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The impact of the Lisbon Treaty on the European Parliament

-Changes in Voting Behaviors of the European Party Groups -

Key words: European Parliament, Lisbon Treaty, Voting Cohesion, Coalition Patterns, Vote Watch, Legitimacy Deficit,

Abstract

This paper firstly examines a previously established proposition on the voting behavior of the European Parliament: That the increased legislative powers of the European Parliament lead to an increase in cohesion within, as well as left-right competition between, the European party groups. The descriptive analysis finds that the average voting cohesion of the major European party groups increased between the Parliament's 6th and 7th terms, without a consistent pattern in different policy-areas. In addition, the overall left-right competition of the European party groups has been weakened rather than strengthened. This finding contradicts conventional wisdom and argues that the empowerment of the European Parliament facilitates an increasingly inter-institutionalized EU political environment, which in turn contributes to leading the European party groups to cooperate with each other in order to form a united position against the Council of Ministers. Also, the expert interviews on newly empowered policy-areas reveal that policy-characteristics play an important role in defining the voting behaviors of the European party groups and thus additional studies of other policy-areas are required for generalization.

Table of Content

1 : Research Outline	6
1.1: Purpose of Studies	6
1.2: Research question:.....	8
1.3: Structure.....	8
1.4: Key Words.....	9
2: History of European Parliament	12
2.1: The European Parliament's Changing Legislative Power	12
2.2: Existing literature on the EP legislative power and voting behavior	16
3: Research Design and Method	24
3.1: Research Design.....	24
3.2.1: Roll-Call Vote on the Voting Behaviors	25
3.2.2: Expert Interview	25
3.3.1: Dependent Variables	27
3.3.2: Explanatory Variables	27
3.3.3: Operationalization	30
4: Empirical Findings.....	31
4.1.1: Descriptive Analysis on Voting Behaviors	31
4.1.2: Discussions on the impacts of the European Parliament's increased role on voting cohesion and left-right competition	36
5: Conclusion.....	41
Bibliography	43

Graph

Graph 1: Change in the Number of Legislative and Other Proposals (1984-2013).....	15
Graph 2: The Number of Commission's Legislative Proposals by Policy and Type of Procedure: COD (Co-decision), AVC (Consent), and CNS (Consultation) (EP6-EP7).....	29
Graph3: The Effects of the Empowerment on Voting Cohesion and Left-Right Competition.....	37

Table

Table 1 : European Parliament's Political Power Balance from EP6-EP7	14
Table 2: European Party Groups' Voting Cohesion (Roll-Call Votes)	21
Table 3 : Expert Interview on MEPs and EP Officials.....	26
Table 5: The Number of roll call vote, legislative vote, and co-decision vote from the 6th to 7th term	29
Table 6: Voting Cohesion for Major European party groups in EP 6 and EP 7	32
Table 7: Changes in Voting Cohesion from the 6th to 7th terms	32
Table 8: Voting Cohesion of Major Party Groups by Different Voting Procedure.....	34
Table 9 : Left-Right Competition Between EPP and S&D (EP6-EP7)	35
Table 10: European Parliament Voting Cohesion as a whole.....	35

Abbreviation

AFCO Committee on Constitutional Affairs

AFET Committee on Foreign Affairs

AGRI Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

ALDE Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

BUDG Committee on Budgets

CDU Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands

CONT Committee on Budgetary Control

CULT Committee on Culture and Education

DEVE Committee on Development

ECON Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

EMPL Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

ENVI Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

EPP European People's Party (former European People's Party and European Democrat)

EP European Parliament

FEMM Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Greens-EFA Greens-European Free Alliance

GUE-NGL European United Left-Nordic Green Left

IMCO Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection

ITRE Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

JURI Committee on Legal Affairs

LIBE Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

MEP Member of the European Parliament

NI Non-attached

PECH Committee on Fisheries

PETI Committee on Petitions

S&D Socialist and Democrats (former Party of European Socialist (PSE))

UEN Union for Europe of Nations

1 : Research Outline

1.1: Purpose of Studies

The European Parliament has in recent years become an increasingly powerful and important part of the institutional structure of the EU. While the European Parliament's legislative power, in the beginning, was generally limited to that of consultation, the Parliament acquired more control over various policy-areas through a number of successive treaty changes, introduced by the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties in the 1990s. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the European Parliament was granted more legislative power in more policy-areas than at any other point in history. This incremental empowerment of the European Parliament was aimed at encountering the EU's democratic deficit in the decision-making process. By transferring more legislative powers and responsibilities to the European Parliament, it was expected to serve as a platform where the preferences of EU citizens could be reflected in the policy-making process and possibly in policy outcomes. On the one hand, the European Parliament's increased legislative competences have been welcomed and regarded as a positive development toward a genuine democratization of EU politics (Hix, 2008). On the other hand, some scholars have expressed worries that further politicization of EU politics might damage the integrity of the European party group because they are too weak to stand firm against the political pressure that would arise from more public forms of political contestation due to possible public pressures as well as high demand from national party delegations (Bartolini, 2006; Scharpf 1999).

This normative discussion on whether or not further politicization of the European Parliament¹ is desirable is disputed among scholars and it is largely dependent on the understanding and interpretation of its current state of play in the European Parliament. A number of the EU literatures are dedicated to explaining how the legislative empowerment of the European Parliament affects the voting behavior of the European party groups. To date, there is a broad agreement among EU scholars that as the European Parliament has begun to play a more important role in the legislative process, the level of voting cohesion among European party groups as well as the level of competition in the ideological dimension have increased, two of the most essential elements of parliamentary politics (Hix et al. 2005, 2007;

¹ The politicization or democratization broadly means the process of empowering the European Parliament both in participating in policy-making as well as in appointing or forming the European Commission members. This paper focuses on the narrow definition of the politicization of European Parliament in policy-makings.

Giovanni, 2005). The main reason why the European Parliament has seen an increase in voting cohesion and left-right competition, according to this view, is that with higher stakes put in the European Parliament, the European political party groups have a greater interest in maintaining their unity in order to influence policy-outcomes. As suggested by the research work (Hix et al 2005: p 211), “further increases in the parliament’s powers will increase rather than decrease party cohesion and left–right competition” and “this suggests an optimistic message for the prospects of democratic accountability of the EU via the European Parliament, since more power for the European Parliament would probably lead to greater transnational and party-political contestation in the EU policy process”.

