

126th Bergedorf Round Table

## **The Future of Democracy—European Perspectives**

June 13th–15th, 2003, Villa La Fonte, Florence





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## SUMMARY

As the European Convention was concluding its deliberations on a draft European constitution, the 126th Bergedorf Round Table on “The Future of Democracy—European Perspectives” gathered. In Florence, where classical ideals were re-vitalized during the Renaissance period, participants debated the future of the ancient Athenian model of democracy. Representatives from current and future EU member states as well as the United States analyzed which problems and opportunities European democracy presently faces in a rapidly changing world.

Under the chairmanship of Richard von Weizsäcker and moderated by Roger de Weck, the participants began by taking stock of democracy’s current situation. With growing global interdependence, traditional political institutions were finding their own ability to steer developments and solve problems increasingly limited. Complex decision-making processes are becoming less and less transparent, leading to voter apathy and a loss of public trust. But while some participants drew the conclusion to defend political autonomy against the encroachments of globalization, others maintained that it was the institutions that had to adjust. It was emphasized that the crisis presented opportunities as well. Thus, dwindling membership in political parties could increase young politicians’ chances to assume leadership positions. NGOs and transnational networks offer new avenues of political participation. One hotly debated point was the roles played by the media and the political class in helping foster a European public sphere and political awareness.

In its second session, the Round Table concentrated on the national dimension of democracy. On the one hand, it was agreed that national institutions and identities remained of central importance for the legitimacy of political decision-making. Yet nation-states were losing power in two respects: local and regional problems were increasingly addressed at a local level, while European and global problems were far more amenable to being treated by the EU. Public trust in political institutions was particularly weak in some accession countries, said their representatives. Therefore, people in these countries were often more than willing to cede their newly gained national sovereignty to European institutions.

Finally, the discussion turned to the European dimension and, with the participation of two members of the European Convention, the EU’s attempt to draft a constitution. Parallels were drawn with the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, and participants praised the new document’s visionary aspects. The participants called for better coordination of the national and European levels of policymaking, but disagreed on whether this would be best achieved by improving Euro-

pean educational facilities, founding a “European CNN,” or encouraging national politicians to better communicate European policy. The analysts and practitioners thus drew an overall positive conclusion and, more importantly, proposed a set of concrete improvements.

## PROTOCOL

### Welcome



Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you warmly to our 126th Bergedorf Round Table and thank you all for having accepted our invitation. We have gathered here in Florence to consider the problem of democracy in Europe—a truly multi-dimensional topic currently focusing minds at the local, regional, national, European, transatlantic, and international levels. Our discussion has taken on a special significance, I think, since the European Convention only yesterday approved the draft of a European constitution.

**von Weizsäcker**

We associate Florence mainly with the 15th century and the birth of the Renaissance. In the present transatlantic controversy over how to best approach the crises in the Middle East, we quickly come to the question of whether our goal should be to install democracy in the Islamic and Arab worlds. This proposal often raises the response that, if a country is to experience a successful introduction of democracy within its borders, its society must already have embraced the intellectual tenets of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Here we are, in the cradle of the Renaissance, although it remains to be seen whether it is therefore also the birthplace of modern democracy. On the subject of democracy, Florence situates us somewhere between Giscard d'Estaing and the Medicis. It is now up to us to draw conclusions for our own future.

I would like to thank Mr. de Weck for having taken on the burden of guiding us through this difficult topic, and I now invite him to open the discussion.

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The Protocol contains an edited and authorized version of the participants' oral contributions.



**de Weck**  
results of the European Convention:

We have met to discuss a topic that is making news and raising tempers throughout the world: the future of democracy in Europe. We have the privilege of welcoming two members of the European Convention in our midst, Mr. de Vries and Mr. Altmaier, and we all wait impatiently for what they have to say about their experiences yesterday, when the draft constitution was passed. So before we begin with the discussion in earnest, I would like to ask both gentlemen to briefly give us an idea of the scene yesterday within the Convention.

**de Vries**

I still have the chorus of Beethoven's 9th ringing in my ears, which was played to celebrate the conclusion of the Convention, even though it is far preferable to listen to that beautiful piece of music in a decent concert hall rather than in a parliamentary meeting hall.

Members of the Convention easily overestimate the outcome of their work, while those who have not been present easily underestimate it. As so often, one can either see the glass as being half empty or half full, but in this case it is a pretty big glass. Compared to previous inter-governmental conferences, the Convention has brought a number of major improvements concerning both the substance of European policies and procedural questions. However, like other European agreements, the text also contains many compromises. It is therefore introducing incremental and evolutionary—rather than revolutionary—changes, but I believe it may in the end bring substantial progress.

mixed outcome

Progress has been achieved in a number of key areas. The human rights dimension of the EU has been significantly strengthened, as has the Union's democratic dimension; the EU treaty has become much simpler to understand, at least for the *initiated*—whether the average voter will find it easier remains to be seen. By contrast, the Convention has not achieved enough in the crucial area of effectiveness. However, should the European Council request the Convention to continue working on part three of the draft, this situation could perhaps still be improved over the next couple of weeks.

constructive atmosphere

Let me finish with a comment on the atmosphere, because the process of the Convention was probably just as important as the substance. It was enriching and productive to have a mix of government representatives and members of parliaments, as well as of European and national delegates. The two European Commissioners who were present were highly articulate and constructive and the President and two Vice-Presidents of the Convention each played an important role. Behind the scenes, Sir John Kerr, who represented both indirectly the British



government and the views of the Convention Secretariat, played a helpful role. Members of national parliaments had a clear and effective stimulating influence when national governments wanted to dig in their heels in the final stages of the Convention.

During the Convention, on many issues a genuine meeting of minds took place. It was inspiring that at a time when Europe in many quarters is experiencing intolerance, irrationality and an unwillingness to listen to people who have different views, the Convention has shown that representatives from 28 countries can produce almost a consensus result by listening and learning together.

It is my pleasure not only to have the same haircut as Mr. de Vries, but also the same views on the Convention's results. Yesterday, the musical quality of the Ode to Joy may have been questionable, the champagne a bit too warm, and lunch delayed, but I was truly impressed that 98% of the Convention's participants actually approved this document. Our joy at the voting's outcome was so great that it infected the journalists, i.e. the representatives of the European public, and the assistants present in the room.

In my opinion, the key factor behind the Convention's success was that we met publicly. The public eye substantially influenced the discussions and their results. Public pressure was what prevented John Kerr at the Convention's beginning from pushing through procedural rules that were pre-democratic at best. Giscard d'Estaing was forced to almost immediately revise his proposals for institutional reform, and every threat to veto something met stiff public resistance. That helped us to achieve many things we could not at Nice and Amsterdam.

Another success was the presence of representatives from the Eastern European candidate countries. It showed that the consensus on European policy with the Eastern Europeans is at least as strong as with the founding states. We were able to put to rest all ideas of a "two-speed" or "core" Europe, because all the points on which the six founding states agreed were also approved by Hungary, Poland, and the Baltic states.

The Convention's only bitter aftertaste was in the area of foreign, security, and defense policy. No progress could be made here except in the office of a European Foreign Minister. This was the price we paid for Europe's polarization over the Iraq war. Earlier this year we still held out hope that the Iraq crisis would lead to deeper integration in this field. It soon became apparent, however, that the time for this had not yet come and that the Convention could not extend Europe's integration

## Altmaier

public pressure was instrumental for success

consensus included the accession countries

no progress in foreign and security policy



to its final goal. Still, I hope that, in public and in practice, the Convention's resolutions will not be regarded as a failure, but as a real step forward.

## I. Traditions and Contemporary Trends—Democracy in Europe Between the Nation and the Union



People have often said in the past that Florence is the *città immobile*, supposedly because nothing here changes architecturally. Recently, however, the city has begun to evolve and experience an architectural revival. Perhaps this could be symbolic for the development of democracy, because there is a real sense of change in the air today. For the next two days, we intend to explore these questions of what is in flux or being questioned.

We begin with the discussion of the historical and cultural roots of democracy in Europe and its present development, including the dangers it is facing, such as absenteeism, populism, corruption, or the parliaments' power decline. We will then turn to the national level and the question of how democracy can be rejuvenated and modernized within the nation-state. Finally, we will devote our attention to the future of the European Union and the prospects for supra-national democracy.

I am particularly pleased to introduce the two individuals who will be leading us into these issues. Our first presentation will be from Larry Siedentop, who has written one of the most important reference works on democracy in Europe. Afterwards, one of our hosts here in Italy, Senator Manzella, a member of the European Committee of the Italian Senate, will be speaking to us.

Larry Siedentop's book begins with the downcast sentence, "democratic legitimacy in Europe is in danger." Yet this thoroughly liberal and open book also contains much optimism, and I am curious whether optimism or pessimism dominates today.

With the light coming down from the window behind, I feel as if I were in a fifteenth century painting!

When European integration accelerated in the 1990s following the Single European Act and the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties, no adequate public debate about the nature of the political project or its constitutional implications took place. I therefore welcome the Convention and am fascinated to hear more about its outcome. In the 1990s, public debates were very polarized, with proponents of further integration pointing out economic advantages and opponents falling back on the rather sterile legal category of national sovereignty. But the really important question, namely that of self-government and the conditions for democratic government on a continental scale, was lost in that argument.

For that question the example of American federalism is very relevant. Not

de Weck

Siedentop  
presentation

the Convention finally creates a public  
debate about Europe



comparison to American federalism

because it should be slavishly imitated, but because it is the only example of sustained self-government on a continental scale. In my book I therefore looked especially at the informal conditions which contributed to the success of American federalism and at whether or to what extent Europe can now match them.

similar informal conditions, except ...

Strong traditions of local and regional self-government are one of these conditions and the developments in Spain, Italy and even the United Kingdom's devolution over the last decades are very promising and encouraging in that direction. With English becoming a kind of updated Latin, the *lingua franca* of educated classes, having a common language seems relatively unproblematic.

By contrast I am less optimistic about the prospects of creating an open political class across Europe. The European Parliament has not yet succeeded in establishing a hold over public opinion and progress is badly needed. It even seems that national political classes have used the European Parliament as an excuse to distance themselves from the European project. The final condition are shared beliefs about the role of individuals versus the role of the state. With the fall of communism and the decline of Marxist socialism, the area of disagreement has narrowed, but not disappeared, and it might widen again with the enlargement of the European Union.

... lack of a common constitutional sense ...

On the whole, Europe seems well on the way to matching most of the informal conditions that made American federalism successful. But in one aspect, Europe does not match the circumstances present during the foundation of the United States. Delegates to the Philadelphia Convention had common memories of subordination to the imperial government in London. This "ghost" of the Philadelphia Convention created a common constitutional sense, which facilitated the deliberations. Europe's greatest challenge is that it lacks a pre-existing constitutional sense and that it has to create new institutions in tandem with a constitutional sense. This challenge is formidable because in Europe integration is historically associated with empires, force and constraint, with the ambitions of Charles the 5th, Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin.

... dominance of economic considerations ...

Another element that adds to the complications and difficulties in Europe is the intellectual fashion called economism. It is the habit of subordinating constitutional to economic questions, which is also a result of the enormous economic success Europe has experienced after the Second World War. It led the European Union to underestimate how difficult it is to fuse different national political cultures. Take as an example the outrage expressed by some European countries when the majority principle was flouted during the election of George

Europe gradually has to create a constitutional sense, because only then can a European *demos* emerge.

Siedentop

W. Bush. For somebody coming from a unitary political system, this might seem scandalous. But from a federal perspective it does not, because you have learned that the territorial principle can constrain the majority principle. This federal point of view has to become more wide spread in Europe as integration proceeds.

A final complication is a veiled competition between three types of states for becoming a model for Europe. Here, Britain has not played a positive role. It opposes anything approaching a European federation, but without proposing an alternative because its common law character makes it impossible to export the British constitution. And it is in the stand-off between German or Dutch federalism and Britain's common law approach that France came to play such a crucial and creative role in Europe, pushing it to the brink of federalism. The negative side of France's engagement is that its political tradition is radically unitary and that makes it difficult to appeal to Europe.

... various constitutional models are competing

I am convinced that Europe gradually has to create a constitutional sense, because only then can a European *demos* emerge. Without it, Europe faces the great danger that democratic political cultures are weakened in the nation-states without being replaced on another level. What has to be done to address that danger is a matter for the Convention and the Intergovernmental Conference to determine, but I would like to propose a few points that seem crucial to me.

First, we should grant states a right of exit. Other than in the US, where since the civil war no state is allowed to secede, this would give the EU a voluntary and acceptable character. Second, we should have a simple definition of fundamental rights. I am uneasy about the proposed new charter of rights, because it lacks simplicity. But when trying to create a rights-based political culture, a short list of rights easily comprehended and readily remembered is crucial. Third, Europe needs a bicameral system. A European senate elected by national legislatures and composed of people who retain their national political role could accomplish three things. First it would educate the European public about the difference between the territorial and the majority or population principle. Second, it could help fuse national political classes. And finally, it could become a permanent constitutional convention for Europe, clarifying which issues are settled centrally and which remain with the nation-states.

Europe needs a bicameral system

This agenda for the European Union is so difficult and complicated that it sometimes makes me think about a graffiti on the wall of a pub in Oxford stating "God is alive and well, but working on a less ambitious project."

The principle of democracy is the essential  
legal and cultural link between the European  
Union and its member states.

Manzella

**Manzella**  
presentation

I would like to put up for discussion five points on the principle of democracy. First, democracy is both an organizational and a juridical principle. Although the two principles are associated, they have to be distinguished from one another. The democratic principle on the one hand is part of the criteria for designing public institutions. The public must be represented to some extent, so a parliament with the attendant electoral legislation becomes necessary. Yet democracy also means the securing of rights. The fundamental rights of peoples and individuals are certified by citizenship. The present proposal for a European constitution incorporates both these dimensions by referring to democratic institutions and the rule of law.

Second, the principle of democracy is the essential legal and cultural link between the European Union and its member states. The Convention's work to make democracy real and palpable reinforces trends that have been observable for some time, namely towards establishing an equilibrium between institutions and processes. The European Parliament's powers have been substantially enhanced to make the system more representative. Furthermore, cooperation between the European and national parliaments, known among insiders as COSAC, has been strengthened and the European Parliament placed at the center of a whole network of parliaments.

democracy unifies the EU's institutions

One innovation is the attention the Convention has paid to the regional and local levels, especially regarding subsidiarity and proportionality. However, the EU also has some control mechanisms at its disposal to help avoid problems, for instance the early warning system that, incidentally, also demonstrates how seamless the distinctions between the state and the EU have become. Democracy, that deeply-rooted principle to which all European states in all their diversity vow to uphold, effectively helps shape and unify the EU's system of institutions. This system is pluralistic, meaning that the European Parliament is not the sole wellspring of democratic legitimacy. Rather, the EU gains legitimacy from the system of institutions in general, i.e. from the legal systems of individual states and the EU, the legitimacy of national parliaments, and regional and local assemblies. This was also expressed in the verdict of the German Constitutional Court in 1993, which stated that each transfer of power from the national to the European level has to be accompanied by a reconstitution of legitimacy.

Third, democracy also binds the states to the Union as a principle of law. Article 58 of the EU's draft constitution gives citizens rights over national states. These rights show clearly that there are no more borders in terms of governance.



The Nice Charter of Basic Rights, which is part of the draft constitution, constitutes a European point of reference for national constitutions and judges. I understand the objections Mr. Siedentop expressed over the complexity of this charter. Still, I believe that, through its function, it will play a decisive part in helping form a democratic identity for the “lesser” Europe, just as the Fundamental Rights Charter of the Convention of Rome has done for the “greater” Europe between the Atlantic and Vladivostok. The fact that we have these kinds of legal documents at various levels simultaneously is, for me, an expression of constitutional subsidiarity.

Moreover, there was a discussion within the Convention over the public accessibility of rights, over whether they were intelligible and transferable. As Mr. de Vries said, the intelligibility of laws determines, to a large extent, how effective they really are. Decision-making procedures were simplified to facilitate the use of rights within the Union, a step that both marked the beginning of standardizing the EU’s maze of procedures and demonstrated that the EU has the last word when it comes to legal issues.

Fourth, the democratic principle is unfolding within the European system in a fourfold manner. The first two ways are in the twinned development of the organizational and procedural dimensions of democracy. The other two tracks are those where the democratic principles of the states converge toward those of the Union, and vice-versa, as in the case of Article 7. One can also observe similar processes outside of Europe, for example within the South American Mercosur association of states. Its democratic Council provides for multilateral, mutual controls over respect for democratic principles.

Fifth and last, the European *demos* emerges through this mutual shaping of democracy. The links among member states and the Union are also effectively promoting the emergence of a European nation. This is where the European association of nations goes beyond other supranational organizations: through its common legal system. This is also why the Copenhagen Criteria name democracy and the rule of law as essential prerequisites for accession to the EU. Even before the European Charter of basic rights was approved, democracy played a central role in the European Union’s economic definition of itself. One of its key precepts is that “if you undermine democracy, I will not trade with you.”

The European nation is therefore unified, yet divided into various electorates that vote for a network of parliaments. The “European electorate,” then, votes for different parliaments, but is reunited again through the fact that these

the Charter of Basic Rights creates  
a common democratic identity

a common legal system creates a  
European *demos*



institutions are tied to one another. The principle of democracy, therefore, is the engine of an integration process that aims not so much at becoming a league of states, but a union of governance, a union of constitutions.

**de Weck**

Thank you very much for these introductory presentations, in which Mr. Manzella sought out bridges between political systems in much the same way as Mr. Siedentop pointed out their distinguishing characteristics. This places us squarely within a discussion of the various national manifestations of democracy, in which we hope to find out more about their similarities and differences. We should also ask ourselves where similarities have yet to be produced, perhaps along the lines of Larry Siedentop's proposal that we could use a senate as a kind of permanent Convention to help us reach a mutual understanding of democracy.

I thereby open the debate and shall lead you with the proud humility of a journalist who recognizes the difference between himself and the president at his right: The president weighs his words three times before he speaks, while the journalist prefers to say something three times before he has given it any thought.

**Fagiolo**  
the EU should learn from national  
experiences with democracy

Both our introductory speakers formulated the question succinctly: How might it be possible, in the process of transferring power to the supranational level, to avoid losing the democracy which, after all, first emerged at the national level. At times I have thought that those moving the process of integration forward were trying to re-invent democracy without taking into account the experiences of the nation-states. Three examples might serve to illustrate this:

From the vantage point of financial policy, democracy means "no taxation without representation." I do not yet know the final text of the draft constitution, but the European Parliament finally seems to have gained full authority over financial policy. How long indeed it has taken to achieve what historically is the first stage of democracy!

We see a similar delay in creating political accountability for those in power. The Commission President is now supposed to be elected by the European Parliament, but the division of powers between Parliament and the Commission remains unclear. We have, therefore, an executive that, in some areas, is completely unaccountable to any other political institution. If we look at the European nation-states, similar developments were observable during the transition from monarchy to democracy, when, for example, the right to declare

We risk building constitutional castles in the air.

W. Wallace



war was initially the monarch's prerogative. In this central question of democracy, I think the Convention has not gone far enough.

The last vital aspect in which the EU is behind the nation-states is the majority principle. In most people's eyes, the right of veto is highly undemocratic, reminiscent of the days prior to the French Revolution, when it was available to each of the three Estates. Here, too, the draft constitution does not go far enough, because it provides for majority decision-making only in certain areas; in the rest, a minority can block the entire system.

In sum, then, the European Union is following the developmental example of the national states extremely slowly, whether it be in financial policy-making, the accountability of the executive, or in the principle of majority rule.

Let me comment on some of the worrying trends of the democratic development of all of our countries as well as Europe. First, traditional political parties throughout Europe are in decline. Parties are the mechanism for connecting the wider public to the elites and for recruiting future political leaders. The British Labor Party for example now has an individual membership of less than 250,000 members. Thirty years ago, it had around a million members and its trade unions counted between ten and twelve million members. Now, all British parties have stopped cultivating people under the age of 30, because most of them don't vote.

As a result of that decline, personalist and populist politics are on the rise in all European countries. At the same time, popular participation in elections is falling in each of our countries, most of all in elections for the European Parliament. Another real danger for European democracy is that the split of Europe into a successful and an unsuccessful class can lead to populist revolts by the unsuccessful in all of our countries—expressing itself in the rise of the nationalist Right or the nationalist Left. Unless we recognize these trends, we risk building constitutional castles in the air with no impact on reality.

I am not much more optimistic about the relations between national parliaments and the European Union. Mr. Manzella mentioned COSAC, but the experiences with this program have been so negative that because of it many object to the establishment of a European Congress or Senate. It is also problematic that most national parliaments—apart from the representatives of national parliaments who took part in the Convention—paid little attention to the Convention, as did the national press of most of our countries. It is therefore now unclear how national parliaments and in particular opposition parties will

**W. Wallace**

worrying trends:  
the demise of political parties

rise of populism

disconnect between national  
parliaments and the EU



react to the draft constitution. While the Philadelphia Convention took place among thirteen states with relatively small political elites, the European Union is much larger. This makes communication much more difficult, particularly since national politicians are mainly concerned with national issues.

