

# The European Parliament: On the Politics of Naming

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## Abstract

In this article, I discuss the early history of the expression of the European Parliament and analyse the political points of its different rhetorical nuances and connotations. I shall use as the background a wider discussion on the politics of naming, indebted to the rhetorical work of Quentin Skinner as well as to the historical repertoire of alternative titles for parliamentary assemblies. The expression “European Parliament” had already been in use in the post-war years, first among the pro-federalist wing of the European movement. In the initial sitting of the ECSC Common Assembly on 13 September 1952, Théodore Lefevre spoke of the Assembly as “la première à mériter le nom de ‘Parlement européen’ ” in the sense of both describing and legitimising the political novelty of that Assembly. In the Ad Hoc Assembly’s debates on the constitutional draft for the European Political Community in 1952/1953, which proposed a supranational parliamentary government, the expression—first in French and then in English—became a colloquial title for the two chambers of the Parliament of the European Political Community. The European Parliamentary Assembly of the EEC changed its name to the European Parliament on 30 March 1962. The title European Parliament has been used both for an existing assembly with a low “parliamentarity” and for a future assembly with full parliamentary powers.

## Keywords

Ad Hoc Assembly; European Parliament; politics and rhetoric of naming; supranational parliamentarism

## 1. Introduction

Every parliament is an assembly, but not every assembly is a parliament. This seemingly neutral statement refers to a conceptual and rhetorical asymmetry of obvious political significance. The asymmetry is normative, but also historical: many anti-parliamentarians have accepted assemblies but rejected parliaments. For others, certain criteria must be met for an assembly to merit the title of parliament. In other

words, the politics of naming does matter. Regarding the name “parliament,” we should ask who uses it, when they use it, and how they use it.

Naming is a paradigmatic example of the contingency of politics: anything could always be named differently. The naming marks a claim of legitimising why this name would be better than any other among the usually limited range of alternatives. This means that naming it as a contingent act is not arbitrary but, as a rhetorical move, depends on the acceptability of the audience.

Quentin Skinner discusses strategies of rhetorical redescription in his *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*. He describes this as “enabling us to redescribe actions or states of affairs in such a way as to lend additional force to whatever interpretation we may wish to put upon them” (Skinner, 1996, p. 139). Skinner regards the scheme of paradiastole as a “technique of elevating” or “depreciating” actions (Skinner, 1996, p. 141) and refers to examples from the Roman rhetoric scholar Quintilian: “Prodigality must be more leniently redescribed as a case of liberality, avarice as a case of carefulness and negligence as a case of simplicity of the mind’ (Skinner, 1996, p. 142). Skinner, finally, sets such renaming in relation to alternative paradiastolic strategies of altering the concept’s range of reference, its weight, or replacement by an alternative concept (Skinner, 1996, Chapter 4; see also Skinner, 1979).

The politics of naming contains a wide if not endless range of topics dealt with in many disciplines, such as onomastic linguists and geographers, but rather seldom by political scientists. A favourite topic has been street names, which are still a regular topic of controversy (see Rose-Redwood et al., 2018). A long time ago I discussed party names in rhetorical terms (Palonen, 1995), yet it has remained astonishingly unthematized.

## 2. “European Parliament” as a Topic of the Politics of Naming

The same holds, strangely enough, for parliament names. The few existing studies (e.g., Pekonen, 2021) refer that concerning the political rhetoric of naming assemblies, we have to consider a historical range of alternative nominations. Parliament comes from speaking (*parlare* in Italian) and has been used since the 12th century; diet comes from the Latin *dies* (day) and is still used, for example, for the Swedish (Riksdag) and German (Bundestag) parliaments; assembly, like congress, refers to meeting, to coming together; the old Scandinavian *ting* also referred to meeting, not only to local courts (the Icelandic Althingi was summoned in the 10th century); legislature refers to law-making, while the representative character of the assembly is still used in the Italian Camera di Deputati or the Finnish Eduskunta (see Ihalainen et al., 2016, pp. 10–11). Roughly speaking, the political controversy between types of political assembly concerns legislatures, representative assemblies, and debating parliaments (Palonen, 2018, 2019).

The following case deals merely with the relationship between parliament and assembly as an excellent example of how the speech act of naming can have a political point. Naming an assembly a “parliament” can always be disputed and regarded as illegitimate, contested on the same or different grounds that were used to justify the naming. In other words, the political rhetoric around the use of the term “parliament” is always controversial concerning the criteria by which the concept is defined, although the criteria are seldom made explicit—it remains to the scholar to interpret the moves of the actors in order to understand the point of the naming or the dispute.

