Parliamentary Co-Evolution: National Parliamentary Reactions to the Empowerment of the European Parliament

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Abstract
Existing research on the development of the European Union’s (EU) multilevel parliamentary system builds on the hypothesis of parallel evolution, situating explanations for European Parliament empowerment at the EU level and explanations for national parliamentary powers in EU affairs at the national level. We propose the hypothesis of co- or coupled evolution, which specifies a connection between national and European arenas of parliamentarisation. We study why some national parliaments react to the empowerment of the EP by strengthening their own competences, whereas others do not. First, we argue that national parliamentary parties take conscious positions on the powers of the EP. In particular, support for parliamentarisation at the European level decreases to the extent that parties are culturally conservative. Second, aggregate support for the EP among the party composition of national parliaments tells us whether or not national parliaments perceive the EP as a competitor and strive for stronger parliamentary competences at the national level. We present support for these arguments using quantitative and qualitative analyses of party positions on the European Parliament and of national parliaments’ oversight institutions in EU affairs.

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Introduction

A demo-cratie political system provides institutions and procedures for the representation of both individual citizens and statespeople. Representation in the European Union (EU) has evolved in this direction. The European Parliament (EP) has changed from a consultative, indirectly elected assembly into a directly elected powerful legislator (e.g. Rittberger 2005). Similarly, national parliaments have gradually created committees to monitor integration, information rights and ways to limit government’s freedom in Brussels (Raunio and Hix 2000; Winzen 2012). These developments at the European and national levels have created the EU’s “multilevel parliamentary field” or system (Crum and Fossum 2009).

In order to advance the empirical-analytical research agenda on “demo-cratization”, we focus on what explains the evolution of the multilevel parliamentary system. Since national and European democratic institutions co-exist in a demo-cracy, it is especially pertinent to investigate the conflicts and complementarities between them (see also Crum and Fossum 2009). Yet, the dominant approach to explaining the EU’s parliamentary system relies on what we may call the hypothesis of parallel or decoupled evolution. Existing studies analyse the evolution of the EP and national parliaments separately. For instance, the empowerment of the EP has been connected to policy goals of (a powerful coalition of) member states (Bräuninger et al. 2001: 50), the EP’s success in capturing informal gains in day-to-day decision-making (Stacey and Rittberger 2003; Farrell and Héritier 2003), or reforms designed to compensate for the weakening of indirect democratic legitimacy in the course of European integration (Rittberger and Schimmelfennig 2006; Schimmelfennig 2010). However, there is no evidence that the EP or the member states take account of developments at the level of national parliaments when asking for or granting new powers to the EP. In turn, the literature shows that national parliaments have created stronger oversight institutions in EU affairs in reaction to the deepening of integration, party political conflict over the EU, popular Euroscepticism and domestic parliamentary strength (Raunio and Hix 2000; Winzen 2013; Saalfeld 2005; Karlas 2012). Yet, no study examines whether national parliaments react systematically to EP empowerment. Overall, the only factor that currently connects European and national arenas of parliamentarisation is the deepening of European integration.

We rely on what we may call the hypothesis of co- or coupled evolution, which aims to shed light on the connection between national and European arenas of parliamentarisation in the EU. In general, the hypothesis of co-evolution draws inspiration from the multilevel governance approach that starts from the premise that European integration disperses authority over actors at multiple levels (Marks et al. 1996). Thus, in order to capture important developments in European integration, such as the evolution
of the EU’s parliamentary system, it does not suffice to look exclusively at the European or national levels. Such an approach does *neither* imply the irrelevance of domestic explanations of national parliamentary empowerment, *nor* of EU level explanations for EP empowerment. Furthermore, the multilevel governance approach does not imply that domestic and European arenas of parliamentarisation are *necessarily* interdependent, yet it draws attention to this possibility (cf. Crum and Fossum 2009). The hypothesis of co-evolution maintains that there actually is a connection between the institutional development of the EP and national parliaments in European integration, and it specifies this connection.

We suspect that domestic and European parliamentarisation are interdependent because the EP and national parliaments co-exist in the same political environment. They share a common focus on democratic representation in the EU’s “multilevel parliamentary field” (Crum and Fossum 2009). Yet, while they may both focus on democratic representation, they do so in part vis-à-vis the same electorate, which might allow one institution to compensate for the other’s weakness or lead to institutional competition. The EP and national parliaments also exercise authority regarding a shared universe of policy decisions. Moreover, members of the EP and national parliaments from a given country come from the same political parties. This opens up the possibility to compensate for domestic losses of parliamentary authority with European gains. Yet, party members focussing on national politics may also be wary of power shifts as a result of European parliamentarisation. Finally, national parliaments have to ratify changes in the EU’s institutional design including decisions to empower the EP. Thus, they get the explicit opportunity to consider their position towards EU parliamentarisation. Moreover, national parliaments have regularly contemplated domestic reforms in order to balance the authority losses from treaty changes. It is at least conceivable that their evaluations of EU parliamentarisation play a role in domestic reform choices.

In this paper we focus on one side of the interdependent process of parliamentarisation in the EU’s multi-level system: the reactions of national parliaments to the empowerment of the EP. National parliaments are likely to be the drivers of co-evolution. For the EP it is much more difficult to adjust its demands for empowerment to national parliaments: with (by now) 27 member states, the EP will rather rely on generic constitutional arguments such as that majority voting in the Council has to be tied to co-decision (Rittberger and Schimmelfennig 2006). National parliaments, in turn, have only one European level parliament to take into account.
Our argument has two parts, which structure both the theoretical and empirical analyses. We begin at the micro-level of parliamentary parties. We argue that parliamentary parties take conscious positions towards the EP that are not entirely determined by whether they support or oppose European integration in general. In particular, support for parliamentarisation at the European level depends on parties’ cultural conservatism in addition to their support for European integration. If parties did not take conscious positions on the EP, we would have to wonder whether the EP’s development has any, except coincidental, effects on national institutional choice.