One final comment about fundamental rights. I believe that we have to be careful about how far we can push fundamental rights at the European level against the different traditions of the member states. Take for example article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, which outlaws discrimination in nation states on virtually all grounds. National parliaments were barely aware of the implications of that step. Now, as article 13 is being implemented, I fear that it could meet much resistance in national systems that oppose an imposition of these regulations.

**de Weck**

The symptoms of the crisis of democracy that Mr. Wallace has described—the decline of traditional parties, a surge in populism, and national navel-gazing—can all be readily found in Germany, perhaps particularly in the country’s eastern part. We would therefore be very interested in hearing the views of Gesine Schwan, who currently works in Frankfurt on the Oder, on the German-Polish border.

**Schwan**

causes: globalization and economism ...

I am glad that Mr. Wallace has raised the issues surrounding democracy at the national level, because these problems do not arise through the process of Europeanization. Within the nation-states, the legitimacy of institutions has been questioned and trust in Western democracy has been waning for years. The keyword here is “globalization.” We must be aware that democratic policymaking has been strongly undermined by the fact that economic considerations have become the determining factor in most decisions. Normative and therefore political issues are often decided at the outset by economic factors over which neither nation-states nor any other political institutions can exercise any influence. The result is that policymakers appear ineffective and lose their legitimacy.

This phenomenon is especially apparent in eastern Germany. If you compare the introduction of democracy in West Germany after 1945 and in Eastern Germany after 1989, the difference couldn’t be greater. In West Germany, democracy was legitimized by the “economic miracle.” In Eastern Germany, the opposite is the case. On the one hand, of course, the people are doing better, but subjectively many feel worse off than before, especially in terms of their self-respect. That is why democracy might be accepted in principle, while in practice people generally do not have the feeling that they benefit from it or that they



have any great influence on the system. Therefore, they participate, but without enthusiasm.

The danger here is of a gap developing between the way we take democratic values and their constitutional foundations for granted and the political non-participation of broad swathes of the population. They cannot relate to the system because they rely on intuitions—that are not completely wrong—that real power does not necessarily exist in the intended democratic institutions.

democratic institutions are losing power

Mr. Krastev and Ms. Kolarska-Bobinska, could you provide us with a brief insight into the current state of democracy in Bulgaria and Poland?

**de Weck**

I am afraid I do not have good news to offer. Take for example recent opinion polls about trust in institutions. The results show clearly that the most trusted institutions are the army, the church and universities, i.e. non-representative institutions. Trust in Parliament by contrast has shrunk to around 12% and fewer people trust political parties than believe that there is life on mars.

**Krastev**

Not only polls, but also recent political events indicate how difficult democracy's stand in Bulgaria is. Our last elections happened under exceptional circumstances. Only three months prior to the elections the former king arrived back in Bulgaria and founded a political party. This party did not only win the majority of votes and the majority of parliamentary seats, but it won in all age groups, education groups and in every single region of the country except the Turkish regions. The volatility during these elections was 47%.

Bulgaria: little trust in institutions

This phenomenon of a protest vote is not restricted to Bulgaria, but can be observed throughout Eastern Europe. After experiencing democracy for ten years, voters feel that they cannot change policies, they can only change the people who are in power. Because no matter who you elect, policies will be much more determined by the position of Brussels, the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank than by national politicians. As a result, elections have become an exercise in punishing political elites rather than anything else.

Another important reason for the crisis of democracy is the popular perception of winners and losers of transition. To an open question in an opinion poll, 53% named politicians and 37% criminals as the winners of transition. To the question of who are the losers, many answered "people like me." As a consequence, societies operate in a "us versus them" mode, in which the political class is perceived as one and where the lack of real policy differences creates a sense of frustration.

many perceive themselves as losers of transition



We sometimes feel that the political elites are so eager to join the European Union because they have grown afraid to face their voters at home.

Finally one comment on transparency. I believe that transparency alone is not sufficient for creating legitimacy. The European Union is a very telling example for this. Here, democratization is conceptualized as institutionalization. When we talk about democracy we talk about institutions and re-distribution of powers, but what is lacking is a feeling of belonging and of representation. Voters are in a trap because they feel that nobody depends on them. That part of the crisis cannot simply be resolved through increased transparency.

### **Kolarska-Bobinska**

In Poland, democracy as a value is highly appreciated because it is treated by many as the best political system. But this changes when people focus on the reality of democracy: only 15% believe that it works well. Very worrying is the level of trust in institutions. Only a few years ago, 50% of the population had trust in parliament, but that has dropped to 12%. Trust in the government stands at about 15% and other key democratic institutions face a similar situation.

Poland: trust in international institutions is much greater than in national ones

In a recent study of the Institute of Public Affairs for the European Parliament, we analyzed trust in Western institutions, such as NATO, the World Bank, the European Commission and Parliament and the United Nations. All of them gained about 55% support among the citizens of Poland, as compared to the 12% of trust in Polish national institutions. The contrast was even starker when the question focused on the perceptions of the working mechanisms of these institutions. As an institution concerned about citizens, only 4% named a Polish one, 70% mentioned the European Commission or Parliament. Questions about corruption, efficiency and the like had similar results.

EU-accession is an opportunity ...

The good news is that most Poles think that once we are members of the European Union, the functioning of our national institutions will improve. Joining the EU can thus become—if the political will exists—a chance to improve the functioning of Polish institutions. If that chance is not seized and the distrust in democratic institutions and politicians increases, the situation can be abused by populist parties.

The weakest element in our political system are the parties. They have not consolidated and the party landscape changes from one election to another. Another troubling feature is the low level of social participation in political life. Usually only 45% of those entitled to vote take part in elections or referendums. That we managed to mobilize 59% for the referendum on joining the EU was almost

a miracle—the intervention of the pope certainly helped, but people also realized that their participation was crucial, because there was a necessary quorum of 50% to make the referendum valid. This also goes to show that if the elites consider participation important, they can find ways to influence and mobilize society.

A final comment on the argument that Poland and other former communist countries want to preserve their newly-gained sovereignty. That argument is simply not right. On the contrary, 45% of Poles favor a strong European government, 39% welcome the idea of a European president and 44% support the establishment of a common European defense force. This seems to be a reaction to the malfunctioning of Polish public institutions. Far from fearing a restriction of their sovereignty, people see Western institutions in a very positive light. The discussions in the European Convention should acknowledge that fact.

The pictures we have just been given of Bulgaria and Poland are jarring. May I ask Mr. Diamandouros, the European Ombudsman, whether the situation in Western Europe is that much different?

Let me relate to you the experiences I have had during my short time in office in three points.

First, the question that arises out of the remarks of Ms. Kolarska-Bobinska is to what extent Poland is representative of the candidate countries. I believe that we have to differentiate between candidate countries. Some Eastern and Central European countries have significantly more weight than others, not only because their population is larger, but also because of their sense of self-importance.

Estonians for example are very concerned that European integration might mean exchanging one remote center of decision-making, Moscow, for another, i. e. Brussels. The European Union is seen as a system over which Estonians have absolutely no control. The perception in Poland is different for very good reasons: The Baltic states are much smaller and have a historical sense of vulnerability that is different from other countries. However tiny, Malta and Cyprus are other types of political entities and Slovenia, due to its long incorporation into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, has a rule of law tradition that is much closer to the Western European legal culture.

Second, we have very rapidly spoken about critical issues such as legitimacy, transparency and the democratic deficit, but we have not yet addressed that whole

... for which a loss of sovereignty is readily accepted

**de Weck**

**Diamandouros**

Poland is not representative of all candidate countries



accountability is key for democracy

vexing issue of accountability. But accountability is crucial when we discuss the quality of democracy at the national as well as the European level. Ms. Kolarska-Bobinska, among others, has alluded to the fact that, as a principle, democracy enjoys much support. After 1989/90, democracy is the only game in town and this lack of alternative models provides it with what we might call negative legitimation. But when we talk about the quality of democracy and its concrete workings, accountability becomes extraordinarily important.

Guillermo A. O'Donnell, an eminent political scientist from Argentina who has collaborated very closely with Philippe Schmitter, has spoken of two types of accountability. The traditional notion of accountability is vertical accountability: through elections, rulers are held accountable to citizens in periodic intervals of four to five years. This mechanism is very important, but the problem is that it only occurs at set intervals and there are no comparable procedures in between. An alternative way of thinking about accountability is "horizontal accountability." This is a system of checks and balances built into the state itself, which hold the executive accountable on a day-to-day basis. Often this happens through independent authorities, such as a central bank, an electoral commission or an ombudsman.

voters feel they cannot influence policies

In the egalitarian or Jacobinian conceptualization of democracy, which has its origins in the French Revolution, legitimacy derives exclusively from the people and is reflected in the national parliament. All controls are therefore seen as encroachments on the legitimacy of this institution. The notion of horizontal accountability, by contrast, also stresses the liberal component in democracies by strengthening controls and counter-weights. With mechanisms of horizontal accountability, we can potentially also address the problem that Mr. Krastev mentioned, namely, that voters sometimes feel they can change persons but not policies. Maybe this could restore trust in the system and help stop the *fuite en avant*, where people focus on the European level instead of reforming democracy at the national level.

politics becomes a zero-sum game

Finally on the split between Europe's successful and unsuccessful mentioned by Mr. Wallace. A problem that has developed particularly over the last ten years is that many issues are no longer seen with the positive-sum logic of European integration, but as a zero-sum game. We are talking more and more about winners and losers and that problem is compounded by the fact that some minorities have the capacity to stage very intense interventions. In a world witnessing major challenges as a result of immigration or the degradation of individual citizens



through the adverse dimensions of globalization, such as illegal trafficking in women, the losers turn into a force to be reckoned with, when addressing the issue of democracy.

France has been mentioned three or four times already as the seminal democratic model that nonetheless has to be adapted because it is no longer contemporary. Thus my question to Anne-Marie Le Gloannec: What challenges is French democracy currently facing?

Mr. Wallace described the declining participation in elections and the decreasing membership in political parties as a problem of democracy in European countries. I agree with his analysis—and I think we cannot distinguish here between the European level and the national one, because the two are so intertwined—, but I want to contrast it with another interesting phenomenon: the rise of grass-root movements. This rise dates back to the 1980s and can be considered as a second bloom of grass-root movements after the late 1960s. A few examples might illustrate what I have in mind.

Take trade unions, for instance. In France, the old trade unions represent about 8% of the work-force, but new organizations and movements have developed on the street. There are populist cases like José Bové, but also more serious organizations such as Attac, which has something to say not only in France, but internationally. Another impressive example is the peace movement against the war in Iraq. Huge demonstrations took place on February 15th in London, Barcelona, Rom, Madrid, Paris, Berlin, Helsinki etc.. The interesting point is that these demonstrations were coordinated, used the same slogans, had the same basis and were addressing the same issue. Despite different political cultures for example in France, an interventionist country, and Germany, a non-interventionist one, masses of people rallied around the same question.

Maybe this points to the emergence of a new form of participatory democracy, in which people who are upset because they feel the system of representative democracy is not representing them take to the streets. This might have unpleasant aspects and be too populist, but we have to take it seriously. And it may signify the emergence of a European *demos*. Of course there were also demonstrations in the United States and Attac is an international and not just a European movement, but through communication and common actions something specifically European might be developing.

**de Weck**

**Le Gloannec**

political participation through  
civil society organizations

Next to our pessimism due to the European democratic deficit and the crisis of democracy on the national level, we are thus witnessing the emergence of something else, which could be a new form of democracy. The phenomenon is certainly not solely national and it remains to be seen whether it is something specifically European. Maybe these movements can be part of the answer of how to adapt our traditional model of democracy—which comes out from 19th century industrial societies—to new realities and challenges.

**de Weck**

I would now like to invite the policymakers and representatives of the media to give us their views on the three topics on the table—the relationship between economics and democracy, the phenomenon of protest votes, and the new movements in old democracies, such as Attac. And I would like to start by pouncing on the youngest member of our circle and one of Germany’s youngest lawmakers, Carsten Schneider. He is a 26-year-old member of parliament from Thuringia and I would be very interested to hear what he has to say.

**Schneider**

I am now in my second term and no longer Germany’s youngest Bundestag representative, just the youngest Social Democrat there. In recent years, the average age of the German parliamentarian has fallen sharply. Many younger deputies entered parliament for the SPD in the last legislative period thanks to the Schröder effect, and in this period the CDU/CSU also saw many younger faces. The younger generation is thus both committed and represented in parliament.

younger people express their interest in politics through different channels

Mr. Wallace said the parties do not pay attention to those under 30 because they are not interested in politics anyway. I disagree emphatically, the interest is simply of a different kind than before—at least in Germany. In my opinion there is a very strong kind of vagabond commitment and interest in political issues. Decreasing membership in large organizations such as trade unions or parties is also a result of the need for much greater flexibility among younger people in their lives and work. Yet every person around this table knows how long it takes for someone to gain trust within a party and be put up as a candidate in an election. Many young people simply do not have enough time and the organizations will have to adapt to finding new ways to reach this group.

when political parties lose members, they sometimes open up

If we talk about low membership rolls, then Germany’s east might be the prototype for what the rest of the country can soon expect. In Erfurt, for example, we have 500 SPD members out of a population of 200,000. Thuringia’s entire SPD organization is the size of a local branch in the Ruhr area. That presents us with



enormous difficulties in helping to shape public opinion, a fundamental task for political parties, or in finding enough candidates for local elections. The party has reacted to this dire situation by opening its election lists to non-members, establishing new possibilities for participation, and becoming more flexible in many ways. This also meant that someone like me who had been an SPD member for only two years could be put up on the parliamentary list. In the Ruhr area that would probably be impossible, but things are beginning to change there as well.

I am worried about the EU's democratic deficit and its connection to the people, for one simple reason. As a parliamentarian I represent a constituency of 200,000 people and have a strong relationship with the grass roots, from whom I get real feedback on individual political issues. On the other hand, even I, a member of the Bundestag, have seen Thuringia's representative in the European Parliament only twice in five years! If there is hardly any coordination between the European and national parliaments, how is the average citizen going to be incorporated?

disconnect between the EU and its citizens

Elections to the European Parliament are scheduled for next year, yet to date the SPD has no idea of how to conduct its campaign. We fear that the conservatives are going to concentrate on the question of Turkey's membership, but we have nothing to counter it. Without a clear program and recognizable faces it is very difficult indeed to mobilize a party for an election. It is even more difficult to reach the average citizen, which is why I expect a low voter turnout.

At the same time, I am concerned that national parliaments will continue to lose power—and I am particularly affected as a budget expert—without seeing the European level gain in legitimacy. One possible answer would be European parties. Perhaps the existing European parties could be strengthened by direct membership dues. That might anchor European parties more strongly in people's minds and make Europe more comprehensible.

strengthening European parties might be a solution

Mr. Altmaier, will the CDU be pushing the Turkish question?

**de Weck**

As long as the issue of Turkish membership in the EU remains unresolved, the Turkish question will be unavoidable. Still, we should keep the issue out of election campaigns because it is far too sensitive and could also lead to a resurgence in ethnic tensions.

**Altmaier**

I agree with Carsten Schneider that the dwindling numbers of political party members are not in themselves a sign of these parties' decline, as Mr. Wallace



small parties are more political

has claimed. On the contrary, the more members they have, the more apolitical these parties tend to be, and the more difficult unusual careers like Carsten Schneider's become. An experience I had 20 years ago in a seminar with young Christian Democrats from the Netherlands helps illustrate this point. In Saarland, out of a population of one million, our CDU youth organization had ten thousand members. With the same population size, our Dutch friends from Limburg had only 100 members—who were, however, better trained, better organized, and more political. We, on the other hand, spent more time discussing internal political issues instead of new concepts. This kind of experience makes me think that our main challenge will be in recruiting future political elites rather than keeping the party membership big.

parties no longer present clear alternatives

It is said that more people believe there is life on Mars than trust parties and parliaments. That is no cause for concern, because in my opinion a degree of scepticism towards the representatives of democratic institutions is simply part of a mature democracy. I am much more concerned that the hard core of democracy that has been practiced in postwar Europe independently of political culture is being called into question. This core consists of the choice that citizens have every four years between political alternatives which are expressed in differing governments.

In Germany in the 1950s, the choice was between the market economy and the French form of *planification* and between Western integration and autonomous policymaking. During the 1970s we could choose between the new *Ostpolitik* and the old Hallstein Doctrine. And in the 1980s we could still decide how to distribute the windfall from the growing economy.

But national politicians have lost much of their ability to shape political outcomes as more and more areas of responsibility are transferred to the European level, globalization is proceeding and European societies are in urgent need of structural reform. We have fewer and fewer basic choices and party programs no longer differ fundamentally. This puts into question the principle of elections, because a fundamental condition for democracy is removed if all party platforms are identical. Yet we maintain the fiction of real electoral choice at the national level, and at the same time we bemoan the democratic deficit in Brussels.

European elections have little impact

Voter participation in Britain for the last European elections was 22%. But when my British colleagues say they are ashamed of this fact, I can only reply that they should be proud of being the only European nation to have realized that the elections to the European Parliament determine neither a European government

Only once the European election has real consequences will a European *demos* emerge.

Altmaier

nor European policy. The European Council still decides predominantly by consensus vote and the rights of the parliament remain very limited. Moreover, the European Commission risks losing its role as the motor of further integration and becoming another institution for the representation of national interests. It is therefore crucial that the European decision-making processes be politicized. This is the only way to provide citizens with a choice that deserves the label “democratic.”

To me, the essential triumph of the European Convention thus is the provision that the European Parliament would elect the Commission President. As a result, parties are going to name their leading candidates for the European election, work out platforms and suggest alternatives. Only once the European election has real consequences will a public debate emerge and a European *demos* emerge, the absence of which Mr. Siedentop has rightly criticized. The second important decision was to establish a legislative council that meets publicly. This will feed public awareness and help promote more choice among policies.

I would like to conclude with what I think is a disturbing trend taking place at both the national and European levels. As real political choice dwindles, calls within the nation-states grow louder for more direct democracy—meaning referenda. Now the European Convention has decided to introduce a European petition that would oblige the Commission to initiate legislation if one million people demand it. I wonder whether this might not just make people consider existing institutions even less acceptable than they are now.

direct democracy is no remedy

I have a frivolous and a serious question for our third political practitioner, Mr. de Vries. Are you happy that there are fewer party members? And do you share Mr. Altmaier’s opinion that the distinctions between parties are blurring and that democracy is impaired as a result?

**de Weck**

I guess most politicians at some stage of their professional lives experience a wistful but transient desire for a democracy without voters. However, we do have to take seriously the concerns expressed, which are only the symptoms of more fundamental problems.

**de Vries**

I would like to comment on a few points in the discussion. First, it has been suggested that horizontal accountability, as defined by O’Donnell, could improve the functioning of democracies. From the Dutch perspective, I am a little skeptical about this. In the Netherlands, we have a cooperative system known as the Polder

the Dutch Polder Model ceased working

Democratic legitimacy in today's  
interdependent European states requires  
'more Europe' rather than less.

de Vries



participatory democracy is  
mainly for the elites

Model. As you know, at least half of the country is below sea-level and some have said that this explains our cooperative political tradition, because we have had to work together to keep our feet dry since the 12th century. That model—which was much extolled by foreigners—has just collapsed spectacularly and the Dutch political elite is at a loss as to how to replace it. The rise of Pim Fortuyn was the revolt of the public against the perceived coziness of the horizontal accountability system which O'Donnell seems to favor.

Second, participatory democracy: The European Convention has included a sub-chapter on participatory democracy into the draft constitutional treaty and therefore clearly supports that principle. I doubt, however, whether it is an answer to the problems described. Philippe Schmitter has rightly indicated that accountability not only has a spacial dimension—vertical and horizontal—but also a temporal dimension, namely *ex-post* and *ex-ante*. *Ex-ante* accountability refers to participatory approaches, where civil society contributes to the making of decisions. Those who are involved in these processes, such as leaders of NGOs, of churches and of companies, mostly belong to the domestic elites. *Ex-post* accountability is primarily guaranteed through elections, which are supposed to involve the masses. However, when a large part of society refuses to take part in elections, a democratic underclass may emerge that is neither represented *ex-ante* nor *ex-post*. While participatory democracy can therefore be useful to engage elites, it does not necessarily extend to the masses.

In searching for solutions to these complicated problems, it is important to recognize that the nation-state increasingly suffers from a lack of output legitimacy. People throughout Europe feel that the nation-state no longer delivers what politicians are promising. This is partly because so many problems have become international (employment, crime, food safety, pollution and so on), and nation-states often prove incapable of solving them on their own. It is necessary, therefore, to strengthen the decision-making capacity and effectiveness of the European Union.

if power moves to the European level,  
democracy must do so too

If people feel they can no longer influence outcomes at the national level because both problems and solutions have moved to the European level, then we must move democracy to the European level as well. Accountability must be exercised at the level where power is being exercised. In other words, democratic legitimacy in today's interdependent European states requires 'more Europe' rather than less.

We have referred repeatedly to the problem of democratically-elected institutions losing power. Anne-Marie Le Gloannec said that new movements like Attac could constitute part of the solution to this problem. There is no question of the necessity of this kind of participatory democracy because it leads to more diversity. Yet the question remains how these decentralized organizations and institutions can be made accountable. This is because movements like Attac always represent only one certain minority, while—as Mr. de Vries has pointed out—many citizens remain excluded from the democratic process.