With an increasing body of empirical evidence suggesting that the European parliament is becoming more cohesive and competitive in vote, this paper aims to explore how this widely accepted proposition can hold true for the European Parliament’s 7th term, when the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty has empowered the Parliament through the extension of the co-decision and consent procedures to various policy-areas such as agriculture, civil liberty, fisheries, economic-monetary affairs and international trade. This is a topic that is worth to study considering the fact that the existing research mainly analyzes the aggregate voting data of the European party groups without taking into account of difference in policy-areas. In addition, the empowerment of the European Parliament not only affects the intra- partisan battles in the European Parliament but also transforms inter-institutional relationship particularly with the Council of Ministers (Rasmussen and Toshkov, 2011; Hoyland and Hageman, 2010; Costello, 2011). The empowerment of the European Parliament requires the further interaction and compromises between two chambers and possibly changes the voting behaviors of the European Parliament. This fast-changing environment of the EU politics provides an interesting test case for whether and how the Lisbon Treaty actually affects the voting behaviors of the European party groups.

Furthermore, when analyzing the voting data of the European party groups, this paper chooses to conduct expert interviews in order to investigate possible explanations for an increase and decrease in voting cohesion and left-right competition in given policy-areas. Acknowledging that there is a considerable variation in voting behavior of the European party groups depending on policy-areas, a close examination using expert interview will complement statistical analysis. The analysis on voting behaviors in the European Parliament during a limited time period cannot alone provide a robust theory. It does, however, lay out a

possibility to test how the existing theory can be applied to a new environment brought out by the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty. Taking into account new empirical data obtained from the analysis, this paper will finally assess the impact of politicization of the European Parliament from a democratic point of view.

1.2: Research question:

First and foremost, this paper's aim is to examine how the legislative empowerment in the European Parliament in given policy-areas will affect the voting behaviors of the European party groups. Specifically, the paper focuses on the effects of the empowerment of the Parliament on voting cohesion and left-right competition of European party groups, by comparing the first four years of the parliamentary 6th (2004 September-2008 July) and 7th (2009 September-2013 July) terms. It is important to note that this paper does not aim to establish a new theory on the voting behavior of the European Parliament, but to investigate to what extent the existing theories will hold true in newly empowered policy-areas. The following three questions are addressed in this paper.

1. How does the legislative empowerment of the European Parliament affect the level of the European party group's voting cohesion in newly-empowered policy-areas?
2. How does the legislative empowerment of the European Parliament affect the level of left-right European party group's competition in newly-empowered policy-areas?
3. What other factors affect the voting behaviors of the European Parliament?

1.3: Structure

This paper is structured as follows: The introductory part ends with presenting the definition of a number of important terms dealt with in this paper. Second part provides a brief review of the development of the European Parliament with reference to existing scholarly literatures and theories on how institutional changes have affected the behavior of the European Parliament. The latter half of this section details discrepancies between the existing theories and the empirical reality of how the European Parliament functions. Third section is devoted to providing an overview of research design and methodology. In the fourth section, a descriptive analysis using the latest voting data of the European Parliament is presented to examine the general trend of the European party group's voting cohesion and coalition

patterns. In the latter half of this section, expert interviews are presented to complement the quantitative analysis and provide information about how the voting behaviors can be explained within the existing theoretical framework. Finally, this paper highlights the main findings and concludes with implications of these findings on the future of the European Parliament from a democratic point of view.

1.4: Key Words

This section presents recurrent key words in this paper.

Roll call vote: RCV is the recorded vote used in the European Parliament and many national parliaments. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, it was made obligatory that all final legislative votes should be taken by roll-call. This change implies that voting cohesion can be observed in a more accurate manner albeit not perfect.

Party Cohesion: Party cohesion indicates how united its party members are in voting situations. Party cohesion is calculated by Agreement Index (see below).

Agreement Index: Party cohesion is measured using the Agreement Index (Hix et al, 2007; p91). In this index, Y_i denotes the number of Yes votes expressed by group i on a given vote, N_i the number of No votes and A_i the number of Abstain votes. The Agreement Index consequently equals 100 when all the members of a party vote together and equals 0 when the members of a party are equally divided between all three of these voting options. For example, if a party casts 30 votes and all the party members vote yes, the cohesion index is 100. But, if these deputies are completely divided, with 10 voting yes, 10 voting no and 10 abstaining, the cohesion index is 0.

$$AI_i = \frac{\max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\} - \frac{1}{2}[(Y_i + N_i + A_i) - \max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\}]}{(Y_i + N_i + A_i)}$$

Left-Right Competition: Left-right competition score is measured using voting similarity/dissimilarity between the biggest two European parties, the S&D and the EPP. This

index measures the number of roll call votes whereby the S&D and the EPP as groups agree or disagree. The higher the index score, the higher competition is between these party groups. For example, in case the majority of the S&D abstain whereas the majority of the EPP votes no as group, this vote is counted as a disagreement.

Consultation Procedure (CNS): Consultation procedure gives the European Parliament an opportunity to give opinions to the Council for a legislative proposal. The Council, however, is not obliged to take them into account. Although the European Parliament can try to influence the Council by delaying its opinion under a consultation procedure, it is recognized that the effect of its delay is very limited (Kardasheva, 2009a).

Co-decision Procedure (COD): With the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the Co-decision Procedure was renamed to Ordinary Legislative Procedure, but its substantial function has not changed. In the policy-areas where co-decision procedure is applied, the European Parliament is regarded as an equal decision-making body as the Council of Ministers. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the scope of co-decision procedure is extended to more than 80 policy-areas under the first pillar (based on the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union - TFEU)². The co-decision procedure makes it possible to extend legislative negotiation up to three readings. Under Co-decision I, introduced with the Maastricht Treaty, the European Parliament can adopt a proposal with a single majority whereas Co-decision II, amended by Amsterdam Treaty, requires an absolute majority. Co-decision III or conciliation committee also requires an absolute majority from the European Parliament.

Single majority voting system: this voting system is used by the Parliament at first reading under co-decision procedure, requiring a majority support from the MEPs present at plenary

Absolute majority voting system: this voting system is used by the Parliament at second and third reading under co-decision procedure, requiring a majority support from the entire membership of the Parliament

² List of decision-making procedure by article, EU Commission
Homepage: http://ec.europa.eu/codecision/docs/Legal_bases.pdf

Trilogue or informal meeting: A trilogue is a negotiation between a limited representatives from three different institutions, i.e. the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. While initially associated with the preparation of third reading conciliation committees, trilogue procedures have been gradually institutionalized across first and second readings. This form of negotiating meeting has become increasingly common in EU decision-making as a response to a growing number of legislative proposals under co-decision procedures that require the approval of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. In order to resolve inter-chamber deadlock or speed up the legislative process through exchange of information, two chambers have intensified the use of trilogue procedures. While only 21 % of co-decision proposals were decided at first reading in 2000, more than 72 % of the proposals were first reading agreements in 2006 (Kardasheva 2009b). The number increased to more than 86 % in EP 7th term (in 2009-April 2013³).

