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Coalition Democracy in Europe

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Traditionally, political parties get bad press. This “ill that is inherent to free governments”¹ is often blamed for impeding the formation of broad based support, since it instils division and a “regime of misfortune”², there, where harmony should reign. In this regard, Gustav Radbruch noted, under the Weimar Republic, the existence of party prudery (Parteienprüderie)³. This of course has largely disappeared, but resistance still exists. Depending on the specific modes of functioning and on the country, the phenomenon of the “party State” (Parteienstaat)⁴ theorised by Hans Kelsen after the Great War finally became established in most countries of Europe due to the generalisation of government opinion and universal suffrage⁵. In their role as the ‘auxiliaries of democracy’⁶, political parties have contributed to the creation of a certain coherence in the multitude of individual choices available. It was all the more important to organise these rationally, since the pace of the industrial revolution and urbanisation disrupted quite significantly “the old framework” of 19th century society – such as links and traditional hierarchies, as well the cohesion of social groups. Functioning as indicators of the will of the electoral corpus, they enabled the healing of its fragmentation. However, this development was only possible because of two things: it was on the one hand vital that the issue of the regime’s legitimacy be settled, i.e. that the public institutions be accepted by all of the citizens as a whole, and, on the other, that the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary branches of the political parties work in harmony.

In real terms parties do not just play an electoral role. Their vocation is eminently political, since the formation of the “party government” suggests that they play a vital role, acting in terms of the exercise of power itself. Of course, today political parties struggle to create a structure for themselves and to rationalise democratic policy, but this has not always been the case. This did not suddenly emerge however, as the precedent of the Weimar Republic sadly indicates. As Georges Vedel noted, a democracy struggles to “*survive without organised parties; [likewise] it can die because of the parties*”⁷. In all events, all of the parties assume their responsibilities in a different way including within Europe’s democracies. On the continent the formation of a coalition often precedes the constitution of a government. In this regard electoral systems are important. Although it might deserve to be nuanced somewhat the triple sociological rule observed by Maurice Duverger seems to retain a certain amount of plausibility: hence the majority, two round vote tends to lead to multiple, incoherent parties, proportional representation to multiple, coherent parties and the majority, single round vote to party dualism. On this point, we might

note that the links between modes of voting and the party system are not unilateral⁸, since they mutually influence each other, and that the structure of the political parties is itself marked by the shape of economic and social life.

Single Party Parliamentary Government

The UK is rather more Europe’s exception than its rule, since majority parties have traditionally tended to govern alone, but this is not always the case, as illustrated by the 2010-2015 legislature⁹, as well by the one that is about to start. Following the snap election on 8th June 2017, Theresa May found herself forced to form a coalition with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), a Protestant, radical party from Northern Ireland. Indeed with 317 MPs (in comparison to a previous 330), the Tories no longer held an absolute majority in the House of Commons (i.e. 326 MPs). As a result they have been obliged to forge an alliance with this small group (of ten MPs) in order to govern. These “back-up troops” have negotiated their engagement effectively since the Prime Minister had to revise some of the points

in her programme. The budget allocated to Northern Ireland for example was increased (1.1 billion € over the next two years). The DUP's support is now secured for Theresa May regarding issues linked to the Brexit, the budget, the economy, security, as well as some decisive votes. Confidence was won by the government on 29th June last.

The mood commonly swings towards the parliamentary government of the dominant party in the House of Commons, since the majority, single round voting method leads to the over-representation of the winners and the under-representation of the defeated parties in the general election. In this extremely common case in the UK, the majority party leads national policy by itself, i.e. without the help of the other party. When we think of what Walter Bagehot called the "electoral function"¹⁰ of parliament, then the victorious party holds the right to govern directly. In this case, it is a kind of democratic election of a two-tiered government¹¹, with some saying that this is an "almost popular"¹² election which is said to legitimise the full majority exercise of political power (with the imbalances that this implies¹³). Only a political change in government can bring this to an end, with a 'reshuffling' at regular intervals, following possible swings in the electoral corpus's mood. The majority and the opposition then exchange their scores until the ballot box decide otherwise¹⁴.

Although this never occurs completely, notably because the Libdems normally succeed in winning seats in the Commons and because the small regional parties almost always have seats within the lower house, the British trend towards the two-party system finds no equivalent on the continent.