Regarding the roles of parties and national parliaments, I must say that I find the argument that parties are more political the fewer members they have a bit too bold. For democracy and political parties are not only about elites. We still have to verify empirically Mr. Krastev’s statement that more people believe in life on Mars than trust political parties. But if this holds even partly true, it is deeply disturbing.

To change this state of affairs we have to, on the one hand, bolster the participatory elements in our representative democracies, and on the other hand, create a better link between the national and European levels. As many binding decisions that shape our societies are now taken at the European level, national parliaments lose importance. We should therefore find ways to help national parliaments regain their voice as the institutional seat of popular sovereignty. National parliaments ought to have more influence on European policies.

First, the discontent with existing democratic practices is not a national or European, but a global problem. It seems to me that the core of that problem is representation. The classic liberal democratic method of representation is that people in territorial constituencies choose individuals from competing parties, whether through proportional representation or first past the post seems to make little difference. But something has changed in the credibility of these mechanisms and the problem now lies in whether people really feel that their preferences, worries and fears are represented at another level. We should therefore start thinking about what can be done to improve, reform or even radically change the nature of representation itself.

We started our discussions with many comments about the “eternal principles of democracy.” To me, that is the wrong place to begin, because democracy has changed its principles radically several times. Even majority rule does not

## Landfried

increase national parliaments’  
influence in the EU

## Schmitter

we must change the nature of representation ...

amount to such a principle, as most democracies do not decide most things only by majority vote.

Consider instead that a basic principle of democracy might be that representatives are given so much legitimacy that people will voluntarily obey their decisions, even if they do not immediately serve their interests. How might that state be reached today? One approach would be to look for the most appropriate constituency for representation. Liberal democracy presumes that such a constituency is territorial and that there is something natural about a county or a commune. This might be the right choice for certain decisions, but there is no reason why the principle should apply all the way from the local to the continental.

... by strengthening civil society ...

An alternative way of identifying and representing constituencies is through civil society. Civil society is a way of organizing passions and interests that do not fit into territorial or partisan categories. The problem is that in real-existing liberal democracies this is not democratic because it systematically over-represents certain interests and under-represents others. What we need is a device that can develop civil society on a more equitable and equal basis. I have suggested a system of vouchers, turning the time-honored principle of “no taxation without representation” into “no representation without taxation.” In this scheme, citizens would have to make a contribution of a certain sum, but could choose how to distribute it to organizations within civil society. This mechanism would certainly increase the funds for the representation of a diverse set of non-territorially bound interests and preferences.

Another important aspect is participation. We tend to think of participation in a traditional way as the practice of people going to meetings or joining groups. Yet much of civil society is financed by contributions to organizations in which people don't participate directly. If you live in the United States for example, you receive an amazing number of solicitations for paying money to different civil society organizations. People will allocate funds to them, because they support their goals, but would not take part in their meetings.

The most important factor influencing these organizations is the development of electronic means of communication. They have given rise to thousands of virtual groups who are constantly connected and who occasionally act collectively to represent their demands. Electronic means of communication have changed basic forms of participation and there is no reason why governments shouldn't provide their citizens with equal access to these technologies. Through it, these



citizens could both gather information and actively identify others sharing similar concerns on the global, as well as the national or local level.

Another suggested approach is through referenda. I generally support the idea, but believe that they have to be more carefully designed. The State of California, for instance, sometimes seems to be an exaggerated version of Switzerland, where a single election can involve as many as 25 different referenda items. It is impossible to make reasonable decisions about such a range of issues and, over time, people stop participating, because they are simply over-burdened by such choices. Referenda, therefore, need to be held in such a way that they really concentrate on political controversies that mean something to society as a whole. A common problem is that citizens often misinterpret the question they vote on. Therefore, one needs a monitoring institution that formulates and tests the formats for specific referenda items. The European Parliament, for example, could shoulder that task, if referenda at the EU level were to be introduced.

... or introducing referenda ...

It was suggested earlier that democracy *in* Europe depends on the democratization *of* Europe, i.e. on shifting the system of citizen accountability to a higher level of aggregation. At the same time, though, decentralization, i.e. shifting accountability downward, should be introduced with regard to other issues. I had hoped that this upward and downward movement would form part of the discussion on subsidiarity, but we have been disappointed to note that it has only generated a concern with avoiding “unnecessary” upward shifts in authority.

Finally, I briefly want to mention the most democratic mechanism of all and which, sometimes, may be the best solution: random choice. Randomly selected citizens can be involved in decision-making, be it through deliberative polling, as James Fishkin has called it, or through a periodic assembly. Right here at the European University Institute, discussions in relation to the possible introduction of electronic voting arrangements are going on. The Greeks used this mechanism to staff many offices at the level of their city-states and maybe we need to rethink its potentiality, even at the European level.

... or through random choice

The last few comments have emphasized three topics—the fact that the crisis of democracy is not exclusively European, but can also be found in the United States, for example; the search for new paths in democracy through direct democracy or new principles for accountability; and the role of the media.

**de Weck**

Therefore my question to you, Mr. Frey: Do the media share responsibility



do the media share responsibility  
for the crisis of democracy?

for the difficulties facing democracy when they imply that people only tolerate politics but cannot influence it, when they constantly emphasize the power of markets instead of the primacy of politics, and when they are sometimes more populist than populist politicians, just for the sake of ratings or circulation?

**Frey**

I would like to include two significant qualifications and must point out that the media play a fundamental part in defining and, in part, making democratic developments and pluralism possible in the first place. The first of these qualifications is that the media today are very diverse and nuanced. We certainly do find throughout Europe newspapers that are more populist than certain politicians. However, Europe, and especially Germany, is distinguished by its unusually dense array of quality newspapers and television stations. Especially the publicly-owned ones do not need to shy away from international comparisons regarding the quality of information they convey—on the contrary. Europe’s journalistic landscape is unmistakably livelier, more diverse, and more profoundly connected to people’s lives than, say, its US counterpart.

In addition, we also have the Internet, as Ms. Le Gloanec has pointed out. This medium is so fascinating because it opens up completely new possibilities for participation and therefore democratization. It makes available to everyone information that used to be reserved for civil servants, specialists, and journalists. The Internet broadens and deepens the exchange of information and opinions and promotes the development of new public spheres because it enables people with similar interests to communicate with each other without the filters of a newspaper or TV editorial board.

the media should reflect  
reality, not educate

On the topic of Europe, Mr. Schneider has given me a great pass to run with. My question is: If not even the parties are interested in the European elections, why should the media report on them? Our main purpose is to report on what exists. I reject expectations that we must educate the people in some way (“You have to do something for Europe!”). It is the job of politics to produce people and agendas that promote Europe and make this new political reality comprehensible to the masses. There is only one way to do this: Important spheres of politics that the media can communicate have to be carried over from the national level to the European and then be put to debate by giving them human faces.

commercial pressure leads to a  
neglect of European issues

I must add in self-criticism, however, that the growing commercial pressure under which publishers and broadcasters work can result in mostly those topics being treated that people want to read about or see. A European perspective



sells poorly. It begins with the language. The risk does exist that we could give European topics less attention than they deserve because of their complexity and the difficulty in explaining them. As the chief of a bureau that covers a government, I sometimes ask myself how relevant the “national political circus” that we show the people every day really is, and whether we shouldn’t be paying more attention to other spheres, i.e. Europe or the business community.

I would like to briefly pick up on what Mr. Wallace said and warn against confusing a decrease in voter participation with a lack of interest in political problems. The antiwar demonstrations as well as the hundreds of thousands of people who took part in environmental activities, such as the cleanup of the Spanish beaches after the offshore tanker disaster there, prove that people are interested in politics. Obviously, however, this interest does not result in deeper commitments to political parties. A great many people, especially young people, no longer feel represented by political parties, which is greatly disturbing. When, as a result, they stay home on election-day and in doing so indicate their dissatisfaction, they are acting quite rationally, in my opinion.

I am somewhat relieved, however, that frustration with parties is at least not concentrated on the right- or left-wing fringes of society. The protest is rather coming from the center of society, but it runs the risk of radicalizing, should the parties fail to react. I think politics can gain legitimacy only when they take on everyday concerns such as employment, education, and pensions. The issue of remodeling social welfare systems is currently being hotly debated in several European countries, but the topic never seems to reach the EU level. The EU is missing an opportunity to make itself relevant to the people. And if it would do so and become more of an advocate for the people, the media would certainly react.

When it comes to transferring additional powers to the European Parliament, I am skeptical. We are witnessing a “dis-simultaneous democratic situation” in Europe, because in many parts of the continent the state of democracy is in completely different stages of development. In Eastern Europe, as well as Eastern Germany, we still have an enormous democratic gap, while political apathy reigns in the West. The phase of building up institutions and establishing a stable party landscape in these countries cannot be skipped simply by referring it to Brussels. Furthermore, for the states of Central- and Eastern Europe, there is something frustrating about once again relinquishing national sovereignty—only a decade

the protest against parties could radicalise



after their democratic re-foundations—to a body that is not perceived as very democratic or transparent.

**von Weizsäcker**  
Europe can never become a  
nation like the US

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Siedentop compared the challenges facing Europe with those in the United States. Doing so, he portrayed the situation in Europe a little more easily soluble than it is in reality. Since its founding, the United States has been one nation. In 1946, Winston Churchill proclaimed the United States of Europe without saying what he, of course, knew well, namely that Europe could never be a nation comparable to the US.

Societies on both sides of the Atlantic are descendants of the Enlightenment. Possibly the greatest legacy of the Enlightenment is the US Constitution and its system of checks and balances. At present many of us would claim not to detect much at all in the way of either checks or balances in the US, but I am convinced that these will reassert themselves. We Europeans cannot exert much direct influence on events in the United States, and certainly not on foreign and security policy. Yet I am completely confident that the core of America's exemplary democratic system will regain its old vigor. We Europeans can, should, and must place our trust in this.

A brief comment on Mr. Schmitter's remarks: For me, the issue of majority voting remains very important. In Germany, unfortunately, it cannot be resolved, because when the decisive moment comes, the two big parties suddenly realize that introducing a majority voting system would benefit the other party while harming one's own.

Mr. Siedentop mentioned the keyword "senate." When the German constitution was being debated, one main point of contention was how we should express our federalism—through the principle of the senate or of the Bundesrat—and as we know, we have a different concept of federalism than do the British or Americans. I personally regret that Adenauer's appeal for the senate principle failed to be accepted in that debate.

As for high voter absenteeism, I agree that the various parties' indistinguishable positions naturally depress voter participation. When Willy Brandt's tenure as chancellor began in the late 1960s, there was a wave of new members in political parties. It reached the point at which children started wearing the logos of their parents' parties on their school book-bags. That was of course utterly exaggerated, but it was a sign of a genuine confrontation within society that was mentioned by both Mr. Altmaier and Mr. Frey. One could witness passionate debates, even in

subways, over whether Hallstein or Egon Bahr had the better ideas for our policy toward the East, and democracy was extraordinarily lively. Today's central issues, for example, whether people my age should still be entitled to medical coverage, do not appear sufficient to mobilize a democratic debate.

Ms. Landfried has demanded that the parliaments be strengthened. The fact is that among all constitutional bodies, parliaments have lost the most power. In Germany, it has been mainly the state parliaments that have ceded power to the state premiers, but so has the Bundestag to the federal government. Moreover, the great global economic and ecological issues are becoming ever more urgent. Increasingly, these problems have to be tackled internationally, through negotiation, and not by parliamentary debates. The inevitable result of all this is a democracy of negotiation, in which the government works out solutions to a certain problem in collaboration with experts. The outcome is then formalized in a kind of treaty which the parliament can only vote on without being able to change the wording. This is how the executive is taking power from the legislature.

Still, I am convinced that democracy is still healthy and finds support where it originated, at least in Germany: at the local level. At the same time, I think the program of European unification is ameliorating national democratic problems, not aggravating them. Ordinary people are also coming to realize that problems increasingly have to be solved internationally and at the European level. A very impressive Welshman told me recently that, as time goes by, he feels increasingly at home both in Wales and in Europe. This statement was not in any way directed against Britain, but merely described the levels that he considered relevant for solving his problems. The Bavarians, for example, could learn a thing or two from this attitude, because they are also skeptical regarding the national level. One of my sons used to say that the Bavarians could become soccer world champions even without the rest of Germany. Yet the people of Bavaria have not sufficiently accepted that the solutions to their problems depend largely on European politics. That is why we should do everything in our power to strengthen Europe's capacity to act, even if this leads, in the shorter term, to a predominance of the executive branch of government.

Turning to the democratization of Europe, I consider much of what we have heard here about France to be very encouraging. One can criticize much about Attac, but many people participate in it and it is a really interesting organization. The pacifist movements are more difficult to put a name on, but they, too, seem to

parliaments are losing power to the executives

European integration alleviates the problems of national democracies and we should therefore strengthen Europe's capacity to act

“The government should dissolve  
the people and elect a new one.”

Siedentop

have raised much interest among democratic associations in helping to establish an autonomous European security-policy capability. In the end, it seems to me that democratic elements can best take root at the European level if we start by augmenting the EU’s executive powers.

**Siedentop**

initially, the United States were  
not a nation

Let me first dare to correct Mr. von Weizsäcker on one historical point. Prior to the Civil War, the political identity of North Americans was much more attached to individual states than to the nation. Virginians were Virginians before they were Americans and that contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War. The gap between the American and the European experience is therefore not quite as radical as you suggest.

Our discussion about democracy in Europe reminds me at times of a cynical comment by Bertolt Brecht during an uprising in East Germany in the 1950s. He said “the government should dissolve the people and elect a new one.” Parts of the debate might benefit from drawing a consistent distinction between a crisis of legitimacy and a democratic deficit. The former refers to the absence of a widely understood and accepted framework for public decision-making. A democratic deficit, by contrast, always exists to some extent.

younger generations take the EU for granted

I also have the impression that in Europe strong Euro-skepticism or -enthusiasm are usually found among middle-aged or older people. The younger generations seem to take many of the achievements of the European Union, such as the free movement of people, goods and services, for granted without showing much gratitude to the EU. I believe that this is largely due to the absence of a widely accepted and understood framework for public decision-making in Europe. Constitutional clarification is therefore fundamental for enabling the European Union to root itself in the aspirations and the identity of Europeans.

**Manzella**

Italian democracy is in a  
particularly deep crisis

Our debate so far has drawn a clear picture of European democracy in crisis. As an Italian I would be the last to dispute this, since television makes an even bigger difference here between political success and failure. The executive’s gains in power that Mr. von Weizsäcker has described have important ramifications. They mean that in elections, the winner takes all. This lays the groundwork for a dictatorship of the majority as the balance of power is dismantled and the rule of law erodes.

However, the many new grass-roots movements in Europe mentioned by Ms. Le Gloannec are becoming a new counterweight. In Italy, for instance, extra-parliamentary movements support the opposition, which is numerically inferior

in parliament. These movements can enter into the present system by cooperating with democratic institutions. Of course, however, these democratic institutions have to renew themselves as well, and Mr. Schmitter has suggested a whole series of possible reforms.

On the subject of civil society, I would like to say to all those who have spoken of a crisis of political representation that, in reality, we are facing a crisis among the represented which, in a sense, has led to the crisis of institutions. The parliaments have a great capacity to renew themselves and could yet become the institution that unites all the new movements with their various demands and wishes. The political parties and parliaments have to take up the demands placed on them by civil society and accept them as a political factors. Equally important is the existence, alongside the democratically elected institutions, of politically independent and functionally representative organs such as the judiciary, independent authorities, and academia, which can provide answers to questions that cannot be resolved by the majority principle.

Finally, I wish to emphasize that I feel very close to the 55% of the Polish population that feels the EU does not restrict the national democracies, but supports them. It is our task to invest in the European level, to develop new solutions to global problems. This is how supranational politics can become relevant for the national and local levels. Let us not forget that we are in Florence, a birthplace of municipal political culture. And we must remain aware that the European Union also begins institutionally in the municipalities and includes all levels from the regions and states up to the national and the European. Europe is manifested in a network of parliaments.

the EU does not restrict, but supports national democracies

## II. The National Level—Similar Challenges, Different Answers?

**de Weck** In our first round of discussion in this glorious room from the *siècle des lumières*, we defined thesis and antithesis in the best tradition of the Enlightenment and searched for the synthesis. We determined that traditional parties are rapidly losing members, and registered new influences in the political process coming from organizations such as Attac that could be considered counter-movements. We regretted the re-emergence of populism while noticing the public's wish for more political accountability. Many democracies are becoming too self-absorbed, but hope is also growing that European institutions can compensate for some deficits within the nation-states. Finally, we diagnosed a sense of helplessness prevalent in many European societies that people are trying to remedy with new, representative, or even direct forms of democracy.

This second round will focus on the national level. We will investigate to what extent Europe's democracies are facing comparable challenges, yet are seeking differing solutions. I am glad that we might now turn more resolutely to the task of developing a synthesis, and it is in that spirit that I welcome our two introductory presentations by Henri de Bresson and Gesine Schwan.

**de Bresson**  
presentation

trend toward decentralization

I think that all nation states in Europe are facing very similar problems. Thus, for example, one often hears the issue of regionalization discussed. Spain has reformed the autonomous rights of its regions to bring policymaking closer to the people. Italy is also in the process of deepening these reforms and even France has begun taking steps toward decentralization. In his book, Mr. Siedentop vividly depicts the strong resistance in France toward these efforts and shows that this was why the process was much slower there than in other states. The debate is mainly about the people's identity, and I think it is an irony of history that 200 years after Corsica, in the person of Napoleon, established a centralist state in France, Corsica is today forcing us to completely rethink the centralized state system. Interestingly, it is not only the national government and its institutions that are resisting decentralization, but other organizations as well, some of them quite surprising. Trade unions, for instance, are currently protesting against the Raffarin government's cautious reforms of France's educational system.

The debate on regionalization is highly interesting, but it does have its dangers. One could see clearly how, in the European Convention, the subsidiarity discussion took a much more conservative, and in my opinion completely wrong, turn. One could have got the impression that Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg were getting all Europe tangled up in their own problems with German federalism. Subsidiarity

The great debates that move our democracies should be conducted at the European level.

de Bresson



is a good thing in some fields to establish closer ties between people and local governments, but we have a very big problem on our hands when nation-states or European institutions are practically banned from taking up culture as an issue.

I have a comment on Mr. de Vries' remark that democracy could regain legitimacy by strengthening Europe. I think that we in France can certainly make some progress when people are able to look to their regions in certain cases. I also think it would be a good thing if European parliamentarians were elected by the regions because they would then have closer contacts to their constituencies. Yet the great debates that move our democracies should be conducted at the European level. Organizations such as Attac or other anti-globalization groups have recently made such an impact because they act beyond national borders. Therefore, key issues such as the environment, our relationship with the United States or with the developing world have to be handled at the European level because they all involve a dialogue between different cultural communities.

This leads, of course, to the question of what should happen to the nation-states. In his book, Mr. Siedentop provides a detailed analysis of the French state and maintains that this centralized model has become dominant at the European level. This may have been the case during the early stages of integration in the years after the Treaties of Rome were signed, but definitely not since the Cold War ended. On the contrary, since then it has been the British system, which was such a latecomer to the EU, that has been gaining influence.

Today, however, the problem is a different one. We want to find the best political system for Europe. It should not be surprising that the Convention has failed to find a conclusive answer to this question. We are, after all, in the midst of the process of producing a synthesis of our governing traditions. That is why I cannot agree with Mr. Siedentop that one or the other system has definitely won out, because it is not yet clear how the structures will develop. Because—as Mr. von Weizsäcker has said—Europe has to become more effective, this lack of clarity could leave us with some big problems in the coming years.

Returning to the nation-states, however, these will retain an important function in the future because they are the focus of solidarity we are accustomed to. Yet we should not rely on this argument too much because we must soon reach solidarity at the European level if we are to progress any further. I am not very surprised when parties such as the CSU and the British Conservatives use the issue of solidarity against Europe because the debate is full of nationalist undertones. These we have to fight, and use the Convention to help anchor

important questions have to be addressed at the European level

member states have to agree on a political system for Europe

the principle of solidarity at the European level. This might take some time to accomplish because Europe has a great deal of contradictions. For instance, I have never understood why the Nordic countries, which are the most advanced of all in social policy, refuse to conduct this debate at the European level.

the media should fully embrace Europe ...

Therefore I call on the media and other policy-conveying institutions, such as political parties and trade unions, to change in this respect. The main obstacle to establishing a European public sphere is the unwillingness of these institutions to fully embrace Europe. Even at a newspaper like *Le Monde*, it is very difficult to deal appropriately with Europe as a topic. Only after the euro had been introduced and we had held endless discussions did we manage to add an EU page to the paper. And it remains difficult to persuade editors in other departments, such as domestic politics or economic policy, to think in European categories. For example, during last year's election campaign in France, I suggested that the European page should cover some aspects of the campaign. I was told curtly that the election was a purely domestic affair, which meant that all the important speeches on Europe given by Chirac, Jospin and others were covered, if at all, only briefly and incidentally.