Today, everyone seems to know what is meant by the expression “European Parliament.” The common story told by EU scholars is that the European Parliamentary Assembly was founded by the Rome Treaty of the European Communities in 1957. It started its sittings in 1960 and changed its name to the European Parliament on 30 March 1962 (see Piodi, 2007). However, the European Community officially accepted the title only after the first direct elections to the Parliament in 1979. Formal recognition of the name European Parliament appeared as late as the Preamble of the European Council’s Solemn Declaration of Stuttgart on 19 June 1983 (European Council, 1983).

The expression “European Parliament” was, however, already used in the post-war history of Europe’s integration of its existing and projected institutions. I shall discuss this early history of the “European Parliament” from the perspective of the politics of naming.

I shall look at when, how, and by whom the institution began to be called the European Parliament. What kinds of rhetorical moves are contained in each use of the term, and to what contexts do they refer? What was the purpose of using “Parliament” and “European” and how did these connect? What justifies using the term “European” and what are the minimum criteria for calling an assembly or a meeting a “parliament”? At the time these terms were adopted, we can ask what conventions were available then that legitimised their use or, conversely, which kind of provocative move the naming may have represented in the face of the prevailing conventions.

### 3. Parliament Beyond the Nation-States

For many British writers who considered the English parliament at Westminster as the “mother of parliaments,” a topos coined by John Bright in 1865 (see also Graham, 1911/2024) it has been an oxymoron to speak of a “European parliament.” Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher spoke on 5 December 1985 of the “European Assembly” as “different from our Parliament” (cited in Rittberger, 2005, p. 160).

In a classical sense, parliament has been linked with the nation-state, for example, in Edmund Burke’s famous Bristol speech, in 1774, to his electorate in which he contrasted “a deliberative assembly of one nation” to a mere “congress of ambassadors” (Canavan, 1999) dependent on the opinions in their constituencies. The formula is mainly remembered for rejecting the imperative mandate for MPs, but it also binds the concept of parliament with the nation-state as the assumed polity level.

After the French Revolution, it was also commonplace to call continental parliaments “national assemblies” and even to regard parliament as one of the nation-building institutions (see Rizzoni, 2023). For British politicians, independently of their party, speaking of a parliament of a supranational European polity has been a real provocation and the same was the case for nation-centred parties, such as the Gaullists in France.

The converse view could be justified by reference to the practice of defining parliament as any assembly that follows certain rules of procedure and meeting practices. This was especially the case when parliament enjoyed at least some degree of power to control the executive, independently of the polity level. For example, in German it has been customary to speak not only of *Landesparlament* but also of *Kommunalparlament* or even *Studentenparlament*, and even in Britain, with the devolution, Scotland has got its parliament, Wales its national assembly, and Northern Ireland its assembly.

The idea here was rather to understand that “parliament proper” referred to a procedural and rhetorical paradigm for doing politics, and such procedures were then followed to a greater degree in different kinds of assemblies, associations, organisations, and meetings (see Alapuro & Stenius, 2010, for examples in Scandinavia; see Haapala, 2016, for the example of the Oxford and Cambridge Union Societies). If the term applies to a subnational polity level, why not apply it to a supranational polity as well?

A further reason that has made it difficult to speak of supranational parliaments is the government’s traditional monopoly on foreign policy, in the sense of *arcana imperii*, the “secrets of the realm,” to be kept beyond the access of parliamentarians. This tendency has to some extent declined since the late 19th century, for example, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, founded in 1889, was originally a debating club of parliamentarians in matters of peace (Kissling, 2006). Participation in the Hague peace conferences of 1899 and 1907 included not only ministers and diplomats but also scholars and parliamentarians (Roshchin, 2017).

Around that time, it became more acceptable to demand parliamentary control of foreign policy (see Ihalainen & Matikainen, 2016, for Britain). After the First World War, parliamentarians were part of many member-state delegations to the League of Nations and other international institutions and this practice has continued in the UN. To sum up, these shifts relativised the divide between foreign and domestic politics and paved the way for applying the parliamentary style of politics to European and world politics.