In a second step, we move to the institutional level of parliament. Here we ask whether aggregate parliamentary support for the EP explains the strength of domestic parliamentary oversight institutions in EU affairs. The hypothesis of parallel evolution expects that the deepening of European integration in general and domestic conditions determine domestic adaptation. The hypothesis of co-evolution requires that we show that parliamentary evaluations of the EP have an effect in addition to existing explanations. We argue that aggregate institutional support for the EP tells us where national parliaments are on a continuum from competitive to cooperative parliamentarisation of the EU’s multilevel system. In competitive parliamentarisation, national parliaments feel pressure to compensate the empowerment of their supranational counterpart. In cooperative parliamentarisation, EP empowerment does not produce, or even reduces, the pressure for national parliaments to play a strong role in EU decision-making.

**Parliamentary party support for the European Parliament**

The hypothesis of co-evolution builds on the assumption that national parliaments take conscious positions on the powers of the EP. Yet, it is also possible that parliamentary positions merely reflect support or opposition to European integration. It is only plausible that national parliaments base institutional choices on their view of the EP under the condition that they hold conscious views about the EP in the first place.

In order to establish whether parliaments take conscious positions towards the powers of the EP, we disaggregate “national parliaments”, which are hardly unitary collective actors, into the constituent parties. We do this because we conceive of collective parliamentary positions as aggregations of parliamentary party positions. We do not dispute that parliamentary party views of the EP depend significantly on their support for European integration. However, we argue that the question of how parties perceive the EP is not identical to the question of how they perceive European integration. There
are explanations for parties’ positions on the EP that work in addition to their support for European integration.

In order to develop this point, we focus on the “conventional wisdom” about party support for European integration. We maintain that the arguments for this conventional wisdom do not hold fully when it comes to party support for the EP. It is widely accepted that party support for European integration maps onto a general left-right dimension in the shape of an inverted “U” (Hooghe et al. 2002; Bakker et al. 2012). The reason for the inverted-U is that the general left-right dimension combines two correlated cleavages: an economic left-right and a cultural liberal-conservative cleavage (also known as GAL-TAN). The parties on the economic right and the culturally conservative side of the political space support integration as a market-building project. Yet, their support declines at the margins of the political space where parties oppose integration as a threat to the national political community and identity. At the economic left and the culturally liberal side of the political space, parties support integration as an expansion of individual rights and freedoms. They do not oppose integration out of a commitment to a strong national identity. However, at the margins of the political space, parties oppose integration as a neo-liberal project. Combining these economic and cultural arguments into a general left-right dimension generates the inverted-U shape, where economic and cultural mainstream parties support, and marginal parties oppose integration.

When it comes to party support for the EP, we expect that the economic arguments do not hold. The EP is an institution that does not as such defend or reflect a stand for or against economic liberalism. The policies of the EP depend on its party composition and, thus, electoral outcomes that vary over time. Potentially, economic right or left parties might shift their EP support depending on the EP’s current party make-up. Yet, as we will see later on, there is simply too little temporal variation in party positions to justify developing this argument.

The cultural liberal-conservative dimension is important for party support for the EP. Although the empowerment of the EP is not a commitment to a particular economic policy, it is a commitment to a particular form of democratic representation (Jachtenfuchs et al. 1998; Schimmelfennig 2010; Cheneval and Schimmelfennig 2013). This form of representation is based on political allegiances that transcend national borders and a civic conception of political community made of individuals with claims to political rights and representation. To date, there is no European demos in a sense comparable to the nation-state demos with a strong sense of identity, a well-established public sphere and intermediary organisations. This form of representation is likely to be unproblematic for culturally liberal parties. These parties appreciate the expansion of individual rights and do not oppose a thin conception of
political community since they are sceptical of strong community norms that constrain individual freedom. In contrast, parties on the right are defenders of the national political community. They take a sceptical stance on whether democratic representation beyond the nation-state is possible and they are suspicious of the EP’s claims to represent a European demos that transcends national allegiances. The reasons for liberal (or conservative) parties to support (or oppose) the EP overlap with the reasons to support (or oppose) European integration. However, this overlap is not perfect since the reasons to support the EP focus in particular on the advantages and disadvantages of democratic representation at the European level. Hence, a party’s cultural liberalism or conservatism should help explain its views on the EP, in addition to the explanatory power of its support for European integration in general.

**H1:** As we move from the culturally liberal to the culturally conservative end of the political space, party support for the European Parliament declines.

**Parliamentary support for the European Parliament and domestic institutional adaptation**

We have argued so far that parties take systematic positions on the EP. Yet, do aggregate institutional differences in parliamentary support of the EP affect domestic institutional adaptation? In order to substantiate our argument of co-evolution, we need to explain why national parliaments’ oversight institutions in EU affairs depend on their views of the EP. As we noted, the evidence below shows that party positions are stable over time. Aggregate institutional positions vary somewhat more due to shifts in parliaments’ party make-up. Nevertheless, our arguments should mainly account for cross-national variation.

The null hypothesis is one of independent evolution. In this case, parliamentary positions on the EP have no impact on their institutional adaptation to integration. The null hypothesis is compatible with the existence of systematic positive and negative views of domestic parliaments of the EP. It only claims that there is no causal connection between parliamentarisation at the European and national level. There is co-existence, not co-evolution.

