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A repertoire for analysing politicisation in parliamentary plenary debates

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Abstract

This chapter analyses the actual speech acts of politicisation among parliamentarians, which also makes it possible to set the current debates among European Union (EU) scholars in a wider context. My aim is to sketch a scheme for distinguishing different aspects of politicisation, referring to concepts of politics (sphere or activity and its specific aspects), to the politicisation of topics or persons, to its time dimensions (past, present and future), to different activities of politicisation (adversaries, unintended changes, the actors themselves), as well as to opposing evaluations of politicisation. My corpus consists of the plenary debates of the UK House of Commons, the (West) German Bundestag and the European Parliament (EP), in all of which a great variety of both interpretations and evaluations of the speech acts of politicisation can be found.

1. Politicisation in the language of the parliamentarians

As a speech act, politicisation marks a change in relation to politics. Politicisation means a break with a stable order of a polity and opens up a spectrum of opportunities[1] for politicking. In this sense, other 'ise'-type nouns, such as democratisation, parliamentarisation and Europeanisation, can also be used as opportunities to politicise. This requires an interpretation of the new possibilities in the situation, as well as a response to the potential change(s) inherent in these possibilities. Moments of politicisation can be related to what has already happened, is still ongoing or is projected to take place.

By focusing on the actual uses of politicisation in parliamentary contexts, we can illustrate important ways of talking about politics in contemporary Europe. To understand the repertoire for analysing politicisation, there are no better sources than parliamentary debates (see Wiesner et al., 2017; Palonen, 2017). In parliamentary debates, the use of the 'politics vocabulary' is everywhere, and the self-understanding of actors in parliaments as politicians

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[1] This should be understood as a translation for Max Weber's *Chancen* (in plural), with the emphasis that what politicisation opens up are not single opportunities but an entire spectrum or horizon of them. For the translation of *Chance*, see Tribe, 2019, p. 460 and p. 464.

is more likely to be expected than elsewhere, although some parliamentarians may try to deny this for their own political purposes.

Quentin Skinner wrote in the preface to his *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*: 'For I take it that political life itself sets the main problems for the political theorist, causing a certain range of issues to appear problematic, and a corresponding range of questions to become the leading subject of debate' (Skinner, 1978 I, p. xi). Following his advice, I will analyse the uses of politicisation in parliamentary plenary debates and examine how they refer to the parliamentarians' understanding of politics. I wish to avoid common academic patronisation about the language and action of politicians, preferring to discuss the rich variety of the politicisation vocabulary found in parliamentary debates as a basis for the construction of a set of rhetorical *topoi* around politicisation.

With this article it is possible to situate politicisation studies among EU scholars in relation to wider debates and practices. Even when analysing the academic uses of EU politicisation, as most of the contributions in this volume do, the analysts should also continue to look at the parliamentarians' use of the vocabulary in the wider historical, conceptual and rhetorical contexts. All contributors to the academic debates can be regarded as 'theory politicians' (in the sense of Palonen, 2005), who have a research agenda of their own, with regard to both EU studies and the EU itself.

2. A research agenda for discussing politicisation

My point of departure for the following discussion can be formulated in the theses: no phenomena are political by their 'nature' but only become political when the actor or someone in the audience interpret them as political. No phenomena can be protected from politics. If someone claims that a phenomenon 'is not political', it would not be difficult, especially for parliamentarians, to invent examples that prove to the contrary, marking the political aspect of the phenomenon in question. A half-century ago, the weather was presented as an exemplary subject having no political dimension. Today, even hardcore climate change denialists would probably no longer say that – or, if they do, they still make weather the very core of their politics.

Historically, it is interesting to analyse practices and contexts that seek to transcend the limits of imagining something as political. Every speech act that refers to the presence of the political aspect effectively politicises a question and changes its relationship to other aspects of the activity of politics; namely, to polity, politicking and policy (see Palonen, 2003).

Talking about politicisation even has a history of its own. The word *Politisierung* was coined in the early twentieth century by German literati, activists and scholars, referring to the opening up of politics to wider society (see Palonen, 1985, pp. 57-67, 1989, 2006, esp. pp. 205-208, 2019b). From the 1930s onwards, however, the politicisation of phenomena was denounced among both scholars and politicians, in response to the uses and abuses of the Nazis and the Communists. But in the 1960s, the concept was rehabilitated by activists for their own purposes. It is against this historical background that I will study the parliamentary use of politicisation in Britain and (West) Germany, as well as in the European Parliament.

In this chapter, I shall analyse speech acts of politicisation as rhetorical moves addressed to a parliamentary audience. This is an audience in which adversaries are also present, so that opposition to the moves can be expected. The speech acts are not 'true' or 'false', but are judged in terms of their strengths and weaknesses by the audience, who the actors are trying to persuade to accept the moves. A speech act of politicisation can, however, be also be used to initiate a broader set of different moves, and I want to sketch a repertoire for a number of ideally typical ways of speaking about politicisation. We must ask *who, when, in which context and to what purpose* someone speaks of politicisation, as well as *what can, should* or *has been done* with the politicisation in question?

