

**T**he **Euro-crisis**, **migration crisis** and the **Brexit** have been catalysts for a vibrant debate on a democratic future of the **EU**. Politicians and academics have contributed to this debate defending blueprints for democratizing Europe. I propose that we can broadly distinguish four proposals. I submit that each position can be understood to rely on a distinct conception of popular sovereignty. To elucidate the differences, I answer two important questions: **who are the people in the EU? And which parliament should ultimately make collective decisions for the EU?**

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By turning to recent political speeches and their counterparts in democratic theories in EU studies, I aim to clarify the differences between these four competing ideals for EU **democracy**. For a healthy public debate, it is crucial to make clear what exactly are the available alternatives.

## **Safeguarding National Popular Sovereignty**

The **British Eurosceptic Nigel Farage** argues that only national peoples have a right to self-rule, therefore the European Union should once again become a cooperation of sovereign states or be completely dismantled. In much less provocative language, so-called intergovernmentalists, and arguably also **technocrats**, argue that the EU should remain a cooperative regime of experts improving all EU-citizens' lives. In international politics, governments represent democratic peoples. The EU should remain an administrative tool of the governments to solve shared problems. EU institutions and personnel are to remain subordinate to governments because the latter represent sovereign peoples. **Popular sovereignty** remains a property of Europe's nation-states without any counterpart at the EU level.

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On their account, the democratic problem facing Europe is that too many powers have been transferred to the EU level. Moreover, democratic EU institutions are a contradiction, because they do not represent a real people. Euroskeptics often argue that **European Parliament (EP)** represents nobody because no European people exist. The road to democratisation is a dismantling of many existing institutions. The EP can be dissolved, while the **European Commission** should be understood as a bureaucratic secretariat of the member states. From this perspective, the **Brexit** constitutes a democratic although extreme reaction against the seemingly unstoppable drift of the EU towards further unification of Europe. Without a European people, the tendency towards further integration is an undemocratic one, because the EU undermines Europe's peoples democratic right to self-rule. Popular sovereignty of national peoples should be safeguarded against undemocratic intrusions by the EU.

## **Shifting Popular Sovereignty to Europe**

In stark contrast, **German** leader of the social democrats **Martin Schultz** recently made the case for a **United States of Europe**. In academia, federalists have argued in favour of this position. Their ideal is a sovereign European state democratically legitimised by a **European people**. On whether a European people exist or not, theorists disagree. Interestingly, Martin Schultz posits a classic federal ideal: a referendum or rather referenda should provide the democratic foundation of a European people. In other words, European people might not exist at the moment, but when EU citizens vote in favour of a European state then they will make themselves into a people. After being created they should have the power to implement their democratic decisions through **a sovereign European state**.

### *The President of the European*

*Commission Jean-Claude Juncker argues that the solution lies not in choosing between national peoples and a European people. Instead, his 2017 State of the Union address suggests that sovereignty should be split between them*

From this perspective, Europe's current democratic problems result from an underdeveloped **European regime**. On the one hand, the EU is not democratic enough, because citizens cannot elect the European government. They cannot determine the policy direction nor can they 'throw the rascals out'. On the other hand, the national governments have too much blocking power. The EU is too dependent upon them, hence it is not truly sovereign. The democratisation of the EU relies on **a process of unification**. In a recent speech at the **Parisian** university **Sorbonne**, French president **Emmanuel Macron** nicely summarised the goal of re-establishing **the classic trinity of unity**, sovereignty and democracy. The EU should become a full-fledged sovereign regime in which national governments become merely representatives of the regions. The true sovereign in the EU is represented by the EP, while the Commission is Europe's government. Popular sovereignty thus shifts from the national to the European level.

## **Splitting Popular Sovereignty between Peoples and Citizens**

The President of the European Commission **Jean-Claude Juncker** argues that the solution lies not in choosing between national peoples and a European people. Instead, his **2017** State of the Union address suggests that sovereignty should be split between them. On the one hand, EU citizens rule themselves through the EU's democratic institutions. On the other hand, as part of national peoples, they govern themselves through their national democratic institutions. In the academic literature, proponents of *pouvoir constituant mixte* defend this type of democracy. They posit that many **basic rights** are ensured through national democracies; a task that the EU is not able to fulfil. The Union, however, is necessary to ensure democratic self-government in an age of **globalisation**. The extensive powers required for this task demand that its citizens have **democratic control** over this level of government. The important point is that citizens take on the role of a European people. Popular sovereignty is thus split between two peoples: national peoples and European

people.

*In his speech at the ceremony of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, President of the European Council Donald Tusk points towards the fourth option. He emphasises the need for external sovereignty to ensure nations remain safe*

**What does such a mixed position mean for the democratisation of the European Union?** European integration is understood as simultaneously a process of cooperation as well as unification depending on the policy. Unlike the Federalists, within this perspective, the influence of sovereign democratic states is not problematic. With the expectation of the problems facing liberal democracy in **Poland** and **Hungary**, proponents of this position accept the EU not being a sovereign in some policy domains, such as primary education and healthcare provision. However, EU centralised policy, such as the **Euro**, do require a European government with the EP to supervise its policies in the name of the European people. Arguably, national peoples should also have a vote in these matters, because they also retain sovereignty. The democratisation of the EU implies giving both Europe and national popular sovereigns a voice in **EU decision-making**. The creation of one chamber with representatives elected from both national lists and a European list constitute an indicative proposal of this approach. This chamber should vote only on all centralised policies in the EU. Popular sovereignty is split between national peoples and EU citizens.