It seems to me—and in this point I must disagree with Mr. Frey—that one reason for the lack of attention the media devote to Europe has to do with the structure of the media, meaning both newspapers and television. It is often argued that the issue is a purely economic one, that newspapers need big circulation and television shows seek high ratings. Yet one often sees interesting reports in television covering other countries. These programs have helped the public to better understand the world. The subject of European democracy, however, has been ignored. Similarly, the big trade unions are hardly organized at all at the European level; at present, the Confederation of European Trade Unions has played an insignificant role.

... to create a European debate

Therefore we arrive at the dilemma that while the problems are approximately the same—from relations with the US and the war against Iraq all the way to questions of pension policy –, possible solutions are discussed almost exclusively at the national level. If we manage to establish a lively debate at the European level we would be making a great contribution to democracy on this continent.

**de Weck**

I would like to ask Mr. Siedentop a short question. What is your response to Henry de Bresson's criticism that you overestimated the French model's influence on Europe and that more recently it has been the British system that has dominated the EU?

The source of political frustration lies in the system.

Schwan

You must remember that the book was written about five years ago and I entirely agree that the role of France in the European Union has changed considerably. This is partly because France is less certain about what it wants for Europe. But it is also because the British Civil Service can be quite lethally effective and its colonizing of Brussels has made a difference.

Our topic is the challenges facing democracy and I would like to begin with the observation that these challenges are neither national nor regional, but global. We are apparently in a transition period.

Allow me a short anecdote from the transition period between Carter and Reagan. Harold MacMillan was giving a lecture at the Wilson Center in Washington and, leaning on his cane, said to us: “Remember the famous story in paradise when Eve caught that apple and Adam ate it and God was very furious and banned them from paradise. Standing at the gates of paradise, Adam showed Eve all that was for them and told her ‘Eve, we are now entering a period of transition.’” Yes, we too are in a period of transition.

First of all, we must recognize that we are dealing with general challenges to democracy. Trust in institutions is waning—not periodically, but constantly and everywhere. We indeed lack output-legitimacy, because policy-makers are constantly disappointing the expectations placed in them. Since the programs hardly differ, we replace individual politicians, yet still see hardly any significant progress. I think that this has a deeper reason. Power and scope for decision-making are presently so circumscribed in politics that it is systemically incapable of providing the needed solutions. The source of political frustration, therefore, lies in the system and not in individual persons or governments.

At this point I would like to digress briefly into political science. Democracy is a combination of the liberal tradition of the rule of law and the principle of popular sovereignty. Liberalism has an economic and a political component. During the past few hundred years, these two components have existed in approximate equilibrium, but today their relationship is facing a new challenge. Political liberalism in conjunction with the principle of popular sovereignty has as its objective human dignity, which is attained politically through participation. Here, people are the end itself, not the means to an end. Therefore I disagree with Mr. Schmitter’s assertion that the underlying principles of democracy have changed over and over again—only their institutions have. By contrast, our market economy is characterized by competition, internationalization, and the fact that

**Siedentop**

**Schwan**  
presentation

democracy faces general challenges

a conflict between economic and political liberalism

the individual is not an end in himself but a means of production. As such, people can be replaced or dismissed when they no longer function.

The dilemma, then, is that although democracy is barely imaginable without the market economy, the principles of the two partly contradict each other. Until the end of the 20th century, this discrepancy could be compensated for through national control of the market. Thus, one of the basic requirements of politics—providing security—could be fulfilled to a certain degree. Now, the rapid internationalization of economies has disturbed this balance because there are no appropriate mechanisms for imposing regulations at the international level. People might remain interested in politics, but the national institutions no longer have the power to impose the necessary regulations. Mr. von Weizsäcker is certainly right that the national parliaments have lost power to the executive branches. Yet the executives, too, all the way to their pinnacles, meaning Mr. Schröder or the *eminence grise*, the head of the Chancellery Steinmeier, no longer feel powerful either. On the contrary, they are dependent on the powerful interests with whom they must negotiate to make progress in an internationalized economy.

politics is losing power ...

The resulting crisis of democracy, then, is not just limited to finding a new principle of representation, which is why the Internet cannot be a satisfactory solution. The problem is rather where power is located. There is a quote by Bertolt Brecht that says “All power emanates from the people, but where does it go?” We have to ask ourselves this question.

I think that power today lies neither with governments, nor with international organizations, nor individual corporations. Instead, it is divided, both domestically and internationally, among various social groups and organizations, without there being any clear legitimacy. Simultaneously, the economic principle of competition is spreading increasingly into other fields. I think some of Marx’s observations here are strikingly accurate, even though I was never a Marxist. First, he anticipated globalization at a very early point. Also, he recognized that the economy develops its own dynamics that cannot be influenced by individuals. Finally, he posited that politics is helpless against these dynamics. Marx’s proposed solutions are unacceptable because they result in totalitarian systems, but we continue to face the question of how to wrest political power back from an increasingly independent economic system.

... and thus legitimacy

The reason for the disappearing confidence in politics cannot be found in any individual politician, but in their inability to fulfill the basic demands placed



on democratic governments, namely to ensure security and freedom. Take, for example, the labor market, which politics can only partially influence or regulate. If Germany's railroad operator DB manages to cut 40 thousand jobs, that's excellent from a business viewpoint. The problem of the unemployed, meanwhile, lands at the door of the policy-makers. This mechanism functions like that throughout the world, because competition forces us to consider the economic side of things while leaving politics to cover the costs. Yet politics cannot cope with the problem. So when parties claim they can establish better framework conditions, everybody should know this is nothing but political grandstanding.

The dominance of the economic system even extends into categories, into the roots of our language. Recently, when the Brandenburg education ministry asked me for a statement concerning performance-based allocated funds, it called this a "product description." I had to describe my university as a product and analyze its "market." The result of this is that success is no longer measured in how secure people feel or whether they become enlightened citizens, but in the economic results.

Hence, politics is no longer made by majority votes in parliaments. Instead, actors holding power are identified, and solutions are negotiated with them. The question of democratic legitimacy, therefore, is left by the wayside in favor of *ad hoc* decisions made with the power brokers in question. The danger here is that the system is leaving behind more and more people, both nationally and internationally. These people will increasingly defend themselves, meaning that violence levels will tend to rise. If we are to address these problems, we must fundamentally reconsider the meaning of democracy.

Mr. de Weck has asked us to concentrate on a synthesis, so I will ask what practical solutions we can suggest. On the one hand we have, of course, the traditional, democratically legitimate institutions: legislature, executive, judiciary. Then, increasingly, there are the civil society groups that enjoy trust as long as they appeal to a common good. The third group are big corporations that are aware of the problems and are ready to cooperate. Finally, we have the recognition that a solid democracy is based on widespread participation.

By participation I mean not only grassroots initiatives, because these fail to reach many social groups. Rather, what we called "democratic participation in sub-sectors of society" during the 1970s and '80s remains important. This includes the entire economic sector. Even though economic structures are fragmented in our post-industrial society and are therefore difficult to incorporate, we have to

all actors should engage in the political process



the EU could and should re-establish  
the primacy of politics over economics

find new ways of sharing power. This is the only way that participation can once again gain a broad footing.

Finally I'd like to make some comments on the European Union. I see big opportunities for the EU to positively confront the basic problems of democracy. To do so, it would have to use its size and potential to establish framework conditions for global economic actors. It would have to take up people's basic needs for security in the fields of work, education, and health care, and when they are old. If people notice that the EU is responding to their concerns, then it will certainly gain legitimacy. Yet it must stop sacrificing all the people's needs for security on the altar of radical market efficiency, and it must re-establish the primacy of politics over the economy.

Just as importantly, the EU must provide opportunities for participation. If people cannot participate in the political process in their towns or in the economy or any other sector and once they are left behind for the sake of efficiency, they are going to defend themselves. So if the European Union takes people's concerns seriously and fulfills the basic goals of democracy, it has a great chance of growing stronger in the present crisis.

**de Weck**

Now that Gesine Schwan has highlighted the helplessness of politics, I would like to ask Mr. Szabo what the view from America is. One gets the impression that in the US, the executive branch is more powerful than ever, and that the primacy of politics is at its strongest point in years. Do you see a fundamentally different picture for democracy in the United States?

**Szabo**

I would like to start by saying that the current developments in American democracy with the election of George W. Bush and the appointment of Donald Rumsfeld as secretary of defence are an important contribution to the unification of Europe, and we deserve some credit for it.

similar symptoms can be observed in the US:

On a more serious note, the debate about the Americanization and personalization of politics in Europe goes to show that Europe and the US share important trends in political and societal development. I have heard often from German friends the belief that things begin in California, then go to the East Coast and finally come over to Germany. This might be partly true for the question at hand, because some of the social changes of a post-industrial society might have started earlier and advanced more rapidly in the United States. We are now seeing similar developments in Europe. During the 2000 elections, and especially over the elec-

## The nation is dying a slow death in Europe.

Szabo

tion procedures and results in Florida, we experienced a major crisis in democracy. But I was struck most by the fact that the Supreme Court took the final decision. The decision was very controversial, yet it was accepted by all the players including the Democrats. That there were no riots in the streets indicates how deeply the political culture and support for the rules of the game are rooted.

This holds an interesting lesson for Europe. Unlike Britain, which relies on an unwritten constitution, the US has a very legalized system with an explicit listing of civil rights and liberties. We had to develop such a set of legal guarantees with a strong role of the courts because our society is so diverse. Europe is also more diverse in political cultures and interests than the British system and should therefore consider adopting a more formalized system.

A look at the political leadership styles of Schröder, Berlusconi, Aznar and Blair reveals a form of Americanization of European politics. What has been mentioned already by Gesine Schwan and others about the crisis of European democracy could have easily applied to the US. We have experienced a major decline in political parties with very low levels of voter participation and diminishing party membership for at least 30 years. Political apathy reigns among the general public. Political action committees or lobby groups have an enormous impact because our system of campaign finance makes each individual candidate an entrepreneur, responsible for raising his own resources. As a result, candidates enjoy great independence from parties and party discipline has been weakened, creating a more fluid political dynamic. Simultaneously, the gap between the very wealthy and lower income groups has grown dramatically under globalization in the last 15 years. Political parties only rarely manage to aggregate these diverse interests, and in their place many single-interest groups have emerged.

political apathy and the demise of parties

What is happening both in Europe—particularly in Western Europe—and the United States is a far-reaching fragmentation of society as the end of the industrial age is reached and the collective identities, including those with trade unions and political parties, are breaking down. Due to the growth of the knowledge economy in the wake of globalization and its concurrent fragmentation, class identification is declining. I believe that this phenomenon extends to national collective identities, meaning that the nation itself is probably dying a slow death in Europe. Italy might be an example of where Europe may be heading. The mass associations of the industrial age, such as labor unions or political parties, are becoming increasingly de-linked from the social changes that have been occurring over the last 30 or 40 years. Parties no longer play the role of the primary intermediary between

social fragmentation

citizens and politics; the media has taken over that role. As a result, single-interest groups, including NGOs, are just as able to articulate their interests, particularly if these are very specific.

interests are articulated, but not aggregated

Something that strikes me about young people in Europe and specifically in Germany is that they have no generational identity. While the 68ers had a sense of themselves as a generation and took political actions on that basis, young people today in the US or in Europe can't even name the generation to which they belong, such as generation-x or "Generation Golf." They don't believe in collective action of that type, but prefer working in small, often transnational groups on issues like the environment or human rights. The problem with these groups is that they can articulate interests, but they cannot aggregate them. Reaching a compromise between various social groups is very difficult when all pursue their own limited social agenda. But because groups like the Christian right or the Greek or Israeli lobbies in the US can mobilize funds and voters, they have a disproportionately large impact. When voter turnout is low, you can win an election with 20 to 25 % of the electorate and that makes intense, well-organized and well-financed minorities very powerful.

differences between Europe and the US:

Let me close by mentioning two differences between Europe and the US. Throughout the debate, we have heard that one of the reasons for a lack of interest in political parties is the lack of real differences between parties. After so much ideological strife in the 20th century, citizens are ideologically exhausted and are content to vote on the basis of who is the better economic manager. As the intermediary institutions lose importance, personalities matter more.

revival of partisan politics in the US

The US had been developing in the same direction, but this changed suddenly and we are now experiencing the re-ideologization, or at least the return of highly partisan politics. There is a very extreme group in the Republican Party that wields disproportionate influence because of their intense determination and discipline and because the Democrats are split in so many ways. But the trend towards more ideology had already started under the Clinton administration, while Europe continues to move towards centrist politics.

9/11 strengthens national cohesion  
and patriotism

The second difference is that in the US with the terror attacks of 9/11, we saw a return of the idea of nation and, at least for a while, of trust in government. Our government suddenly had to protect citizens against a threat that everyone took seriously. That resulted in a great rise of support and trust in Congress and the executive. The main danger for American democracy now is its relation to threat, fear and war. Many Americans are willing to give up some of their critical capa-

bilities and even some of their civil liberties because they are afraid. A positive consequence is the creation of national cohesion and a sense of patriotism. But on the negative side, the politics of fear can bring back a much stronger executive. During the Clinton Administration people thought that power would revert back to Congress because with the end of the Cold War the role of the President had diminished. This trend has been reversed by 9/11 as national security concerns have gained importance once more.

I would like to remain with the United States for a while. Richard von Weizsäcker mentioned the missing checks and balances. And in his chapter about Europe and the United States, Larry Siedentop criticizes the French for taking American democracy for granted while underestimating its populist potential, which can contradict liberal principles. Hence, a question we must ask ourselves is whether European democracy will follow the US lead in becoming more authoritarian and restrict civil rights. I would like to pose a second question to Larry Siedentop: Why does American democracy, one of the oldest and most successful in the world, lose its control mechanisms every twenty or thirty years? What is the deeper mechanism that, under McCarthyism, during the Vietnam War, and again now, makes this perfect democracy so imperfect?

There are two ways of looking at the situation after 9/11 in the United States. On the one hand, one can see it as in some ways comparable to the McCarthy period. In a period when the American people perceive a clear and present danger, the checks and balances introduced by Madison and others into this subtle and complex political system are temporarily suspended. Madison of course developed those checks and balances precisely because he recognized that a democratic society without a permanent governing class always risked turning authoritarian. In the US, the formal system of checks and balances is backed up by the extraordinary importance of the legal class, i.e. of lawyers in the political system. Yet, whenever opinion is sufficiently aroused, that system fails temporarily. On the whole, I think that this comparison of September 11th is correct and that the habits of the American political class, together with the system of checks and balances, will gradually reassert themselves.

The other way to view the situation is as a result of a longer-term change in the American political system. The shift of population, wealth and influence towards the American South and West will continue changing political culture towards

### **de Weck**

why does American democracy lose its control mechanisms?

### **Siedentop**

this loss of control could be temporal ...

... or permanent



more populism. Then Europe will have to come to terms with the fact that the present Bush Administration is not just an aberration. Europe should not despair of this situation, but rather try to reinforce the influence of the North-Eastern liberal establishment, which can no longer be taken for granted.

**de Weck**

how does Great Britain differ from the US?

The reaction of the British democracy to the Iraq war was very different from the American one. The British press always remained critical, in parliament there was a rebellion within the governing party, and the public remained much more skeptical and insisted on its civil rights. Mr. Wallace, what is the fundamental difference between British and American democracy?

**W. Wallace**

money plays a different part in the US

The biggest difference between the American democracy and any European democracy is the part money plays. Every time I go to the US I am struck by the extent to which the constant search for campaign finance drives congressmen. This gives lobbies a very important role and is part of the reason why our politics drifted apart, irrespective of the immediate war situation.

Great Britain has more experience  
with terrorism

Concerning reactions to the war, most of the British and European public saw the Iraq war within a different context. After all, we have experienced terrorism in Britain for the last 30 years, affecting London, Manchester, Birmingham and Belfast directly. Whereas the Americans interpreted the attacks on the twin towers as an entirely novel threat, it did not look like this to the British public, which had lived with a terrorist threat for a generation already. The Bush Administration then responded successfully by harnessing all symbols of nationalism and an established right wing political agenda. This increased the distance between American and European politics.

American politics becomes more rural,  
European politics remains centered on cities

Other divisions suggest a longer-term trend. American politics are drifting away from the cities and the coasts towards the geographic center, between the Rockies and the Appalachians, and is now evenly divided between those two different political cultures. European politics, including British politics, remains much more centered on cities. Order and social welfare thus automatically remain prime concerns; no established European party could therefore talk about dismantling the welfare state in the way that Republicans from more rural areas do. The popular image in the United States is that you can move away from a city when it becomes unsafe. In Europe by contrast, we know we cannot do that.

Another issue concerns our relation to Islam and immigration. Today's populist issue *par excellence* in Europe is immigration. Some portray multi-culturalism

as *the* treat to the nation. Luckily, established political elites in Europe are on the whole united in resisting that and we all recognize that immigration will increase over the next 10–15 years. This will be deeply unpopular with many voters; the elites will have to explain that it is virtually impossible to exclude all those who try to get across national borders. These tensions might make European politics more American in the sense that the Republicans have strengthened nativist tendencies in the United States, with right-wing Christian and anti-Muslim tones underlying a lot of the public rhetoric. A similar reaction by counter-elites is possible in European countries, but the established elites are united in recognizing how dangerous that would be for the small and very densely populated Western half of our continent.

different positions on immigration

Mr. Wallace, you have given very illuminating reasons for why Europe reacted differently to the war than America. And while you were doing so, you referred repeatedly to “us Europeans,” something we are not used to hearing from the British any more. Yet the question remains: why did the British react the way they did during the Iraq crisis? The country’s traditional and well-founded special relationship to the United States cannot be the full answer.

**von Weizsäcker**

What we have heard from Mr. Siedentop and Mr. Szabo about the development of American democracy has been remarkably interesting. Europeans are not bothered by the fact that the United States was deeply shocked by 9/11, on the contrary, we must examine whether we fully comprehend the gravity of the country’s trauma. What irritates us is, firstly, that Paul Wolfowitz was not the only one to have had expressed a desire, well before the terrorist attacks, for a military solution to the Iraq problem. In his election campaign, George W. Bush said openly he would not repeat two mistakes made by his father, to whom he apparently has a close relationship both personally and politically: He would not halt the troops’ advance before Baghdad, and he would be re-elected.

we criticize the US, as military solutions were already favored before 9/11

Secondly, we understand completely America’s quest for greater security after 9/11, which includes a strengthening of the executive. What we cannot understand is the immense increase in power of the Attorney General’s Office under John Ashcroft. His stewardship unites a Christian creed with the craving for security, resulting in a missionary posture that can only be called fundamentalist. This development profoundly marks our current image of US democracy.

Ashcroft’s posture is fundamentalist

Our third criticism is the manner in which politicians in the US manipulated the media to justify initiatives that would have profound effects—something



the media were manipulated

that also occurred in Britain. It was shocking to hear how carelessly the reasons for war and supporting evidence were presented in the highest official speeches, especially in the State of the Union Address. This kind of conduct would have immediately broken the back of any weaker government. One might think that refraining from accusing the US chief executive of lying is a matter of basic respect. Yet how dysfunctional must a government be to present the most dubious sources in the president's flagship speeches to convince the world that war had to be waged against Iraq? The fact that the reasons for this decision kept changing does nothing to improve the picture.

why did Great Britain act the way it did?

You were right in pointing out that the media in Great Britain remained what they always have been, namely, critical and impressive, with the possible exception of Rupert Murdoch's media empire. It was also very moving to watch a live broadcast of the House of Commons debate over the pending Iraq resolution—a prime example of parliamentary exchange at its most vigorous. Similar debates are rare in the German Bundestag. And Tony Blair, whom I personally deeply respect, took the moral high ground so firmly during the debate that hardly anyone could dissent without appearing immoral from the start. This makes it all the harder to comprehend why the British government reacted the way it did to the American administration's behavior during the Iraq crisis.

I say all this not to criticize for criticism's sake, but in the hope that Britain and continental Europe might reach a better understanding of the tasks before us, including the moral ones. Then we could perhaps help fulfill one of Mr. Siedentop's appeals, that of helping to restore the system of checks and balances in the US. We have a fundamental interest in doing so, because America has always set an example for democracy in the entire world, which is also suffering in the current crisis. This is why we have to further develop our friendship and partnership with the Americans.

**Gibbon**  
because Tony Blair wanted to  
engage with the US

Mr. von Weizsäcker asked why Britain went to war in Iraq. I believe that we took that decision because Tony Blair was following a strategy for engaging with the US. That strategy was to remain as close to America as possible, in the hope of influencing its policies. Given the US' current supremacy and the new ideological framework underlying its actions, that seemed to be the only sensible course. Blair did not necessarily want to go to war and he probably thought that other circumstances might save him from having to commit forces. But in the circumstances, he thought this was the best thing to do. Others might want to ask themselves

The core of the British way of seeing the world:  
“Be philosophical, don’t think about it.”

Gibbon

whether they too had a strategy or whether the entire issue came as a surprise to them.

Lord Wallace described British politics as city-politics, but 75–80% of British voters live in a suburban context. Suburbs contain atomized societies, which we have in common with the US. The difference is that we don’t have ideology, because we don’t really understand it at all. I overheard a lady in a bus saying to another “be philosophical, don’t think about it.” To my mind, that goes to the core of the English, perhaps even the British way of seeing the world.