We propose the alternative hypothesis of co-evolution. At low levels of support for the EP, we get closer to a competitive logic that involves zero-sum institutional competition. The empowerment of the EP, a supranational competitor, generates pressure on national parliaments to take measures to protect their authority. They do so by creating oversight institutions that enhance their role in EU decision-making. At high levels of support for the EP, we get closer to a logic that allows institutional cooperation. National parliaments do not regard the EP as a competing institution and do not implement reforms in reaction to
EP empowerment. The EP, as an alternative source of democratic legitimacy, may even reduce the need for domestic oversight institutions. As we explain further below, we expect the following:

**H2:** The weaker parliamentary support for the European Parliament, the stronger domestic parliamentary oversight institutions.

We briefly elaborate the two ideal-typical logics of parliamentarisation. To begin with, parliamentarians and parliaments opposed to the EP see it as a supranational competitor. Parliaments oppose giving powers to the EP because this collides with their ideological agenda (see above). The EP is yet another supranational institution that takes away competences of the Council, the institution of national governments. Moreover, it claims to engage in democratic representation, the core institutional competence of national parliaments. The latter, however, do not consider European parliamentarisation a plausible option to address the democratic deficit. In sum, national parliaments feel pressed to step up their own efforts to play a relevant role in EU decision-making to counteract the supranational competition and the weakening of national governments.

Parliaments that support the EP regard it as their supranational ally. The empowerment of the EP is compatible with national parliaments’ ideological agenda. European parliamentarisation is a feasible institutional option to address the EU’s democratic deficit. Therefore, the empowerment of the EP does at least not create, or even reduces, the pressure on national parliaments to play a strong role in EU decision-making themselves.

**Analysis**

We begin with parlgov data on parliament composition (Döring and Manow 2011). We use items from the Chapel Hill (CH) surveys to operationalise cultural conservatism, the economic left-right dimension, party and parliamentary support for the European Parliament (Bakker et al. 2012; Hooghe et al. 2010; Steenbergen and Marks 2007). Data on popular Euroscepticism come from the Eurobarometer. We use Winzen’s (2013) measure of the strength of national parliamentary oversight institutions. We add a control variable to distinguish a party’s support for the EP from its support for European integration in general (based on the CH surveys). A second categorical control variable distinguishes the time periods between EU treaty changes to capture the effect of the deepening of integration. Finally, we control for domestic parliamentary committees strength (Martin and Depauw 2011). For reasons of space, we have to refer to the Appendix (Table A1) for details on the operationalisation. Our data cover the years 1999-2010.
Party support for the European Parliament

A first examination of the data shows that European parties are “somewhat in favour” of the EP on average (average support is 4.8 on a 1-7 scale). Moreover, a party hardly ever changes its position. Regressing party support for the EP on its support in the previous year, we are able to explain 97 per cent of variation in the data. Thus, we have to explain differences between parties.

Table 1 presents our multivariate analysis of party support for the EP in 2010 (the Appendix shows models for 2006, 2002 and 1999 in Table A2, bivariate relationships in Figure A1 and robustness checks including additional control variables). Absent longitudinal variation in the data, we model party support for the EP at four cross-sections corresponding to the waves of the CH expert surveys. At each cross-section we have sufficient observations for simple linear models. We present the results for 2010 but, as the Appendix shows, the results for the other years do not differ. The first and second models respectively contain only the measures for cultural conservatism and economic left-right positions. The third model includes both measures. The fourth model adds a control for party support for European integration. The fifth model does not include party support for European integration but country dummy variables, meaning that the results reflect only differences between parties in a country.

We examine the results in the light of Hypothesis 1 suggesting that cultural conservatism depresses party support for the EP. We did not dispute a significant impact of party support for European integration. Yet, we suggested that a party’s economic left-right position is not relevant for explaining EP support. First, cultural conservatism has a consistently significant effect. Substantively, based on Model 1, support for the EP declines by two points on the 1-7 scale as we move from extremely liberal to extremely conservative parties. Cultural conservatism still matters if we control for party support for integration in Model 4, although the impact is reduced. In earlier years, the effect is at least as strong and stronger in most models (see Appendix). Second, parties’ economic left-right positions exert a significant effect in some models, yet the effect is inconsistent and lacks explanatory power. The effect of left-right positions is not significant in Model 2 and changes signs in Model 4 when controlling for party support for integration. While one would expect the economic right to support integration, the effect on support for the EP runs in the opposite direction in Model 4. Moreover, comparing the r-square values of the Models, economic left-right positions have virtually no explanatory power. Descriptively, Figure A1 in the Appendix supports this impression, showing no visually discernible link between economic left-right positions and party support for the EP.

In sum, we are able to show that cultural conservatism helps explain party support for the EP, even when controlling for party support for European integration. Moreover, the effect of economic left-right
positions, which are conventionally said to explain party support for European integration, is inconsistent and lacks explanatory power. We take these findings as evidence that parties hold systematic positions on the EP, although we acknowledge that their positions on the EP are also significantly affected by their support or opposition to European integration.

The impact of support for the EP on national parliamentary oversight institutions

Figure A2 shows average levels of parliamentary and governmental support for the EP in our data. There are clear cross-national differences. For instance, the British parliament and government take at best a “neutral” position. The most enthusiastic supporters of parliamentarisation at the European level are the Belgian, Greek and German parliaments and governments.

The plots in Figure 1 show the relationship between the strength of parliamentary oversight institutions and parliamentary support for the EP for each year in our data. We observe a negative relationship in all years. The relationship is particularly strong in the years after the 2004 Enlargement that brought in several parliaments with comparatively strong institutions and low support for the EP. The plots also make clear that parliamentary support for the EP does not explain all variation in oversight institutions. This is not surprising since there are well-established additional explanations in the literature. We do not deny such explanations although we claim additional explanatory power for EP support. In this regard, the plots in Figure 1 constitute first pieces of evidence.