For discussing the rhetorical quality of politicisation as a speech act, we can use the rhetorical scheme of *paradiastole.* This rhetorical scheme is concerned with the normative tone of a notion and can contain the devaluation of virtues, the extenuation of vices or the neutralisation of both (see Skinner, 1996, 2007). The neutralisation of vices and virtues might include both claiming that the consequences of politicisation are not as bad as they have been made to look, as well as warning that the expectation of new opportunities for politicking are unlikely to be realised. The devaluation of virtues might insist that impartial judgements beyond politics might be neither obtainable nor desirable. Turning a vice into a virtue could consist of arguing that the insight of politicians might be better than that of officials and

experts in debating the pros and cons of a phenomenon (see Weber, 1918, pp. 235-237; Palonen, 2010).

The rhetorical qualities can be then used for creating conceptual links to a wider debate on politics as a concept. For the re-conceptualising of politics, we can distinguish several levels of the actual speech act of politicising:

1) Who is speaking of politicisation: the participants or the spectators, such as scholars or journalists?

In addition, speaking of politicisation historically has two independent aspects:

a) The politicisation of what?

b) The politicisation of whom?

2) To whom or what is the politicisation attributed: to impersonal forces, to the contingent result of actions, to the actions of adversaries or to the speaker's actions?

The politicisation of questions, topics, aspects of phenomena and persons, either as actors or as victims of politicisation, refers to different speech acts. Praise or blame for the politicisation of certain persons is also possible within the existing framework of the polity, whereas the politicisation of phenomena contests the limits for politicking that the existing polity sets.

3. Politicisation in the debates of three parliaments

For analysing the use of politicisation in parliamentary debates, the digitised plenary debates in the post-war British Parliament, the German Bundestag and the European Parliament provide primary sources to discuss the relevant *topoi*. The German *Politisierung* and the British *politicisation* have different conceptual histories (see Palonen, 2006 and 2019b). Whereas in the Bundestag *Politisierung* was commonly used from the parliament's beginnings in 1949, in Westminster it began around 1970. For the EP, the digitised debates are only available from 1996 onwards. Nevertheless, certain comparisons are still possible.

In my analysis of the speech acts of politicisation, I have adapted the range of thinkable cases to those which I found to be best represented in the sources. Using the rhetoric of *topoi* means that I do not define them in advance but elaborate different, even partly opposed versions of the same *topos*. I proceed from the common denunciations of politicisation, through the more

ambiguous views and the qualified acceptance of it, to the voices of those celebrating politicisation. From this perspective, I distinguish between five main *topoi* of politicisation as a product of 1) adversaries, 2) anonymous forces, 3) a matter of dispute, 4) an object of defence, or 5) an opportunity for something new.

3.1. Politicisation by adversaries

The bad reputation of politics, also in parliamentary democracies (see Palonen, 2012b), was formulated by Carl Schmitt as an asymmetry: it is common to attribute the political quality to others and to deny it for oneself[2] (Schmitt, 1932, p. 21). This is a common move, also in parliaments, even when the members using it know that they are also 'doing politics'.

An extreme example of this practice is that of the British UKIP members in the EP: '[I]t is not for the EU to weaponise and politicise its trade policies to try and force countries which disagree with it on the practise to stop capital punishment.' By repeating this formula, ten UKIP members of the European Parliament (EP) obstructed the debate and manifested their opposition to the EU as a politicising power (EP, 27 October 2015). This is a striking case against the claim that it is the populists who have politicised the EU (for critical studies on EU politicisation, see Wiesner, ed. 2019 and 2021).

Decades earlier, the Thacherite Keith Joseph (Cons.) accused trade unions of politicisation: 'The fifth obstacle that stands between a society and full employment and rising standards of living is politicised to a great extent by a Luddite trade union movement' (UK House of Commons, 21 May 1979). In Germany, the proportional representation that the Adenauer government proposed for the co-determination (*Mitbestimmung*) of the coal and steel industry was condemned by the SPD members as politicising workers' representation (Karl Bergmann, 16 June 1952 and 17 July 1956). For Joseph, 'political' refers to state intervention; for Bergmann, it refers to a party-based system of representation. Joseph alludes to an ongoing process of politicisation, whereas Bergmann refers to the expected consequences of an electoral system.

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[2]'In Wahrheit ist es … eine typische und besonders intensive Art und Weise, Politik zu treiben, daß man den Gegner als politisch, sich selbst als unpolitisch (d.h. hier: wissenschaftlich, gerecht, objektiv, unparteiisch usw.) hinstellt.' (Schmidt 1932 [1979] 21n].

The dominant paradigm in the British debates is to be found in repeated references against the politicisation of the civil service by party appointments.[3] Similar asymmetry can be detected in the Bundestag, in particular for the two first decades, but later the variety of different views increased. In the EP, Fernand Herman (EPP) commented in the following terms on the appointment of EU officials: 'In particular, anything to do with staff recruitment, promotion and motivation has been affected by a growing renationalisation and politicisation' (14 April 1999), thereby branding member state interests in this respect as partisan (see also Othmar Karas, EPP, 25 November 2009).

In the EP, the right-wing ECR members spoke, for example, against the politicisation of sport, the judiciary and higher education (e.g. James Nicholson, 2 February 2012; Charles Tannock, 29 April 2015; Derek Ronald, 19 May 2010) and saw this as a work of their political adversaries or of the EU. Teresa Zabell (EPP) similarly declared that 'sport should not be politicised' (25 February 2004). These speakers therefore opposed extending the range of politics, with Zabell further arguing against the use of sport for partisan advantage.