However, recent studies have emphasised that the concept of “supranationalism” was, at first, frequently regarded as inimical to parliamentarism. Especially in France, since the 19th century, supranationalism has been linked to corporatist or syndicalist views, as opposed to individual suffrage and parliamentary government. Supranationalism has also been connected to legal or economic universalism, as opposed to the alleged arbitrariness of politics and parliamentary debate (Canihac, 2020).

Parliaments were, of course, treated with contempt in older authoritarian political thinking. Thomas Carlyle (1850, p. 85), for instance, condemned “the national parliament as an enormous national palaver.” The case was similar for leftists who favoured direct action. The poet Georg Herwegh (1848) depreciated the mere “politics by speaking” of the Frankfurt parliament: “In Parla-parla-parliament. Das Reden nimmt kein End!” In the 20th century, both the Soviet model of direct workplace democracy and the neo-corporatist thinking on the extreme right shared a militant anti-parliamentarism. In the Western democratic countries of the 1920s and 1930s, parliaments were, as it is well known, weakened in favour of executive power, as supported by proto-corporatist expert bodies as well as by presidentialist and plebiscitarian tendencies.

Even in the contemporary forms of direct-democratic thinking, an assembly might be a legitimate title for a meeting of citizens, factory employees, universities, and so on, but a parliament is viewed as something suspicious. Representation and debating *pro et contra* might appear illegitimate if the given opinions or mere presence of the “people” in the process are seen as authoritative (Butler, 2015).

In other words, in the broader historical context, the application of the concept of parliamentarism or parliamentary government to a supranational level has had mighty conceptual and historical hurdles to overcome before it could be taken seriously. To legitimise it would require a rhetorical competence of what Quentin Skinner (1974) has called an “innovative ideologist,” who legitimises the change by referring to cases in which the proposed new concept or expression has been already accepted.

#### 4. Parliament in the Post-War Political Constellation

The situation looks different when we consider the European institutions of the immediate post-war period, especially the Council of Europe, created in 1948, and the ECSC, founded in 1951. As we shall see, the expression “European parliament” was used in their context, but not in a very ambitious sense. The Council of Europe remained, despite its vocal federalistic minority, a traditional inter-governmental organisation, especially in the form insisted upon by the UK Labour government (see Haapala, 2022, for an analysis of the British debates). In the ECSC, the supranational element (the High Authority) was based on a kind of expertise, while the parliamentary Common Assembly, elected by member-state parliaments, was originally formed in order to hold supranationalism in check (Palonen, 2024).

An alternative to both was the attempt to put European integration on a parliamentary basis. This took place in the context of planning the European Political Community (EPC) in 1952/1953. The resulting Draft Treaty of the so-called Ad Hoc Assembly (see Palonen, 2024, for the debates in the Ad Hoc Assembly) was ultimately rejected by the French National Assembly in August 1954.

Before turning to the primary sources, I shall offer some general points regarding the rhetoric of naming.

The move to speak of an existing assembly by using the term “European parliament” may be justified on two opposing grounds, both intelligible with the rhetorical scheme of *paradiastole*, of depreciating vices and extenuating virtues, as reactivated by Skinner (1996).

As mentioned, many parliaments are officially named “assemblies,” whereas in other cases “assembly” has a more modest connotation. The French *Assemblée nationale* is the title used for the French parliament since the French Revolution. The General Assembly of the UN and the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, for their part, are not parliaments by strict criteria, although they do follow parliamentary rules in some important respects.

In post-war Western Europe, the revaluation of parliamentarism gained surprisingly strong support, at least outside the Communist parties and the French Gaullists with their presidential-plebiscitary ideals. Parliamentarism came to be viewed as an inherent part of democracy, especially among those speaking in favour of European unification; parliament remained a highly respected concept. As such, it may be regarded as a misuse of terms to call any kind of assembly a parliament.

In the context of the post-war years, to speak of a European parliament was, of course, never meant as a description of an existing or established institution. Referring to an institution as “the European Parliament” was a highly pretentious claim for empowering that institution, as were, indeed, attempts to use it as a name for certain proposed or projected institutions that did not yet exist.

If “parliament” was in post-war Europe both a descriptive and a normative concept (in the sense of Skinner, 1973), then speaking of parliament was always a move of revaluation, deeming an assembly worthy of the title “parliament” (in the sense of Skinner, 1996). The title could be disputed by denying the assembly’s “parliamentarity,” regarding it as a pseudo-, facade-, quasi-, or proto-parliament. In the early 1950s, the latter analytic termini were not used, and the question could thus be simplified to whether it was legitimate to call an assembly a “European parliament.”