Mr. Altmaier was perhaps trying to provoke us when he said we shouldn’t be worried about voter turnout. But someone close to Tony Blair once described it seriously as an inverse indicator of contentment: the lower the turnout, the happier the country. Unfortunately, reality looks much bleaker when you consider the number of dispossessed amongst the absentees. We therefore have to treat that question with the utmost care. Turnout in local elections has plunged so deep that some British policy think tanks have suggested hiring management consultants to carry out the duties of local government—as if we didn’t have enough management consultants without going down that route. But local elections in Britain and presidential elections in France have shown that we face a serious threat. When turnout is low, extreme forces can organize themselves and seize more power than their numbers merit.

low voter turnout is a serious problem

Let me make a suggestion from a media-perspective: Politicians often speak in ways that are phenomenally alienating. Their grammar and posture bear no relation to the lives of ordinary people. But how can you trust people waving their arms around in the air, thumping the podium and speaking a language you don’t understand? In addition, many politicians automatically adopt an attacking posture, thrashing no matter what your opponent has said. The media encourage that behavior because we love good rows and cover them extensively. Nevertheless, politicians would find a welcome audience if they articulated their policies differently. Tony Blair promised to do so when he came into power, as did Ian Duncan Smith when he became leader of the Conservative Party. One way the current government is trying to implement that promise is by engaging people in local policy decisions. That might help if the government really is committed despite its centralizing tendencies.

politicians should articulate their positions differently

A final comment on the location of power alluded to by Ms. Schwan. A minister who was about to introduce a bill into parliament told me that the hardest part of his work was already done, because all the lobbyists and action groups had

European integration has succeeded  
so far partly because members agreed  
to forget about foreign policy.

W. Wallace

already spoken to him during the drafting period. That means that these people are appropriating a lot of political power and that politics has moved from the public to the private space. This lack of transparency is a great danger.

**W. Wallace**

A brief reply to Mr. von Weizsäcker. The British Prime Minister persuaded his country to go to war partly to maintain some checks on the United States. As a result, the United States became more willing to engage the United Nations in the question, at least until the beginning of the war. Britain's public support has also helped the US-Administration to think more about the Middle East as a whole, i. e. including the Road Map for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. While Blair has not persuaded his entire political class, his strategy has worked so far.

the EU should accept more  
global responsibility

The European Union faces a large question in this context: how can this weak union handle its role in the world? While the British Prime Minister and the French President can commit their countries to military operations, other heads of government cannot. European integration has succeeded so far partly because members agreed to forget about foreign policy. But current developments in the transatlantic relationship require the EU to think harder about the rest of the world and its responsibilities to it. This presents another major challenge to European democracy and the legitimacy of its institutions.

To be more concrete: the EU has declared that it has a Common European Security and Foreign Policy. Its first test after Iraq lies in Eastern Congo. The EU has committed troops to deal with a potential genocide in Eastern Congo, under French leadership with troops from Britain and a number of other EU states. The majority of European Union members, however, remain hesitant about this sort of projection of military forces. My question therefore is: If we choose not to use the British strategy of following the United States, pulling at their coat for them to slow down, will the European Union be able to agree on a Common Foreign Policy which can take responsibility for preventing disorder beyond its own borders? Given how weak the European confederation is, I have to say that I remain pessimistic.

**de Weck**

To bring the chapter of the US, Europe, and Britain to a conclusion I would like to ask you all to limit your comments to a minute's length.



To me, the real issue is how the US can deal with the amount of power it has today. During the Cold War, internal checks and balances together with the external balance presented by the Soviet Union pushed the US to enter coalitions. Today, the external balance no longer exists and we have to some extent lost the internal balance because of the trauma of 9/11, an event which is unique in American history. These events have been used by a very determined group of people with their own agenda. We have to ask how the US can recover its balance, which is a difficult task for such a powerful country. I believe that Europe could be a friendly balancer, which shares the same fundamental values and yet is an external check.

I will restrict myself to three questions. Firstly, why has America lost its internal balance? The rise of the right is understandable, but not the demise of the left, which seems to have lost the courage to speak out. Secondly, why is there such a vicious contempt for European proposals? When the European nations volunteered to invoke NATO's Article 5, all they got from Washington was a shrug of indifference. I can see the military rationale behind that reaction, but not the political one. And thirdly, what exactly can Europe do to help redress the balance in the United States apart from fulfilling the Administration's requests without any further debate?

Mr. Szabo mentioned the keyword "friendly balancer." If it were going to balance out the US, the European Union would have to act in concert. I think it is an illusion to believe that individual European countries could influence the behavior of the US. Take, for example, the unbelievable situation of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, who are completely bereft of their rights, yet hardly anybody in Europe has protested against this situation.

Two things struck me about this transatlantic debate. First, Europe tends to universalize its paradigm. It criticizes that the US and some other parts of the world are becoming more religious. But the rise of secularism over the last twenty years is a purely European phenomenon. Elsewhere, Islam is playing a more important role in politics as is Christianity in the United States. Europe is therefore the exception rather than the rule and we should bear that in mind.

Secondly, while America has a fascination with hard power, Europeans believe that all problems can be solved with methods akin to the *rapprochement* between

### **Szabo**

Europe could be a friendly balancer for the US

### **de Vries**

### **Fagiolo**

Europe can only be a balancer, if it acts in concert

### **Krastev**

France and Germany. Both positions are problematic, particularly since both sides tend to criminalize the behavior of the other. The US fiercely criticizes European actions, and Europe declares Bush and his administration to be mad. This stance is counter-productive and will constitute a major problem in transatlantic relations.

**von Weizsäcker**

The effort to exercise influence on the US has been mentioned as a reason for Britain's conduct. This effort has not always been successful, because even with the second UN-resolution, the US ultimately did not respond to the British wishes. Still, I find this explanation for a motive convincing.

Second, solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most pressing tasks for the global community. The most recent initiative, the so-called Road Map, was produced in large measure through British-German cooperation. Continuing to work hard on this fundamental issue is a European priority and I am convinced we will succeed.

Great Britain must be a co-leader  
in European integration

Third, I would like to recall the British-French summit at Saint Malo, even if it took place already five years ago. We must provide the British with a role as co-leaders in Europe's integration process. This role will be located in the field of security policy, where, together with the French, they have made significant progress that has completely defied all the problems in the two countries' mutual history. Following that, we will be able to deal with questions of a common European foreign policy. Also, integrating Britain the way so many of us would like to in no way means limiting our cooperation with the French—far from it. However, we must be much more careful in talking about a two-speed Europe than we have been.

Finally, I would like to respond to Mr. Fagiolo and Mr. de Weck by saying that I do not share their pessimism over the future. I am confident that we will succeed in making the British more interested in our mutual challenges. For now, at the end of the crisis over Iraq, we understand Tony Blair, despite his occasional moralizing, much better than many others who made prominent statements concerning the crisis.

**de Weck**

Now that we have heard the word Islam used several times, I would now like to ask our Iranian colleague Ali H. Jafari for his views.

**Jafari**

Here I would like to present some Iranian perspectives. Iran as one of the most



advanced countries in the Middle East is currently undergoing a process of democratization. Although our experience with democracy is different to yours, we are now considering the next step forward in consolidating our own form of democracy. We have been analyzing the developments in your countries over the last 50 years to determine how we may benefit of them. In a recent declaration, our president drew a clear distinction between democracy and civil society and we are currently exploring options for developing a civil society.

In Iran, however, and particularly within the conservative camp, we have some criticism and questions concerning democracy in the West. I would be curious to hear your answers to these doubts. First, you mentioned that the low rate of participation in elections leads to a situation in which delegates only represent a minority. In Iran, by contrast, the president represents over 70% of the people.

Second, we are concerned about the dominance of capital and economic special interests in important decisions. These special interests can sometimes become more powerful than democratic institutions.

Third, some very concrete facts seem to fly in the face of European democracy. Take Austria as an example. Because the outcome of democratic elections did not please the EU, Austria was banned from some formal meetings and other occasions. How can this count as democracy? Then in Algeria the legitimate vote of the people was overturned by a *coup d'état*. We are trying to understand why Western Europe supported that action instead of acting against it.

Finally we come to the case of Turkey, which might soon be a member of the European Union. What will happen if an Islamist party wins the election—and the latest polls suggest that could soon be the case? Would the EU accept that as a democratic procedure?

Concerning Iran, you know better than I do that more than 50 years ago Dr. Mohammed Mossadeq was democratically elected as Prime Minister. But his government was toppled by an Anglo-American *coup d'état* and the Shah assumed power, receiving support from the West. Now that the people are not asking for democracy, there is talk about imposing and exporting democracy or even invading Iran. These contradictions and apparent double standards cast doubts on the intentions and honesty of the West and we are searching for answers to these questions.

At this point I would like to pause for a moment to take stock of where we are before continuing the discussion with some fresh news. In our discussion we

Iran's criticisms of Western democracy:

double standards

de Weck

have been referring more often to cultural than to institutional factors. One of the lessons for me, then, is that the functioning of a democracy depends a great deal on cultural considerations. Yet this aspect of the debate is usually given little attention in the European discussion of democracy.

We then—particularly in the context of the war in Iraq—turned to our relationship with Islam. One significant difference between Europe and the US in this respect is that Islam is part of our history, our next-door neighbor, and is present in the midst of our societies. In my opinion, this close association explains some of the differences between ourselves and the US.

Finally, a real utopia: imagine, if you will, that Turkey has become an EU member, and that we have a Common Foreign and Security Policy with a European foreign minister. This foreign minister would have to deal with our next-door neighbors Iraq and Iran. This alone gives us an idea of the demands that will be placed on any common foreign policy.

Yet before we return to our debate over democracy and the nation, I have good news for you. The Czechs have voted by an overwhelming majority to join the European Union. The latest preliminary results from Prague indicate about 76 percent approval of membership. More than 54 percent of the country's 8 million eligible voters went to the polls in the two-day referendum. I would like to request a commentary from Ms. Kolarska-Bobinska.

the Czech Republic votes for  
EU-membership

**Kolarska-Bobinska**  
this predetermines other referenda

I am really happy and surprised about these results because the Czechs used to regard EU accession with skepticism. Now they achieved an even better result with a higher turnout than Hungary, which was always seen as the most enthusiastic nation. With this result, the outcomes of other referenda are predetermined, because it is not imaginable that the Baltic states could say “no” under these circumstances. Holding successive referenda created a feeling of solidarity in the region. I believe that the previous votes in Hungary, Slovakia and Poland helped the Czechs take that decision. The experience that one nation would adapt its behavior to developments in neighboring countries in such a way is new and very positive to me.

**von Weizsäcker**

I would like to congratulate Vaclav Havel, who contributed so much to the developments culminating in this decision. It shows that, to a certain extent, he still is “in office.”

Democracy is also about identity.

Le Gloannec



Let's now return to our topic at hand, the relationship between European democracy and the nation. The media is certainly an issue here, but also the relationship between citizens and consumers: Most consider democracy and the market economy to go hand-in-hand, but democracy requires citizens and the market economy produces consumers. When the sense of citizenship yields to consumerism, democracy can be weakened as a result. Our topic also includes the issue of elites, or who will be the backbone of these democracies in the future.

In her contribution, Gesine Schwan said that in a situation when power has become diffuse, we need to strengthen democracy at the European level in order to increase the efficiency and legitimacy of political decisions. While I believe that this is true, we have to bear in mind that democracy is not only about institutions. It is also about identity, the “we” of “we, the people.” What I mean is not an ethnical community. But a *demos* does not only consist of discursive interaction or what Habermas referred to as “kommunikatives Handeln,” but also of common rules of the game and an underlying common language. This language is common both symbolically and literally, i.e. we have to rely on the same cultural background and speak the same language in order to understand each other. This culture can of course be very diverse and can be enriched by newcomers, but there has to be a common basis.

At the European level, however, this common identity is not developed enough. In our discussion, some have noticed promising developments towards a European identity, but we are still far from reaching the goal. European democracy is thus faced with a time differential between a fast development of democratic institutions on the one hand, and a very slow process perhaps leading to a European identity on the other. Even if identity is being eroded at the national level, it will certainly take a long time to be established at the European level—if it is at all.

I would like to briefly return to the question of where power is located in a fragmented society. The problem of fragmentation is exacerbated in a supranational community such as the European Union. It is indeed difficult to determine exactly with whom and at which level the power to determine political outcomes lies. But this is precisely why we need institutions such as parliaments that are committed to the common good. It is not sufficient for a democracy to enable as many special interests as possible to participate. For who would represent the interests of those who cannot afford to participate, even via new technological mechanisms?

**de Weck**

**Le Gloannec**

European democracy requires a European identity

**Landfried**



I believe that we cannot simply change the principle of “no taxation without representation” into “no representation without taxation.” To my mind, an inclusion of a maximum number of interests can never replace the democratic legitimacy of national or European politics, it can only supplement it.

Then I would like to react to Gesine Schwan’s statement that people are losing confidence in parties and politicians also because national institutions can no longer fulfill people’s needs for work, health care, and education. The question we have to ask is whether and how European institutions could solve these problems.

politics, the economy and the media  
have to remain separate

For the ability of politics to offer solutions it is important that we differentiate both on the national and the European level between the spheres of politics, the judiciary, the economy, academia, culture and the media. In reality, however, we increasingly observe that the boundaries between politics and the media or academia and the economy are becoming blurred. But if politicians act more and more according to the principles of the media and leading journalists act increasingly politically, that leads to both institutions failing to fulfill their tasks. The same is true for academia and the economy. Universities cannot be evaluated solely by economic criteria and those who attempt to do so will in the end damage both sectors. I could name many more examples. Continuing to differentiate, though, remains crucial for the ability of parties and politicians to find solutions. If that cannot be achieved, than shifting responsibilities to the European level will not increase the output-efficiency of politics either. Once the differences have been reasserted, however, it will become important to communicate across the borders of individual disciplines.

**Frey** Ms. Schwan’s comments on the growing dominance of economics in society have given me plenty to think about. I work at ZDF, one of Germany’s two big public television channels, and when I think about it, I have to admit that we, of course, feel economic pressures as well. We feel the same financial pressures as she did when asked to draft a “product description” for her university. In addition, we have to fight for ratings—something I basically approve of, because only when we have proven that we are a relevant force in the television landscape do we qualify for public funding. Our job is to produce reports for viewers, not for journalists. Still, not every television “product” can be successful. A cultural magazine show cannot reach as many viewers as a crime drama can. That is why guidelines are so important on what “niches” a TV program, a university, or a theater should

The media cannot compensate  
for the failings of policymakers.

Frey

consciously occupy to go beyond the “product” and remain loyal to those things that are valuable both culturally and socially.

Still, I remain skeptical of all the well-meant attempts to manufacture a European public sphere. They have rarely been successful. Very few people watch Arte, 3Sat, or EuroNews, for example, compared to the amount of funding these stations receive. The European channels that we now have do not reach the great majority, rather the elites who are convinced of the European idea anyhow. However, we need these efforts, even if we shouldn’t have any illusions about their effectiveness and mass appeal. Broader success can be achieved only if Europe can be made more comprehensible as a dimension of decision-making that directly affects the viewer. The media cannot compensate for the failings of policymakers.

If we want to produce a European public, then we have to expose the European actors to the rules of democracy and the media. In practical terms, this could mean establishing public competition for three key positions, namely, Commission President, Foreign Minister, and President of the European Council. By giving people a direct say in filling these key positions, this would give the European elections a whole new significance. A direct election would increase both voter participation and media interest. It would also create an incentive for politicians to express themselves in different languages to seek support from people across the EU. It seems very anachronistic to me that neither Chirac nor Blair nor Schröder—Europe’s top three politicians—is able to communicate with his European compatriots outside his native tongue. In contrast to the business world, our political stages are still restricted and national, precisely because the actors do not have to have an interest in communicating at the supranational level as they are elected solely by their national constituencies. A politician hoping to be directly elected President of the European Commission could not afford to ignore major segments of the European public such as Germany, France, or Britain. He or she would make sure of securing media attention in all these countries.

I have an experience to share with you in this respect. When I headed ZDF’s international desk four years ago, we launched a small, daily European news show called *Heute in Europa*. Each afternoon between 4:00 and 4:15 we purposely abandoned the nationally-centered daily news approach to take a look at the world from a European perspective. Despite the skepticism of our programming planners, the show was a hit, perhaps because we didn’t concentrate on Brussels, but on every-day life in Europe. We wanted to show how people in Austria, Portugal, or Estonia deal with the same problems we face here in Germany. Besides its

the media cannot manufacture  
a European public sphere

European actors must follow  
the rules of the media



ratings success, it also affected the station's other programming. It opened the eyes of editors at our news bulletins *Heute* and *Heute Journal* to different kinds of stories. It was a modest beginning, but nonetheless represents a step towards Europeanization that ZDF has been working at every business day for the last five years.

Europe must defend its values

To return to the question of economization, however, I do not completely agree with Ms. Schwan. I do not believe we can push the genie back into the bottle. Globalization is a reality and we must now decide whether we can again tame today's unbound capitalism. Simple appeals will never suffice to turn this around. Rather, we will have to learn to live with it while defining and defending our social, and one might say, European, values. This debate is presently being passionately conducted, though in Germany it seems too pragmatic to me, and not fundamental enough. We ask too much what we can still afford. But what this is really about is defending European values. In the US, the approach to political issues, whether they be social or military in nature, is completely different. A level playing field in education, compensating regional differences through infrastructure projects, protecting individual lives and communities—these achievements cannot be dismissed out of hand as a belt and braces mentality. This is about preserving a piece of civilization, even if we Europeans may have paid too little attention to the responsibility of the individual in the past and too much to that of society.

**de Weck** You mentioned that a European newscast was successful, yet throughout Europe reporting is increasingly centered on national issues. I would therefore like to ask Peter Frey and Gary Gibbon why, given the progress of globalization and Europeanization, European issues still have a hard time getting air-time?

**Frey** I think that the extreme pressures of competition in television force us to discard everything nonessential. This is something that hurts not only European issues but national politicians as well. Still, we do have new, talk-oriented formats such as *Morgenmagazin* in which we try to incorporate the European perspective by including certain guests. This kind of approach didn't exist seven or even five years ago.

One step toward practical integration might be to include European authorities and associations into the supervisory structures of the public broadcasters, so as to provide their own input. Experience teaches us that not only our given

War makes for good television and hence for good ratings. What they do in Brussels is much too complicated.

de Vries

reality influences programming, but so do certain expectations from the political sphere.

To my knowledge, no European issues program is currently running on British television and I think the chances of having one soon are very slim.

Ms. Landfried mentioned that politicians can no longer offer solutions. This touches on an essential dilemma of the current political trend of the “third way,” where people want to pay fewer taxes, but get better public services. This means that we either need to rethink policies or manage expectations. Tony Blair won his first elections in 1997 on one of the most modest slogans ever conjured by a politician: “things can only get better.” But with the help of images or “sight bites” used by the media, the image was created that Labour would transform things. The government kept its modest pledges, but created such a spirit of potential and excitement that expectations need to be managed or the political debate changed or else the disappointment will continue.

Mr. de Vries, is there a greater willingness to present European topics in the Dutch media?

To answer this question, we have to distinguish between the written press, radio and television. In the Netherlands, radio coverage is generally not bad, but also not very extensive, and much depends on the quality of the correspondents in Brussels. In general, European news is still defined as news from Brussels; comparative reporting about policy issues does not happen yet.

The situation is worst in television for all the reasons that Mr. Frey mentioned. When I asked the head of a current affairs program on public TV some years ago why they jumped from information about The Hague to Afghanistan skipping Brussels, his answer was: “War makes for good television and hence for good ratings. What they do in Brussels is much too complicated.” This was uncharacteristically forthright but he probably captured the general sentiment well.

By contrast, the situation in the written press improved a lot and it now tends to cover European issues fairly extensively. For example the major Dutch newspaper “NRC Handelsblad” has deliberately introduced a stronger European angle into its sectoral reporting. Be it social affairs or women’s issues, reporters have to include what the European Union is doing, because half the legislation affecting the Netherlands is made in Brussels. Not covering the European element

**Gibbon**

politicians are creating expectations they cannot fulfill

**de Weck**

**de Vries**

Europe in the Dutch media: covered a little on radio ...

... but barely on TV ...

... and fairly extensively by the written press



would therefore mean to miss a lot. Unfortunately, this practice still is an exception. Another newspaper tried to establish a European dialogue by publishing articles by intellectuals from other countries. This interesting experiment in creating something akin to an *agora*, a European public sphere, never really took off, though.

The European Commission's information strategy, I regret to say, hasn't been very helpful. Its press releases tend to state the content of regulations without translating them into specific domestic situations. But if the Commission does not spell out what exactly a particular piece of legislation will change in which country, the news is of little value to the media. With a more intelligent and agile communication strategy the Commission could contribute much more to the establishment of a European public.

### **Hemmati**

new forms of participation in  
international movements

I would like to add a few comments from my experience, which might be missing in this debate. At the international level, movements are arising that point beyond fragmentation and the defense of narrow interests. In August 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio plus 10, was convened in Johannesburg. Over 50.000 people took part in it. Many of them were not actively involved in the negotiations of the outcome document, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, but focused on the events around them, such as conferences of businesses, trade unions, NGOs and mixed meetings of various stakeholders.