Branding politicisation as partisanship is a common *topos* used to accuse non-EU countries of the politicising of their judiciary, state administration and so on. Berndt Posselt (EPP) spoke of the 'politicisation of Gazprom by President Putin' (16 May 2006). Even appealing to human rights has been accused of promoting politicisation. Tunne Kelam (EPP) claimed: 'The EU leaders should in principle avoid such attempts to politicise human rights issues' (27 November 2007). Similarly, Konrad Szymanski (ECR) criticised the extension of the EU's powers with reference to human rights (14 December 2010). In the Bundestag, Claudia Roth (Grüne) saw, on the contrary, the Human Rights Charter as a medium for politicising and democratising European integration[4] (18 May 2000).

At the institutional level, many EPP members also opposed the politicisation of the Union itself. Valverde López (EPP) defended the existing system and reduced parliamentarisation to nothing more than the supremacy of parties: 'If Parliament and the political groups were to nominate the Commissioners and the President of the Commission, this essential balance would be upset and the College of Commissioners would be politicised. The treaties stipulate that it must be independent, not only from the governments but also from any political group.'

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[3] See See https://www.english-corpora.org/hansard/
[4] 'Grundrechtscharta ist ein zentrales Projekt der notwendigen Demokratisierung und Politisierung Europas'

(13 January 1999) Again, on behalf of the EPP, Gunnar Hökmark likewise opposed the politicisation of the Commission: 'That is why we need legal certainty and the rule of law, and that is why my political group and I are sceptical about naming and shaming within this parliament, or politicising how the Commission implements the competition rules.' (30 January 2019) In this way, he repeats the old argument that law guarantees market neutrality, while simultaneously linking politics with arbitrary rule (see also Swedish EPP members on 10 July 2007). A similar argument was used by the Socialist Vital Moreira (24 November 2010).

In the 1970s and 1980s, in both the British and West German parliaments, the United Nations and its sub-organisations formed a new target for the denunciation of politicisation. Siegbert Alber (CDU) disputed the authority of the World Health Organisation as an example of growing politicisation (11 June 1976; also Hans v. Hyun, CSU, and Leni Fischer, CDU, both 10 March 1978). Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (FDP) declared on behalf of Helmut Kohl's government that there was a need to overcome the trend towards politicisation in UN organisations (7 November 1985). In Alber's critique we can see warning of future changes that would follow on from further support for the WHO, whereas Genscher wanted to stop an ongoing process, although he left open exactly how this should be done. Hans Apel, the SPD finance minister in Helmut Schmidt's government, was more nuanced in his approach, supporting the politicisation of debate but not of decisions in the IMF (23 January 1975).

In the House of Commons, Minister Timothy Raison (Cons.) stated that 'UNESCO has been beset with problems of inefficiency, over-politicisation and obscure programming for a great many years' (22 November 1985). The target of criticism about 'over-politicisation' was not just partisanship, as was the case with German critiques, but also the state-interventionist style of UNESCO. However, such a style could also be understood as the de-politicisation of an institution without efficient parliamentary oversight and control (see Weber, 1918, pp. 235-248).

Straightforward condemnations of politicisation can also meet with opposition. When several members of his own party demanded the withdrawal of the UK from UNESCO, the former Prime Minister Edward Heath (Cons.) accepted politicisation as being inherent in and therefore appropriate for that particular organisation:

There is indeed 'politicisation', to use a word as bad as 'privatisation', but we ourselves politicise. Of course, we do. Whenever we take an attitude towards human rights, we politicise. Politicisation exists because representation in UNESCO is by governments, not by individuals or by the representatives of learned societies. If it were, it would not be politicisation, but would merely be a repetition of the arguments in senior common rooms up and down the country, which are far more bitter and unpleasant. Therefore, I cannot accept that politicisation is an argument for withdrawal from UNESCO (22 November 1985).

Heath does not clearly distinguish between politicisation and politicking (Palonen, 2003) but offers us the excellent insight that politics do not exist independently from and prior to politicisation: it is politicisation that enables politicking. We first 'take an attitude towards human rights' and then, as a result, 'we politicise' it. Having thus politicised the issue as a matter to be debated, we engage in politicking by taking a stand on that issue. With his 'we politicise' claim, Heath therefore also makes the point that those preaching against politicisation are actually politicking, in the sense of the Schmitt formula. With his approval of politicisation, Heath also marks a dissent from the Thatcher government: he is proud of saying 'we politicise'.

During his period as an EU commissioner, Peter Mandelson opposed the de-politicisation of policy questions in the EU with an argument analogous to Heath's.

As for politicisation – politicisation of these issues is almost inevitable. When you have European industry now representing different views and competing interests and, frankly, making very different rival submissions as to whether they want trade defence measures adopted, that is bound to be reflected in the positions of our member states … When people have different views, those views have to be debated very broadly in a political way, through a political process, and that is what happens. (23 October 2007)

Mandelson well understands that the commission politicises the questions on the EU level by bringing them to the agenda, without expecting that either the EP or the member states would accept them by acclamation.

The German Green MP Imma Hillerich opposed the reaction of the new CDU-FDP coalition in Hessen to politicising changes in educational politics. In the Bundestag she criticised the coalition, claiming that it had replaced social studies with a more traditional teaching of

history and the separation of disciplines, with the aim of preventing further politicisation in schools[5] (21 January 1988). Hillerich understood that actors who have been politicised cannot simply revert back to a pre-political status, whereas the new coalition nevertheless was determined to continue with its attempts to neutralise the effects of past politicisation.

