Johnson was strictly speaking without a majority, so was Theresa May in many crucial decisions: Hence, what we

saw during the Brexit crisis was a deviation from the ideal type, because if you read the textbook accounts on the British system you will always find references to the fact that, as soon as the Prime Minister loses a major vote in the Commons, he or she will resign. However, this did not happen, so Britain lived through a very interesting period of time politically, but we saw that the government in the British system cannot survive in the medium term without a majority, so that situation was bound to resolve itself sooner or later.

When we look at the U.S. system of government, which is fairly close to an ideal-typical presidential system, things get more complicated. We see the election of the House of Representatives, the Senate and of the President by the people, and there are many interconnections; there is an interlocking of powers. In the ideal world of the presidential system, the secretaries of state are simply the servants of the President. However, in the real world of the U.S. system a candidate for cabinet, e.g. candidate for being a Secretary of State, needs to survive a hearing in the Senate in order to assume office – this is what is meant with interlocking powers.

Now, I said before that there are some criticisms about the typological approach. Often these typologies are not sufficient to capture all cases and the old typology by Arend Lijphart is an example of this because initially it could not account for cases like France and any other countries, which have a mixed system, a so-called semi-presidential system. Here we see a directly elected President with significant powers who is completely independent of parliament - parliament cannot send him home - who coexists with a Prime Minister who needs the confidence of parliament. What we see here is a combination of the presidential logic with the parliamentary logic. A President who is popularly elected and cannot be removed under parliamentary logic coexists with a Prime Minister who needs the confidence of the house and who needs to govern with the national parliament.

This is one example where the binary typology of parliamentary vs. presidential system does not fit, but there are others. Switzerland is a country where the government emerges from the national assembly but the National Assembly, which has that has two chambers, follows a so-called magic formula which determines the composition of an oversized coalition government. The same parties have formed the government for many years and it does not matter very much which way the election goes. At the same time much of the legislation needs to go through a vote by the population, through a plebiscite. I will not go into details here, the point simply is that

this is another example where the simple typology does not function. Having said this, Switzerland is a very peculiar case when it comes to its tier of direct democratic decision-making.

A Principal-Agent Perspective

Let me move on to the next part of the presentation that is delegation and accountability and here we see more analytical approach to the same problem. Kaare Strøm suggested that one can reduce the way political systems function to chains of delegation as he and others call it. Interestingly, he says that the French system is simply also a parliamentary government. I think this is disputable, but the big analytical contribution of all people following Kaare Strøm is that they directed our attention to the real workings of these two institutional arrangements, and what they say is that politics in the ideal world should be understood as chains of delegation. Voters vote for the members of parliament in a parliamentary system. Parliament brings a Prime Minister into office who then selects his cabinet members, who then try to control their governmental departments. The idea is that the people rule in democracy; hence the orders go from voters to parliament to the Prime Minister, and eventually the orders go to the government departments. The voters delegate, because they cannot act themselves, they delegate to parliament. Parliament cannot do everything by itself, it cannot govern. You cannot govern by assembly, so the parliament selects a committee – from this perspective, the government, the Prime Minister and the ministers, are a committee of parliament and they take orders from parliament; and finally the ministers then give orders to their departments.

This is only part of the story. The other part is accountability. The idea is that each of these principal-agent relationships has two sides: delegation and accountability. Voters are the principals, parliament is the agent of the voters, voters delegate power to parliament, but they also give orders and hence parliament is accountable to the voters. The idea is that parliament, that individual MPs can be held accountable by voters and that is the most simple and fundamental form of delegation and the principal-agent relationship; accountability here is simply about elections. If people are not happy with what parliament does, they will vote in a way that the next parliament looks differently and some members of parliament will lose their jobs.

What you see here is a huge research agenda. It is more than a theory. This is a research program because what you need to ask is how well do all these chains of delegation and accountability function? The principal-agent

literature is mainly about how well these principal-agent relationships function at each stage of the chain of delegation. Ideally this chain should be constructed in a way that whatever department B does is more or less what the majority of voters want – and the 'more or less' is the research agenda.