Table 2 presents the multivariate analysis (the Appendix presents robustness checks). We do not have the option to analyse individual cross-sections with regression techniques because we have, at most, 27 cases per year. Instead, we present pooled models of the years 1999-2010. Model 1 includes only parliamentary support for the EP as explanatory variable. Models 2-4 gradually add existing explanations: a measure for the deepening of integration, for popular Euroscepticism and domestic committee strength. Model 5 additionally controls for parliamentary support for European integration. Model 6 adds a lagged dependent variable. The last model should be seen as robustness check only. There simply is not much variation over time in the data meaning that the effects of the remaining variables besides the lagged dependent variable are bound to be small. Nevertheless, we can have confidence in those effects that we still find.

As to the results, in line with Hypothesis 2 there is a consistently significant and substantially relevant negative effect of parliamentary support for the EP on the strength of oversight institutions. A one-unit increase on the 1 to 7 scale for EP support corresponds to a .2 unit decline on the 0 to 2 scale for the strength of oversight institutions. If we control for parliamentary support for European integration, the
effect of EP support remains stable, albeit significant only at the .1 level. Support for European integration is not significant. The effect of EP support is the only one that holds in the model with a lagged dependent variable although it becomes substantially very small.

Although none of the control variables retains a significant effect in Model 6, there are such effects in the other models. We observe significantly stronger oversight institutions in later treaty phases. Moving from post-Amsterdam to post-Lisbon corresponds to about a .3 increase in the index of oversight institutions, based on Model 2. We note, however, that the adaptation phase to Lisbon might have continued beyond the period when our data collection on oversight institutions ended (mid-2010). We find an effect of Euroscepticism (e.g. Raunio 2005). Yet, this effect is weakly significant and only major differences matter. For instance, we expect a .25 unit difference in oversight institutions between, on one side, a country with equally large Europhile and Eurosceptic groups of voters and, on the other side, a country with a 50 percent excess of Eurosceptics. Finally, a move from the parliament with the weakest domestic committees observed in our data to the strongest corresponds to about a .5 unit increase in the strength of oversight institutions in EU affairs (e.g. Karlas 2012).

Summing up, the previous section showed that parliamentary parties take systematic positions on the EP. This section aggregated parliamentary party positions to the institutional level. The descriptive analysis and regression models show that there are weaker oversight institutions in EU affairs in parliaments that support the EP compared to parliaments that oppose the EP. This finding does not mean, as we have also seen, that prevailing explanations for national parliaments’ institutional adaptation to integration lose relevance. However, in addition to prevailing explanations, the extent to which national parliaments adopt strong oversight institutions in EU affairs also depends on their support for Europe’s supranational parliament.

**Case studies**
We complement the quantitative results with two case studies. Our approach is to probe the plausibility of the arguments about party positions on the EP, and about the link between such positions and parliamentary reform in EU affairs. First, in a 2003-2004 reform in Denmark, a rather EP-critical parliament, we expect to observe the scenario of competitive parliamentarisation. Second, we examine debates on EU treaty reform in the 2000s in Germany’s EP-friendly parliament, expecting to observe that parliamentarisation at the European level does not create pressure for domestic oversight. In each case study, we briefly outline key elements of parliamentary reform in EU affairs in the last decade; then, we
probe the plausibility of the arguments developed above, first focusing on the institutional level of analysis, then turning to the micro-level of parliamentary parties.

**Denmark**

On average, Danish parties have been comparatively critical of the EP (see Figure A2) and allegedly see the national parliament as the core source of legitimacy (Katz and Wessels 1999; Wind 2009). In turn, the Danish parliament’s system of domestic oversight is one of the (reputedly) strongest and best-known across the EU. Yet, while popular Euroscepticism and national parliamentary strength explain this in part, there is little systematic knowledge about how Danish parliamentarians perceive, and have responded to EP empowerment.

**Key elements of the reform.** In 2003-2004 the Danish parliament (*Folketinget*) passed a larger reform of its EU-oversight institutions. The 2004 reform identified a broad range of issues to be addressed—in all, nine—which is not surprising given the general thrust of the process. The more important changes concerned: a more systematic involvement of specialist committees in scrutinizing EU legislation; new commitments by the Danish government to provide detailed and continuous information on EU legislation; and, finally, the formalization of cooperation between members of *Folketinget* and (Danish) members of the EP. All measures were described in a wealth of practical and organizational details, and often supported by evidence from Finland, Sweden, and the UK.

**Institutional level.** The justification for change identified by the architects of the reform provides important clues on the motivations of Danish parliamentarians (Europaudvalget 2004). It was twofold. The first reason concerned the practice of codecision. The report singled out the significant increase in the number of so-called “first-reading” agreements between the European Parliament and the Council—allegedly affecting 30 to 40% of all legislative proposals at the time of reform—as an important development, raising new requirements for the organization of Danish parliamentary control over EU affairs. In light of this development, the authors of the report argued, it was “fundamental that *Folketinget* be involved as early as possible in EU policy-making in order to be able to exert *maximal* influence on the decisions adopted in the EU” (Europaudvalget 2004, 5; added emphasis). The other important reason was the prospect for national parliaments to be granted formal competences in monitoring the principle of subsidiarity, as envisioned in the Constitutional Treaty. Anticipating ratification, Danish parliamentarians wished “already now, and in line with the European Affairs Committees of several other national parliaments, to make an *optimal* use of these new opportunities” (Europaudvalget 2004, 2; added emphasis). On both accounts, it was clear that: Danish parliamentarians
were well aware of deepened integration; they reformed domestic institutions in response to—
sometimes in anticipation of—these changes; and finally, they aimed to compensate the perceived
losses in the bargaining power of Folketinget. In the mid-2000s, rescuing Folketinget involved not just
the mobilization of domestic parliamentary actors but also the enrolment of Danish MEPs.