3.2. Anonymous politicisation

Much of the debate surrounding politicisation concerns the passive voice. In other words, it refers to forms that are not clearly attributable to definite actors but are the results of the unintended consequences of political actions. The German term *Verpolitisierung* refers precisely to this case, but it was used in the Bundestag only once by Walter Althammer (CDU), who bemoaned the fact that more and more matter-of-fact issues had been politicised (*Sachprobleme verpolitisiert*) and thereby spoiled (*verdorben*) (25 October 1973). In this instance, politicisation occurs as a disturbance of the proper order of matters, which Althammer attributed to the general 'climate' of the time.

In the House of Commons, Brian Mawhinney (Cons.) similarly illustrated how anonymous forces can politicise matters: 'The Irish language has, for whatever reasons, become politicised over the years. It has been taken out of its cultural context and put into a political context' (14 March 1991). More interesting than Mawhinney's supposition of the separation of contexts is his argument, resembling Althammer's, that this has been a long-lasting phenomenon, the politicising effects of which have only slowly been noticed over time. When politicians emphasise the unintended consequences of this kind of politicisation, at the same time they also create it, in the parliamentary sense of elevating the issue to the debate agenda.

The Welsh Labour MP Alan Williams referred 'to the unconscious, unintended politicisation of the civil service that has inevitably taken place through the erosive persistence, for 15 years, of the unchallenged "one of us" philosophy' (24 February 1994). His target was the Conservative government that had been in office since 1979 and which, in his opinion, had allowed the 'unintended politicisation' to take place. This is a typical example of a confrontation between the government and the opposition in Westminster, who have regularly been accusing each other of politicisation since the 1970s.

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[5] 'ein bewährtes Mittel, um Politisierung, die eingesetzt hat, wieder zu neutralisieren'.

Another common criticism relates to the politicisation of persons. Patrick Thomson (Cons.) was 'particularly unhappy about the way in which over the years students' unions have been politicised' (12 March 1986). He did not attribute this change to any party group but saw it as an unintended product of various practices in student politics, resulting in the fact that the Conservatives had *de facto* been discriminated against in student unions. Even if Thomson says something obvious, he still politicises the question by attempting to raise and debate the matter in the House.

German CDU members were equally worried about the politicisation of student unions; in particular, over the question of their 'political mandate' and the manner in which they took stands on extra-university questions. The chair of the national students' union, *Verband deutscher Studentenschaften,* had explicitly supported such a mandate, as is evident from the question of Manfred Wörner, CDU, and the answer of Minister of Justice Ernst Benda, also CDU (28 March 1968). A few weeks later, Benda quoted the famous student leader Rudi Dutschke's demand to politicise the opposing positions[6] (30 April 1968). In this way, the CDU minister depicted as a warning something that Dutschke had expressed as a hope.

The leader of the opposition Free Democrats, Walter Scheel, accepted the politicisation of students as an ordinary part of academic life[7] (30 April 1968). He emphasised how politicisation had taken place across the political spectrum and he welcomed the students' increased interest in politics, including the student activists in his own party. The important point, he contended, was to see a growing momentum for a break with the rather passive student attitude of the *Wirtschaftswunder* era.

Other parliamentary examples illustrate that sometimes members welcomed unintended forms of politicisation and even saw in them an opportunity for opening up something new. This was well understood in the Bundestag by Hedda Hauser (FDP), a medical doctor who appreciated that health issues had been increasingly politicised (*zunehmend politisiert worden*) before she became a member of parliament. She was delighted with this sign of a

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[6]'die sichtbaren und unmittelbaren Widersprüche zu vertiefen und zu politisieren'
[7] 'Das sind doch Zustände, die zu einer Politisierung der Studenten geführt haben, zunächst im Bereich der Hochschulpolitik. Dann ist diese Politisierung in eine allgemeine Oppositionshaltung unter den Studenten umgeschlagen, die durch alle politischen Lager der Studenten geht. … Wer in dieser Entwicklung etwas Unnormales sieht, muß seltsame Vorstellungen von politischer Denkarbeit haben.'

growing popular interest in matters relating to health (*Gesundheit*) (26 June 1968). She stated something that is quite obvious to the audience, but by using the word *politisiert* approvingly she also identified a momentum that could be more consciously and consistently used in health policy for politicking as well.

The EU commissioner Viviane Reding spoke about politicisation in her own field, with regard to the redistribution of radio frequencies: 'The Commission welcomes the politicisation of the debate surrounding the spectrum issue. This debate goes far beyond the technical level' (2 September 2008; see also Eric Besson, acting as the President of the Council, on the same date). However, other commissioners have opposed the 'politicisation' of special questions – for example, Dalia Grybauskaité on food aid (16 December 2004; Benita Ferrero-Waldner, 12 December 2006 and Joe Borg on the UN Human Rights Commission (25 April 2007) – although this does not prevent them from understanding the Commission as a politicising institution.

3.3. Disputes on politicisation

Explicit parliamentary debates on the presence and acceptance of politicisation are rare, but they deserve special attention, as they reveal explicit conceptual disputes. In West Germany, a board of economic experts – *die Wirtschaftsweisen* – offered at regular intervals their opinions about the economic situation. Karl Schiller (SPD), an economics professor, who later became Minister of Economics in the Kiesinger-Brandt coalition, questioned the authority of these experts in a parliamentary debate. He did not criticise the experts' intervention for politicisation but regarded it as such as a political act[8] (16 February 1966). The German word *Politikum* indicates the political status of an issue, not as 'partisan' in the sense of the struggle between the government and the opposition, but 'political' in the sense of being controversial in principle.