Indeed the British trend towards the two-party system and to the leadership of the majority party seems to have disappeared in Spain following the elections of December 2015 and June 2016, whilst in the past it had been confirmed with the "restoration of democracy"¹⁵. The party system seems to have been disrupted, whilst the voting method had, to date, brought about positive results in terms of government stability and the political alternation in power of the two main parties, i.e. the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the

People's Party (PP). After an unprecedented political crisis, that was notably punctuated by a dissolution of parliament in May 2016, Mariano Rajoy was invested as the leader of government on 31st October 2016, but he owed his accession to office to the PSOE and the centrist party (Cuidadanos C's)¹⁶: although the former wanted to avoid a further dissolution of parliament the latter is reputed for its unpredictable behaviour. In other words, the task of the head of the Spanish government is particularly difficult, since he has no majority on which he can rely.

The multi-party system prevails in Europe in extremely different forms, including in France where voting traditionally takes the shape of a two-round majority method. The fragmentation of the partisan landscape has "grown particularly acute" in Italy. The phenomenon of partitocracy, the lack of parties with a majority, and the exclusion of the Communist Party, has contributed to the creation of great political instability. In Italy, no fewer than 60 governments have succeeded one another since the end of the Second World War, without the electoral reform of 1994 succeeding in establishing long term majority democracy. From this point of view, the Republic of Italy is an exception.

The coalition of conflictual democracy

Another difference from the Westminster model emerges in the culture of the players in the political landscape. On the continent, certain "competitive democracies"¹⁷ function according to a method that is particularly focused on consensus. This feature is not as strong everywhere, since the political culture of the Vth Republic is traditionally one of conflict and theatrical, and even "story book like"¹⁸.

Incidentally, the majority (of Gaullist inspiration) constantly opened up to centrist parties as of the presidential mandate of Georges Pompidou (1969-1974), without this exclusively matching purely mathematical criteria. This trend finally led to the accession of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 1974 to the Elysée, with the holder of the supreme office coming from the liberal movement. With this he achieved a kind of political alternation within the same majority

(dominated by neo-Gaullists), a prelude to that of 1981. Apart from this particular case, the minorities (of the majority) often seem to depend on the president's good will in normal times and on that of the Prime Minister when there is co-habitation, particularly when the parliamentary majority is strong. Moreover, the will to legally acknowledge minorities alongside that of the opposition during the constitutional revision of July 2008 tended to attenuate the rigour of this government "authoritarianism" (art. 48 and 51-1), even though the French scenario very much inferior to the "minority rights" (*Minderheitenrechte*)¹⁹ which exist in Germany. The recent controversies over the attribution of positions of responsibility in the National Assembly at the end of June highlight this.

The present government led by Edouard Philippe includes various trends (such as La République en Marche (LREM)! (Onwards!), the Democratic Movement (MoDem), the Radical Party of the Left (PRG) as well as dissidents from the Republicans (LR) and the Socialist Party (PS)), whilst the presidential party has the absolute majority at the Bourbon Palace. In the National Assembly there are no fewer than 7 political groups – which is a first under the V Republic. In addition to the 17 non-affiliated MPs (of whom 8 are from the Front National (FN)), there is the LREM (314 MPs), the Republicans (100), MoDem (47), the Constructives (Republicans, UDI, independents (35), the New Left (31), France Unbowed (17), and the Democratic and Republican Left (16).

This trend towards confrontation can also be found notably in Romania, which contrasts with the rather conciliatory traditions in Spain, as well, and more especially with the political climate in the Germanic and Scandinavian countries.

The coalition of consensual democracy

The Germanic and Scandinavian countries traditionally lean towards consensus, even though exceptions inevitably do arise. The proportional vote is often practised, which implies a rather substantial party system. The constructive leanings of countries like the Federal Republic of Germany can to be found in the

taste of the victorious parties to join forces with other parties in order to govern. Hence when a party has the absolute majority in the Bundestag it tries to form a government coalition²⁰, although this is in no way an arithmetic necessity. Here, we are close to a certain "aspiration for harmony"²¹, tinged with a quest for maximum legitimacy in the exercise of power, so that it is vital not to speak so much of "the Chancellor's democracy" (*Kanzlerdemokratie*)²², but of "coalition democracy" (*Koalitionsdemokratie*)²³. All of these elements contribute to explaining why the phenomenon of the "grand coalition" (*große Koalition*) functions quite smoothly, whilst we struggle to imagine it happening elsewhere. In this context, the smallest party in the coalition (*Juniorpartei*) has a certain amount of influence over its ally (*Seniorpartei*), which depends on the structure of the party system and political circumstances.