We do not dispute the effect of the deepening of integration. Yet, did reservations about the powers of
the EP also motivate parliamentary reform? Working documents from the European Affairs Committee
are silent on this point, but we can flesh out the Danish imagery surrounding the EP and EP
empowerment from attendant parliamentary debates and the broader public debate on EU affairs.
Occasionally, Danish parliamentarians expressed their evaluations of the EP publicly in these arenas.

Party level. In the parliamentary arena, the debates focused on the new partisan alignment on EU affairs
agreed on 2 November 2004. The parties in government hailed this agreement as an historic
opportunity to transcend the “yes-no” cleavage and develop a more nuanced debate on EU institutions:
indeed, departing from its longstanding Eurosceptic platform (Nielsen and Pedersen 2012), the Socialist
People’s Party had joined the coalition of “EU-constructive” parties in favor of the ratification of the
Constitutional Treaty. Although the debate continued to be structured around a broad “yes”-“no” axis,
some nuances appeared as Eurosceptic MPs pressed individual EU-constructive parties to justify their
position. “Yes” parties tended to highlight EP empowerment as one of the reasons—sometimes one of
the most important—for supporting the Constitutional Treaty. While all “yes” parties emphasized the
democratic advances secured in the Constitutional Treaty, the Liberals in government tended to
emphasize the tangible policy benefits to be expected from EP empowerment, and the Social-
Democrats and the Social Liberals the democratic gains. “No” parties, on the other hand, opposed
transferring more powers to the EP and listed EP empowerment as a reason for rejecting the
Constitutional Treaty partly. The Danish People’s Party viewed EP empowerment as hollowing out the
legislative sovereignty of Folketinget. Both the Unity List and the Danish People’s Party referred
sarcastically to the political agreement of 2 November 2004 as a “national compromise,” alluding to a
collusion of the elite against the people.

Outside the parliamentary arena, Danish politicians were occasionally compelled to spell out publicly
their evaluation of the EP. The EP hearings with the Commissioners designate that took place in the fall
of 2004 provided them with just such an imperative; they also illustrate how nuances in the
parliamentary debate give way to a more vivid EU debate in the Danish media. The trigger of public
controversy was the EP’s unprecedented refusal to endorse the team of Commissioners presented by
Commission president-elect Barroso, at the end of October 2004. This controversy split the Danish “EU-
constructive” coalition: left-wing parties supported the EP’s show of strength; liberal and conservative parties criticized it. To some extent, these divisions reflected the fact that a predominantly Socialist EP had weakened a liberal Commission. However, divisions among “EU-constructive” parties also revealed more fundamental differences on their respective evaluations of the role of the EP. Among parties of the “yes” block, the conservatives were especially critical of EP activism. Conservative MEP Gitte Seeberg argued that “the EP has claimed power that is undesirable. This is not about Buttiglione. This is about power. I don’t think the EP must have more power” (Gitte Seeberg, Politiken 28 October 2004). Several days later, she developed this argument in a full-length opinion piece entitled “Deliver us from EU parliamentarianism.” Taking issue with Social-democratic MEP Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, who had “proudly called [the EP’s action] a victory for democracy and a historic day for parliamentary forces in the EU”—she explained:

I do not support European parliamentarianism. We have a say in Denmark: nobody is above and beyond Folketinget. This is parliamentarianism. Folketinget can bring down governments and dismiss ministers. Folketinget can propose, adopt, and amend legislation. Folketinget is the beating heart of Danish democracy. Folketinget is the proof of our national independence. The European parliament shall neither approve nor bring down a government of the United States of Europe. The European Parliament shall not have the sovereign right to propose or adopt legislation. The European Parliament is an EU institution, side-by-side with the Commission and the Council of Ministers. Parliamentarianism belongs in states, not in the EU. (MEP Gitte Seeberg, Fri os fra parlamentarisme i Europaparlamentet, Politiken, 12 November 2004).

As the public debate served to highlight, divergences on the role of the EP crisscrossed the “yes” coalition. For right-wing cultural conservatives, the EP was an institution inherently belonging to the realm of intergovernmental politics; for the Social-Democrats, the Social Liberals, and the Socialist People’s Party, the EP was an additional arena for the unfolding of parliamentary politics. The pro-integration camp did not display uniform views of the EP.

In sum, at the party level, in line with our expectations (H1), there is evidence that partisan ideologies affect parties’ perceptions of the European Parliament. This appeared most visibly in the fact that pro-integration parties’ positions on the role of the EP clustered along the expected culturally liberal v. culturally conservative cleavage. At the institutional level, the connection between aggregate parliamentary support for the EP and institutional reform is not clear-cut. The Folketing emphasized domestic reform as a means to “exert maximal influence” on EU legislation. We also observe that some parties in the pro-EU coalition express reservations towards the powers of the EP in public debates at the time of the domestic reform. Yet, we do not directly observe the final link between such reservations and reform. Possibly, the parliament would have scaled down reform efforts if the conservative parties had been more supportive of the EP on average. Hence, the Danish case study supports H1 but does not
yield conclusive evidence on the second step of our argument. It is clear, however, as we show in the second case study, that parliamentary motivations for domestic institutional reform are much less pronounced in Germany’s strongly EP-friendly parliament compared to the Danish parliament.