In Johannesburg, these groups did not just lobby to ensure that their suggestions were incorporated in the official documents. Rather, corporations, NGOs, trade unions, local governments, women's groups, faith communities, the media and many more were offering their contributions to implementing the decisions taken earlier. These people meet at summits like this one and in many cases agree on a course of action, rather than just a lobbying strategy. The attitude among many of them seems to be that the best thing governments can do is to step out the way, remove the barriers for necessary action and allow stakeholders to do what is necessary.

are these movements legitimate  
and transparent?

These movements, however, often face challenges of legitimacy and transparency. Their actions can, for example, lead to major investments in African countries, circumventing the World Bank and national governments and agreed development plans and processes. They can form very powerful coalitions between different groups of people who together master a lot of convening and sometimes media power. They are a reaction to a political situation where things are not

Many today perceive nation-states and national governments as barriers.

Hemmati

happening that people feel should be happening, but they operate without a real discussion about their transparency, legitimacy and accountability.

Ms. Hemmati, you are describing a powerful movement that has emerged transcending national borders. May I ask you, as a psychologist, whether anything is changing psychologically so that the nation-state is no longer the main point of reference?

**de Weck**

My impression is that many today perceive nation-states and national governments as barriers. A lack of good governance, corruption, and inappropriate or outdated legislation are seen as barriers for investment and for people who want to act and productively contribute to solutions. Governments often fail to create the necessary enabling environment. People therefore still relate to national governments and try to impact them, but as stakeholders affected by decisions, they also take actions themselves. Bodies such as the UN or national governments can and should convene such groups, and thus channel efforts that aim to implement decisions taken at the international level. Governments have expressed repeatedly that they cannot achieve sustainable development on their own, but they need to improve their interaction with stakeholders and engage in partnerships with them.

**Hemmati**

What I want to point out is that a large group of individuals and organizations stand ready to engage actively and that political parties and governments underestimate the willingness of people for change. Even if much of human behavior is not entirely rational, people do invest their energy and time rationally. For example, they will, in the long run, only participate in political processes if they have control over what is happening and if they can see their impact. Otherwise, they will walk away. They will participate in a framework with which they can identify. Whether that unit of identification is the Languedoc, Bavaria, the hometown, or the globe, varies. But whenever they do identify with a region or with an issue because they have a stake in it, then they will participate if they have the opportunity and if the process is right for them.

people will participate in a framework with which they can identify

Mr. Altmaier, Mr. Schneider, do your voters identify more with the nation than with Europe?

**de Weck**

Vaclav Havel once said before the German Bundestag that we all have a private, a local, a regional, a national, a European, and an international identity. The drama

**Altmaier**

One cannot impose a European identity by law.

Altmaier



a “European CNN” could create  
a European identity

of the 20th Century, he said, was that the people attached far more importance to their national identities than to the others. Yet in Germany, perhaps as a consequence of the country’s late reunification, the tendency to identify with the nation is paradoxically rising just as the nation’s problem-solving abilities decline. I think we can observe similar tendencies in other European countries, which should give us something to think about.

If one cannot impose a European identity by law, what would need to happen for it to grow? First, we need a European counterpart to CNN. This American news network might not be all that good, but it can be viewed all over the world and conveys a certain image of the United States and of journalism. EuroNews, by comparison, is more like a sleeping pill. With all due respect to public broadcasting in Germany, I do not believe that a joint project of public broadcasters could produce the kind of program I have in mind. Instead, we should provide private radio and TV broadcasters with European funding so that they can set up something comparable, with correspondents in all countries, excellent access to news in English, and global reception. We simply must accept that English has become the universal means of communication.

Europe must strengthen its  
military capabilities

Secondly, Europe has suffered from the resurgence of military solutions to problems since 1991. With the Gulf War, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and now the second Iraq war, military strategies have become much more acceptable, and this is a field in which Europe has little to offer. The difficulties in the Congo have thrust these problems into the spotlight. We would have been unable to conduct the Kosovo war on our own, even though it was a limited military conflict against a weakened Serbian regime. Currently there is no European country ready and willing to allocate the necessary funding to develop weapons systems that could rival those of the US.

Our only possibility, then, is to strengthen military cooperation and thereby achieve synergy effects. Sooner or later that will raise the question of sovereignty, because such a division of labor means that one can no longer use one’s military capabilities independent of others. We did not even approach this issue in the Convention and it would probably have been premature to do so. In the next European Convention, however, it will play a central part, because it is essential both for a European identity and to assure Europe’s place in the world.

**Frey**  
the BBC World Service is our CNN

Mr. Altmaier, I beg to differ. My reply would be: We already have a European CNN, the BBC World Service. A genuinely European program can only arise once

It is the responsibility of local politicians to act responsibly with regard to Europe.

Schneider

Europe's political identity has developed far enough to be expressed through a broadcaster. It is a question of relevance. Once people realize that Brussels is making decisions that affect their lives, they will start paying attention to the debates in the European Parliament and Commission. And if the pensions problem is solved and the next military intervention is determined at that level, then the people will watch a European broadcaster, but no earlier than that!

CNN not only expresses an American identity, it also helps establish one. That was my argument.

No, CNN creates, if anything, a globetrotter identity.

On the question of identity, I have an example to relate. The taxi driver yesterday was a British citizen, has been living in Italy for the last 26 years, and comes from both British and Italian families. When I asked him what he feels like, he answered "European." But when I asked what he feels like when there's a soccer match, he said "English." In the end everyone, it seems, can decide where he or she belongs.

You asked earlier what my constituents identify with. The situation in Thuringia is an unusual one, because German reunification is only twelve years old, which is also how long Thuringia has existed as a federal state. People there have emotional ties to their home towns, they feel primarily like Erfurters, etc. This is followed by the categories German and European, because the European idea is strongly rooted, particularly within my generation. Since the introduction of the euro, we tend to take Europe for granted and perceive Europe as an indivisible unit, especially in comparison with other states.

Mr. Frey mentioned how necessary it is to have relevant achievements at the European level. These achievements already exist, but are not made known at the national level. Since I am a budgetary expert, the first thing that enters my mind is the European subsidies law. It limits public subsidies to 35%, which saves public funds and raises efficiency, because without this law, the states would keep hiking their subsidies payments. But what do the states do? They complain that Brussels doesn't permit higher subsidies. It is therefore the responsibility of local politicians to act responsibly with regard to Europe instead of treating it as a scapegoat.

Finally, I would like to comment on Mr. de Bresson's suggestion to strengthen parliaments and increase regionalization. I think that stronger regionalization is



Altmaier

Frey

Schneider

local politicians must bridge the gap between Europe and its citizens

authority within the EU should be clearly delineated



not feasible, at least in Germany at this small scale. The regional parliaments also often lack the necessary capacities, which is why many federal states are strongly executive in their governance. I think it would be more worthwhile to raise the status of national parliaments, with a clear allocation of competencies that is reflected in the budgets. It was a mistake, for instance, to transfer authority over agricultural policy to the EU. We, as a national parliament, have no control at all any more over expenditures in this field. Yet EU agricultural policy contradicts the Lisbon target of becoming the world's most innovative region by 2010. That is why we should strengthen the national parliaments, establish a second European chamber with national deputies, and clearly delineate authority.

**Manzella**

During Mr. Schneider's presentation I was thinking, we poor Italians, why have we just declared German federalism with the Bundesrat to be our role model? Now he has destroyed this role model. Well, that's the way it goes, but this is all part of Europe.

building Europe bottom-up

When discussing European identity we must keep in mind the question of EU citizenship. A widespread consensus has it that European citizenship cannot replace national citizenship. Therefore we have a certain subsidiarity of identities. And this structure means that the attempt to create a European public is doomed to fail. Instead, we should try to make the national publics more receptive to Europe and in so doing pursue a bottom-up approach of building Europe. Vital in this respect are civil society movements and Europe's process of regionalization. In EU jargon one might say what we need is more the method of Lisbon and less the method of Maastricht.

If we want to identify the specific characteristic of European identity, it would be, in my opinion, our definition of democracy not only as free elections but also the rule of law. At which point I turn to what our friend from Iran has said: Free and fair elections are not enough. Democracy requires the rule of law to defend a multitude of inseparable values.

**Kolarska-Bobinska**

We have been talking a lot about the degree of political participation in terms of partymembership and turnout in elections. My question would be whether we can speak about a general decline in participation and maybe a de-politicization of societies, or whether people engage through different channels. To analyze the situation correctly, we have to take into account whether and how people are involved in civil society groups. As a result, we might have to adopt a different



definition of politics and change political activities accordingly. Instead of only complaining that fewer and fewer people take part in elections or are members of parties, our democratic societies should design innovative ways to raise people's interest and include them in the political process.

Let me come back to the relation between the media and the public. The media on the one hand create public opinion, but they also partly respond to it. The development of the written media in Europe over the last 15 to 20 years is striking. Newspapers are devoting less and less attention to national politics and have almost abandoned international news to focus on lifestyle, gossip and sports. Across Europe, glamour and gossip magazines like "Hello," "OK," and "Now" are growing, responding to the wishes of people who are turning away from politics. Our problem therefore remains how to energize politics.

A big part of this question is the quality of political leadership. It is not accidental that the type of great leader of the previous generation has disappeared, because our recruitment processes do not favor such personalities. We therefore have to ask how we could educate a new generation of citizens and how we can persuade our publics that politics matter to them. Given the central role of the media, we also have to find ways to dramatize politics so that people feel these issues relate to them. The mantra of British politics today is that all that matters to voters is education, health, pensions and law and order. The broader issues like freedom, world civilization and famine in Africa matter only to a small proportion of the European electorates. That has to change if we want to re-create an active political class.

I want to return to the effects of mental and rhetorical paradigms. In Europe and elsewhere, we apply terms taken from the economic sector to other fields, thus for example when we speak of customer-friendly public administration. This rhetoric influences our way of thinking and I think it is dangerous.

I must disagree with Mr. Frey who said that we do not need Arte and EuroNews because the elites are already convinced Europeans. Unfortunately, European elites are not convinced at all, which is why we need truly good programs to make clear to them the significance of Europe. We citizens do not pay our fees to the public broadcasters out of the goodness of our hearts, but because they inform and edify us.

## **W. Wallace**

political leadership is crucial for making politics attractive

## **Schwan**

## **de Bresson**

we do need good European media!

When the French channel TF1 was privatized, its Berlin correspondent was withdrawn and there are hardly any correspondents in Brussels anymore. So if not even the public broadcasters shoulder this task, why should we pay? We must do something to help a European public emerge. The elites also need qualified information that they can use in the public debate. In radio and in certain newspapers this already exists to a certain extent. At least there is competition between populist and serious newspapers. In television, however, we have a big problem.

**de Weck** Permit me now to briefly sum up our debate on the media. The European Union has difficulties with the media for many reasons. The media love events, but the EU is a slow development. The media love simplicity, but the European process of unification is highly complex. The media prefer to concentrate on people, while the EU is dominated by authorities and assemblies. Conflicts are easy to report on, but European unification is an arduous search for compromises. Finally, the media love speed, but the EU is slow. The relationship is therefore a difficult one, but the EU could certainly make a contribution. If, for example, it had a speaker as visible as Ari Fleischer, then the European Union, although it might not yet have a phone number, would at least have a face.

### III. The Future of the European Union— Prospects for a Supra-National Democracy

I would like to open our third session with a short anecdote. Three small boys—one French, one German, and one Swiss—are debating the vexing question of how babies are born. The little Frenchman knows best: “Papa et Maman couchent ensemble et font un bébé.” “No,” says the German boy, “everyone knows that the stork brings babies to their parents.” “But no,” says the Swiss boy, “with us it’s different from canton to canton.” Similarly, each EU country is different from the others, despite the parallels in culture, history, and in how they understand democracy. And precisely this is our topic: What is the future of European democracy? How can it take shape?

We should, of course, incorporate the European Convention’s draft constitution in our comments, yet also pay attention to new trends, such as the introduction of elements of direct democracy. We should then ask ourselves what possibilities of strengthening European democracy exist beyond constitutions and institutions. Some that were already mentioned include pan-European parties and a European citizenship. And if sufficient time remains, we should take a look at the European foreign and security policy, because a democracy incapable of defending its interests is a fair-weather democracy only, and that does not fulfill our aspirations sufficiently.

Ms. Wallace, a devoted European veteran of both the intellectual discourse and practical policymaking, and Mr. de Vries will briefly introduce us to the topic at hand.

On the question of the future of democracy in the European Union, I would like to explain to you my three worries and offer three challenges. I apologize if my arguments are slightly contrary and if I caricature—both are intended as constructive provocations.

My first worry is that we treat democracy too much as an end in itself and neglect its role as a means to other ends, namely good governance and good outcomes. Many claim that democracy may not be efficient, but that it is better than all alternatives. Nevertheless I was struck by Mr. de Vries’ honest remark that the Convention paid too little attention to effectiveness and output legitimacy as criteria for reform. I fear that this may have been a big error and not a small one.

Secondly, I am worried that we might get caught in a trap. For all the policy predicaments that escape the grasp of national democracies and all the democratic flaws we encounter at that level, we have proposed as a potential solution the strengthening of European democracy. Although I share your enthusiasm

de Weck

H. Wallace  
presentation

democracy is also a means to other ends

European democracy cannot replace  
national reforms

The European political process has to address the normal worries of ordinary voters.

H. Wallace

for supranational democracy, we must not let go of the quest for improving our national democracies. Italy, for example, has in the past relied too much on a European *dea ex machina* and is now paying a large price for it. The same risk concerns perhaps all European countries.

a modern European democracy should:

My third worry is that we risk developing an old-fashioned model of democracy at the European level. In this debate for instance I only remember Minu Hemmati and Philippe Schmitter trying to focus our attention on the stakeholders in our societies and their role in governance. David Simon, who worked with Richard von Weizsäcker on an advisory group for Romano Prodi, would ask some tough questions about our expectations of public institutions and about the role public institutions should play in facilitating the work of private actors or engaging them in reform processes. We therefore need to think harder about the requirements of an up-to-date democracy in which the roles and contributions of public and private institutions are changing fast. Doing so we need to take into consideration our needs both for representation and for the delivery of outcomes.

... propose effective solutions to citizens' worries ...

That brings me to the challenges. The first concerns effectiveness. Citizens will develop loyalty to or trust in European institutions only if they are seen to be delivering valuable outcomes. A certain Mr. Wallace complained earlier that voters were only interested in health, housing, education, employment and so on. But we have to be realistic and accept that that's the way it is. It is an illusion to expect citizens generally to be preoccupied with the broader and more abstract issues that concern us. The European political process therefore has to address the normal worries of ordinary voters. They understand Europe through day-to-day issues—a process that a friend and colleague has labelled as “banal Europeanism.” European regulations on the equal treatment of men and women in the labor market are a good example. This legislation has improved the situation in all our national systems, yet those who benefit from it tend to ascribe it to their local employer, not to the European process.

... achieve economic growth ...

I am particularly preoccupied about a lack of effectiveness in the sphere of economics. And if Larry Siedentop was worried that in the history of European integration economics had primacy over politics, we now risk that the primacy of politics over economics extends so far that we lose sight of the latter. Frankly, the European economy at the moment is in very bad shape and the sluggishness of growth is deeply disturbing. Together with a group of economists, I am currently working on a report for Romano Prodi on the economic governance requirements that might facilitate more growth in the European economy. I am struck by how



difficult it is to give clear recommendations. Luckily, Central European countries will join the Union soon, because their growth performance will probably be better.

Policy responses have to involve all levels of governance, from the local to the European. If the Polder Model has imploded, as Gijs de Vries suggested, this is bad news because we hoped that similar models in different countries would help the local economies to thrive. The Convention has simply not paid adequate attention to economic issues, or to how Europe could strengthen national and local economic performance. While the provisions about subsidiarity are reassuring, a discussion needs to take place beyond that. In fact, the Convention should not prevent us from searching for non-treaty reforms and for more imaginative delivery mechanisms. Specifically the European Council and the European Commission must improve significantly in their ways of delivering results. Constitutional rules alone will not suffice in tackling that problem.

The second challenge has to do with the wider Europe, i. e. with enlargement, the new neighbors and potential candidates. The reports by Lena Kolarska-Bobinska and Ivan Krastev about the low levels of trust in national institutions were disturbing. That the new member states build trust in their institutions and thus become able to take ownership of the Europeanization process in their countries seems extremely important. In Germany, for example, people in the new “Länder” still do not feel ownership of their own modernization and transformation processes. By contrast, Spain, Portugal and Greece seemed to have a more positive dynamic between the processes of domestic transformation and Europeanization and we must make sure that the new member states develop more like them.

Another issue are our next neighbors, especially in the Western Balkans and the former Yugoslavia, where some countries are still lacking viable state structures, let alone functioning democracies. So far, the European Union has been dealing with those countries through a mixture of control measures and colonization, but we cannot escape from our responsibility for them. The levels of crime and trafficking in human beings are horrifying and the European Union has to show its commitment to democracy by helping the process of democratization in the Western Balkans in much more thoughtful and competent ways.

I believe that the Convention has not addressed the issue of third-country nationals. Due to our control neurosis, foreigners who are legally resident in a EU member state still do not receive proper democratic rights or the right to free movement within the European Union. The Convention could have sent a

... support the process of transition in Eastern European countries ...

Democracy does not flourish through technocratic Europeanism devoid of human beings.

H. Wallace

signal to legitimate foreign residents who contribute to our under-performing economies.

... create a European public sphere ...

The third challenge concerns the European public sphere. As Larry Siedentop argued, European democracy would benefit from a functioning transnational political process that would allow for vigorous political arguments. Democracy does not flourish through technocratic Europeanism devoid of human beings. As Europeans, we are faced with many crucial policy choices that offer ground for constructive political argument, but that could also easily be perverted into unpleasant populist debates.

... further and channel immigration

Thus, for example, a positive discourse about the preferred socio-economic model in Europe could turn into a nasty argument between the winners and losers of integration. A second example is the demographic deficit in Europe, which is at least as worrying as the democratic deficit. Mr. de Weck made a joke about babies, but babies are not a joke in Europe. We simply do not have enough of them, in the new as well as the old member states. We therefore need to have a positive attitude to migration and welcome newcomers from other European countries and elsewhere. The core democratic values of tolerance and respect for differences have to be strengthened to counter our current neurosis about the “other,” i.e. migrants in any form and from any background. This attitude will be an important signal whether European democracy will be introverted or extroverted and open.

A final example is Iraq. In Florence, the large number of rainbow banners covering not only houses facing to the street, but also those facing into backyards is impressive. The crisis over Iraq on the one hand provoked a real and spontaneous public debate across Europe, but this debate can obviously turn very crude and anti-American and thus be destructive. It is therefore our task to channel this wave of European opinion into a constructive process leading to sensible policies vis-à-vis our neighbors and other partners.

**de Vries**  
presentation

the Convention was not supposed  
to debate European policies

Let me start with two comments on Helen Wallace’s contribution, before I move on to presenting something of a counterpoint to her arguments. First, we need to be clear that the Convention was not about addressing national democratic problems. These problems are fundamental, also for building a healthy European democracy, but it was not the job of the Convention to address them. Second, the Convention was also not meant to address the many policy problems and failures of the European Union. Its task was to look at institutional mechanisms—no more, no less.



These caveats in mind, I now want to give you a brief description of what the Convention has done. The Laken Summit put four main questions to the Convention: First, how could the European Union improve in terms of human rights. Secondly, how could the Union be made more transparent and easier to understand. Thirdly, how can its efficiency be improved and finally, how can its democratic dimension be strengthened. The Convention made the following recommendations:

With respect to human rights, the Union should be authorized to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights. Additionally, the Charter of Human Rights should be transformed from a political to a legally binding document. These two steps would enhance the human rights protection in Europe.

Concerning openness, transparency and simplicity, the Convention proposed that the Council of Ministers should discuss legislation in public. This measure will open the black box of the Council's decision-making to public scrutiny, creating potentially important dynamics. Access to public documents and the rights of the Ombudsman have also been improved. More important is maybe the proposal to simplify the decision-making procedures and the legal instruments used by the Union. A crucial step was the division of competences between the Union and member states, which answered the key question of who does what. In the category of exclusive competences, only the Union is allowed to legislate, and not member states. In areas of shared competence, member states can legislate as long as the Union has not. Where the Union has supporting competences, it is not allowed to legislate. An additional flexibility article allows the Union to act in areas which are not formally part of any competence.

Regarding the question of effectiveness, the jury is still out. The Convention has proposed to extend qualified majority voting to a number of very sensitive areas—social affairs, fiscal affairs, international trade, asylum policy and budgetary aspects. But this stands little chance of surviving the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) and the proposals do not include the Common Foreign and Security Policy. A positive aspect is the idea of an enabling clause that allows the Council of Ministers to move by a unanimous vote from unanimity to qualified majority voting without treaty modification. That provision is crucial and I hope it will survive the IGC, even though the British government has already announced that it will oppose it. The change from the very complex triple majority mechanism in qualified majority voting that was introduced in Nice to a system of a double majority is also welcome. Qualified majority is now defined as 50% of the member

tasks of the Convention:

... strengthen human rights ...

... make the EU more transparent ...

... more effective ...