There can be several kinds of problems along the chain of delegation and accountability. Voters may not know exactly what, for example, the candidates for parliament want. They may not tell the truth. At the same time, voters may not be powerful enough to deselect them. There are many different problems of agency loss. I could now talk very long about this but I will not, one simple example here may suffice. In the language of the principal-agent approach it is called contract design, which is about the specific rules that guide the selection of the agent. The accountability between voters and parliament depends a lot on how the electoral system works. A very simple and effective system - at least when it comes to the delegation between all voters in one constituency and the specific MP - is the British First Past the Post electoral system, because parties have relatively little power. There is a direct accountability of the MP to his constituency.

Another example is Germany - it is changing now, because the party system is changing, but let us forget this for a moment. In a system with fixed lists that are determined by the political parties and proportional representation, many members of parliament can be very sure that they will be reelected. The composition of parliament in a proportional system is relatively far removed from the will of the ordinary voter, because it is small groups within the party who de facto decide over a large portion of the seats in parliament.

We have seen that one important element of the principal-agent analysis is concerned with way the contract is designed. Another important aspect - and that applies to the entire chain of delegation - is of course the media system: How well do the media function in order to prevent the agents from doing things that the principals do not want? The legal system is another important factor to prevent agency loss - but as I said, I do not want to spend too much time on this.

Let us come back to our main theme, namely the configuration of power. Regarding the configuration of institutional elements Kaare Strøm reduced political systems to two versions or two types. In a way this also speaking of ideal types, and the presidential system is characterized by a much more complicated configuration of chains of delegation. There are three chains

of delegation: from the voter to the President, to the upper chamber, and to the lower chamber. This means that there are also three different sources of legitimacy. Furthermore, there are all these interlocking connections that I mentioned before. The main problem, however, is that the President has no more popular legitimacy than House and that explains to certain degree the problems that you sometimes have in presidential systems when the majorities in the house are not friendly to the political ideas of the President. Having said this, we are now living through a phase where we see problems of majority government in many other parts of the world; I just mentioned Britain that is only one example, of course.

Majoritarian and Consensus Government

Let me turn to another way of looking at how political systems function, namely them dichotomy of consensus vs. majoritarian systems that also goes back to Arend Lijphart. When we want to understand how political systems function, it is essentially about the following questions: How does power emerge, how is it legitimized and how is it shared? These are the fundamental questions about understanding political systems. Arguably even more important are the following: How many actors in the political system are legitimized directly by the people? And how do they need to work with each other? These remarks already hint at the underlying idea of this theory and also at the empirical study of consensus democracy versus majoritarian democracy.

Lijphart started with a basic typology of political regimes, but he did not stop there. Very early on he worked on more sophisticated, more differentiating ways of understanding the configuration of political systems in the tradition of new institutionalism. This means that he uses an extended conceptualization of institution that includes configurations of actors and rules. Furthermore, the way the political actors are forced to interact with each other – in other words - the political process itself becomes part of the typology. Finally, there are another two important aspects, and now you will understand why I started with these conceptual remarks about typologies: First, he thinks in terms of a continuum and no longer of two distinct types; hence a system can be more or less of this or the other. And second, the ideal type becomes - and that is what an ideal type should be - the end point of the continuum. In addition to this, the intention is to do causal analysis in order to see whether a specific type of democracy produces better or worse outcomes. The idea is that there should be a correlation between the type of democracy and a given output.

The central perspective of Lijphart's theory is that we need to think of political systems as a configuration of veto points. To put it differently, Lijphart asks himself how much does the political system force political actors to negotiate with each other.

If we want to understand what was going on in the United Kingdom during the Brexit crisis, why the political system found it so difficult to handle Brexit – this has a lot to do with the fact that the United Kingdom is very much a majoritarian system, and under majoritarian systems the political actors are used to not having to negotiate. What we saw in Britain was that the system is very badly equipped to a situation where the majority is not really there and if the majority is not there, in parliament, you should be used to, and you should be trained to negotiate, and I think that is what the British system faced.

This is just a little teaser. Now, let us go through the different variables which explain the entire concept. The leading question is always: Are there configurations of institutions in the system that enforce negotiation rather than allowing decision by majority, by a simple 50 plus one logic. Lijphart looks at two dimensions. The first one he calls the executive-parties dimension. This is mainly about parliament, government and the party system, and the second one looks at the structure of the state; it is called federal-unitary dimension.