Indeed, “European” in this context was not used in a strict exclusive sense—nobody tried to restrict “Europe” to only those countries included at a given time in the European Parliament. The question was more about “the parliament in Europe,” rather than “the Parliament of Europe.”

In the sources, we can find discussions of two typical but contrasting cases. A speaker may value a given assembly highly as a “parliament” by lowering the criteria used for distinguishing a parliament from other assemblies. In contrast, a speaker may value a given assembly highly but keep high criteria for speaking of a parliament. These contrasting speech acts may have opposite points in an actual political context: in the former, desiring that an assembly would in the future act even more like a real parliament; in the latter, giving recognition to an assembly if, for example, its procedures and practices already correspond to those of a parliament.

In the context of speaking of a “European Parliament,” the initiative frequently came from those who used the expression for an existing assembly by lowering the criteria for a parliament. The alternative—speaking of the parliamentary quality of an existing assembly or a system of government—was seen as requiring increased powers for the assembly vis-à-vis the executive.

By Skinner’s criteria, only the first case was a move through the rhetoric of naming in a strict sense. In the second case, the move was a demand to alter the institution itself to correspond to the criteria of a full-fledged parliament (Skinner, 1996, Chapter 4). The Ad Hoc Assembly, for its part, proposed the introduction of a supranational parliamentary government, which was an unprecedented form of political regime.

## 5. The Hague Congress, Council of Europe, and ECSC

For the Hague Congress on Europe, activists from the federalist wing of the European movement (Comité International de Coordination pour l’Unité Européenne) prepared a “Political report,” which contained a rather ambitious vision for the permanent unification of Europe. The final point in Article 26 called boldly for “the conclusion of a complete Federation with an elected European Parliament” (Mouvement européen, 1948, p. 86). However, in the further proceedings of the Hague Congress, nothing remained of this proposal; the unionist wing of the European movement around Winston Churchill prevented all federalist plans.

Nonetheless, the formula is interesting in its uncompromising claim. Although seen merely as a long-term target, the “Political report” uses “parliament” as a well-known concept and does not water down the criteria for it. The epithet “elected” referred to the aim of forming a single “European parliament,” and the federalists of the Comité did not have any reservations about applying the concept of parliament to a future supranational polity. In the next stage of the Congress, in the “Political resolution,” the federalist ideas and talk of a “European parliament” had disappeared because there was no support for such a maximal programme.

In the Council of Europe, hopes of transcending intergovernmentalism were frustrated from the beginning, and the Council’s parliamentary aspect was degraded already by its title, “Consultative Assembly,” leaving the decision-making to the Committee of Ministers. A federalist minority was, nonetheless, still active with the French socialist André Philip speaking in the Assembly on 8 August 1950 about the possibility of instituting parliamentary control on the European level. His strategy, following the “method Monnet” in the ECSC, was to “set up [of] various Ministries, which will be responsible towards what will become a European Parliament”

(Philip, 1950, as cited in Lippens & Loth, 1991, pp. 119–121). Philip still hoped that the Council of Europe would be the main institution of European integration and similar hopes were also held by other federalists in the Council (see Kivistö & Haapala, 2023).

To speak of “European parliament” would have also been somewhat pretentious when the Council of Europe’s membership originally consisted of only 10 countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK) while Turkey and Greece joined three months later. “Europe” was an inclusive concept, allowing other countries to join later, as was the case with the 13 states founding the US in 1776.

The number of European countries was, of course, still more modest in the ECSC, consisting of only six countries. It was originally based on France’s and West Germany’s joint forces in coal and steel policy but allowed other states to join later, as Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands did at the occasion of the Paris Treaty of 1951. The inclusive European “we” did not prevent speaking of “European” in the context of the ECSC.

The political constellation in the ECSC was different from that in the Council of Europe. It was built around the High Authority, a supranational institution consisting of officials rather than politicians. Contrary to the original plans, the Council of Ministers and the Common Assembly of parliamentarians from the member states were created in order to hold the powers of the High Authority in check. Jean Monnet, the president of the High Authority, soon realised that the Common Assembly could be opposed to the Council of Ministers and serve on the side of the High Authority in the internal struggles of the ECSC.