As a result, coalition democracy leads in reality to "complex, subtle forms of political organisation"²⁴. Beyond the strict rules, parties usually conclude coalition contracts (*Koalitionsvertrag*), in view of facilitating their cooperation within the government and parliamentary coalitions. Hence they come to agreement over the coalition's working programme, on the cooperation method, as well as over the formation of a "coalition committee" (*Koalitionsausschuss*). Comprising the leaders of the government majority, this body plays a vital role in decision making.

Inclusive coalition democracy

The Nordic countries for their part practise a kind of "inclusive democracy", in which political rivals mutually deem themselves partners. Negotiation rules supreme, to the extent that the parties in office reject the employment of their authority to assert their views. Here, it is rather more a question of achieving compromises. This leads (as in Germany) to the contractualisation of political relations, to the point that some parties finally succeed in acquiring a political influence that is greater than their effective electoral weight.

It is common for these countries to use the solution of the minority government. Parliamentary opposition is then greater than the majority. Moreover, the constitution of a cabinet does not formally require a positive majority. Tolerance without commitment is enough. Hence article 2 of the Swedish Constitution provides that investiture requires a vote by the Riksdag of course, but only rejection by the absolute majority of MPs can prevent the appointment of the head of government. In Norway (art. 12) and Denmark (art. 14), no parliamentary vote is required, which means that the coalition in office asks for support amongst its rivals. The latter then find themselves in the *"paradoxical, hybrid position of controlled and self-contained opposition"*.²⁵ Governments like this do not last until they are overthrown. In fact, unlike in the Weimar Republic, this does not necessarily lead to political instability, due to the replacement majorities according to the issues, as well as the arbitration of the electoral corpus, via the use of the right to dissolution in the event of insurmountable political disagreement. This is especially the case in Denmark²⁶. In this context, it leads to *"anticipatory democracy in which provision for conflict is replaced by the provision for compromise."*²⁷

This preference for conciliation can be found in Switzerland where consensual democracy emerges via political power that is federated, referred and co-managed²⁸. The country is led by a permanent alliance of the major parties, since compromise is fully sought after and organised within the directorial regime. As a result political relations are softer than in France where cooperation with rivals is often considered to be synonymous to collusion.

The plural approach of the European Parliament

At European Union level, the construction of a *sui generis* organisation that is free of the State framework has led to significant differences between the European Parliament and national assemblies²⁹. Although, these do not seem totally convincing, parallels to the American system sometimes emerge³⁰, in that the European Parliament cannot be dissolved³¹ for example. But this is also the case with the Storting and Norway practises

a parliamentary system. In other words, there are many possibilities of parliamentary systems, as shown by the attachment of nearly all of the Union's countries (apart from Cyprus) to this system. These patterns have been communicated by the European institutions themselves, since the Commission worked towards the emergence of a European model of parliamentary democracy, when the new States of Central and Eastern Europe were in the process of joining the Union, as in Bulgaria and Romania³². In all events, the relative independence of the European Parliament regarding the executive bodies (both supranational and national) tends to strengthen its institutional position. It is not obliged to support a government for the entire legislature³³. This takes it away from traditional partisan rationale, even though it elects the President of the Commission and approves the appointment of the members of the Commission, which it is allowed to censure.

The regulation of the European Parliament is all the more critical, since the majority rule and partisan discipline have never dominated, to the benefit of a culture of "plurality"³⁴. This seems to distinguish it in many ways from that of the national assemblies. Due to the irreducible heterogeneity that reigns in the Union, a split clearly separating the right from the left has not developed with the same strength in the European Parliament as it has done within the assemblies of the Member States. In fact, the groups play a decisive role³⁵. With the aim of being representative of most of the opinions of the citizens of Europe, this system tends to integrate minorities. Highly influenced by the consensual, the decisions adopted by the European Parliament have normally been the result of large majorities, the shape of which varies depending on the issues at stake. These traditionally cover a great number of political trends, with oppositions regularly being smoothed over during the vote. The borders between the groups are sometime porous, which undeniably facilitates the creation of compromise³⁶. In other words, to copy a typology³⁷, "consensus majorities" (more than one third of the vote by roll call in 2014 according to estimates established by VoteWatch Europe)³⁸, the major coalitions (more than two thirds of the votes by roll call)³⁹, and "left/right confrontational majorities"⁴⁰ follow each other depending on the subject in hand.