The first dimension starts with the idea that - and here you see the extended idea of institutionalism - if you have a party system that tends to function like a two-party system, this is part of the institutional setup. Britain used to be characterized by single party majorities and a two-party system for many decades. Of course, we all know that Britain never had a two-party system. There were more parties in parliament, but they did not count when it came to governing. Small parties were beginning to be part of a government only in recent years. This leads to a concentration of executive power, which is the majoritarian pole of the continuum. The opposite is the consensus pole, where traditionally there is the institution of multi-party government, often based on broad coalitions, maybe even oversized coalitions.

The second variable is concerned with the relationship between the executive and the legislature. The legislature can be very strong vis-à-vis parliament, which means that once a government is in office it can dominate parliament. Of course, parliament can always dismiss a government under

a parliamentary system, but there are political systems where the executive dominates the legislature while in others there is a balance of power. How would you measure this? Stronger parliaments have more committees, they have more rights to set the agenda, they have more resources, all these aspects are relevant indicators.

The third variable talks about the party system and this is something where Lijphart has been criticized for. The format of the party system is very closely related to the type of government in that two-party systems lead to a single-party governments while multi-party systems tend to result in multi-party coalition governments.

Also the fourth variable, the electoral system, is related to the variables measuring party system and government format. A majoritarian system like the British tends to favor a two-party system. Clearly, there are exceptions, but majoritarian systems tend to produce majorities; proportional systems tend to do the opposite.

The last variable has become a little less fashionable in recent years. It relates to the system of interest groups. Here you can have a pluralistic interest group system where many groups compete with each other for influence. Interest groups are not powerful enough to block what government wants, which is conducive to majoritarian government. On the consensus side of the continuum, we have a neo-corporatist system of interest intermediation. Classic examples are the Scandinavian countries, where powerful organizations of labor and industry have almost co-equal powers to the government in the socio-economic sphere. Hence, governments need to negotiate.

Let us turn to the second dimension, the federal-unitary dimension. If you have a centralized structure of government, the central government has nobody with whom it needs to negotiate. Federal and decentralized government means that there are many power centers in the country. Germany, for example, has a federal government and 16 federal states. The latter have autonomous legislative and administrative powers. Very often, the federal government needs to cooperate with the federal states. It cannot simply do what it wants, it needs to talk to state governments.

The second variable on this dimension is about unicameralism vs. bicameralism. In unicameral systems, legislative power is more concentrated. Here, the UK comes close to the ideal type. Of course, there is the colorful

House of Lords, where they have purple dresses and wigs, but its function is largely ceremonial. The House of Lords is not very powerful. The opposite is true for the German second chamber, the Bundesrat, or the American Senate, where the states have a very strong representation. The two chambers make it more difficult for the government to do what it wants, especially if there are hostile majorities which can emerge because of a different electoral system or a different logic of representation. This means there is another need for negotiation.

Obviously, if the constitution is flexible and can be amended easily, a government finds it easier to govern compared to a situation where constitution is very rigid, which means that constitutional change requires qualified majorities. Again, we have two variables that are relatively close to each other, because juridical review, the other variable, means that the power of a governmental majority is limited by a strong constitutional court. The UK is fairly close to the typical majoritarian pole as it has no written constitution and weak judicial review whereas Germany and the United State, for example, are clearly near the opposite end of the continuum on these two variables.

Last, but not least there is a central bank. If the government can control the central bank it has more possibilities to steer the economy compared to a situation where the central bank is independent. An independent central bank is a limitation of majoritarian power.

This is Lijphart's original model, which allows him to place individual political systems along these two dimensions. The United Kingdom is very much on the majoritarian side on both dimensions because it has a fairly centralized and majoritarian government. Germany is situated somewhat towards the consensus side on the executive-parties dimension, because it tends to have coalition governments and many other aspects which enforce negotiation; it is very clearly on the consensus side of the federal-unitary dimension, because Germany is a strongly decentralized, federalized state. Japan is in a relatively neutral position on both dimensions while the United States are very decentralized, but the strong presidency places it on the majoritarian side on the executive-parties dimension.

This is what you can do with that particular analytical tool. Lijphart and many others following him have used this empirical instrument, which has also been refined by many others later on, to understand and to analyze whether this actually makes a difference for the output of political systems.