In his address at the opening meeting of the Common Assembly, Monnet spoke of it as the first European assembly invested with decision-making powers: “C’est devant vous seuls que la Haute Autorité est responsable...C’est la première Assemblée européenne qui soit investie d’un pouvoir de décision” (Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de l’Acier, 1953; 11 September 1952). Both arguments were directed against the merely Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe. Nonetheless, the Common Assembly’s “responsibility” as well as its power to make decisions were, according to the Paris ECSC Treaty of 1951, highly restricted. In the context of the annual report of the High Authority, the Common Assembly could, with a two-thirds majority, express a “vote of censure” by which it could force the Authority to resign.

If we consider that the vote of censure—or vote of no confidence—serves in 20th-century political theory and constitutional law as the main criterion for parliamentary government, we can understand that Monnet had well understood how an assembly could become more like a parliament. When speaking of the European Assembly, he also realised that in practice the Common Assembly’s hurdles preventing it from being a proper parliament were far too high, perhaps above all the fact that its vote of censure was limited to debates on the annual report.

We can note, in the Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de l’Acier (1953; 11 September 1952), that when the chair of the ECSC foreign ministers, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, went one step further in recognising the parliamentary quality of the Common Assembly, he was the first to explicitly use the terms “supranational” and “parliament” together: “Vous êtes en Europe le premier Parlement souverain établi sur une base supranationale.” Adenauer thus first affirmed the possibility of supranational parliaments, again by

the criterion of vote of censure: “par votre décision, vous pouvez provoquer la démission de la Haute Autorité.” Simultaneously, Adenauer recognised that due to the limited range of competence of the ECSC, the Common Assembly was a “parliament in Europe,” not a European parliament.

Adenauer’s speech also marks the origins of a bicameral understanding of parliamentary powers in the ECSC: “La position du Conseil et de l’Assemblée est peut-être à certains égards comparable aux rapports entre deux Chambres dans la vie constitutionnelle d’un État” (Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de l’Acier, 1953; 11 September 1952). Although admitting that his interpretation might be merely partial, Adenauer regarded the nine-member Council as a rudimentary upper house of the ECSC. For the present purposes, the point was that the “parliament in Europe” for Adenauer did not refer solely to the Common Assembly but to a second chamber—the Council of Ministers with its free mandate. This is a highly ambiguous view, due to the legislative and executive hybrid form of the Council of Ministers, which persists in the EU still today.

In the debate on setting up the Ad Hoc Assembly, the Belgian Christian Social Party member Théodore Lefevre spoke explicitly of the Common Assembly as a European parliament, “notre Assemblée qui est la première à mériter le nom de ‘Parlement européen’” (Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de l’Acier, 1953; 13 September 1952). Lefevre seems to compare different assemblies to see whether they fulfil the criteria for both parliamentary quality and Europeanness, concluding that the Common Assembly comes closest to a European parliament. He notes the inclusive, open-ended membership criteria of the Common Assembly, consisting of MPs appointed by member state parliaments, and therefore regards it as deserving to be called a parliament.

Indeed, Lefevre seems to have been the first person to characterise an existing institution, the Common Assembly, as a European parliament. His comparative judgement was that the Assembly was on its way to becoming a European parliament, if not the European Parliament. Not only did Monnet and Adenauer in a sense encourage the Common Assembly to act as a parliament, but the Assembly’s members themselves from early on were discontent with the modest competence given to it by the Treaty of Paris. Already in September 1952, the Assembly’s founding of committees and its adoption of parliamentary procedure served as instruments by which Assembly members strove to make the Assembly resemble as closely as possible a proper parliament (Wigny, 1958).

## 6. Debates in the Ad Hoc Assembly

The ECSC foreign ministers proposed to the Common Assembly in September 1952 the setting up of a so-called Ad Hoc Assembly to draft a constitution for the EPC.

The six-member countries agreed to the proposal as political support for the ECSC and the planned European Defence Community. The Ad Hoc Assembly consisted of the Common Assembly members, supplemented with a few additional MPs from the bigger member states (France, Italy, and West Germany) as well “observers” from the Council of Europe countries. The Ad Hoc Assembly provided a Draft Treaty on 10 March 1953, including a plan for a European parliamentary government (Palonen, 2024). As is well known, the plan was rejected by the French Parliament in August 1954.



I focus now on the debates over the politics of naming the European Parliament in the plenary and committee sessions of the Ad Hoc Assembly. The Ad Hoc Assembly followed in its internal deliberations the ordinary parliamentary procedure, which was familiar to its members.