The Qualified Majority Vote in the Council of Ministers: A qualified majority will be reached if the following three conditions are met; 1) a majority of Member States approve (in some cases a two-thirds majority); 2) a minimum of 260 votes is cast in favor of the proposal (26 %), out of a total of 352 votes; 3) a minimum 62 % of the total population of the Union. If this is found not to be the case, the decision will not be adopted. Voting points are distributed in the following manner:

Distribution of votes for each Member State	
Germany, France, Italy, United Kingdom	29
Spain, Poland	27
Romania	14
Netherlands	13
Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal	12
Austria, Bulgaria, Sweden	10
Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia	7
Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovenia	4
Malta	3
TOTAL	352

Source: European Council Homepage ⁴

³ European Parliament Legislative Observatory Homepage, accessed on May 10th 2013: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/search/search.do?searchTab=y>

⁴European Council Homepage: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/council>

2: History of European Parliament

2.1: The European Parliament's Changing Legislative Power

The European Parliament, previously known as the Common Assembly, was understood as a weak legislative body in which a European party group is fragmented with different national parties competing each other to maximize their national interests (Kreppel, 2002: Hix et al, 2003a; Hix et al, 2003b; Scully Roger, 2005). The European Parliament had no direct popular legitimacy, no effective control over the fledgling budget of the EEC, and no effective ability to influence legislative outcomes. What is known as the European Parliament began life as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 and the Rome Treaty in the late 1950s had transformed the chamber to become an elected institution but the election did not take place until 1979 (Scully, 2005 p 23). Since the 1970s, treaty amendments and institutional agreements have granted the European Parliament considerably greater formal powers. With the Treaty of Luxembourg and Brussels in the 1970s, the Parliament was granted the right to propose modifications to planned compulsory expenditures (mainly on agricultural policy), to insist on amendments to non-compulsory spending, and the right (if supposed by an absolute majority of all MEPs and two third of those voting) to reject the budget proposal. The European Parliament's budgetary role was further enhanced from the late 1980s, by a series of Inter-Institutional Agreement between the Council, Commission and Parliament, which agreed that parliamentary approval would be needed for increases in compulsory spending: these agreements ran parallel to multi-year budgetary deals that allowed the parliament to give greater attention to monitoring EU expenditure (Scully, 2005; p 25).

The greater advances of the law-making powers of the European Parliament were brought out by the introduction of the Single European Act in 1980s. Before the Single European Act, the Parliament's role was very limited. It could offer an opinion, but could not force the European Commission or Council to respond to this opinion. Putting aside from using delaying tactics by failing to present its opinion, the European Parliament had not formal powers to influence legislation. However, with the introduction of direct elections in 1979 and most importantly Single European Act in 1985, the European Parliament was granted the cooperation procedure for policy-areas related to the single market. Under the

cooperation procedure, only a unanimous Council decision can override the European Parliament's amendments supported by the Commission.

Subsequently, the Maastricht Treaty with entry into force in 1993 introduced the co-decision procedure with which the European Parliament was granted the power to amend throughout three round of plenary vote. The new procedure effectively provided the European Parliament a veto right since a final bill cannot be adopted if the Parliament cannot adopt the final bill at the third reading. In order to avoid rejection, a Conciliation Committee is convened if the Council cannot accept all the European Parliament's second-reading amendments. The Amsterdam Treaty in 1999 later followed and modified the co-decision procedure with the intention of strengthening the European Parliament position (Co-decision II). Recently, the Lisbon Treaty increased the European Parliament's legislative powers through the extension of co-decision procedure over the policy-areas such as fishery and agriculture policy, civil liberty and justice and home affairs.

In the similar way, the European Parliament has increased its prerogatives in the selection of the president and other members of the European Commission. Until the introduction of the Maastricht Treaty, the Commission president was chosen unanimously by the Council and other members of the Commission were nominated by each member state and approved by a unanimous vote by the Council. The European Parliament had no formal role in this selection process until the Maastricht Treaty. The Maastricht Treaty also provided the right of the European Parliament's standing committees to convene hearings to assess the qualifications of commission candidates. This informal setting, in which the European Parliament had de fact powers to veto the Commission as a whole was later formalized in the Amsterdam Treaty (Hix, 2008: p38). The Nice Treaty later changed the rule so that the Commission president and the Commission as a whole would be proposed by the Council with a qualified majority vote rather than by unanimity. This was a big change in the way that a same-sized majority vote in the Council and the Parliament was needed to approve the Commission president and the Commission as a whole. This change actually accelerated the process of politicization of EU politics, as the European Commission's membership and thus its policy direction is influenced by the composition of two chambers.

Concurrently with these empowerments of the European Parliament, the number of European political party groups rose dramatically in parallel with the number of EU member countries. At the first election of European Parliament, 410 MEPs were elected from 9

member countries: West Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Italy, Ireland, and Denmark. With the gradual increase of EU membership to Spain, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Sweden, Finland, the overall number of MEPs amounted to 626 at the time of the European election in 1999. After the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Cyprus, the size of the European Parliament membership rose to 732 seats. With the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU in 2007, the number of MEP grew to 785, but was reduced to 736 on December 2011 (European Parliament Home Page).

The European party groups play a central role in organizing and managing the policy-making process in the European Parliament. Among main European party groups are the EPP (Christian Democrats), S&D (Social Democrats), ALDE (Liberal Democrats), GREEN-EFA (Greens), and GUE-NGL (Leftists). With no single European party group securing the majority seat of the European Parliament so far, it is imperative that European party groups create coalitions on a case-by-case basis. In the 6th and EP 7th parliamentary terms, the largest party group has been the EPP, followed by the S&D, ALDE and GREEN-EFA groups. As Table I illustrates, the balance of power has remained unchanged during the 6th to 7th EP terms. In general, these two biggest party groups tend to form grand-coalitions over the issues of EU integration rather than socio-economic policies (Hix et al, 2003b). The recent report by Vote Watch (Hix et al, 2012; p 10) also shows that, in the EP 6th term, these party groups tend to form coalitions frequently over certain policy-areas such as agriculture and fisheries but in other policy-areas, such as environmental and civil liberty, those two party groups are in relative term likely to be in conflict than in agreement.