Lijphart found that there were some significant differences, e.g. the representation of women and participation was better in consensus democracies. By and large, Lijphart concluded that consensus systems worked somewhat better than majoritarian systems. However, we need to remember that we are looking at a limited number of cases statistically, so some of these correlations have to be read with a little bit of care.

Party Government in the EU?

I will now move one level higher up and talk about the European Union, which is a unique creature. When you go to other parts of the world, you will also find arrangements of collaboration between states but none of them comes close to the level of supranational integration that we find in the European Union.

Sorry to keep talking about Brexit, but the fact that Brexit is so difficult shows you how far integration had already proceeded. Arguably, some of the British may have thought that one could simply leave the European Union like a club – you go in, you go out, you resign your membership - this is it. However, they are learning the hard way that the European Union has created an interconnection that is so hard to dissolve that it is very costly and very difficult to leave the EU.

The main theme in this section will be political parties. More precisely: What do parties do in the European Union. How much do they do? Do they do anything meaningful? Let us begin with a brief a look at the unique configuration of what parties are in Europe. We have had direct elections to the European Parliament since 1979. It is a very interesting creature, because it keeps changing all the time. In the wake of Brexit, we had a very peculiar situation in that suddenly 73 MEPs had to leave. Once the UK left the EU, the UK Members of the European Parliament had to resign their seats. As a result, the majorities in the European Parliament changed. It is an interesting historical footnote that we had European elections, which resulted in a certain majority that decided upon the composition of the Commission and the election of the President of the Commission. However, within a few weeks, a significant number of the MEPs who participated in this decision had to leave the European Parliament.

We have groups in the European Parliament. These groups are ideological families. There are Socialists, Christian Democrats/Conservatives, Liberals, Greens, Left Socialists and various shades of right-wing formations.

These parliamentary groups have a somewhat difficult or not fully developed relationship with European parties. To call them European parties is not entirely correct, because they are federations of parties rather than real parties. Europarties, as we call them now in the literature, have no individual members. To be sure, there are some minor exceptions, but individual members play no role within Europarties. The members of the Europarties are national parties. The German Social Democratic Party, for example, is a member of the Party of European Socialists. Clearly, the fact that Europarties are not real parties undermines the idea of party politics in Europe. The second important point is that the national member parties are in charge of selecting candidates to the European Parliament. As a result, their connection to their MEPs is relatively strong. How well these connections function will be discussed now.

The conceptual question is formulated in the header of this section: Party government in the European Union? Now, what is party government? Again, I start with the basics. Party government means that the parties control policy and the selection of political personnel. They select personnel, they are the gatekeepers for whoever wants to get in political office and parties determine policy. Within the EU, however, the question is which party determines what? Is it the national member parties, is it the Europarties or who is it? This is a really complicated question when we look at the European Union.

The European Union as a system of governance means that - compared to national systems - there are many more veto points that undermine direct party control. If you think back to Lijphart, the idea was that consensus systems create more need to negotiate. How can you create the need to negotiate? If somebody can veto something. An actor who can block a decision can force the others into a negotiation. Essentially, the European Union is a configuration of political institutions that leads to many veto points.

Now, what are the principal arenas of legislation? At the end of the day, legislation is the most important aspect of the European Union, because it does not really have a strong executive. If you look at the European Union as a system of governance it is mainly governing through regulation. It does not have an army. It does not have a police. Everything the European Union does in member states is done through the member states, it needs the administration, the executive of the member states. Essentially, the European Union is a system of legislation and regulation. Hence, we need to look at who controls legislation. I am simplifying a bit, but this is really it, I would

argue.

What are the arenas of legislation? On the one side, you have the Council of Ministers and the European Council; the Council of Ministers is an assembly of ministers; one day they can be the Ministers of Agriculture, the next day they can be the Ministers of Interior. It is one legislative chamber in the European system of legislation. In addition, some of the fundamental guidelines are subject to a decision by the European Council, which is the assembly of chief executives, the Presidents and Prime Ministers, who meet at the European summits. Hence, one legislative chamber is an assembly of executive members, and the other chamber in the European legislative process is the European Parliament.

Let us look at the different logics of decision-making. The European Council is mainly intergovernmental in that it does not decide with majority, but mainly decide by consensus. This is not always the case, but in most cases there is a national veto. The reason why the European Council mainly decides in an intergovernmental mode is because that is where the fundamental decisions are taken and the member states would not easily accept that their national government loses a vote on an important issue.