Half a century later, Hermann Färber's (CDU) views on the herbicide Glyphosate provoked a spontaneous interjection from Renate Künast (Grüne)[9] (21 September 2016). Färber said that

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[8] 'Es hat nicht der Politisierung in einem negativen Sinne gedient, Herr Minister, sondern es ist als solches ein Politikum'

[9] Hermann Färber … In dieser Glyphosatdebatte ist ein erschwerender Faktor hinzugekommen: Der Zulassungsprozess wurde politisiert.
(Renate Künast …: Der war immer politisch! Vom ersten Tag an!)

disputing the expert opinions given for the legalisation of the herbicide was an 'act of politicisation', an illegitimate intervention on a factual issue, and he claimed in his reply to Künast that such politicisation always leads to arbitrary decisions. This is an old argument used by officials and experts to persuade people to support factual (*sachlich*) matters of policy, in the face of which politicians should supposedly keep silent. Renate Künast, who was Minister of Consumer Affairs and Agriculture in Gerhard Schröder's government, made clear in her interjection that she regarded the entire process of legalisation as a thoroughly political process. Comparing the grounds for and against the legalising or the prohibition of the herbicide in a parliamentary debate would allow contingent decisions to be distinguished from arbitrary ones.

In the House of Commons, both Conservative and Labour members have repeatedly accused each other of politicising the civil service. Peter Mandelson (Lab.) used the term 'creeping politicisation' (13 July 1994). The debate on the *Third Report from the Public Administration Committee on Politics and Administration: Ministers and Civil Servants, and the Government Response* contains interesting conceptual controversies. The committee chair was Tony Wright (Lab.), a political science professor (see also his book, *Doing Politics*, 2012, esp. pp. 148-190), who opened the debate by problematising politicisation:

> We began our report – this was its whole purpose – to dispatch once and for all the perennial arguments about whether the civil service was being politicised. That has been said repeatedly over the years. It has been said that it was happening under the previous Government and under this Government. We wanted to be helpful by trying to disentangle all the things that might be meant by 'politicisation'. We stripped away some of the difficulties surrounding the word and its pejorative overtones, and tried to say something sensible about it. (30 October 2008)

Wright repeats the common accusations of partisanship but wants to get rid of the 'pejorative overtones' and to look for the range of meanings attributed to 'politicisation'. This is an extraordinary ambition, without parallel among the parliamentary debates that I have had at my disposal. In the next paragraph, however, he speaks of politicisation in a rather ambivalent sense:

> It is worth recording that, in some sense, the civil service is necessarily politicised and partial, because its constitutional function is to serve the Government of the day. Of necessity, it is not impartial between the

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Mit dieser Politisierung des Zulassungsprozesses nimmt auch die Willkürlichkeit von Entscheidungen zu.

governing and other parties, because its job is to work for the governing party and to deliver their programme. That is what Professor Colin Talbot calls the civil service's 'serial monogamy'. In that sense, there is a necessary politicisation of the civil service, but we know what we are talking about when we identify the bits that we worry about. We are worried about politicians interfering in such things as the appointment and advancement of civil servants when it contaminates the principle of appointment on merit. (30 October 2008)

Wright denies that politicisation is *a priori* negative. Against the Hegelian idea of officials representing the general interest against the partisan interest of parliaments and politicians, Wright insist on the 'necessary politicisation' of the civil service, in the sense that the officials have a duty to follow the decisions of parliaments and governments, as Max Weber (1918, 1919) had earlier emphasised. To support a commonplace in scholarship, Wright quotes an academic authority and admits that everyday language offers a narrow and partisan view of politicisation, whereas he wants to maintain merit-based appointments but intends to neutralise talk of political appointments.

> That takes us to the relationship between the political and administrative sides of government, which we explored somewhat in our inquiry. We visited Finland and Sweden because, among other reasons, they are traditionally cited in all the analyses as the homes of good government. Universally, Finland comes top of the league tables. It is interesting that one finds far more politicisation in those places and far more political involvement in those respective administrations than here. (30 October 2008)

Wright referred to Finland as a country in which the frequently partisan appointment of officials had not prevented the country from reaching the top of the international rankings in 'good government'. He continued with the consoling conclusion 'that the evidence for "politicisation" in the sense of inappropriate political involvement with the civil service does not stack up' either under Thatcher or under Blair and that 'despite the regular accusations of politicisation, Britain…remains singularly unpoliticised' (30 October 2008).

The term 'singularly unpoliticised' refers back to the conventional language of partisan appointments. Wright justified the view: 'That is because we have an in-built distinction between administration and politics. As my honorable friend indicated, that provides an in-built probity in government.' (30 October 2008) Andrew Tyrie (Cons.) doubted the report's conclusions on the civil service but reduced the question to one of 'perception', to something that could be either 'true' or 'false'. In particular, he wondered why civil servants'

perceptions differed from those of the committee (30 October 2008). He probably understood the diversity of the uses of the term 'politicisation', but he confined himself to the narrow meaning in order to make a point against the government and the committee.