Table 1: European Parliament's Political Power Balance from EP6-EP7

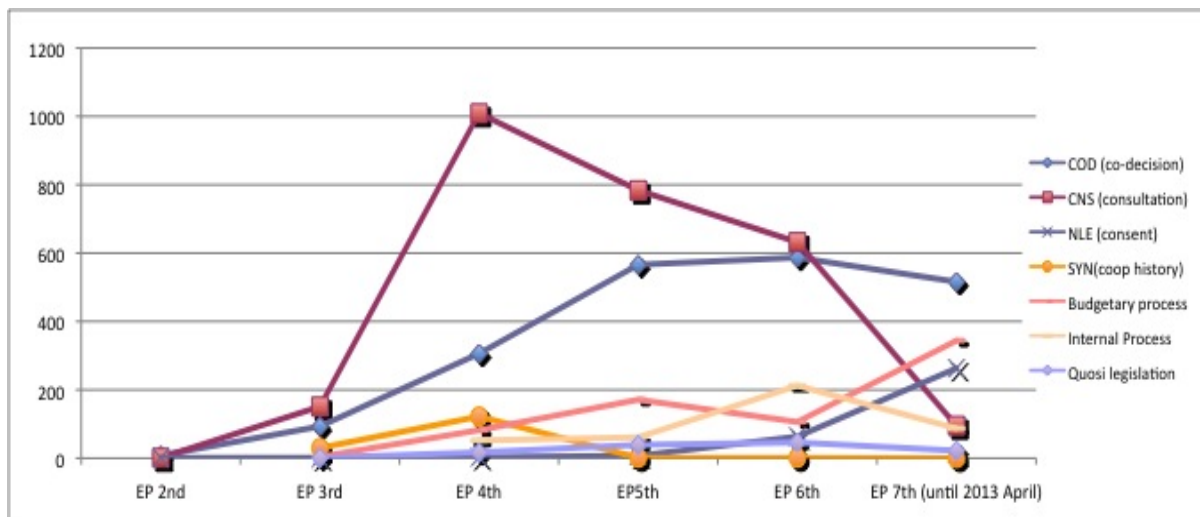
European party group	EP6 (2007)	%	EP7	%
European People's Party (EPP)	288	37	265	36
Socialist and Democracy (S&D)	215	27	184	25
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	101	13	84	11
Green Party and European Free Alliance (GREEN/EFA)	43	5	55	8
European Conservatives and Reformist (ECR)	-	-	54	7
Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE:NGL)	41	5	35	4
Europe of Freedom and Democracy(EFD)	-	-	32	5
UEN	44	6	-	-

IND/DEM	24	3	-	-
Non	29	4	27	4
Total	785	100	736	100

Source: European Parliament Homepage ⁵

Graph 1 below shows the change in the number of legislative proposals by the European Commission between the 2nd and 7th terms (ending in April 2013), obtained from the website of European Parliament Legislative Observatory. This graph clearly shows a general trend toward an increase in the number of legislative proposals under co-decision procedures throughout the period. Specifically, the number of consultation procedures amounted to almost 1000 in the European Parliament 4th term and then gradually declined to less than 100. In parallel with the decline in the number of consultation procedures, the numbers of co-decision procedures and non-legislative enactments, which are equivalent to consent procedures, have increased to 516 and 285, respectively, in the 7th term.

Graph 1: Change in the Number of Legislative and Other Proposals (1984-2013)



Source: European Parliament Legislative Observatory (From 1984 to April 2013) ⁶

⁵European Parliament Homepage, accessed on May 10th

2013 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/004a50d310/Composition-of-Parliament.html>

⁶European Parliament Legislative Observatory Homepage, accessed on May 10th

2013: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/search/search.do?searchTab=y>

2.2: Existing literature on the EP legislative power and voting behavior

Political theorists have built up the European Parliament theories from the experiences of western parliamentary party politics, particularly U.S Congressional bicameral politics. There is a general agreement, based on the past knowledge, that a functional party system has two essential elements: 1) organization-internally hierarchical party organizations (i.e. cohesive party organizations), and 2) left-right competition-contestation, rather than collusion between these organizations (Sartori, 1976: Hix et al, 2003: Hix et al, 2007a). These are two fundamental characteristics that the European Parliament needs to acquire to become a full-fledged functional parliament. This section firstly presents the theories of party politics in national contexts and secondly introduces the theoretical expectation of party politics in the European Parliament. Lastly, we present the existing empirical evidence of how the European Parliament functions and some of discrepancies between theoretical expectations and the reality of the European Parliament.

2.2.1: Theories of Party Politics in National Contexts

In the context of national party politics, fellow members of a certain political party vote together due to the fact that they share similar political ideologies and policy preferences. Sharing similar political ideologies and policy-preferences, however, does not necessarily mean that party members are always united in voting, as the interests of the party leadership can sometimes be in conflict with those of a member's constituency. Simon Hix explained in detail on this point, "In a legislature with several hundred representatives, it is logically impossible for a decision to always produce the closest possible outcomes to the preference of voting constituencies" (Hix et al, 2007a: p34). Therefore, sharing ideologies and policy-preferences cannot alone be a factor in determining the voting cohesion of political party. Theorists of parliamentary party politics have argued that there are other disciplinary means available to party leaderships in order for them to enforce their members' compliance and thus ensure higher voting cohesion.

Three political instruments have been identified in conjunction with a politician's three main goals: 1) electoral control by using re-election seeking behavior; 2) legislative control by using office-seeking and policy-seeking behavior; and 3) agenda setting control by removing sensitive and controversial issues from agenda. Most of the political science scholarly works on parliamentary politics, mainly derived from U.S congressional politics,

assume that politicians strive to achieve some combination of three principal goals mentioned above, but emphasize that re-election is the most important goal for representatives, not least because it is the minimum requirement that must be satisfied in order to achieve the other two goals (Mayhew, 2004).