In the Ad Hoc Assembly, no party affiliations were mentioned, and it seems that there were no cross-national faction meetings either. In the ECSC, partisan names were used for these political factions as of the summer of 1953 as a guide to identifying the Ad Hoc Assembly members politically. I use the ECSC affiliations of socialists (Soc), Christian democrats (CD), and liberals (Lib) when first mentioning a member. Among these, the “liberals” was the vaguest denomination, reaching from the far right (e.g., Deutsche Partei) to the centre-left (Radicaux de gauche in France).

The chair of the Ad Hoc Assembly was Paul-Henri Spaak (Soc), who chaired the plenary sittings. Its main organ was the Constitutional Committee, led by Heinrich von Brentano (CD), with a working party functioning as a kind of executive committee completed with subcommittees. The Subcommittee for Political Institutions, chaired by Pierre-Henri Teitgen (CD) with Fernand Dehousse (Soc) as rapporteur, was the most important for the politics of naming.

Whereas the Common Assembly could call itself a “European parliament,” the Ad Hoc Assembly was merely a proto-parliament that applied parliamentary procedures and practices. The title “European Parliament” was reserved for the future Parliament of the European Political Community. “European Parliament” was a *Vorgriff* in the sense of Reinhart Koselleck (1972), referring to an institution that did not exist, but that the Ad Hoc Assembly expected would be realised in the future EPC.

The guidelines of the ECSC foreign ministers spoke vaguely of a federal or confederal constitution based on a bicameral system, without presupposing a parliamentary system or that the chambers together would be called “parliament.” In the Ad Hoc Assembly, one notorious adversary of supranationalism was Michel Debré, a Gaullist and later de Gaulle’s first prime minister in the Fifth Republic. In the Constitutional Committee, Debré contended that a European parliament could not be anything more than “l’émulation des parlements nationaux” (Assemblée Ad Hoc, 1952–1953a; 24 October 1952), thus opposing not only supranational powers but also parliamentary direct elections, which the majority of the Ad Hoc Assembly had already indicated to support.

There were also other members who, like Marinus van der Goes van Naters (Soc), initially saw that speaking of a European parliament would go beyond the mandate given to the Ad Hoc Assembly (1952–1953a; Constitutional Committee, 25 October 1952). Van der Goes van Naters polemised against those whom he thought wanted to create “un vrai ‘Parlement’ de six.” His main point was to oppose the direct elections. Regarding the Council of Europe as the umbrella organisation of European integration, he was suspicious of the powers planned for the EPC (Assemblée Ad Hoc, 1952–1953b; Subcommittee for Political Institutions, 16 November 1952).

On 25 October 1952 (Assemblée Ad Hoc, 1952–1953a), the debate on the European Parliament was indirectly opened by Antonio Azara (CD), who in the Constitutional Committee proposed the creation of “une assemblée politique européenne” which should be elected directly as soon as possible by the citizens of the member states. He did not initially call that assembly a parliament but, in response to van der Goes van

Naters, Azara argued that there were already several “Parlements européens,” and what was now being proposed was “un nouveau Parlement.” In this usage, Azara did not hesitate to regard the different existing assemblies as parliaments but maintained that the new parliament would be a proper parliament. Herman Kopf (CD) supported Azara with the argument that the thought of “un Parlement Européen démocratique élu” might lead the peoples of Europe to assimilate better into the EPC. For Kopf and Azara, only a directly elected chamber would deserve to be called a parliament.

Already on 20 November 1952 (Assemblée Ad Hoc, 1952–1953b), several members of the Subcommittee for Political Institutions used the French expression *le parlement européen* as a rather unproblematic concept. Eugène Schaus (Lib) asked whether the president of the ECSC High Authority, as a European Executive Council ex officio member could be dismissed by the “European parliament,” “est renversée par le Parlement européen.” Chair Teitgen answered affirmatively: “il puit être reverse par le Parlement européen,” thus emphasising that the parliamentary responsibility of the ministers of the European Executive Council also applies to the ECSC president as an ex officio member of the Council. In this context, the term “European parliament” was therefore already connected to the acceptance of parliamentarianism in terms of the relationship between the government (European Executive Council) and the Parliament of the EPC. This was also affirmed in the same sitting by rapporteur Dehousse, who regarded the Executive as “responsable devant le Parlement europeen.”