Wright responded that they had asked former cabinet secretaries and civil servants 'to give us some concrete evidence of the charge of politicisation and, simply put, it was not there. The same opinion has come from outside observers' (30 October 2008). For Wright, the popular view of the politicisation of appointments does not hold good for those inside the civil service. In a later intervention, Wright affirmed: 'We need to think our way through, without simply making knee-jerk charges of politicisation every time the issue is raised.' (Ibid.) He recommended that members direct attention to the use the term 'politicisation' in the sense of its actual context. He did not, however, convince Nick Hurd (Cons.), who continued to speak of 'a trend towards the dangerous politicisation of the civil service' (30 October 2008), as if it was merely a factual question, in line with popular prejudices.

3.4. Support for politicisation

In several speeches from each of the parliaments analysed here, politicisation is accepted as a *fait accompli*, its strengths being judged as stronger than its weaknesses, at least in the exact sense of the issue to which attention is being drawn. One such issue is the politicisation of the military. Finding support for this seems to have been an especially hard task.

As one of the many examples against it, Egon Klebsch (CDU) blamed the social-liberal Brandt government for '*Politisierung der Bundeswehr*' (4 February 1971). Some weeks later, Defence Minister Helmut Schmidt (SPD) defended politicisation in a personal sense[10] (26 March 1971), by shifting attention away from party appointments to the legitimacy of Bundeswehr soldiers in taking a political standpoint. If the main duty of soldiers is seen as obedience to their superiors, Schmidt's move was oxymoronic. The founding of the Bundeswehr in the 1950s had, however, taken place in a context where the aim was – to use another oxymoron – to 'civilise' soldiers, transforming them into *Staatsbürger in Uniform*. Schmidt argued that even Bundeswehr soldiers should have the right to exercise an

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[10] 'Gegen eine Politisierung der Bundeswehr haben wir dann nichts einzuwenden, wenn darunter eine stärkere Ausprägung der Fähigkeit zum Mitdenken und zum Urteilen in politischen Zusammenhängen gemeint ist. In diese Zusammenhänge sind Soldaten und zivile Bürger in gleicher Weise gestellt'.

independent political judgment, in the name of equality with civilians. This was a major break with German tradition: the Reichswehr soldiers of the Weimar Republic were denied voting rights. In this instance, Schmidt was able to make the 'politicisation' of the Bundeswehr soldiers, at least in this sense, appear as a widely shared principle of the Federal Republic.

In the House of Commons, most discussions relating to politicisation date from the 1970s, when the Labour governments of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan were in office. Going against the tide of opinion at the time, the Labour left-winger Dennis Skinner dared to say: 'Although few would agree with me, I should like to see a greater degree of politicising in the civil service based on the party that comes to power.' (15 May 1978) Here he identifies politicisation with the notorious partisan appointments made on the basis of a parliamentary majority, such as was commonly practiced in the 1970s among the European Social Democrats, who considered that 'impartial' officials would simply maintain a bourgeois way of thinking.

Another Labour left winger, Martin Flannery, wanted openly to politicise the debate on Northern Ireland: 'I shall attempt to raise the level of the debate and politicise it. Ulster Unionist Members may grin, but they do not seem to understand politics.' (6 December 1978) Politicisation in this case refers to breaking open the deadlock between vested interests, represented in Westminster by the loyalist Ulster Unionist Party. Politicisation for Flannery therefore means nothing more than a willingness to speculate with possibilities that would not only to freeze the 'troubles' but allow a reconsideration of the entire political constellation.

In contrast to those who regard nationalisation within the EU as a form of politicisation, several speakers in the European Parliament have claimed that it is precisely by transcending partisan national interests that politicisation of the EU will occur. Roberto Galtieri (S&D) defended the link between Europeanisation and politicisation: 'The question here is one of democratisation and politicisation, in order to strengthen the action of the Commission and, overall, to build a more legitimate, stronger European Union that is closer to its citizens.' (22 November 2012) Reino Paasilinna (S&D) argued along similar lines: 'The greatest problem is a political one: they do not want to tax capital, but raise personal taxation instead. In the end, tax would politicise the global, undemocratic system of financial power.' (19 January 2000; also see Michael van Hulten, S&D, 3 April 2001)

Support for politicisation could even occasionally be found within the EPP faction. Georgios Papastamkos (EPP) demanded the politicisation of citizens by making the significance of the EU more obvious as an answer to the constitutional crisis[11] (15 February 2007). The Commission President José Manuel Barroso also accepted politicisation in the sense of 'a "coalition" between all those who are in favour of the European project' (27 October 2004). Pascualina Napoletano (S&D) supported Barroso for Commission President as a politicising move: 'This means that, with your candidacy, you wish to help politicise the political life of Europe. You strongly and repeatedly stressed this notion, including today.' (21 July 2007) For his part, Othmar Karas (EPP) regarded the enlargement of the EU as a politicising move: 'We must accord this political process the historic importance it deserves and enter into discussion with the citizens. We need to politicise the politics of the enlargement process, if we are to have the ability to engage in meaningful conversation with the citizens.' (3 October 2002) For him, the question was merely one of intensifying the existing political quality of the issue, without mentioning the respects in which that political quality would be strengthened or intensified.