Although in its initial form, a certain trend towards political bipolarisation is now gathering pace, even though increasingly the centre seems to arbitrate parliamentary life. Opposition cannot be ruled out of MEPs traditions. European parliamentary life generates inclusion of course, but also exclusion (desired or not), contest, as well as opposition. However, this is never a perfectly coherent whole, nor is it structured long term, so that it is probably better to speak of

parliamentary opposition rather than the opposition as such. Eminently variable, the behaviour of the elected representatives of the opposition regularly seems to follow more individual rather than collective systems.

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ANNEXE

6

Member State	Country's political colour
Germany	Right/Left Coalition (CDU-CSU, SPD) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 502 seats of the 620 in the Bundestag)
Austria	Left/Right Coalition (SPÖ, ÖVP) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 99 seats of the 183 in the Nationalrat)
Belgium	Right Coalition (MR, Open VLD, CD&V, N-VA) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 83 seats of the 150 in La Chambre)
Bulgaria	Right Coalition (GERB, United Patriots) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 122 seats of the 240 in the Narodno Sabranie)
Cyprus	Centre Right government Minority government (les MPs from the party in office occupy 18 seats of the 80 in the Chamber of Representatives)
Croatia	Right/Left government coalition (HDZ, HNS) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 76 seats of the 150 in the Hrvatski Sabor)
Denmark	Rightwing government (Venstre) Minority government (MPs from the party in office occupy 34 seats of the 179 in Folketing)
Spain	Rightwing government (PP) Gouvernement minoritaire (MPs from the party in office occupy 119 seats of the 350 in the Congreso de los diputados)
Estonia	Left/Right Coalition (K, SDE, IRL) Majority government (MPs from the parties in coalition occupy 56 seats of the 101 in the Riigikogu)
Finland	Centre, right and populist right coalition (KESK, KOK, PS) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 123 seats of the 200 in the Eduskunta).
France	Centrist government (LREM) Majority government (MPs from the majority party, LREM, occupy 314 seats of the 577 in the Assemblée Nationale).
Greece	Radical Left/Sovereignist right Coalition (SYRIZA, ANEL) Majority government (MPs from the parties in coalition occupy 153 seats of the 300 in the Vouli Ton Ellinon).
Hungary	Rightwing government (FIDESZ) Majority government (MPs from the party in office occupy 117 seats of the 199 in the Országgyűlés).
Ireland	Centre right government (Fine Gael) Non majority government (the party in office occupies 50 seats of the 158 in the Dáil Éireann).
Italy	Left/Right Coalition (PD, NCD, UdC, MDP, AP, CpE, PSI, CI, CD) Majority government (MPs from the party in office occupy 405 seats of the 630 in the Camera dei deputati).
Latvia	Government Coalition (Unity – ZZS - National Alliance). Majority government (MPs from the party in office occupy 60 seats of the 100 in the Saeima).
Lithuania	Coalition government Centre Left Greens (LVŽS, LSDP). Majority government (MPs from the party in office occupy 75 seats of the 140 in the Seimas).
Luxembourg	Centre right, centre left government coalition (PD, LSAP, Verts) Majority government (MPs from the party in office occupy 32 seats of the 60 in the Chambre des Députés).
Malta	Leftwing government (MLP) Labour Party (MLP), holds the majority in the Parliament ta' Malta
Netherlands	Outgoing right/left coalition (VVD, PvdA) Government now being formed following the elections in March 2017
Poland	Rightwing government (PiS) Majority government (235 of the seats in the Sejm)
Portugal	Leftwing coalition (PS, BG and the United Democratic Coalition which includes the Communist Party PCP and the Ecologist Party PEV). Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 122 seats of the 230 in the Assembleia da República)
Czech Republic	Left/Centre-Right Coalition (CSSD, ANO 2011, KDU-CSL) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 113 seats of the 200 in the Poslanecká Sněmovna)
Romania	Left/Right Coalition (PSD, ALDE) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 170 seats of the 329 in the Camera Deputatilor)
United Kingdom	Rightwing Coalition (Conservatives/DUP) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 328 seats of the 650 House of Commons)
Slovakia	Populist/left/right Coalition (SMER-DS, ISNS, Most Híd and Siet) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 85 seats of the 150 in the Národná rada Slovenskej)
Slovenia	Right/left Coalition (SMC, DeSUS, SD) Majority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 45 seats of the 90 in the Državni Zbor)
Sweden	Left/Green Coalition (SAP, Green) Minority government (MPs from the coalition parties occupy 138 seats of the 349 in the Riksdag)