On December 1952, at the initiative of Chair Teitgen, who admitted that *parlement* was a maximalist expression, the subcommittee agreed on to adopt “le parlement de la Communauté” as the official title of the future EPC Parliament (Assemblée Ad Hoc, 1952–1953b; 3 December 1952). This concept was different from the views of Azara and Kopf in that it included not only a directly elected chamber (later agreed to be named the Peoples’ Chamber) but also a Senate elected by the member state parliaments. The title was thenceforth used in all the documents of the Ad Hoc Assembly. The subcommittee’s decision on 6 December 1952 contains also the explicit English title, “European Parliament.”

In the debates, however, it was common to speak of “the European Parliament” in a rather unproblematic way when referring to the two chambers. Dehousse in his report to the Constitutional Committee (15 December 1952) as well as Lodovico Benvenuti (CD), Guy Mollet (Soc), and Max Becker (Lib) in the Committee (17 December 1952) all used the expression “the European Parliament.” The definite article referred to the Parliament of the Community, which thus tacitly raised the claim to encompass all “Europe,” perhaps with the hope that one day other European countries would be included.

This colloquial use of the European Parliament in the Ad Hoc Assembly formed a representative affirmation of the principle of parliamentary government at the supranational European polity level. It marked a disjunction from the mere “assemblies” of the Council of Europe and of the ECSC as well as a typological use of the scholarly term as a substitute for the official term “Parliament of the Community.” Parliamentary language was also practised when referring (although with some reservations) to the European Executive Council as “a European government” and to its members as “European ministers.”

The decisive test regarding the parliamentary quality of the EPC’s system of government was the election of the president of the Executive Council. Brentano took up the topic of the future EPC’s parliamentary powers, particularly the power to choose the president of the European Executive Council. For Brentano,

granting such powers would deny the European idea if “de ne pas donner le Parlement européen le pouvoir de designer le Président de l’Executif” (Assemblée Ad Hoc, 1952–1953b; Political Institutions subcommittee, 20 November 1952). Dehousse’s proposal that the directly elected Chamber—later named the Peoples’ Chamber—should elect the president of the Executive Council was passed by the subcommittee on 3 December 1952.

On the following day, however, Chair Teitgen persuaded the subcommittee members to let, in the name of a stable European government, the Council of National Ministers elect the Council president, and this was also included in the Resolution of the Constitutional Committee on 20 December 1952. This did not necessarily mean a break with parliamentary government, but a rather minimalist interpretation of the concept.

In the plenum of the Ad Hoc Assembly, however, several members turned against the proposal, including Dehousse, who as the rapporteur, presented the “compromise” proposal of the committee while at the same time stating his own doubts on the compromise solution (Assemblée Ad Hoc, 1952–1953c; 7 January 1953). The plenum rejected the Committee’s proposal, supporting Piet Vermeulen’s (Soc) motion instead, which was that the EPC Senate should elect the Executive Council president (9 January 1953). In subsequent meetings this was further detailed: The Executive Council at its inauguration would be subject to votes of confidence from both parliamentary chambers; the election of the Senate in member state parliaments to a fixed term of 5 years instead of altering the composition after every election in member states; and a slightly different qualified majority in the two chambers would be required to dismiss the Executive Council (for details see Palonen, 2024). Such measures were supporting the stability of the Executive Council as well as the supranational standing of the senators.

To sum up, although the Ad Hoc Assembly was initially cautious about speaking of the Parliament of the Community as a European Parliament, it soon adopted this language, which included a directly elected People’s Chamber and the responsibility of the European Executive Council to the Parliament of the Community (with the parliament having the power to name the Council’s ministers). The rather detailed system of nominating, confirming, and dissolving the Council in the bi-cameral parliament was the final move to secure a full-fledged system of supranational parliamentary government for the EPC.

## 7. A Future or the Existing “European Parliament”?

In a typological sense, the Ad Hoc Assembly understood well that, since the EPC was to have a parliamentary system of government, its parliament was to become the European Parliament and its executive the European government. A certain caution, however, was shown in using these titles officially, perhaps due to the limited powers of the Community or, alternatively, to facilitate the acceptance of the supranational parliamentary government in the member states.