The Council of Ministers is generally involved in more detailed and technical aspects of legislation. This is where we have seen a movement to a supranational decision logic, which means an increased usage of qualified majority voting. This involves not a simple 50 plus one rule but additional criteria: 55 percent of the members states need to agree and they need to represent 65 percent of the population of the EU.

In a nutshell, legislation in the European Union has a strong executive component. Government members co-decide about legislation, which then becomes either directly or indirectly binding legislation in all European member states. The negotiations in the Council follow the logic of international politics, which is characterized by an executive bias. This means that it is structurally very difficult to connect these decisions back to national party government, to link them to what national parliaments want. After Council negotiations, ministers go back to their countries and tend to argue that the results represent as much as they could achieve. They will tell their parties not to mess things up by blocking it in the national parliament, because the price would normally be a government crisis. Once negotiations are finalized at the EU level, it would create a government crisis if a minister or even the chief executive could not get the support of his or her own

majority back home. Hence, that rarely happens. In other words, the blackmail power of these executive members is relatively high or - to think back to Kaare Strøm's idea - the accountability is relatively low at this moment.

The European Parliament, the other legislative chamber, functions purely according to a supranational logic in that there is no national veto. More precisely, it has a double supranational logic. First, European party groups decide with majority. There is no national veto, because each delegation to these groups is too small to block anything within the group. Second, no national delegation to the European Parliament is sufficiently large to bloc anything.

What does this mean for party government? What is the opportunity structure for party government? In other words: What is the structural possibility for party government to work? There is a strong national component incorporated in the Council (despite its supranational tendencies). Therefore, all depends on the future development of European political parties. I would argue that we could only expect a strengthening of party government if the parties in the European Parliament were truly supranational and clearly linked to extra-parliamentary Europarties. In theory, this would mean that there should be coherent majorities in the European Parliament based on parties linking directly to the European people. Of course, this does not happen. Instead, we have this strangely fragmented system where parties in European member states are members of European Parties, which are not really organizations in their own right.

While European party government is an idealistic projection, it is a heuristic, a theoretical yardstick. We could find that parties are moving a little in this direction. The real question is: Do political parties link EU decisions to the preferences of citizens? This was one of the questions that we tried to answer in a large empirical study on the EU-15 a few years ago. What did we find? The elites, who are almost exclusively party politicians, enjoy a very high degree of discretion. Discretion is the opposite of accountability in the sense that elite action is really linked to the will of the people. This applied to the members of the European Parliament, but even more so this applied to the members of governments who are in the Council acting as legislators. Even though national parties and national parliaments tried to improve the accountability of politicians acting at the EU level, they had very high discretion.

Why was this so? We explained it by the fact that if a political system is

based on negotiations, elites need to have a room for maneuver. There is an inherent and theoretically understandable contradiction between having a high degree of accountability and having a consensus system working where the elites negotiate. The price of a working consensus system is that accountability is limited, hence parties are fighting a losing battle here to a certain degree. Clearly, this logic has not changed since our study was in the field, which means that the weakness of linkage is still very much the same.

European Integration and Presidentialization

What is the connection between the process of European integration and presidentialization? When you look who gets into office in this complex structure that is called the European Union system of governance, you will find that political parties have selected these people. However, as I have pointed out above, parties do not really control the substance of the European policy process because linkage is weak. It is such a complicated system with many veto points which require negotiation that there is an inherent logic that undermines the accountability of elites vis-à-vis their parties – simply because these negotiations necessitate room for maneuver of elites. EU system of governance strengthens the power of those higher up in the political system, and this means mainly those who are in government.

On a very impressionistic or anecdotal level, you see this when we talk about European politics. We often talk about Angela Merkel talking to Macron, or the French President is talking to the Italian Prime Minister, or Boris Johnson goes over to Brussels and he talks to members of the Commission. Hence, already in our way of thinking about politics on a simple everyday level or in the way the media report, we have become used to personalize things. We think and talk about the leading actors rather than institutions. Instead of talking about the relationship between the French and German governments, for example, we have begun to say that Angela Merkel gets along with Emmanuel Macron - or that she does not get along with Donald Trump.