FOOTNOTES

- [1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Gallimard, 1961, Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 2, p. 178. According to Bolingbroke, "relatively the faction is to the party as the superlative is to the positif: the party is a political evil and the faction the worst of all of the parties" (*Lettres sur l'esprit de patriotisme, sur l'idée d'un roy patriote et sur l'état des partis qui divisoient l'Angleterre, lors de l'avènement de Georges Ier, Aux dépens de la Compagnie*, 1750, p. 145).
- [2] Charles de Gaulle, quoted by André Malraux, *Le Miroir des limbes* (1976), Gallimard, 2012, Volume 2, p. 150.
- [3] "Die politischen Parteien im System des deutschen Verfassungsrechts", in Gerhard Anschütz (dir.), *Handbuch des deutschen Staatsrechts*, Volume 1, Mohr, 1930, p. 285-292. Marked by a certain kind of resistance to the partisan phenomenon, article 130 of the Constitution of the Republic of Weimar provided that "civil servants serve the community and not a party".
- [4] Hans Kelsen, *La démocratie : sa valeur, sa nature* (1920), Sirey, 1932.
- [5] Moisei Ostrogorski, the first theorist on modern parties reflected on "how could the crowd – both old and young, the educated and the ignorant, wealthy and proletarian, who were proclaimed all together to be the arbiters of their political futures – fulfil its new sovereign function if it was just a jumbled assembly?" (*La démocratie et l'organisation des partis politiques* (1903), Fayard, 1993, p.1).
- [6] Pierre Avril, *Essai sur les partis politiques*, Paillot, 1986, p. 42-43. On this point, see also Jean-Claude Masclet, *Le rôle du député et ses attaches institutionnelles sous la Ve République*, LGDJ, 1979. According to certain authors, the political parties are struggling to fulfil this role, because they are too close to the government function to the detriment of the citizens (Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le bon gouvernement*, Le Seuil, 2015, p. 26-29; Dominique Rousseau, *Radicaliser la démocratie. Propositions pour une refondation*, Le Seuil 2015).
- [7] Manuel élémentaire de droit constitutionnel, Sirey, 1949, p. 156. At the same time, Joseph Barthélémy, *L'introduction du régime parlementaire en France sous Louis XVIII et Charles X*, Giard & Brière, 1904, p. 145 : "the parliamentary regime is just the organisation of the struggle between parties for the conquest of power. The parties are the vital and main source of energy of this regime: without the parties, no parliamentary regime". According to Léon Blum, "the correct functioning of any representative or parliamentary regime necessarily involves the existence of political parties". And the State Counsellor added that in England there was an old, strong organisation of parties and that, apart from a few exceptions that confirm the rule, it had never been possible to re-created the same thing in France in over a century and a half (quoted by Francis Hamon, « Le statut des partis politiques », *Traité international de droit constitutionnel*, Volume 2, Dalloz, 2012, p. 414-415).
- [8] François Goguel, "L'influence des systèmes électoraux sur la vie politique", in Maurice Duverger et François Goguel (dir.), *L'influence des systèmes électoraux sur la vie politique*, Presses de Sciences Po, 1950, p. 69-83.
- [9] This meant the first government coalition since 1974. For more information on this, see Yves Mény and Yves Surel, *Politique comparée*, Montchrestien, 2009, p. 116.
- [10] *La Constitution anglaise* (1867), Germer Baillière, 1869, p. 198 sq. ; Armel Le Divellec, "Bagehot et les fonctions du Parlement (britannique)", *Jus politicum*, n° 7.
- [11] In this regard, Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch, *Le régime parlementaire dans les constitutions européennes d'après-guerre*, Sirey, 1937, p. 42.
- [12] Olivier Duhamel, *Les démocraties. Régimes, histoire, exigences*, Le Seuil, 1993, p. 22.
- [13] On this theme, see Dicey's analysis (J.W.F. Allison (dir.), *The Oxford Edition of Dicey*, Volume 2. *Comparative constitutionalism*, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 122 sq.).
- [14] A.L. Lowell, *The government of England*, Volume 1, Macmillan, 1908, p. 438.
- [15] Olivier Duhamel, *Les démocraties. Régimes, histoire, exigences*, p. 150.
- [16] Anthony Sfez, "Pourquoi l'Espagne est gouvernée sans majorité. L'explication par un mode de scrutin hérité du franquisme", *Jus Politicum Blog*, April 2017.
- [17] *Ibid.*, p. 453 sq.
- [18] André Malraux, *Le Miroir des limbes*, Tome 2, p. 219.
- [19] Acknowledged in various MP quorums (as an MP, a group, a third of the members of the Diet, or even a quarter of them), without their party affiliation being taken into account, the rights of the minorities allow parliamentarians to act and not simply remain in an exclusively "reactive" role in the face of