First of all, electoral control is referred to as the power of political party leaders to toe their members into line by controlling electoral candidate lists. To what extent party leaders are able to enforce their members is dependent on the characteristics of the election system (proportional or majoritarian election) and the degree to which the proportional election system gives discretions to individual candidates (open list system or closed list system) (Hix, 2002). As for the European Parliament election, a proportional system was introduced as compulsory for member states in 2004, but there is a variation in detailed rules from country to country. The majority of the EU member states conduct the European Parliament election using either a closed party list electoral system—in which voters may vote only for a party, and have no possibility to favor particular candidates—or semi-open systems, where there is still very limited scope for individual candidates to gain enough votes to alter their position on the electoral list. In both case, the party members' electoral fate is largely dependent on the hands of their party leadership (Farrel and Scully, 2005) and therefore, the politician is likely to follow with her party leadership even if decisions are against the wishes of voters in her district" (Hix, 2005: p 219). For these reasons, party cohesion is expected to be higher when party leaders strictly control candidate selection in election.

Second, the legislative control is referred to as the power of political party leaders to control the allocation of important offices and positions for their members. According to parliamentary theories, politicians pursue higher positions in order to realize his or her policy goals. As a politician assumes a higher position or office within the party or government, one is more likely to achieve his or her policy-goals. Given that politicians are likely to give priority to office-seeking behavior over policy-goals due to the fact that policy goals are difficult to be achieved without being in higher position in a party, party leaderships are able to enforce their members to follow their lines by threatening not to give them the opportunity to obtain higher positions. In addition, the scholarly literature on parliamentary politics suggests that to what extent party leaderships exercise legislative control depends on whether political institution is unitary or a federal, decentralized political system (Hix, 2004). A unitary political system, or centralized power system—in which the political parties in the

majority position in a parliament are fused into government—is considered to have stronger legislative controls than federal political system—in which the legislative and executive bodies are separated—because the political party leaderships in the former system are able to whip their party members into line by either threatening to dissolve the parliament or rewarding important positions like ministership.

Third, the party leaderships seek to maintain their party's voting cohesion at a high level by using control over agenda setting. This means that party leaderships use their agenda setting powers to opt out proposals and bills that might threaten to divide the party and only put forward proposals for which there is sufficient support among the rank and file legislators (Hix et al 2007b, p823). The existing research shows that governments in parliamentary systems—comprising of a party or a coalition of parties—generally have stronger control over their members through agenda-setting than in presidential systems, because if each member party in a coalition government can veto a legislative proposal from the government, then it can prevent any legislation from being proposed, which consequently leads to an increase of voting cohesion in the party (Gary et al, 2000).

2.2.2: Theoretical Expectation of Party Politics in the European Parliament

These parliamentary theories, however, cannot be transposed to the voting behavior of the European Parliament due to a number of substantial differences in the nature of political structures and organizations, making the European party group leaderships weaker when it comes to controlling their members. First, the European Union lacks a European identity or a European-wide *demos* among its people, the element which is considered to be a sufficient factor for functional party politics (Dahl, 1989). Scharpf Fritz, one of the leading scholars in the EU policy-makings, considers the absence of the European-wide *demos* to be a fundamental problem for functioning European-wide party politics: “Given the historical, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and institutional diversity of its member states, there is no question that the Union is very far from having achieved the thick collective identity that we have come to take for granted in national democracies and in its absence, institutional reforms will not greatly increase the input-oriented legitimacy of decisions taken by majority rule” (Scharpf, 1999; p 9). He went so far as to argue that the European party groups should find it difficult to maintain their integrity when making a decision on controversial issues that

might produce winners and losers among different national party delegations, because such a decision could undermine the cooperative relationship within the same party groups.

Second, the European party group leaderships do not hold a firm grip on electoral control to toe their members into line, because they are not responsible for organizing the European Parliament election. A candidate list for the Parliament election is prepared by the respective national parties in the member states. Accordingly, many scholarships on the European Parliament point out that the European Parliament election is secondary to national one and that it is generally regarded as a second order national contest (Reif and Schmitt 1980; van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). This leads to the suggestion that national party leaderships keep electoral control in order to enforce their members to follow the national party line rather than European party group lines. Since politicians generally prioritize to secure the possibility of re-election over any other goals, as we have seen above, national party delegations actually play an important role in the formation of policy at the European Parliament (Simon Hix, 2002).

Third, the European Union is structured in a way that the executive and legislative bodies are separated and thus the European Parliament is not structured to form an executive body of the European Commission. In contrast to national parliamentary politics with centralized power system, where the political parties holding the majority of seats in the parliament are fused to form a government, the European party groups cannot effectively force their members to toe in line by threatening to dissolve the parliament or rewarding important positions like ministerships. In addition, the European party group leadership in the Parliament do not have the ability to control agenda setting in the same way as in national parliamentary politics, because the EU political system is structured in such a way that the European Commission has a monopolistic role in initiating policy proposal, with the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament given the role of amending or rejecting them, if necessary, under co-decision procedures. As the European party group leaderships have practically no discretion in initiating policy-proposals, agenda setting power cannot be fully exploited. This is also the case when the European party groups vote on consent procedure in which the Parliament can only accept or reject a proposal (Hix, 2007b; p 823).

As for the dimension of left-right competition in the European Parliament, there are a number of theoretical explanations why the European party groups tend to collude rather than compete with each other (Hix et al, 2003b: p 326): 1) the two biggest parties, S&D and EPP,

share a general ideological view on many issues concerning the EU agenda, particularly their relatively pro-European attitude to European integration; 2) the technical rules of the EU's legislative procedures often make it necessary for the two biggest parties to vote together, as the second reading of co-decision procedure requires an absolute majority rather than a simple majority of the European Parliament (see the previous chapter 1.4 on Key Words) ; 3) there is a collective institutional interest to increase the influence of the Parliament as a whole and therefore the political party groups jointly promotes its interests and powers against the other two institutions by consolidating a common position; 4) the S&D and EPP collude to prevent the smaller groups from having influence in the voting outcome in the European Parliament. For these reasons, one of the leading scholars in this field concludes. Furthermore, one of the leading scholars in this field pointed out in her work (Kreppel, 2002: p19), "Increased legislative powers also gave these two groups an incentive to avoid ideological dogmatism and work together to achieve moderate, broadly acceptable proposals".

These national parliamentary theories and European Parliament theories lead to the conclusion that politicization of the European politics through the empowerment of the European Parliament does not necessarily strengthen the European-wide functioning politics with highly cohesive and competitive European party groups, not only because of the risk that the European party groups will break down due to heavy pressures from national parties but also for the reason of promoting the interests of the European Parliament as a whole against the other EU institutions. Following the reasoning of the national parliamentary theories, the increasing legislative empowerment of the European Parliament through the extension of co-decision and consent procedures could have a negative effect on the voting cohesion and left-right competition of the European party groups.