... and more democratic

states and 60% of the European Union population. To increase effectiveness in our external relations, the Convention has suggested creating the post of foreign minister, setting up a common armaments agency and giving countries the possibility to cooperate with a smaller group and move ahead without waiting for the last member.

the Convention's proposals on  
institutional reforms:

On the democratic dimension of the Union, the Convention has made four formal proposals. First, the European Parliament's legislative powers have been strengthened significantly and now also include the sensitive area of agriculture. Secondly, its budgetary powers have been enhanced, again including agriculture. Thirdly, it has been given a stronger role in the selection of the Commission President. After 2009, the candidates for the Commission Presidency will represent the majority in the European Parliament. Fourthly, a "citizens' initiative" or "Bürgerinitiative" has been introduced, which allows citizens to put topics on the EU agenda.

After outlining the Convention's responses to its major tasks, let me briefly highlight the envisaged institutional changes. The European Council will get a president. This president will be elected for 2 years and have limited powers. The position created will thus be somewhere between the German and the French presidential models, but probably closer to the German one.

The powers of the European Commission have been strengthened in various ways. Its right of initiative has been expanded to allow it to propose multi-year policy frameworks. This might sound like a boring technical provision, but it is very important because the Commission—and not the European Council President as originally suggested—can now define the strategic choices to be addressed by the Union. The Commission also has received the right of proposal under the excessive deficit procedure, one of the few steps forward in the area of economics and monetary issues. The provision on delegated legislation strengthens the Commission's executive powers, as it is now allowed to legislate on a number of technical issues. The Council and Parliament that had been dealing with these issues previously keep a right of call-back, which means that they can reassert their legislative prerogative if they do not like the Commission's policies. Then, the Commission has received increased monitoring powers and shorter infringement procedures reinforce its role as guardian of the treaties.

Regarding the Union's external relations, the Commission remains responsible for all negotiations, except those where the constitution provides otherwise, such as Common Foreign and Security Policy or monetary affairs. The Commission President plays a stronger role in preparing European Council meetings and,

in reaction to the case of Edith Cresson, has the right to dismiss individual members of the Commission. A difficult compromise has been reached over the composition of the Commission: On the insistence of the applicant countries, all countries have a commissioner. But because a Commission with 30 members will be very difficult to operate, a rotating executive board will be created within it. The rotation allows all member states to be represented on the executive board in equal manner.

The European Court of Justice has also been strengthened. In particular, the Council will use qualified majority voting on measures affecting the Court, such as changes in its statute. Quality tests on future candidates for the Court are designed to ensure the Court's continued independence.

Overall, the proposed draft constitution strengthens all four major European institutions modestly and thus preserves the balance among them as well as among the member states. That, together with the fact that it reinforces both the supranational and the intergovernmental elements of the Union, makes it a middle of the road outcome. On the one hand, the supranational dimension has been strengthened because the primacy of European law over domestic law has now been enshrined in the treaty. This is an important step, given that both the German and the Italian constitutional courts have questioned the primacy of European law. At the same time, qualified majority voting, co-decision and the jurisdiction of the Court have been extended.

On the other hand, however, it can be argued that the intergovernmental dimension of the Union has been strengthened too. First, the principle of conferral has been recognized in the treaty, which means that the European Union cannot grant itself any powers. As only member states can confer powers on the Union, the EU's status as an instrument of the member states has been reconfirmed. Secondly, an exit clause has been introduced, allowing member states to leave the Union if they wish to do so.

Is the result then a constitution or another treaty? I would argue it is both. The strengthening of the human rights dimension and the enumeration of the Union's competences are classic constitutional elements. Furthermore, in most member states, the constitutional treaty will be subject to a referendum. By voting on it directly, the people will be entering into a social contract commonly deemed necessary for a constitution. Legally speaking, however, the Convention proposals take the form of a treaty. Also, many of the steps that have been agreed are rather too technical to warrant inclusion in a constitution. Still, the changes

strengthen all four main institutions

the draft is partly treaty, partly constitution

proposed by the Convention are more significant than those of the Amsterdam and Nice treaties.

shortcomings of the draft constitution:  
not enough democratization...

I want to end with two criticisms that represent my personal views and not necessarily those of my government. Concerning the democratic dimension, at least five elements are missing. First, the President of the Commission is not directly elected. This would have been a chance to politicize the Union and to create a personality contest that the media could take up. National governments have blocked direct elections because they wanted to keep control over the appointment of the Commission President. Secondly, we still lack a common electoral system. Again, European voting lists to be used in the election of the European Parliament will probably not be created, because national political elites do not want to give up seats to the joint list. Thirdly, we do not have a European tax subject to parliamentary control. While taxation plays a key role in national parliamentary elections, it does not figure in European elections. Fourthly, there is no provision on third country nationals, as Helen Wallace rightly mentioned. The question was not addressed because, I am sorry to say, neither national, nor European institutions or civil society initiatives have demanded it. Finally, I agree that national parliaments should play a stronger role. There have been two suggestions which have perhaps been dismissed rather too easily: the idea of a chamber composed of national parliamentarians and the proposal for an electoral college consisting of members of national parliaments and the European Parliament.

... proposals on defense  
not far-reaching enough

My second major criticism concerns the provisions on defense. The Convention has been unimaginative because member governments have not allowed it to be more imaginative. Particularly after the transatlantic rift, the need for closer defense cooperation in Europe is absolutely manifest, if Europe wants to be taken seriously. Politically, the time would have been ripe for a bold and far-reaching step. My hope is that Germany, France and the United Kingdom will make use of the provision on reinforced cooperation, maybe even before the treaty has been ratified. Germany is crucial because of its pivotal role in European integration in all respects. France and the United Kingdom are central, because they are the only credible military powers in the European Union. While the three could have played a more active role on defense in the Convention, I hope they will do so in the coming months.

the Convention's results must be explained  
by national politicians

What effect the Convention has, however, crucially depends on how national political elites explain it to their citizens. The Convention could of course have communicated better with the public, but the key question is whether national



political leaders will pass on at home what this Convention has done and has not done. So far, they have been shirking that responsibility. Indeed, in quite a number of member states politicians prefer to speak as little as possible about the European Union. Just as the media fear viewers might tune to a different channel, politicians feel voters might tune to a different party. Paradoxically, therefore, it is in national capitals that Europe's democratic deficit manifests itself most prominently.

I can subscribe to almost everything that Gijs de Vries said in his impressive overview on the outcomes of the European Convention.

Allow me a comment on the issue of outcome legitimation that was stressed by Helen Wallace. For a number of years, European institutions have been increasingly incapable of dealing with major problems and of amending all the regulations and directives that together constitute the *acquis communautaire* to adapt them to changing circumstances. The Convention has not tackled that problem sufficiently. Instead, it has strengthened the intergovernmental dimension of the EU. Not for adopting the exit clause—because it has always been clear that you cannot prevent a member state from leaving the Union—and neither for the confirmation of the conferral principle, but by increasing the power of the European Council. The Council is now recognized as a central institution, not just for appointing its own president and the foreign minister, but also in dealing with crucial European problems. This is worrying because the Council decides by unanimous vote. In the past, it often had problems to reach conclusions and I don't see how this could change in the future. The executives, particularly heads of state or government, are gaining ever more power at the national level. At the same time, they are accumulating more power at the European and international levels. This could be a dangerous development because they might not be able to deal with so much influence in a correct and efficient manner.

My second point concerns the reduction of complexity. Roger de Weck said that complexity was one of the reasons why communicating Europe to citizens is so difficult. I agree that the EU is a very complex political system, but it is a fallacy to believe that things are any simpler at the national level. Who does really understand the functioning of German federalism and the legislative rights of the Bundesrat? And nobody can explain the division of competences concerning social security and pension funds in the Swiss cantonal system to the citizens. The difference is that at the national level, complexity is reduced to very simple

## Altmaier

the Convention overemphasized the EU's intergovernmental dimension

to reduce complexity and connect the EU to its citizens ...



political alternatives. We talk about right and left, old and new, good and bad, progressive and conservative and thereby politicize, as Gijs de Vries has called it, our political systems. As a consequence, most European countries have two main political parties. That reduces the choice to two alternatives, which are easy to communicate.

... European politicians must offer  
clear alternatives ...

On the European level by contrast, complexity is increased instead of reduced. In the Council, members decide on the basis of their national preferences, leading to ever changing coalitions between small and big, rich and poor, agricultural and industrial countries and so forth. Finding compromises between 15 and soon 25 different national standpoints is almost impossible. In addition, Council members represent the position of their government, but most European governments only muster the support of a slim majority of the population. One of our main challenges therefore is to politicize the institutions of the European Union in order to reduce complexity.

The Convention offers two tools to achieve this objective. First, the extension of qualified majority voting in the Council and the introduction of a simple system of double majority requiring a majority of states and 60% of the population will make things much clearer. Discussions in the legislative council will proceed along political, not national lines and compromises will have to be reached between left-wing and right-wing members.

Secondly, once the European Parliament elects the Commission President, European political parties operating across borders will have a say in European politics. This even more than majority voting will reduce complexity by pitting a candidate from the right against one of the left and maybe a liberal one. These candidates will then have to explain their policies on, say, agricultural subsidies and free trade to the people. I therefore do not agree with Gijs de Vries who regretted that the Commission President was not directly elected. While direct elections would give the people an immediate choice, our French colleague in the Convention Alain Lamassoure cautioned us against adopting the French system at the European level, because it can lead to cohabitation and paralyze political decisions.

... and include national parliaments  
in their work

I am also happy that we managed to avoid a third-chamber of national parliamentarians or a mixed electoral college, because that would deprive European citizens of their influence in the election of the Commission President. It remains important, however, to involve national parliamentarians much more in the European process. National and European political elites have to be interconnected and



the new early warning system will be a first incentive for national parliamentarians to observe developments in European legislation more closely. Hopefully, we will be able to build on this first step in the future.

I take from your presentation that the European Parliament will play a key part in implementing and breathing life into the Convention's resolutions. Mr. de Vries, can you give us a forecast of the Parliament's further development?

This is not an easy question, because the future development of the European Parliament depends on many imponderables. To some extent the Parliament has been a victory of political will over gravity. With more than 600 deputies from so many different countries and political parties, speaking so many political languages, it is almost a miracle that it works at all. As a member of the European Parliament for 14 years, I could observe it growing into a much more influential body than it was at the beginning. A parliamentarian belonging to a national opposition, such as a Conservative MP in the House of Commons, now has much less influence on legislative processes than a Conservative member of the European Parliament serving on a strong parliamentary committee.

On the negative side, this Parliament is simply too big. Its membership will grow to over 700. This creates a problem for the internal cohesion of the political families. Already today both the Socialist group and the Christian Democrat group are bigger than some national parliaments. The larger they get, the more difficult it will become to define positions within the political groups. The European Parliament risks becoming less reliable as a legislative body. Whether the European Parliament will manage to defy gravity in future will, of course, also depend on the quality of our representatives.

Mr. Wallace, will British Conservative deputies in the House of Commons then prefer to switch to the European Parliament?

This question relates to what you consider the role of parliament to be. I believe that a British conservative MP sees parliamentary politics more in symbolic terms. The role of the opposition is to define in simple terms the alternatives between government and opposition; Peter Altmaier would say to politicize choices.

My criticism of the European Parliament is that it concentrates too much on the details of individual directives. To use a metaphor, its work on the small

**de Weck**

**de Vries**

the European Parliament has increased its influence ...

... but it is too big

**de Weck**

**W. Wallace**



branches of individual trees is very good, but it often fails to talk about the wood as a whole. When our Members of European Parliament report about their work in the European Parliament, they tend to talk about things like recent progress on revising the European bathing water directive and similarly detailed provisions. In that sense, European parliamentary committees almost operate in a non-political way, but maybe the election of the Commission President will begin to change this.

the integration of national parliaments ...

The Convention was designed to address four questions, but it has largely failed to answer the challenge of how to increase the involvement of national parliaments in the European process. To me, that is the biggest failure of the Convention. It leaves us with the enormous problem of how to reconnect national parliaments with the European Parliament and thus national democracies with the growth of a European democracy.

The establishment of a mixed Congress would probably only have led to similar results as the COSAC meetings: wonderful food, superb concerts, but awful and empty discussions. We need to find ways to make relevant what happens at the European level to the national level and connect it back into national politics. At the same time, we need to strengthen the engagement of national parliamentarians in Europe. Establishing offices in Brussels to inform national parliamentarians about European developments or granting them an allowance for regular visits, to Brussels or other national capitals as the British government has done are small steps towards that goal.

### **Landfried**

The Convention on the future of the EU has indeed neglected the topic of the national democracies. The functioning of national democracies is, however, a precondition for the success of a European democracy.

... into the European policy-making process ...

But the Convention has proposed mechanisms to include national parliaments in the European political process and these could contribute to establishing a closer link between the national and European levels. According to the proposed draft, national parliaments can protest when they believe the Commission is exercising illegitimate powers. The Commission then has to reconsider its plans if a third of all national parliaments come to the conclusion that the issue at stake should be dealt with at the national level. Ultimately, though, it would be up to the Commission to decide whether it wants to implement, change or withdraw its proposals. National parliaments, in turn, would have the possibility to put their arguments before the European Court of Justice.

It was not the Convention's task to discuss European policies.

de Vries

This “early warning system” is a step in the right direction. But the Convention has only gone half-way. Members of national parliaments do not only want to voice their concerns, or be informed and consulted. They want to be included in the design of policies.

Therefore, I have proposed to establish a mixed body of national and European parliamentarians and endow it with decision-making powers. This body would be composed of five deputies from each national parliament and an equal number from the European Parliament. With 25 member-states, that would amount to 250 delegates. This “Conference of Parliaments in Europe” could be named by its acronym “COPE,” which would indicate that it would cope with problems and solve them adequately.

The main task of this conference would be to decide on questions concerning the distribution of competences. It would be convened once a certain number of national parliaments or a qualified majority within the European Parliament had established that the Commission had taken action in an area better dealt with at the national level. The conference would decide in cases where different interpretations concerning this distribution of competences exist.

A conference of parliaments in which elected representatives could decide on conflicts about competences would establish political control over the principle of subsidiarity. National parliaments would thus be included in European policy-making. A simple right to voice complaints, by contrast, would not really strengthen national parliaments. If the current proposals of the Convention are not changed, national parliaments will remain marginalized in European politics.

To my mind, a discussion about a modern model of democracy must start with the importance of differences. Within national democracies and in the EU, political, economical and cultural differences are growing. And while we usually see differences as something negative, we should consider under what conditions they could contribute to our political problem-solving capabilities. These conditions certainly include a democratic and communicative way of dealing with these differences. We will have to evaluate the European draft constitution also according to whether it can organize differences democratically.

Allow me three brief remarks in response to those criticisms. First, let me emphasize again that it was not the Convention's task to discuss European policies. Rather, it was supposed to look at the institutions and propose ways to improve them. I agree that we need more debate about the effectiveness of EU policy-making and

... could be further improved ...

... for example through a conference of parliaments

de Vries



execution, but let's not mistake the target. Our criticism should be directed at the European Council, the Council of Ministers and possibly the European Parliament. The Convention's job was to focus on institutions.

Secondly, extensive discussions did take place about the institutional aspects of foreign policy, justice and home affairs and economic and monetary policy. The talks achieved most progress in the field of justice and home affairs, to some extent against the wishes of my own government, but much less with respect to foreign affairs and economic and monetary policy. While progress was therefore not sufficient, these policy areas were discussed in the plenary as well as in working groups and the results can be found in part three of the constitutional treaty.

national parliaments are integrated through the principle of subsidiarity

Thirdly, I agree entirely with William Wallace about the disconnect between national parliaments and Europe. The Convention was an explicit effort to engage national parliaments and the majority of its members were national delegates. Yet these representatives barely connected back to their own legislative assemblies. The Convention thus gave national parliaments the chance to shape an answer to the disconnect, but most, except the French, were adamantly opposed to the creation of the third chamber. Most national parliaments—rightly, in my view—did not want a legislative role at the European level. Instead, they are now included through the subsidiarity principle, which for the first time gives them the right to block progress in certain areas until a re-consideration has taken place. Implicitly, this also entitles them to go to court, but it is questionable whether that is a welcome innovation. Hopefully, this formal involvement will lead national parliaments to pay more attention to proposed legislation. What remains astonishing is that the first time that national parliaments had a major role in shaping European integration, they chose not to propose very far-reaching and innovative steps.

### **Diamandouros**

a constitution should not contain too many detailed provisions

As the European Ombudsman, I was an observer at the Convention after the assumption of my duties in April of this year. With this partial insight, I would like to offer some observations from my perspective.

First, I agree with Mr. de Vries that the purpose of the Convention was to lay down general principles. Even though the outcome is what you charitably called a “halfway house” between a constitution and a treaty, it was a constitutional convention meant to delineate basic principles. Constitutions generally do not contain provisions on specific policy areas. When they do, as in some continental European countries, they quickly become dated and have to be amended



frequently. By comparison, the American constitution has remained largely unchanged over more than 200 years.

When thinking about the Convention, it is also important to keep a historical perspective in mind, even if we are preoccupied by contemporary events and their policy implications. European integration is an evolutionary process, following an incremental logic. Therefore, we should focus on the gains that are likely to accrue from the new document—and I believe we have made some important steps forward, certainly more important than the progress achieved in Nice. This is not meant as a justification or excuse, but rather as an attempt to put the outcomes of the Convention into perspective.

Let me address a few points that seem relevant from the point of view of the European Ombudsman. It is very encouraging that the Charter of Fundamental Rights has been adopted as an integral part of the draft constitution. Art. 41 of the Charter, which recognizes good administration as a fundamental right, combined with the inclusion of the European Ombudsman in part 1 of the draft constitution, constitutes a notable step toward granting citizens more direct access to European institutions. It is therefore incumbent on me to inform European citizens about how they can use this mechanism to engage in the democratic process at the European level.

Concerning the role of the European Parliament, we have to consider the internal hierarchies among, and workings of, specific committees. Regrettably, the committee with a special responsibility for dealing with citizens, the Committee of Petitions has to date not been granted the infrastructure needed to reach out to citizens and inform them of their rights. As a result, it has not been fully able to meet its mandate and the expectations linked to it. That is a shame because only the Petitions Committee is empowered to deal with violations of the *acquis communautaire* at the national level.

The Ombudsman, by contrast, is confined to address complaints about violations at the European level and since the vast majority of European citizens do not deal directly with European institutions, they will have no occasion to call on the Ombudsman. The Committee of Petitions thus presents a good opportunity for linking the national and European levels and we need to hold the European Parliament accountable for not sufficiently enabling this committee to meet its mandate.

Further, I agree with Helen Wallace that the effectiveness of European institutions is essential and I believe that accountability is a key element in that. I also

the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights was a big step forward

we need to re-conceptualize the nation

Our challenge is to rethink the nation to include multiple identities and multiple levels of governance.

Diamandouros



concur with her that we need to re-conceptualize democracy at the national and European levels, but I would add that we also need to rethink the concept of the nation. Our understanding of democracy and the nation seems to remain hostage of a centralist tradition, which continues to be powerful throughout Europe despite the existence of federal systems like the German one. The development of the European Union combined with migration and a demographic deficit in Europe require us to reconsider our concepts of the nation. When Brussels bypasses national governments to distribute benefits directly to the regions, this leads to “multi-level governance.” In Spain or Italy for example, different levels of identity are emerging as a result.

A brief example might serve to illustrate the importance of acknowledging the existence of multiple identities: When Spain went through a period of transition after the death of Franco in 1975, it embarked on a policy of de-centralization and introduced autonomy laws. Opinion polls were conducted to estimate the risk of a Catalan independence movement. When the question was “Do you feel Catalan or Spanish?“, 76% of the respondents said “Catalan.” But when the question was changed to “Do you feel more Catalan or more Spanish?“, allowing for the possibility of being both instead of imposing a zero-sum-logic, this result fell to 32%. Our challenge therefore is to rethink the nation to include multiple identities and multiple levels of governance.

Finally, the demographic deficit constitutes an explosive political reality with repercussions for our understanding of the nation. Europe’s rapidly aging population will put enormous pressures on our social systems, particularly the social insurance schemes. Unless fertility rates undergo a major change, we can only address these pressures by accepting that immigration has to be included in the reconfiguration of national identities. The German government’s extraordinary decision to move, however partially, from a *ius sanguinis* to a *ius soli* in its definition of citizenship is an example of a first step to a controlled process of immigration.

Another example is my home country, Greece. Since 1991, almost 10% of the resident population is made up of individuals who were born abroad, who are not Greek orthodox and for whom Greek is not a mothertongue. It is only with a law enacted in the year 2000, which endowed immigrants with social rights, that we have seen a dramatic decline in crime and that immigrants, including the Albanians, are increasingly integrated into social and economic structures. This erstwhile extraordinarily homogenous nation is beginning to accept that immigrants

more immigration is needed due to the demographic deficit

integration of immigrants through social rights



are enriching Greece. If such momentous change is possible in a country with a Balkan heritage, it can certainly be done elsewhere in Europe.

I would like to come back to the question of a European public sphere mentioned by Mr. Altmaier and Mr. de Vries, which is closely related to the issue of connecting Europe with national parliaments. I believe that it is a mistake to try and give national parliaments a say in European legislation. We never suggest that regional parliaments should play a role in national parliaments, so why should that be different one level up?