**Germany**

The German parliament is one of the most supportive national parliaments in the EU both regarding European integration in general and the empowerment of the EP in particular (see Figure A2). In his 1996 European Representation Study, Bernhard Wessels finds that 60 percent of German MPs agree that the legitimacy of the EU should be based on the EP (country mean 35%), whereas only 19 percent (country mean 37%) consider national parliaments to be the appropriate source of democratic legitimacy in the Union (Wessels 2005: 452). In addition, a 2003 survey of German MPs shows that only 29 percent find that they have too little supervision of the positions of the German government in the Council (Wessels 2005: 461). Under these circumstances, it appears rather puzzling that the German parliament has comparatively strong oversight powers in EU affairs: in terms of formal powers, it is closer to the more Eurosceptic Nordic countries than to the Southern European parliaments whose EU- and EP-friendly attitudes it shares.

**Key elements of reform.** Reforms of oversight powers in the Bundestag have been weak and incremental throughout the 2000s. The Bundestag extended its existing competences to new areas such as foreign and defense policy; it has upgraded the legal status of some provisions from agreement to law; it acquired more detailed information rights and more time to react to proposed EU legislation; and its involvement in amendments of primary law outside the normal national ratification procedure has been strengthened (Beichelt 2012: 147-50).

**Institutional level.** In marked contrast to Denmark, key reforms strengthening the oversight powers of the Bundestag have originated in rulings of the German Federal Constitutional Court and not in the parliament itself. In both its decisions on the Treaty of Maastricht (1993) and the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), the Court strengthened the role of the national parliament in EU affairs, going beyond the initial preferences of German parliamentarians (Beichelt 2012: 144-5, 9-50). Moreover, tellingly, the Bundestag has only implemented the Court’s requirements in a minimalist fashion. The Court is thus the major solution to the German puzzle of strong support for the EP and strong oversight powers in the national parliament.

**Party level.** At the party level, we provide a summary analysis of the discursive links made by party representatives between the empowerment of the EP and national parliamentary oversight in Bundestag
debates on the Constitutional Convention, the Constitutional Treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon from 2003 to 2009. Based on the findings of the comparative analysis above, we expect that German mainstream parties (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Greens, and Free Democrats) perceive no competition between the EP and the Bundestag and may even see the empowerment of the EP as a legitimate compensation for their own loss of influence. This expectation is broadly confirmed by the analysis of parliamentary debates on EU treaty reform between 2003 and 2009.

The representatives of mainstream EU-friendly parties perceive the further empowerment of the EP and national parliaments as envisaged by the Constitutional Treaty and Treaty of Lisbon as two aspects of a single and highly welcome process: the parliamentarization of the EU. They support the most far-reaching proposals for the strengthening of the EP and welcome the European Convention as a parliamentary method of treaty-making. There is further broad agreement on a cooperative relationship between the two levels of parliaments. For instance, Michael Roth (SPD) regards the Bundestag as a “partner of the European Parliament” and advocates a “division of labor”. For Axel Schäfer (SPD), “we as a parliament are a part of Europe, exactly like our colleagues in Brussels … They are not our opponents.”

Skepticism towards the EP and demand for stronger competences of the national parliament can only be found among the CSU and some members of the CDU. For the CSU, Edmund Stoiber, prime minister of Bavaria, claimed that, in the absence of a European public sphere, the EP “will never be a classical parliament” and cannot fully substitute national parliaments. By contrast, members of the CDU have made more conditional statements. Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) justifies “the contribution of national parliaments” by the observation that “in the perception of most people …, the European Parliament is not or not yet able to provide legitimacy for political-parliamentary decisions alone”; Gerd Müller (CDU) calls for a strong role of national parliaments because the loss of power of national parliaments is not fully compensated by additional powers of the EP. These mildly dissenting arguments from the culturally conservative end of the mainstream spectrum correspond to our hypothesis that culturally conservative parties are less likely to accept EP empowerment as a compensation for the loss of national parliamentary power (H1).

Even in this mild form, such arguments are absent from the contributions of the FDP, the SPD, or the Greens to the debate. Members of the SPD explicitly rejected the “red card” option of subsidiarity control by national parliaments, and Michael Roth (SPD) openly contradicted the opinion of the Constitutional Court about the EP as a parliament of inferior quality.
Finally, the opposition of the Left part to the Treaty of Lisbon had mainly policy reasons. According to Lothar Bisky, the Left recognizes improvements such as the stronger codecision rights of the EP and the stronger participation of national parliaments but rejects the EU’s security and defense policy as well as its “neoliberal” economic policies. The contributions of the Left to the debate provide exemplary support for the conjecture that support for the EP and opposition to European integration go together at the extreme left side of the political space.

In sum, even despite pressure of the Constitutional Court, the German parliament has not implemented major reforms in the 2000s. We have examined whether its views of the EP help explain this. The analysis of party discourse in parliament shows that the German parties position themselves towards the EP in line with our expectations, and that the Bundestag as a whole has a cooperative attitude towards the EP. Moreover, EP empowerment has been welcome and not generated pressure for reform.

Comparing the findings from the two case studies, we find evidence in favour of H1 in both cases. The degree of cultural conservatism of parliamentary parties helps to explain their views of the EP, beyond what can be explained by their views on European integration in general. Regarding H2, we observe significant parliamentary reforms in the EP-critical Danish parliament and weak ones in the EP-friendly German parliament: on the one hand, we have a parliament acting upon own initiative and seeking to maximize influence; and on the other hand, a parliament acting on the basis of Constitutional Court requirements and implementing these requirements in a minimalist fashion. The EP’s empowerment has not generated any reform pressure in Germany. In Denmark, we observe reservations towards the EP among some parties of the pro-integration parliamentary majority but we cannot conclusively say whether these reservations contribute to the 2003-2004 reform efforts or not. Thus we cannot support or reject H2 in the Danish case. Overall, the case studies support H1. Support for H2 comes from the comparison between the two cases and the German parliamentary debate, while the Danish evidence is inconclusive.