the cabinet. Whilst some of this rights are absolute, since the majority cannot impede minority initiatives (such as the creation of an investigative committee for example, which is far from the case in France), others have more relative scope (Georg Jellinek, *Das Recht der Minoritäten*, Hölder, 1898, p. 18 sq. ; Klaus von Beyme, *Der Gesetzgeber. Der Bundestag als Entscheidungszentrum*, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997, p. 237 sq. ; Armel Le Divellec, *Le gouvernement parlementaire en Allemagne. Contribution à une théorie générale*, LGDJ, 2004, p. 420).

[20] Between 1957 and 1960, the CDU/CSU held the absolute majority of the seats 50.2 %, but it formed an alliance with the DP (*Deutsche Partei*), a small party that has disappeared since 1961 at federal level. The ministers in this right wing party left the cabinet led by Konrad Adenauer in 1960.

[21] Dieter Grosser, "Die Sehnsucht nach Harmonie : historische und verfassungsstrukturelle Vorbelastungen der Opposition in Deutschland", in Heinrich Oberreuter (dir.), *Parlamentarische Opposition. Ein internationaler Vergleich*, p. 206-229.

[22] Philippe Lauvaux and Armel Le Divellec, *Les grandes démocraties contemporaines*, p. 792-800 ; Olivier Duhamel, *Les démocraties. Régimes, histoire, exigences*, p. 96-98.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 800.

[24] Armel Le Divellec, "Aspects des contrats de coalition gouvernementale en Allemagne (1998-2009)", *Jus Politicum*, December 2009, n° 3.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

[26] Georges Burdeau, *Droit constitutionnel et institutions politiques*, LGDJ, 1980, p. 262-264.

[27] Michel Hastings, "Oppositions parlementaires, gouvernements minoritaires et démocraties inclusives. L'exemple des pays scandinaves", p. 56.

[28] Olivier Duhamel, *Les démocraties. Régimes, histoire, exigences*, p. 63.

[29] Although similarities exist, notably in terms of internal organisation, participation in the legislation and drafting of the budget as well as in terms of regulation.

[30] Olivier Costa, "Que peut le Parlement européen ?", *Pouvoirs*, n° 149, p. 77.

[31] The importance of these criteria must not however be overestimated, in that this faculty that is specific to parliamentary regimes is barely put to use notably due to the majority rule.

[32] The specified democratic conditions that the former communist countries had to apply they were to fulfil if they were to join the Union. In this regard, Anne Gazier, « Une démocratie parlementaire à l'europpéenne ? », *Pouvoirs*, n° 106, p. 69-84. Spain can incidentally be considered as « a synthesis of European constitutional law" (Olivier Duhamel, *Les démocraties. Régimes, histoire, exigences*, p. 134).

[33] Art. 117, 118 and 119 EPR.

[34] Robert Schuman Foundation, "Interview with Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament", *European Interview*, n° 38. <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/entretiens-d-europe/ee-38-en.pdf>

[35] On this point, see Simon Hix, Abdul Noury and Gérard Roland, *Dimensions of Politics in the European Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, 2007. et *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, 2007 as well as the site of the research group on the European Parliament: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/government/research/resgroups/EPRG/home.aspx>.

[36] Hence between 1980 and 1998, the People's Party and the Socialists agreed on 65% of the vote in coalitions that included 80% of the MPs. In this regard see Selma Bendjaballah, "Des assemblées sans opposition ? Perspectives comparées sur le Parlement européen et le Congrès américain", in Olivier Rozenberg et Éric Thiers (dir.), *L'opposition parlementaire*, La Documentation française, 2013, p. 184.]

[37] Yves Bertoncini and Thierry Chopin, *Des visages sur des clivages : les élections européennes de mai 2014*, Institut Jacques Delors/Fondation Robert Schuman, 2014, p. 48-83.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 54-61 : in this case the authors explain, "that most of the political movements represented in the European Parliament rally to adopt or reject proposals that are put to them by the European Commission or resolutions put to them by one political group or another".

[39] In other words majorities formed on the basis of negotiations between the EPP and S&D groups" (*ibid.*, p. 61-73).

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 73-83. Here we mean majorities resulting from the "left/right split, or to be more precise centre-right/centre left".