3.5. Politicisation as opening up of new opportunities

An exceptional Conservative supporter of politicisation in the House of Commons was Hugh Dykes, who spoke in favour of the politicisation of the EU parliament itself with his views on the Europeanisation of parliamentary politics:

> Worthy and honourable though that may be, let the parliament politicise itself in the real party-political structure sense. If the energy and will is there, if the educational effort prior to the elections has been substantial, and if the government machine in the proper sense of the term has been supporting all that effort to explain and to inform the public, the public will identify much more quickly with their new European members of parliament and with their European constituency, even if it be a constituency of 500,000 or 600,000. (3 December 1975)

Contrary to the old British tradition of regarding Westminster as a fundamental part of the English national identity, Dykes argued for opening up the British polity to the momentum of Europeanisation, which would also require a politicisation of the electorate, so that they could learn to think of politics in European terms. Dykes later became a Liberal Democrat.

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[11]: 'Ein Ausweg aus der Verfassungskrise muss Anzeichen eines umfassenden Integrationsprojekts aufweisen, das den Bürger 'politisiert' und die gesamte – innere wie äußere – Aktivität der Union für ihn erkennbar macht.'

In the Bundestag, demands for the politicisation of issues have been almost exclusively presented by Green MPs. Analogously to Dykes's view, Christian Sterzing (Grüne) demanded the politicisation of the EU[12] (12 December 2001). Sterzing actually connected four movements – parliamentarisation, democratisation, politicisation and de-nationalisation – in order both to support and to change the institutions of European integration. In his opinion, the democratisation and parliamentarisation of the EU institutions was instrumental for connecting politicisation and de-nationalisation, which would be broadly equivalent to learning to think politically in European terms.

The Foreign Minister of the Red-Green government, Joschka Fischer (Grüne), supported opportunities for politicisation in the EU within the context of the planned EU constitution. He also expected the national parliaments to initiate a highly important process of politicisation in their own countries[13] (2 July 2004). Fischer therefore opted for a dual strategy of supporting both the supra-nationalisation of European politics and the parliamentarisation of the politics of the participating member states.

This argument contended that Europeanisation and parliamentarisation would intensify the political quality of the institutions of European integration and require a raising of political awareness to a consistently European level. Wildfried Telkämper (Grüne) spoke in favour of the politicisation of the budget within the context of the development plan (16 April 1996) and Heide Rühle (Grüne) in the context of extending the EU towards Eastern Europe, also in relation to budgetary questions[14] (14 December 1999). Carlos Botopoulos (S&D) commented similarly: 'Today's debate … represents a first essential step towards the politicisation of the budget procedure' (21 April 2008) and the leading Social Democrat Martin Schulz supported the politicisation of the debate on the budget as a matter of principle[15] (14 December 2010). A thorough debate of the budget is a classical parliamentary answer to claims of arbitrariness,

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[12]'Die wesentlichen Stichworte … sind zum einen Parlamentarisierung, also Demokratisierung des Integrationsprozesses insbesondere durch einen Parlamentarisierungsprozess, aber auch Politisierung und Entnationalisierung der Debatte.'
[13]'dass auch aus dem nationalen Parlament heraus ein Politisierungsprozess stattfinden kann, der von eminenter Bedeutung ist'.
[14]'daß dieses Europäische Parlament in diesen Haushaltsfragen in der Verantwortung gewachsen ist und sich auch in diesen Fragen politisiert hat.'
[15]'Ich möchte mich an all diejenigen Kolleginnen und Kollegen aus dem Haushaltsausschuss wenden, die sich darüber beklagt haben, dass es eine Politisierung dieser Debatte gegeben hat. Ich will Ihnen sagen, das ist die Logik aus dem neuen Verfahren, dass wir über eine Haushaltstechnik hinausgehen und über eine wirkliche Haushaltspolitik reden müssen.'

by instituting a procedure for the debating of items *pro et contra* in several rounds in the plenum and in committees.

Among the EPP members, Maria da Assunção Esteves contended: 'Having many groups can help parliament politicise bureaucratic Europe, because a democracy is a democracy and not an order.' (7 July 2008) Here she sees the decisive contest as being between the bureaucratic and democratic ways of doing politics. Elmar Brok (EPP) equally supported the politicisation of EU summits as a way to limit the impact of technocratic tendencies (3 July 1996; 19 December 1997; 4 July 2001).

Claudia Roth (Grüne) praised the resigning EP President Klaus Hänsch (S&D) for having politicised debate in the EP[16] (12 December 1996). Strengthening the parliamentary style of controversial debate is, for Roth, the main achievement of the European Parliament. In the context of the vote of no confidence against Jacques Santer's Commission, Claude Delcroix (S&D) even went so far as to demand the parliamentarisation of the EU Commission as a politicising move:

> My third point concerns the desire to better politicise relations between parliament and the Commission and, in this connection, to reduce the Union's democratic deficit. The public has been surprised to see that the European parliament … is called on so little when it comes to appointing the Commission and the President of the Commission. This goes against the democratic practices of our respective countries. What is more, parliament's democratic credibility will only be truly strengthened when, as our declaration requests, 'a significant number of the members of the Commission (are) chosen from among sitting members of the European Parliament'. (13 January 1999)

This latter demand was a reactivation of earlier debates about the Westminster-style principle of the compatibility of both parliamentary and Commission membership (see Selinger, 2019). This principle had been narrowly rejected in 1960 in favour of incompatibility in the name of the separation of powers (see *The Case*, 1969, discussed in Palonen, forthcoming).