**Conclusion**

The hypothesis of parliamentary co-evolution stipulates that parliaments at different levels of a multi-level system do not develop independently of each other but in co-evolution. The parties of which national parliaments are composed not only have systematic attitudes toward the EP but also act upon these attitudes in the creation of oversight institutions for EU affairs. The more strongly a parliament is composed of parties with a pro-EP attitude, the less it will regard the EP as a competitor or as an inadequate compensation for parliamentary deficits at the national level and the less it feels the need to
counter the empowerment of the EP with the strengthening of national parliaments’ oversight competences in EU affairs.

Turning to the results, our quantitative analyses show, first, that culturally conservative parliamentary parties oppose EP empowerment. Second, at the institutional level, parliaments that are more critical of parliamentarisation at the European level create stronger oversight institutions in EU affairs than their pro-EP counterparts. Two case studies of an EP-critical and an EP-friendly national parliament support, first, our analysis of the correlations between party ideology and positions towards EP empowerment. Second, in line with our expectations about the relationship between aggregate parliamentary support for the EP and domestic institutional reforms, the EP-critical Danish parliament implemented a significant reform in the mid-2000s whereas the EP-friendly German parliament made only “minimalist” changes. In Germany, almost all parties clearly welcome the EP’s empowerment. Only the most conservative of the mainstream parties criticises the EP and connects such critique to an emphasis on the importance of national parliaments in the EU. We find EP-critical views among the pro-integration parties in Denmark but our evidence as to whether such views are linked to domestic parliamentary reform is not conclusive. In sum, taking the quantitative and the qualitative evidence together, we observe noteworthy evidence in favour of the co-evolution hypothesis. We acknowledge that further empirical investigation at the level of case studies would be useful because at this level our evidence is weaker than in the quantitative analysis.

The findings suggest that the development of a multilevel, demoi-cratic parliamentary system in the EU is the result of interdependent European and national parliamentarisation processes. While the deepening of supranational integration drives parliamentary empowerment at both levels, national parliaments also base their strategies on whether they see EP empowerment as a legitimate compensation for their authority losses. Support for the EP is high where parliaments are composed of culturally liberal parties which are open towards the idea of a European demos and political community. In turn, the demoi-cratic dimension of the EU’s political system, taking the form of strong national parliaments, is particularly pronounced where parliamentary parties have strong national identities and cultural demarcation preferences, and are critical of supranational parliamentarisation.
The immediate purpose of the November agreement was to harness an alternative parliamentary majority in support of the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty given that in EU matters, the minority Liberal-Conservative coalition in government could not rely on the support of its normal parliamentary ally, the Euroskeptical Danish People’s Party. The agreement underpinned the 2004 reform of oversight institutions. It brought together three parties of the opposition: the Social-Democrats, the Social-Liberal Party (Radikale-Venstre) and the Socialist People’s Party.

For documentation of the debates, see http://www.ft.sk/samling/20041/forespoergsel/f14/beh1/forhandling.htm?startItem=-1#alleindlæg. For example, “The fact that the EP will be more influential in agriculture means that we can expect animal welfare issues to become much more salient” (Charlotte Antonsen, member of the Liberal Party).

Social-democratic Jakob Buksti: “For populations in European countries, it [i.e., the Constitutional Treaty] increases the transparency of EU decisions. The parliamentary control over EU decisions increases; the EP becomes more influential in EU policy-making; and the national parliaments will be more influential, individually and collectively. The EU becomes more democratic”. Elisabeth Arnold, member of the Social Liberal Party: “The special things we wish to emphasize in the Constitutional Treaty are: a good description of the normative foundations of the EU, a clear division of labor, strengthened citizen rights, a strengthened European Parliament, and the involvement of national parliaments…”

These are the Danish People’s Party on the right, and the Unity List on the left.

Søren Krarup, member of the Danish People’s Party: “What do we read in the new EU constitution? … That the EP exercises the law-making and budget-making functions together with the Council of Ministers, chapter 19, paragraph 1. That’s where parliamentary sovereignty went down the drain.”

Liberal MEP Karen Riis-Jørgensen: “Europe is weakened, and we have witnessed a ‘no’ to a very liberal Commission. There are two winners, from a liberal perspective: these are anti-EU forces and the Socialists, who now smell blood” (Politiken 28 October 2004).

For documentation of the debates, see http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21.web/bt.

Peter Hinze (CDU), Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 15/43, 8 May 2003, 3352-4; Plenarprotokoll 15/175, 12 May 2005, 16378-9; Axel Schäfer (SPD), Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 15/175, 12 May 2005, 16380; Thomas Silberhorn (CSU), Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 16/107, 4 July 2007, 10999; Plenarprotokoll 16/151, 13 March 2008, 15854.

Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 15/43, 8 May 2003; Plenarprotokoll 15/53, 26 June 2003.

Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 15/43, 8 May 2003, 3560; Plenarprotokoll 15/160, 24 February 2005, 14905.
12 Edmund Stoiber (CSU), Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 15/175, 12 May 2005, 16365.
14 Axel Schäfer and Michael Roth (both SPD), Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14 June 2007, 10580 and 10583.
15 Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 16/233, 8 September 2009, 26357.
### Tables and Figures

#### Table 1. Explanations of party support for the European Parliament

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Note: ° p<.1, * p<.05. Models 1-4 are OLS estimations with robust, country-clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 5 has robust standard errors and includes country-dummy variables. Earlier cross-sections are in the Appendix (Table A2).