## **Sharing National Sovereignty in Europe**

In his speech at the ceremony of the **60th** anniversary of the **Treaties of Rome**, President of the **European Council Donald Tusk** points towards the fourth option. He emphasises the need for external sovereignty to ensure nations remain safe. What sets Tusk's speech apart from Schultz and Juncker is that he only defends a political union of national *peoples*. Interestingly, he does not appeal to EU citizens or a European people. This idea of a political union of nations finds an academic counterpart **in demoi-cratic theory**. The central idea is that European integration should not result in unification but in opening up between national

peoples. National peoples should not give up on their sovereignty but share this right with others. They should '**govern together**' rather than as a single European people.

*Which proposal is the most attractive? Each position combines facts about the EU with an interpretation how to solve the current democratic deficit. They thus share concerns with the current status quo and, given the crises that have affected and affect Europe, there is no doubt that a choice for EU democracy should be made*

This perspective also points towards a **democratic deficit** in the Union. Demoi-cratic theorists emphasise the need for representatives of national peoples to play a central role at the EU level. Member state governments are important representatives. The European Parliament can also fulfil this role because they are elected through national lists. Many demoi-crats also explore ways to include national parliaments in EU decisions. For instance, they propose the creation of a **European Senate** made up of national parliamentarians so that representatives of Europe's peoples can share their sovereignty in this chamber. Alternatively, national parliaments should be given right to propose laws to **EU lawmakers**. The core idea is to develop institutions apt to allow national peoples to democratically govern themselves at the EU level.

## **A democratic choice about EU democracy**

Europe faces a real choice. **Farage's and Schultz's** ideals **are the most radical solutions**. They require almost a complete overhaul of the European Union. One proposes a complete dismantling, while the other wishes for the creation of a superstate. The looming **Brexit** shows that such **revolutionary political solutions** are not impossible. Both positions capture part of Europe's reality. Juncker's ideal focuses more on the real powers of EU institutions that require **democratic oversight**. These public powers require a political principal: a European people. Similarly, Tusk's ideal recognises and embraces the EU, but puts much more emphasis on the diversity of Europe's national peoples. Something is lost without them or at least this diversity poses serious problems for **a pan-EU democracy**. The

two middle positions are often hard to disentangle, but they rely on distinct conceptions of popular sovereignty and thus EU democracy.

**Which proposal is the most attractive?** Each position combines facts about the EU with an interpretation how to solve the current democratic deficit. They thus share concerns with the current status quo and, given the crises that have affected and affect Europe, there is no doubt that a choice for EU democracy should be made. Some might expect a defence of my particular position here, however, this is neither the place nor the point of this post. I wanted to show **EU citizens face a real choice when considering a democratic future for Europe**. In a democracy that choice ultimately belongs to the people.

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1. *Two brief notes, firstly, politicians' speeches are not always particularly coherent, probably, in part, for sound strategic reasons. Secondly, I cannot do justice to the richness of the academic debates in this short blog post.*

2. *For instance,*

*<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/488294/Farage-on-Friday-Nigel-Farage-on-democracy-in-the-EU> (last accessed 2 January 2018).*

3. *See, for example, Giandomenico Majone, *Dilemmas of European Integration: The Ambiguities & Pitfalls of Integration by Stealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Andrew Moravcsik, "In Defence of the 'Democratic Deficit': Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 4 (2002).*

4. *See, for instance, <https://euobserver.com/political/140200> (last accessed 2 January 2018).*

5. *See, for example, Glyn Morgan, *The Idea of a European Superstate: Public Justification and European Integration* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).*

6. *Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, *The Ventotene Manifesto*, ([http://www.altierospinelli.org/manifesto/manifesto\\_en.html](http://www.altierospinelli.org/manifesto/manifesto_en.html) (accessed 13 May 2012)1941).*

7. *<http://international.blogs.ouest-france.fr/archive/2017/09/29/macron-sorbonne-verbatim-europe-18583.html> (last accessed 2 January 2018).*

8. *[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-17-3165\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-3165_en.htm) (last accessed 2 January 2018).*

9. *See, for example, Jürgen Habermas, "Citizen and State Equality in a Supranational Political Community: Degressive Proportionality and the Pouvoir Constituant Mixte," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55, no. 2 (2017); Markus Patberg, "Introduction: The Eu's Pouvoir*

*Constituant Mixte – Exploring the Systematic Potential of an Innovative Category,”* *ibid.*

10.

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25/tusk-ceremony-rome-speech/> (last accessed 2 January 2018).

11. *Demoi is the plural of demos. Examples include Francis Cheneval and Frank Schimmelfennig, “The Case for Demoicracy in the European Union,”* *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51, no. 2 (2013); *Kalypso Nicolaïdis, “European Demoicracy and Its Crisis,”* *ibid.*

12. *Richard Bellamy, “An Ever Closer Union among the Peoples of Europe’: Republican Intergovernmentalism and Demoicratic Representation within the Eu,”* *Journal of European Integration* 35, no. 5 (2013).

13. See for example, *Kalypso Nicolaïdis, “Demoicratic Theory and Europe’s Institutional Architecture in Times of Crisis,”* in *The European Union. Democratic Principles and Institutional Architectures in Times of Crisis*, ed. *Simona Piattoni* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 2016).

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