2.2.3: The Empirical Evidence about the European Parliament

Despite a popular image that national parties, rather than European party groups, dominate decision-makings in search for national interests and despite the theoretical expectation that politicization of the European Parliament will not necessarily lead to the European wide-functioning politics, however, the empirical research on the European Parliament is increasingly presenting the opposite results. The European Parliament became a more powerful decision-making player in the EU with the increasing transfer of legislative powers to the Parliament through successive treaty changes since 1990s, and European party groups,

rather than national parties, actually dominate policy-making in the European Parliament (Raunio, 1997; Kreppel and Tsebelis, 1999). In recent works, Hix, Noury and Roland (2007a; 2007b) analyzed all of the nearly 15,000 roll call votes by individual MEPs in all first five European Parliament terms, covering the 25-year-period from 1979 to 2004. This large-N data quantitative study showed that the European Parliament's overall voting cohesion or agreement index as a whole (i.e. the proportion of support/opposition/abstention in a vote in the Parliament) has declined as the European Parliament gained more legislative powers, while the voting cohesion of the European party groups has increased over the period (Table 2 see below). This means that the European party groups increasingly vote cohesively and compete with each other on the left-right dimension. By way of comparison, for example, the Democrats and Republicans in the US Congress have voting cohesion scores around 0.80 while most parties in national parliaments in Europe score above 0.90. Furthermore, the European party groups vote in a more cohesive way than do national delegations of MEPs, and the voting gap between the European party groups and national delegations has broadened since the mid-1980s. Therefore, "the European Parliament should not be treated as a unitary actor in theories of the EU policy process, but rather as a set of transnational party-political actors with predictable preferences on EU regulatory, redistributive or macro-economic policies"(Hix et al, 2005: p 232).

Table 2: European Party Groups' Voting Cohesion (Roll-Call Votes)

	EP1(1979–1984)	EP2(1984-1989)	EP3(1989-1994)	EP4(1994-1999)	EP5(1999-2004)
PSE(S&D)	0.754	0.781	0.77	0.831	0.931
EPP-ED(EPP)	0.888	0.85	0.764	0.833	0.897
ELDR(ALDE)	0.833	0.759	0.726	0.791	0.919
UEN(EFD)	0.783	0.763	0.778	0.734	0.787
GUE-NGL	0.817	0.804	0.753	0.756	0.831
Greens-EFA	-	0.753	0.755	0.86	0.971

Source: Hix, Noury and Roland (2007b)

The main rationale for an increase in voting cohesion and in left-right competition in the European Parliament is that the European party groups have little chance of impacting the legislative outcome if the party groups do not maintain voting cohesion among their members.

Another factor is the transformation of pro-integrationist attitudes and identity to MEPs through the effects of socialization in the European Parliament, although this claim has often been disputed and even criticized (Scully, 2005). While it is difficult from a methodological perspective to verify the effects of socialization on MEPs, there is a general observation that the proportion of European careerists—the MEPs who choose to work for the European Parliament to achieve their goals, unlike others who see the political career in European Parliament as a stepping stone to higher positions in domestic politics—is gradually increasing and that MEPs are becoming more independent of domestic politics (Scarrow, 1997).

In addition, an increasing number of scholars point out that the European party group leaderships have disciplinary controls over their members through various measures: European party group leadership's allocation of committee seats, rapporteur, and speaking time (Raunio 2003). It has also been shown that less attractive committee seats are allocated to MEPs who vote against their party lines (McElroy, 2001). Furthermore, the latest research (Nikoleta, 2011a) has revealed that rapporteur for an important legislative proposal under the co-decision procedure is distributed to the MEPs who are loyal to the party and who do not have outlying preferences or special interests. These findings therefore lead to the suggestion that it is by using this allocation of rapporteur that the party group leaderships could attract their members to follow their party group lines.

It is important to note, however, that an increase in voting cohesion and left-right competition in the European Parliament does not necessarily mean that the European party group leaderships have more powers than national party delegations in controlling their members. On the contrary, the empirical evidence suggests that when an issue is of extreme salience to national party delegations, these national party delegations often issue instructions to their MEPs to vote against their European party groups, and the question of whether the European party group leaderships have the ability to control their members is dependent on the characteristics of the vote and its importance to national party delegations. When there is no conflict of interests between the European party groups and national party delegations, “the national parties delegate significant organizational and policy leadership powers to the European party and use their own power to discipline the MEPs to follow the European party line” (Hix, et al 2007b: p146). The view that national party delegation is the master of MEPs is shared by a number of other scholars. Bjorn Lindberg analyzes the latest voting data and

conducts a number of interviews with MEPs, concluding; “The party group leaderships cannot pressure national party delegations to vote with the party group line. The European party groups are therefore partly dependent on the voluntary voting support of the national party delegations to achieve voting cohesion” (Lindberg 2008: p 183).

Still, there remain some doubts about the validity of the existing empirical research. First, even if the MEPs are likely to follow their European party groups’ line except when vote is of critical importance to their national party delegations, it is counter-intuitive to believe that the voting cohesion increases when more decisions are taken under co-decision procedure, under which “the MEPs have the greatest incentive to deviate from the positions of their party group” (Ringe, 2009; p 66). Second, the existing research does not take into account the changing environment entailed by the empowerment of the European Parliament. The empowerment not only changed the ongoing dynamics of organizational concentration and functional differentiation / specialization within the European Parliament (Farrel and Heritier, 2003) but, more importantly, accelerated the process of inter-institutional or bicameral politics and thereby requirement of further coordination with the Council of Ministers (Rasmusen, Toshkov, 2011). A clear process or consequence of bicameralized politics is visible in the fact that an increasing number of co-decision procedure are concluded at first reading without being dragging into a second and third reading or conciliation committee. While 21 % of the total co-decision proposals were decided at a first reading in 2000, this percentage jumped up to 72 % in 2006 and 86 % in EP 7th term (during 2009-April 2013). This change in the way co-decision procedure is dealt with has profound implications for the voting behaviors of the European Parliament. Although there are different factors for the increase in the number of early agreements, as Amie Kreppel argues, one of the most likely explanations is that the European party groups in the European Parliament aim to form a united front to increase the influence over policy-outcomes (Kreppel, 2002). This changing environment of EU politics provides an interesting test case for whether and how the Lisbon Treaty actually affects the voting behaviors of the European party groups.