On a few rare occasions, there have even been demands for the politicisation of matters that were not previously controversial. Some German Greens moved for the politicising of certain

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[16]'Sie haben es geschafft, die Debatte hier im Hause zu politisieren'.

lifestyle questions, as Hannelore Saibold (Grüne) argued for consumption[17] (6 May 1987). She not only wanted to politicise something 'private', in line with the slogan 'the private/the personal is political', but also to circumvent the traditional Social Democratic practice of public regulation. With this in mind, she favoured a voluntary organisation of consumers as a means of politicisation.

Peter Sellin (Grüne) presented a slightly different type of demand[18] (23 November 1988). He asserted that politicisation should transcend the minimalist view of maximisation or optimisation of 'industrial policy'. For Sellin, this was not merely a policy question but implied the need for a comprehensive and politicising debate about the alternatives for industry. These debates could either open up controversies for politicking within the industry or else connect industrial questions more closely with the polity, as the frequent reference to democracy in Sellin's speech suggests.

4. The rhetoric of politicisation

For Reinhart Koselleck (1972), democratisation and politicisation are central hypotheses of the conceptual changes that have taken place at least in the German-speaking parts of Europe from the *Sattelzeit* (1770-1850) onwards. In contemporary parliamentary debates, democracy has for decades been a descriptive-normative concept. The use of it is equal to demanding it, as Quentin Skinner has said (1973, 1974). On the contrary, to talking of something being 'politicised' appears, to many speakers, to be sufficient *per se* to condemn the change. In part, this is related to the use of politicisation (as Koselleck does) in the sense of partisanship, either in favour of one party or distributed between parties (see Palonen, 2012a).

Hardly any parliamentarian is willing to do away with politics as such. Even the Thatcherite Keith Joseph only wanted to 'keep politics in its place'. The fiercest adversaries of politicisation attempt to reduce the range of the concept to policies that *a priori* favour their adversaries, although for the UKIP MEPs all EU politics was worthy of condemnation.

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[17]'alles tun, um eine Politisierung des Konsums zu erreichen, d. h. einen gezielten Einsatz des privaten Geldes; denn die angebliche Ohnmacht der Verbraucher muß in Macht verwandelt warden'.
[18]'Demokratie verlangt geradezu die Politisierung industriepolitischer Entscheidungen'

In Britain, politicising tends to be regarded as highly pejorative. For John Biffen (Cons.) politicisation was an 'ugly word' (12 June 1974) and former Prime Minister James Callaghan (Lab.) referred to it as 'that awful word' (11 July 1983). In the European Parliament, British right-wing members assumed that by speaking of 'politicisation' they could silence their opponents or reduce the question under discussion to a contest of whose 'facts' were more plausible. However, in terms of its overall profile the EP, with several pro-politicisation speeches, even from members of the EPP faction, is closer to the Bundestag than to the House of Commons.

An alternative rhetorical strategy combines the practices of a re-evaluation of the normative tone with a change to the core meaning or the range of reference of the term (see Skinner 1979, 1996). I have discussed examples of such paradiastolic moves to transform politicisation, with certain conditions, from a depreciated to an appreciated concept. Most of those examples, from Walter Scheel and Helmut Schmidt, through Edward Heath and Tony Wright, to Roberto Galtieri and Martin Schulz, emphasise that politicisation is less dangerous than what is commonly thought and also contains valuable and widely accepted dimensions of action.

Another of these proponents, Dennis Skinner, assumed that with the politicisation of appointments it might be possible to change patterns of underrepresentation in the British civil service. Hedda Hauser's acceptance of an achieved politicisation made visible the political aspect of a phenomenon that was not previously recognised. Both accepted that there was an increase in the level of political quality in the phenomena.

Dykes, Fischer and Sterzing, as well as Delcroix, Roth and Botopoulos in the EP, are willing to regard European integration as something more valuable than their adversaries. To assist this integration, they require institutional changes in favour of the politicisation of the procedures for agenda-setting in EU institutions, in order to secure more openly political, parliamentary-style debates as an aim in itself, without expecting any guarantees that politicisation would favour their own side.

Identifying something as political that had not been interpreted as such before was the common factor in the demands for politicisation made by the Green politicians Saibold, Sellin and Roth. Tellkämper and Rühle in the EP placed a slightly different nuance. Their main

intention was to stimulate controversy on topics in the parliamentary agenda, which, in a sense, had not arisen as an issue before. They wanted to give a new momentum to the existing debate and thereby 'parliamentarise' questions, as well as altering the profile of items to be debated on the parliamentary agenda.

In the disputes on politicisation, we can further identify two different views of parliamentary politics. For those who adhere to the party paradigm, politicisation marks a victory for either their own side or the opposition. For those who regard politicisation as a matter of procedure rather than results, the most important aspect is the setting of questions on the agenda, followed by a fair and thorough debate. In this perspective, there is willingness on the part of the members to change the constellation of voting in the course of the debate in parliament. In this regard, politicisation marks the open recognition of politics as a contingent and controversial activity.

As far as the focus on the language of politicians as the primary actors is concerned, I have illustrated not only how the rhetorical uses of politicisation differ considerably but also how the concept of politics shows a remarkable range of interpretations. In so far as my typology has a reference to existing practices in its formulation, I concur with the sense of what Quentin Skinner writes when he refers to the 'innovating ideologist' (1974). Like such ideologists, those parliamentarians who accept, support or demand politicisation do so by extending its usage from contexts in which it has already been acceptable to others to other contexts in which it appears as new and provocative. In this way, they open up aspects of contingency and controversy, thereby creating new opportunities for politicking and for their legitimisation with the polities in question.

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