National parliaments do not represent nations or countries, but political parties. Therefore, they will rarely speak in unison at the European level and will be divided on most questions concerning European policy. But, just as national MPs are responsible to their parties, European MPs should be held more accountable by their parties. Political parties should focus more on European issues and give their candidates clearer mandates for their new European jobs. This implies that the coordination among national parties at the European level has to be improved. So far, European party groups have formed more or less by accident and maybe they do not only need to organize themselves better, but also differentiate themselves more, so that we might have a Christian Democrat group and a more conservative rightist group in the European Parliament.

Let me take up what William Wallace called the disconnect between the branches and the wood and the question of politicization. Take as example foreign policy and defense cooperation. It consists of many small bits and pieces, but lacks a European grand strategy. On the one hand, this is because we have different political cultures and different understandings of key concepts. Thus, France and Finland for instance agree that we need cooperation in defense. But by that, the French mean intervention, whereas the Fins mean defense against a neighbor.

Another reason is that crises demand leadership from heads of state or government and, whether this corresponds to reality or not, this gives them the impression that they can make a difference in international affairs. It is one of the last holdouts of sovereignty. Simply creating the post of European foreign minister or introducing qualified majority voting will not be sufficient. Instead, we need to bridge the gap between political cultures and introduce more democracy in European foreign policy. This will take a long time and risks creating a gap between policies and public opinion.

### **de Bresson**

we should not give national parliaments a say in European legislation ...

but strengthen European parties!

### **Le Gloannec**

Europe lacks a strategy for foreign and defense policy

European citizenship, to use a German expression, is a *Fata Morgana*.

Le Gloannec



European citizenship includes rights and duties

My second example is European citizenship, which, to use a German expression, is a *Fata Morgana*, a mirage. Europe confers human and social rights on European citizens, but no political parties exist and no elections take place except on national issues and in national frameworks. In that sense, European citizens have no political rights and are disempowered. Citizenship is composed of rights and duties, but we do not have duties to perform. A possible, but not necessarily popular, option would be to introduce a European tax, as was mentioned earlier, and we should make an effort to invent other duties to perform. As opposed to the area of foreign and defense policy, in this case institution-building could make a difference. Political leadership could fill citizenship with content and foster those elements of the *demos* that do already exist.

**de Weck**

Mr. von Weizsäcker, what do you, as a former German President, have to say about European citizenship being a mirage?

**von Weizsäcker**

As far as citizenship is concerned, we Germans only just took the first step towards some sort of a solution, and in doing so we produced a particularly ugly example of populism. Before we take a leading role on this issue within Europe, we will have to solve it adequately at home. A little help from Europe would certainly not hurt in the process.

**Schwan**

German politics shies away from conflicts

First I'd like to offer a thought on the concept of a culture of consensus. My teacher Ernst Fraenkel always said that consensus and conflict belong together because arguments can be properly exchanged only within a conflict situation. In Germany we often claim that we have a culture of consensus. I think, however, that we often reach agreement far too soon as we are afraid of conflict, because our fundamental consensus is not strong enough. I would like to ask the others in our circle what they think of this assertion.

Then I have a question for Gijs de Vries. Right at the beginning you referred to the division of competences. I would be interested in knowing whether and how the subsidiarity principle was further specified during the Convention. Did these considerations build on what had emerged over time, or on which political tasks needed to be addressed and at what level that should best be done?

**de Vries**

The Convention has distinguished three categories of competences, exclusive, shared and supporting ones. The principle of subsidiarity only applies to shared

Democracy is the only game in town but ever fewer people are interested in playing.

Krastev

competences. We did not define criteria for subsidiarity within that second category in greater detail. Instead, we have developed a mechanism to apply the principle, but left the definition of the substance to national parliaments and governments. In the end, though, whether one thinks that the European Union has overstepped its boundaries or not remains essentially a political question. It is difficult to turn subsidiarity into an absolute and legally enforceable concept and its definition will depend on the situation and the players involved.

Let me first try and connect our previous debate about the crisis of national democracies to the response of the Convention. We are facing an increasingly strange situation, where democracy is the only game in town but ever fewer people are interested in playing. And, to use Ralf Dahrendorf's words, it is more and more becoming a professional sport, not least in the case of the Convention. We are trying to counter the professionalization of politics through the engagement of civil society organizations and the introduction of elements of direct democracy. But this will not reconnect people to policy decisions, because the disconnect on a more fundamental level is due to a change in our understanding of what constitutes good policy. Good policy used to be what a political community would agree on, but now it is what experts agree on. The European Union is very proud of limiting its own flexibility by deferring to expert opinion, but this alienates it from the citizens.

Then a comment on the Western Balkans, the EU's major foreign policy challenge. To date, enlargement was the one successful common European foreign policy. But this will come to an end once Bulgaria, Rumania and Croatia are integrated. Macedonia, Serbia or Kosovo are weak states that do not respond to conditionalities and therefore require a different integration strategy. Yet the EU talks about enlargement as if it were the same exercise as with Hungary. We also have to ask why enlargement stops in the Western Balkans and not in the Ukraine or Russia. I believe that it is because there are European troops in the Balkans, but not beyond. In this area, European foreign policy thus consists of a strange mix between enlargement rhetoric and a form of colonization. In my mind, this is Europe's biggest challenge and a failure would be much more counterproductive for the common foreign and defense policy than the divisions over Iraq.

When talking about how to remedy the disconnect between politics and public opinion, I believe that we missed a great opportunity. The issue of enlargement

subsidiarity—details

**Krastev**

politics becomes a task for experts

Europe needs to define strategies for the Balkans, the Ukraine and Russia

**Kolarska-Bobinska**

the debate on the constitution  
could create a European *demos* ...

could have been used to create common policies and interests and build a European identity through this common goal. But Western political elites considered it a very technical exercise and thus lost the chance of communicating with their societies and building a European *demos*.

Now, however, we get a second chance with the European constitution. The Convention may have failed to communicate its work to the general public, but in many countries the constitution has to be accepted in a referendum. That will force the elites to explain the constitution's content and its motivation and to point out conflicts and dilemmas to win the support of their societies. The same debate will take place in many European Union countries at the same time and enable people to compare their concerns and worries with those of other societies. The process of adopting the constitution will therefore be a wonderful opportunity to build a pan-European debate and public interest in European issues, which can contribute to the creation of a European *demos*. This period is crucial and I hope we will not squander the chance again.

**W. Wallace**  
... if political leaders support it

I strongly agree with that assessment. Another important aspect when it comes to creating a European debate is political leadership. Leadership depends on the individual capacities of politicians and can be supported by institutional positions. Thus, a person who has a good grasp on the broader issues will be given greater stature if he or she becomes European Foreign Minister. And if we choose a Council President who can focus attention on broad problems as well as the current President of the Commission Romano Prodi, we might be able to return to a Europe-wide debate.

In the last few years, we had real difficulties finding political leaders in Europe who would have been able to fill this role. My hope is that the new applicant states might provide the EU with capable individuals who could take up the topic of what Europe's priorities and responsibilities are or should be. Maybe they will be in a position to use the type of language that in recent years no prime minister, foreign minister, let alone finance minister has wanted to use.

**Hemmati**

We have mostly been talking about institutions that are visible or will become visible once the draft constitution is enacted. I would like to draw your attention to non-visible institutions that can be very powerful and that are connected to the stakeholder approach I mentioned earlier. Take for example the World Commission on Dams. This was a global process of hearings that was concluded a few



years ago and that had substantial financial backing from the World Bank and various foundations. The conclusions reached by that Commission had and have a significant impact on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as well as on various programs of the United Nations and are now being integrated into legislation proposed by different national parliaments. However, members of the World Commission on Dams have not been elected, nor can they be held accountable by anybody. This raises questions about the democratic legitimacy of such processes.

The challenge for the new European institutional framework is to harness the power and activism of those who participate in those processes, while ensuring their democratic accountability. New mechanisms for participation are needed to give those representatives of corporations, NGOs and the media a voice. If you, as government or EU, focus only on political parties and parliaments, you miss key elements of participatory democracy—elements of policy formulation and elements of implementation. Thus, you can disempower yourself. Under the leadership of democratic institutions, all societal voices and forces need to be drawn in and meaningfully included in the democratic process.

Examples for how that can be done can be found in the UN system and elsewhere. For example, the United Nations' Economic Commission for Europe developed the so-called Aarhus Convention on access to environmental information and justice. Stakeholders were significantly involved not only in the drawing up of the Convention, but also in part of the monitoring mechanism. This process shows how various actors can be included in a transparent and fair way, putting their forces to constructive use while making the process more democratic.

The difficulties of designing such a process are manifold, including the personal challenge for those involved. Individuals who enter into a dialogue need to be open to change and prepared to learn. This can be particularly difficult for those who have never participated in the political process, yet these are the voices we most need to hear. Currently, few politicians have the ability to really listen and learn, but those who do, embody a new kind of visionary leadership and set a positive example of dialogue and learning. Such leaders will help to reinvigorate the democratic process and bring us all closer to the changes we need.

I want to offer two comments from an American perspective. First, the American Constitution was not popularized by the Philadelphia Convention, but by the Federalist Papers and the surrounding debate. With the debate launched now by

stakeholder approaches can have a positive effect on politics ...

... if they are accountable and legitimate

**Szabo**

the US constitutions was popularized  
by the Federalist Papers

Jürgen Habermas and other prominent thinkers in Europe, this process might be beginning. More efforts, however, are needed to create the equivalent to the Federalist Papers, including from the people in this room. This, rather than the constitution itself, could be a way to engage a broader element of society.

Secondly, Mr. de Vries and Mr. Altmaier were talking about the division of competences introduced in the draft constitution. My question refers to the issue of judicial review: Will the European Court of Justice play a larger role as a referee for disputes relating to competences?

**Altmaier**  
the European Court of Justice will  
become a constitutional court

Yes, it will. In the past, the Court has already played a crucial role in the development of the European Union's institutional system. We have now given national parliaments the option of putting questions relating to subsidiarity to the Court of Justice and that will expand its jurisdiction. Past decisions were almost all in the favor of the Union, thus helping further integration. Now that we have defined the EU's competences and new criteria for the Court, we expect it to issue more balanced rulings. These two points lead me to believe that the Court will develop into a constitutional court over the next few years, even if it is still difficult today to admit this publicly.

**Landfried**  
Europe lacks the basic consensus  
needed for constructive conflict

I agree with Gesine Schwan that consensus and conflict must not be seen as an irreconcilable pair of opposites. How much of a fundamental consensus we need in order to deal constructively with conflicts, depends on the case in point. In the conflict among European states regarding the war in Iraq, it would have been a positive step to even talk about different existing interests. But Germany's and France's isolated initiative on the one hand and the support for the United States expressed in an open letter by eight other European states on the other, show that there was no consensus within the EU to deal with these different positions constructively.

**de Weck**

To conclude our discussion I would like to ask Helen Wallace and Gijs de Vries for their assessments and then give the floor to Larry Siedentop for some closing remarks.

**H. Wallace**

Let me begin with two comments on the question concerning the ratification of the future European Constitution. I disagree strongly with my husband William that a few prominent political leaders would suffice to propel the debate across



Europe, which remains a very diverse political space. Rather, I believe that different voices that resonate with various kinds of constituencies are needed to engender an adequate public debate about the European Constitution.

The case of Ireland, where the Irish Civic Forum played an instrumental role in the delivery of a positive second vote on the Treaty of Nice, shows clearly that Irish voices were necessary to explain to the citizens how the treaty would impact them.

But the fact that Irish citizens at first rejected the Treaty of Nice should also teach us something else about ratification. While the process of constitutional ratification should be important, it should not be so crucial that we lose the achieved progress in the case of a negative vote. Finding this delicate balance will be a difficult task for our politicians.

My second point relates to the question of how the European political process can be connected back to national parliaments and the general public. It is certainly valuable to make political procedures transparent to ordinary citizens and to guarantee free access to documents. But we know that most citizens will not participate in the open meetings of the Legislative Council or demand access to specific documents and lodge a complaint with the European Ombudsman, Nikiforos Diamandouros, when their rights are being denied. From my perspective, it would therefore be more important to engage leading figures of national opposition parties in European policy-making. If for example Ian Duncan-Smith and the Conservative front bench in the UK could be convinced to participate in the meetings of the Legislative Council, then I believe that something would percolate through.

Thirdly, when we speak about political effectiveness, I was struck by an example given recently by John Ruggie. He described how the United Nations, when it was looking for an effective distribution mechanism for preventive measures against AIDS in Africa, ended up cooperating with Coca-Cola, because this company has the best existing distribution system on the continent. This unusual strategy has produced tangible results for local communities. This example demonstrates that unconventional approaches to the delivery of public policies can be highly effective. I therefore regret that the European Convention has not included provisions that would enable partnerships between public institutions and the private sector to operate and see this as a lost opportunity.

Finally, a comment on our debate about the importance of regions in Europe. The Convention has included some provisions on legislative regions into the

local voices are needed to engender a public debate

engage national opposition parties in European policy-making

unconventional approaches can be very effective



draft constitution and we should not underestimate the potential of these regions, some of which are bigger than many of the EU's member states. It is a topic that needs to be handled carefully and we need to define strategies that allow strong regions such as Catalonia to feel at ease within the nation states they belong to.

**de Weck**

And what is your prediction for the future of the draft constitution? Will it survive the Brussels grindstone or emerge completely transformed?

**H. Wallace**

the draft constitution's fate is uncertain

It is of course hard to prophesy, but I presume that the process is not yet complete and that the Intergovernmental Conference will introduce some changes. The Convention's draft constitution already contains a number of compromises, some of which contradict each other. The Intergovernmental Conference therefore risks building in more contradictions, making it even harder to explain the achievements of the Convention and the IGC to our citizens.

**de Vries**

First, I agree with Minu Hemmati that it is very important to harness the power of civil society and its organizations. Some time ago, Romano Prodi wanted to engage a European debate on that subject and had a White Paper on European Governance produced. This initiative ended up as a bit of a damp squib, but the Commission should be encouraged to take it up again. We do not just need stronger and better institutions, but the living fabric of our societies also needs to be connected to the political process.

excessive regionalization  
weakens nation-states

Secondly, I slightly disagree with Helen Wallace on the importance of legislative regions. Redefining the nation and letting emancipatory regional movements gain access to the European level certainly is a liberating trend that should be encouraged. At the same time, though, we should keep in mind the dangers of weakening nation-states. We all agreed that there is a crisis of national democracy. I, for one, am doubtful that a strong and democratic European Union can be built on a foundation of weaker and less democratic nation-states. Too much regionalization might undermine the national dimension that is indispensable to the European project.

Thirdly, let me contribute to some bridge-building in the Wallace family, because I think that both Helen and William are right. We do need senior national politicians to speak out across frontiers. We do need to create opportunities for a Greek or Danish voice to resonate in the domestic debates of Germany or the Netherlands and to give citizens a sense of connection to a genuine European debate.

The least true of all historical clichés is that things cannot go on as they are.

Siedentop

First and foremost, however, we need political leadership in our member states. Domestic political leaders must take the European project forward, improve upon it and prevent it from being picked apart in a Chinese death of a thousand pin pricks of national civil servants. If national civil servants would be given too wide a mandate at the Intergovernmental Conference, they will impose a collection of negatives on the Convention result and only national politicians can prevent them from doing so.

Permit me to ask Carsten Schneider a brief personal question. Has this discussion given you the feeling that you, as a young politician, would one day prefer to work in the European Parliament rather than in the Bundestag?

Not for the moment, because I think national parliaments continue to be very important. But these kinds of things can, of course, change.

Also, as a politician, I take quite seriously the task of communicating the outcomes of the Convention within my constituency. But that is no easy job. The experience with the Charter of Fundamental Rights has shown that people will appreciate the constitution only once it has been implemented and manifested in real changes. When the European Court of Justice ruled that women must be accepted into combat duty in the Bundeswehr, for example, people became more aware of the European dimension and could identify with it more easily.

Mr. Siedentop, we are all anxiously awaiting your appraisal of the Convention.

A contemporary letter about the last day of the Philadelphia Convention reports that after the end of the formal proceedings a delegate addressed his colleagues: “Gentlemen, we have worked hard and well. What we have done here might last for 50 years.” In response, everybody burst into laughter. Judging the future impacts of the European Convention is no less difficult.

However to me, the least true of all historical clichés is that things cannot go on as they are. They so often do. The draft constitution’s subtle compromises and advances could allow things to continue the way they are or at least not change fast enough for the problems arising from enlargement. And enlargement will create challenges that nobody can yet foresee.

As regards consensus in the European Union, it seems clear to me that the members of the Convention fundamentally disagree about *finalité*, i.e. about



**de Weck**

**Schneider**

citizens appreciate the constitution only once it shows concrete effects

**de Weck**

**Siedentop**

process-legitimacy remains crucial for the EU

where the process of integration should lead to. This uncertainty is reflected in political language, where we have no term to describe an outcome, which will neither be a federation in the American sense, nor a traditional confederation. And while we have been emphasizing the importance of outcome-legitimacy, this lack of agreement about *finalité* suggests that process-legitimacy remains crucial for the European Union at this stage in its development. Only when processes of policy-making are perceived to be legitimate will Europe be able to integrate further.

open disputes about Europe would be  
instructive and entertaining

National political processes when they are at their best do not just educate public opinion but also provide entertainment. It is a symptom of the difficulties and weaknesses of the European Union that it has not yet managed to combine its educational with its entertaining role. When the Treaty of Nice was negotiated, many people regretted that disagreements were displayed openly. Yet open disagreements would be a good way to be both instructive and entertaining, and I am therefore in favor of an untidy Europe with more open disputes.

Increased devolution and more weight for Europe's regions could also be a promising path. But I agree with Mr. de Vries that nobody, least of all the European Union, would benefit from devolution to a point where regions begin to play off Brussels against their nation states by drawing on historical resentments and thus undermining national legitimacy.

a European tax would underline  
citizens' rights and duties

A more promising suggestion to dramatize European politics is to introduce a European tax that would emphasize citizens' duties as well as rights. Finally, it will be essential to establish a closer connection between a European political class and national political elites to create a European demos.

education forms the basis  
of European democracy

Let me end on a different note. We have been speaking about multiple layers of identity that develop in this more complex European political system. In this debate, we have failed to mention a fundamental intellectual factor: the comparative neglect of European universities. After the Second World War, North American universities have experienced an extraordinary surge to the point where very few European universities can compete with them. Building European democracy from below depends critically on the quality of education. In countries which have become so phenomenally prosperous since 1945, the continued neglect of higher education is nothing less than a disgrace.

**de Weck**

Larry Siedentop said we have no term to describe the European Union. In a kindred spirit, Jacques Delors once called it an *objet politique non-identifié*. This is,



at once, the great weakness and strength of the EU. It is neither empire nor nation, and is therefore a new phenomenon in world history, one that has yet to find its true face. Yet this weakness can become a long-term strength because it creates a democratic form of government beyond the nation state. This offers a way of confronting problems for which the nation-state has become too small without imposing the regime of an empire.

André Glucksmann once said that Europe has a negative image. In distinguishing ourselves from non-Europeans we see exactly what Europe is: we have only to watch an American TV series. Yet we are also in the process of establishing a positive identity and the draft constitution could be a major contribution.

I hope that this Round Table has also contributed. And before I hand the floor back to Mr. von Weizsäcker, I would like to warmly thank all our participants, the organizers and interpreters, for having made possible this stimulating discussion, which will surely enrich and invigorate the public discourse on Europe.

Allow me to heartily underscore your words of praise for the ladies and gentlemen responsible for organizing this conference, the interpreters, and our circle of participants. Of course, our gratitude is owed to our moderator Mr. de Weck, who has demonstrated in the most impressive manner how important guidance is in democracy as well, and for having steered us through this demanding discussion.

For my part I would like to compliment the Körber Foundation on its great skill in choosing the right participants for this Round Table. We come from many countries, from many different backgrounds, and we have experienced, in my opinion, a much more subtle and diversified discussion of the problems facing Europe than we otherwise do as professionals of the political world.

Before World War I, young people often came to Florence to gain a sense of the world, of a city that, through its history and culture, has played an outstanding role in shaping Europe's cultural and intellectual future. I am therefore especially glad that we have gathered here to become re-acquainted with the great treasure that Florence represents for all us Europeans.

Since World War II, the Italians have contributed an inordinate amount to the future of Europe. Often, they conveyed their ideas less stridently, yet more effectively, than have the French or the Germans. And even if today we have the one or the other concern over our great and abiding friends in Italy, I am certain that this land will continue to help us all along our path toward Europe's future.

Europe has a negative identity and develops a positive one

**von Weizsäcker**

Nothing remains the same.

von Weizsäcker



that the European Convention took place  
is a miracle

Allow me to conclude with a lesson that one learns with advancing age. Nothing remains the same, honorable Mr. Siedentop. When I was as young as the youngest members of this Round Table, I didn't dare dream of the things we deal with today. We may be struggling with the details of the European Convention, yet the mere existence of this Convention and the fact that it has produced the results that it has borders on the miraculous. On that note, I wish you all a good trip home, and a good deal of courage for the challenges that await you.