This purely anecdotal perspective shows that something has changed in the way politics works. From an analytical perspective, we can do this a with more substance than simply looking at the media and the public debate. This is what I have done with a colleague who was here a while ago, Professor Paul Webb from Sussex. Together with many other colleagues around the globe we argue that we see a trend towards the presidentializa-

tion of politics in modern democracies. What we mean with presidentialization is that there is a shift of power. There is a shift of power away from collective actors like cabinet, parliament is a large collective actor, parties are large collective actors. We see a shift of power from collective actors to individual leaders - and this may include small groups of leaders. We often find that strong leaders have a small group of close advisers or a core cabinet around them.

In a nutshell, the concept of presidentialization means, first, that we have an increasing leadership power and autonomy within the executive. Within the executive itself the chief executive - whether it is a President or a Prime Minister or a Chancellor does not matter - the chief executive becomes the central actor. It is no longer so important who is in cabinet; instead it is the chief executive who matters. It is Boris Johnson, it is Angela Merkel, who decide the policies, who make the decisions, who can also more freely select their cabinet members than in the past. That is the first element of the concept.

The second aspect of presidentialization is that we also see an increasing power and autonomy of leaders within the political party, so they can set the agenda more independently than in the past. As a necessary result of this we see, thirdly, an increasingly leadership-centered electoral process. This aspect is largely synonymous with personalization. We find that parties fight election campaigns by putting their leaders to the front, by not talking much about programs but about personalities. We find that the media do the same. They talk about the leading candidates and they do not discuss much about policy; instead they talk increasingly about the qualities of leaders, personal properties of leaders. Finally, voters decide accordingly, and we have fairly strong evidence for all three aspects of this trend towards a personalized or leadership-centered electoral process. We have fairly strong evidence on the presidentialization of political parties and also of the executives.

What does this mean? I want to emphasize - this is very important - the concept basically means that political systems can move from partified government to a more presidentialized government and also back again. We argue that there is generally a trend, a push towards presidentialization, and we can also give reasons why there is such a push. However, depending on political context, situations, or the quality of leaders, political systems can also move back towards a more partified logic.

The second important point is that we are not talking about institutional change; instead we talk about a change in the way political systems function. We are focused on their working mode. We do not argue that parliamentary systems might change their rules and become semi-presidential or even presidential. We claim that the way they function, the way they behave, changes - and in this respect this is comparable to the logic of Arend Lijphart. And we argue that the powers that move political systems towards the presidentialized pole of the continuum are stronger than the countervailing powers and there are many reasons for that. It follows from this that also semi-presidential and presidential systems can become more presidentialized. The power of the President and his or her autonomy, the ability to do things, can also grow in a presidential system.

It is all about increase of power and the increase of power can happen in two ways. It can be the result of more resources becoming available to the chief executive or the party leader , e.g. more personnel or more money. We know that the resources of the chief executive have grown in many European democracies; the Prime Ministers used to have relatively small offices, even Number 10 Downing Street is small, but behind Number 10 the apparatus has grown. There are more government advisers working directly for the Prime Minister. Formal powers are also resources; there is also a growth and this brings us back to the European Union. In addition, there is also a growth of autonomy, which is a very important element of power. Especially the European integration process has led to growth of leadership autonomy through the executive bias in the Council and the decreasing accountability of those who make decisions in the Council. They are increasingly removed, insulated from controls, so they can decide more things relatively autonomously. To be sure, leaders may not like the decision of which they are part at the EU level, but they are more powerful than in the past to enforce these decisions in their own countries.

You may have guessed that I would end with some remarks about Brexit. Brexit as an example of presidentialization. First of all, Brexit is very much the result of elite action or lonely decisions. David Cameron decided to have the referendum, Boris Johnson decided to be against EU membership, Theresa May did not decide for a long time, and now we have Boris Johnson and we must not forget Jeremy Corbyn and Nigel Farage, who pushed the established parties ahead.

So when we talk about Brexit and I think this is to a certain degree not just a media construction, we talk about individual politicians, what we also

see is that political parties are becoming ever less coherent. They are almost in danger of disintegrating and we see – this was really interesting - a very strong attempt to govern past parliament. The chief executive tries to govern beyond his own parliamentary control. Boris Johnson even went as far as suspending parliament. That may be an extreme example, but I think when we think about presidentialization we detect many parallels to the way the British system works right now.