3: Research Design and Method

3.1: Research Design

Recalling the background that the Lisbon Treaty empowered the role of the European Parliament in various policy-areas, this paper specifically focuses on changes in the following two dimensions, as mentioned in the first section: 1) the level of the European party group's voting cohesion and 2) the level of left-right competition in the newly empowered policy-areas. After analyzing and comparing the empirical data from the 6th and EP 7th term, 3) this paper examines to what extent the empowerment of the Parliament affected the voting behaviors and whether if there are any other variables influencing the results.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, in spite of theoretical expectations deriving from parliamentary and congressional national party politics, a number of empirical research works have revealed that the delegation of more legislative powers to the European Parliament actually led to a strengthening of voting cohesion within, and left-right competition between, the European party groups. With this empirical result in mind, this paper aims to investigate how this previously quantified proposition actually holds true for the 7th term of European Parliament, when co-decision procedure was applied to various policy-areas such as fisheries, agriculture, civil liberty, economic-monetary affairs and international trade. This is worth investigating mainly for three reasons; First, not many scholars have so far investigated the impact of the Lisbon Treaty on the voting behavior of the European Parliament⁷; Second, the existing research has predominantly focused on the aggregate data from roll-call votes by European party group and have not specifically analyzed the impact of legislative empowerment of the European Parliament on each policy-area by separating such voting procedures as non-legislative and legislative votes which mainly consist of co-decision procedure. Third, the empowerment of the Parliament not only affects the intra party relationship in the European Parliament but also transform inter-institutional relationship particularly with the Council of Ministers, which requires further interaction and coordination between two chambers. As bicameral politics plays an increasingly important role in decision-making with more trilogue introduced, it is reasonable to expect that this will have an impact on the voting behavior of the European Parliament and is thus worth studying.

⁷ It is worth mentioning that "Vote Watch" regularly publishes analytical reports on voting patterns of the European Parliament by using the latest data from the parliamentary 7th term.

3.2: Material

3.2.1: Roll-Call Vote on the Voting Behaviors

In order to investigate the voting behaviors of the European Parliament, the best instrument available is the roll call vote, or recorded vote, cast in plenary. The data of roll-call votes can be obtained from Vote Watch, the website for collecting and presenting the European Parliament's voting data in a way that is suitable for various purposes. To this end, the roll-call votes are collected from the period of EP 6th term (September 2004-July 2008) and the EP 7th term (September 2009-July 2013). The total number of roll-call votes during the period of the 6th term amounted to 4582 votes whereas the 7th term produced 4529 votes. Although it would have been preferable if a comparison was made possible between these two parliamentary terms on full-length of five years, the number of roll call votes in these two parliamentary terms is almost comparable and thus justifiable. However, an analysis using roll call votes is not without flaws mainly two reasons; 1) roll call vote constitutes only 30 % of total votes at plenary, 2) roll call vote is predominantly called on non-legislative votes (Carrubba et al, 2006). Nevertheless, this is the only available hard evidence that allows us to conduct more or less consistent and reliable analysis of voting behaviors of the European Parliament. Therefore, despite its drawbacks, the roll-call vote is one of the most useful and frequently used sources of information for political scientists studying the voting behaviors of the European Parliament.

3.2.2: Expert Interview

In addition to the quantitative-oriented analysis using roll call votes, this paper employs expert-interviews to help explain the impact of the Lisbon Treaty on voting behaviors of the European party groups in specific policy-areas. The total of eight semi-structured interviews were carried out at a late stage of this research and all interviews are anonymous as requested by interviewees. The interviewees were five MEPs from different political groups engaged in the areas of fisheries, agriculture and civil liberty. In addition, three European Parliament administrators working with fisheries and agricultural policy are included as interviewees (Table 3). The selection of interviewees was made in line with relevance to policy-areas where the European Parliament gained legislative powers. Although

it would have been preferable if we could have included people involved in the economic-monetary affairs and international trade committees, the two of which also fall under empowered policy-areas after Lisbon Treaty, this does not necessarily damage the credibility of this research, as the voting result of agricultural policy provide a negative implication for existing theory whereas those of other two policy-areas (fisheries and civil liberty) are in line with expectations from exiting theory. Therefore, these three policy-areas provide a more or less balanced overview of how the Lisbon Treaty impacts the voting behaviors. It is also important to emphasize that this qualitative analysis does not provide a detailed analysis of policy-formation and its outcomes but rely on secondary research and interview contents, as this paper's focus is not on policy-outcomes but voting behaviors.

Three European Parliament administrators were chosen from the secretariat and policy-department. While secretariat is directly responsible for assisting the legislative as well as administrative work of the MEPs in their respective policy-area, policy-department, a think-tank functionality modeled from the US Congressional Research Service, is mainly charged with preparing and providing their committee members for necessary information which serve to improve the quality of policy-making⁸. Both of them are relevant to provide necessary information on the process of policy-making and particularly major issues of conflict between European party groups. By conducting interviews with MEPs and EP officials in relevant committees, we expect to have sufficient knowledge on the background of how the Lisbon Treaty affected the policy-making and the outcomes in the policy-area.

Table 3: Expert Interview on MEPs and EP Officials

Interview Number	Position of Interviewee	Date
A	MEP (GREEN, PECH)	2012/ April / 2013 May
B	MEP(S&D, AGRI)	2013 May
C	MEP(ALDE, AGRI)	2013 May
D	MEP(ALDE, LIBE)	2013 May
E	SECRETARIAT (PECH)	2013 March
F	DG Internal Policy Department (PECH)	2013 March
G	DG Internal Policy Department (AGRI)	2013 March
Email Correspondence		
H	MEP(S&D, PECH)	2012 April

⁸ European Parliament Homepage on Policy-Department <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/studies.html>
See also the latest studies on the roles of the EP officials after Lisbon Treaty: "The roles Bureaucrats Play" The Input of European Parliament Administrators into the Ordinary Legislative Procedure: A case Study Approach" (Mathias Dobbels and Christine Neuhold), Journal of European Integration, Volume 35, Issue 4, 2013

3.3: Research Method

3.3.1: Dependent Variables

There are two units of analysis in this paper: the voting cohesion of and left-right competition of European party groups in the European Parliament (EPP, S&D, ALDE, and GREEN/EFA). Firstly, the level of European party group's voting cohesion is calculated by the Agreement Index, an indication of the extent to which a party group is cohesive or divided in a given vote. As explained earlier in the chapter 1.4, the Agreement Index is calculated with the formula as follows: Y_i denotes the number of Yes votes expressed by group i on a given vote, N_i the number of No votes and A_i the number of Abstain votes. The Agreement Index consequently equals 100 when all the members of a party vote together and equals 0 when the members of a party are equally divided between all three of these voting options.