#### Table 2. Determinants of national parliamentary oversight institutions

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Note: ° p<.1, * p<.05. The models are OLS estimations with robust, country-clustered standard errors.
Figure 1. Parliamentary oversight institutions and support for the European Parliament

### Appendix

#### Table A1. Operationalisation of the main variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Operationalisation</th>
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| Cultural liberalism-conservatism | The Chapel Hill surveys ask experts to rank parties on a 0 (liberal) to 10 (conservative) scale based on the following statement. The scores of several experts for one party are averaged.  
> ‘Parties can be classified in terms of their views on democratic freedoms and rights. “Libertarian” or “postmaterialist” parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, active euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or greater democratic participation. “Traditional” or “authoritarian” parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues.’ |
| Economic left-right | As cultural liberalism-conservatism but based on the following Chapel Hill survey statement.  
> ‘Parties can be classified in terms of their stance on economic issues. Parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, and a leaner welfare state.’ |
| Popular Euroscepticism | At least once a year, the Eurobarometer asks respondents to state whether they regard their country’s membership in the EU “a good thing”, “neither good nor bad” or “a bad thing. We measure popular Euroscepticism as the percentage responding “a bad thing” minus the percentage responding “a good thing”. In case there are two surveys in a year, we take the average of both. |
> ‘What position did the party leadership take over the course of 2006 on the following policies? First, take the position of the party leadership in 2006 on the powers of the European Parliament (EP).’ [Note: question from the 2006 survey; emphasis in the original] |
| Parliamentary support for the European Parliament | We measure parliamentary support as the average position of parliamentary parties weighted by their seat share. |
| The strength of national parliamentary oversight institutions in EU affairs: | We use an index based on the most important rules and structures parliaments use to control national governments in EU decision-making: access to EU documents; access to an explanatory memorandum by the government on issues under negotiation at the EU level; the existence of a European Affairs Committee; the involvement of sectoral standing committees in monitoring EU affairs; the availability of a parliamentary scrutiny reserve that delays EU level commitments until domestic scrutiny ends; and ability to issue a binding negotiation mandate to government. This measure ranges between 0 and two. For reasons of space, we cannot describe the composition of this index in greater detail here (more detail is available in Winzen 2012, 2013). |
| Control variables | Party support for European integration (based on Chapel Hill surveys).  
> A categorical variables distinguishing time periods after different treaties, namely Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon.  
> A measure of domestic committee strength (Martin and Depauw 2011). |

Note: The Chapel Hill (CH) expert surveys were conducted in 1999, 2002, 2006 and 2010. We interpolate party positions for each year between two adjacent surveys assuming linear trends (as noted, there is very little variation between the years in any case). However, for parties that are not included in two adjacent surveys (say, a party that is included in 1999 and 2006 but not 2002) we do not interpolate positions. For 90 percent of the country-year observations between 1999 and 2010 our data contains 90 percent or more of the parties represented in parliament. Sources: see main article (section on Data).
Figure A1. Party support for the EP and explanatory variables

Note: Based on data from the years 1999-2010. Dotted lines are linear and quadratic trends.
### Table A2. Explanations of party support for the European Parliament (cross-sections before 2010)

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Note: ° p<.1, * p<.05. The 2010 cross-section is included in the main text. Models 1-4 are OLS estimations with robust, country-clustered standard errors in parentheses. Model 5 has robust standard errors and includes country-dummy variables.
Robustness checks: party support for the European Parliament (Table 1)

We tested the robustness of the results in Table 1 in several ways. First, our measure of party support for the EP is slightly skewed. Squaring the measures makes the distribution look more normal but does not affect the conclusions. Second, we added a control variables that identifies that have been in government at least once in the period covered by the Chapel Hill data to capture a general impact of being in the party mainstream. This variable has no notable effect on the impact of cultural conservatism. The measure itself has a significant positive effect in some models but not consistently and never if we also control for a party’s EU support. Moreover, the effect of economic left-right is further undermined, turning insignificant in several models. Third, a party’s governing status has no consistent effect itself and does not affect the effect of cultural conservatism. Fourth, a measure for a party’s seat share in the European Parliament does not have a consistent effect itself and does not affect the results. We also added this variable as a difference between a party’s seat share in the EP and the national parliament, again without finding a consistent effect of the measure itself or an impact on the remaining results. Fifth, the residuals of all 2010 models are largely normally distributed. We also confirmed this for
Models 3 and 4 for all other cross-section. Sixth, for Model 4 (in all cross-sections) we examined whether the results depend on the inclusion of any particular country, which is not the case.

Robustness checks: national parliamentary oversight institutions (Table 2)
We tested the robustness of the results in Table 2 in several ways. First, the effect of EP support remains stable when we add a dummy variable to identify Central and East European Countries. Second, the residuals of the models are roughly normally distributed. There is a slight tendency for the models to predict lower levels of oversight than what is actually observed. The residuals in Model 6 with the lagged dependent variable cluster closely around 0. Third, the effect of EP support does not depend on the inclusion of any particular country. By exception, the effect of EP support is only significant at the .1 level in two cases in Model 3 and in two other cases in Model 4. However, the effect of EP support in the Models 5 and 6 depends considerably on having all countries in the analysis. This is probably because all observations are needed to disentangle the effects of EP and EU support in Model 5 (EU support is, however, never significant). In Model 6, the problem is the lack of variation which makes the results sensitive to the exclusion of any country that actually displays variation over time.
References