When writing the history of the European Parliament, we should remember the debates of the Ad Hoc Assembly. It had a vision of a bicameral European Parliament, which at first had the limited range of competence of the EPC, but which followed, in its rules of procedure and political practices, the model of a parliamentary government. The European Parliament was planned to be a core institution of supranational parliamentary Europe. In that sense, the planned Parliament of the Community was much more “parliamentary” than what the subsequent “European parliaments” have been.

Creating a supranational parliament was an unprecedented task the Ad Hoc Assembly faced. The name of this new institution was by no means self-evident. Those who took the position to call it the European Parliament acted as “innovating ideologists” (see Skinner, 1974). Both parts of the name contained a modified range of references. “European” referred to a polity of merely six countries, but it was open to extension in the weak–inclusive sense of “European” as meaning “in Europe.” In contrast, the prestigious term “parliament” was boldly applied, without watering down the principles of parliamentary government to justify the extension of the range of the parliamentary style of politics to a supranational polity.

The Ad Hoc Assembly itself would perhaps deserve the distinction of being the first “European parliament.” Although most of its members were not elected for the purpose of drafting the Constitution for the EPC, in its procedure, rhetorical practices, and the politics of time, the Ad Hoc Assembly was an extraordinary example of a “European parliament” in which neither the national delegations nor the party affiliations played a decisive role. In this regard, it was different from not only intergovernmental organisations but also from the strongly partisan and government-bound practices in the member countries of that time.

The character of the Ad Hoc Assembly does not yet say anything about whether the Parliament of the EPC would have transcended ambassadorial relations between states and parties in favour of a proper deliberative assembly, in which questions on the agenda would rise above both the inter-partisan negotiations and inter-governmental forms of diplomacy. The deliberative alternative would have been one in which differences in polity and policy (as interpreted in Palonen, 2003) matter, in which debates on the strengths and weaknesses of the items on the agenda, would have gained a greater independence over the partisan and national divisions between persons.

## 8. Remarks on the Later History

The shift from the European Parliamentary Assembly to the European Parliament served as a rhetorical move that strengthened its political reputation but did little to increase its powers within the European Communities of the 1960s. After the direct elections, the legitimacy of speaking of a European Parliament was stronger than before (although major parliamentary powers, such as the right to initiative, are still lacking). Margaret Thatcher, however, refused to use the expression, in line with the old British view of disputing the very possibility of supranational parliaments.

The work of the Ad Hoc Assembly might have legitimised both a “small” view of Europe and a parliament with restricted competence. Despite this, its point was not to lower the criteria for attaining the title of a parliament: its project proposed a supranational parliamentary government for the EPC, and the Assembly itself acted in several respects as if it were a European parliament.

In the post-war West European context, when women’s suffrage had finally been introduced in France, Italy, and Belgium, the member states’ parliaments were commonly regarded as democratic, and the regimes were commonly called parliamentary democracies. Extending the principle of parliamentary government to the supranational level, with a government (European Executive Council) elected by the Senate of the European Parliament and responsible to both houses can also be seen as a major move in the democratisation of the European political order. The Draft Treaty of the Ad Hoc Assembly also gave the planned European Political Community the power to exercise supranational control against threats to democracy and human rights in the member states.

It is still common to hear not only among the Eurosceptics that the European Parliament is not a proper parliament, for example, due to its low representativity, as expressed in the electoral turnout. The European Parliament of today is a parliament even by the most ambitious procedural criteria and its sitting time is longer than that of many member state parliaments.

However, the EU itself is still no parliamentary democracy, as its parliament has only limited powers to elect and dismiss the government (the European Commission), unlike what was proposed by the Ad Hoc Assembly in 1953. The Ad Hoc Assembly did not accept that either the EPC or the Council of the European Union, consisting of ministers of member states, would act as a quasi-second Chamber, as well as the EP's lacking right of parliamentary initiative of individual members.

Nonetheless, I would not dispute the current EP the title of European Parliament. In terms of the political rhetoric applied in this article, I would, however, not see the “parliament” so much as the description of existing affairs but as a *Vorgriff* to change, a prospect for the parliamentary government in the EU. Or, in terms of my typology of the four aspects of politics (Palonen, 2003), the claim to name the European Parliamentary Assembly “European Parliament” was a move both in politicking and politicising it, the prospect for parliamentarisation of the EU is a major claim of politicisation.

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### Data Availability

The article is based on an analysis of the documents and debates of the Ad Hoc Assembly, available at the Historical Archives of the European Union, located at the European University Institute in Florence.

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