Secondly, the level of left-right competition is calculated by measuring to what extent the European Social democratic party group (S&D) and Conservative Party group (EPP) vote together or against each other. Certainly, being ideologically located somewhat in the middle of the political spectrum, the European Liberal group (ALDE) plays an increasingly important role in determining voting outcomes in the European Parliament, as the EPP and S&D are in need of ALDE's support in order to reach a majority in voting. However, it is still the case that the ALDE group needs to cooperate either with S&D or EPP in order to be pivotal in the outcome of votes and including smaller European groups to capture the left-right competition therefore does not make a difference. In fact, most of previous research on coalition patterns predominantly use the difference in vote between S&D and EPP as a benchmark for capturing the left-right dimension of the European Parliament (Hix et al, 2003b).

3.3.2: Explanatory Variables

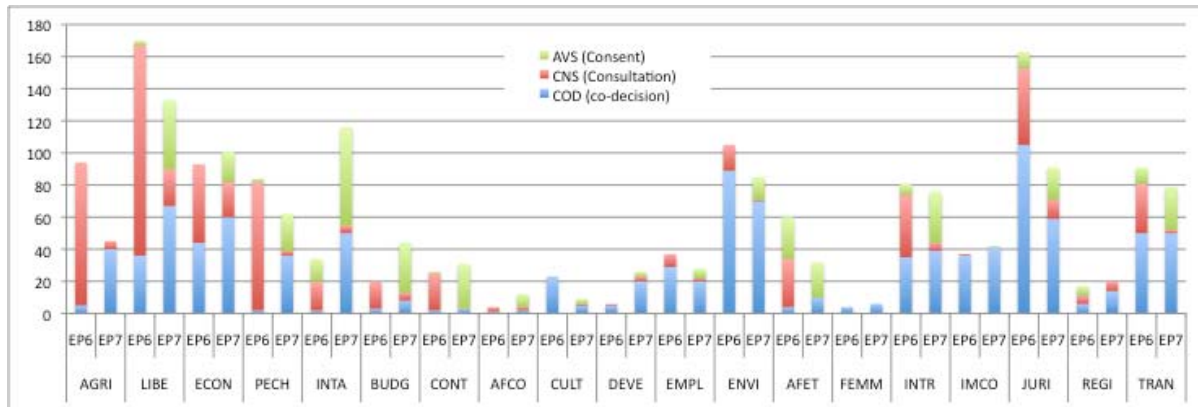
The increased legislative powers of the European Parliament granted by the Lisbon Treaty—the extension of co-decision to certain policy-areas—is regarded as independent or explanatory variable. The Lisbon Treaty increased the scope of co-decision procedure by more than 80 areas—including fisheries, agriculture, civil liberty, economic monetary affairs

and international trade—based on the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union⁹. However, an increase in competence over policy-areas does not necessarily mean that the European Parliament actually is engaged in legislation under co-decision procedure in such policy-areas. Therefore this paper chooses to focus on these policy-areas based on two criteria to make the selection more reliable: 1) the changes in the number of legislative proposals by the European Commission under co-decision procedure; 2) the changes in the number of roll call votes under co-decision procedures. (The consent procedure is not chosen as a criteria for identifying the newly-empowered policy-areas in the European Parliament because the number of roll call votes under consent procedure remained very small (44votes) compared to that of co-decision procedure (804 votes) in EP 7th term).

Firstly, Graph 2 shows the changes in the number of legislative proposals by the European Commission under consultation, co-decision and consent procedures by policy-area from the 6th to EP 7th terms. It is evident from Graph 2 that fisheries, agriculture, civil liberty and international trade are primary areas where the European Parliament extended its competences. It is also important to note that economic and monetary affairs, environment, transport, industry gained more consent procedures than before. Secondly, one needs to consider the changes in the number of roll call votes under co-decision procedures from the 6th to EP 7th term in order to ensure the consistency in comparison. Table 5 shows that in fisheries, agriculture, civil liberty, international trade, and economic-monetary affairs, the number of votes under co-decision procedures have risen dramatically. Although other policy-areas such as budget, budgetary control and gender-equality have witnessed an increase in the percentage of legislative votes under co-decision procedure during the period, the total number of votes in those policy-areas is significantly smaller than others. Therefore, in this paper, the main policy-areas where the European Parliament gained more competence are determined to be fisheries, agriculture, civil liberty, economic and monetary affairs, and international trade. Petition and internal affairs committee are excluded from analysis not only because the number of roll call votes is not directly related to legislative works.

⁹ List of decision-making procedure by article, EU Commission
Homepage: http://ec.europa.eu/codecision/docs/Legal_bases.pdf

Graph 2: The Number of Commission's Legislative Proposals by Policy and Type of Procedure: COD (Co-decision), AVC (Consent), and CNS (Consultation) (EP6-EP7)



Source: European Parliament Legislative Observatory

Table 4: The Number of Roll Call Votes, Legislative and Co-decision (6th-7th)

		EP6 (Sep 2004 - July 2008)				EP7 (Sep 2009 - July 2013)			
		Roll Call	Legislative Vote	(COD)	(%)	Roll Call	Legislative Vote	(COD)	(%)
	AGRI	238	123	9	0.07	354	34	29	0.85
	LIBE	376	95	48	0.51	267	97	67	0.69
	ECON	301	70	15	0.21	422	205	137	0.67
	PECH	120	97	14	0.14	154	80	73	0.91
	INTA	167	3	3	1.00	296	113	97	0.86
	BUDG	313	36	17	0.47	499	10	7	0.70
	CONT	130	3	2	0.67	356	17	17	1.00
	AFCE	369	63	1	0.02	152	28	8	0.29
	CULT	115	31	30	0.97	50	4	2	0.50
	DEVE	73	3	0	0.00	99	11	9	0.82
	EMPL	162	53	50	0.94	237	43	23	0.53
	ENVI	627	473	430	0.91	412	144	142	0.99
	AFET	612	7	2	0.29	515	17	6	0.35
	FEMM	86	14	10	0.71	150	29	29	1.00
	INTR	193	82	64	0.78	186	66	24	0.36
	IMCO	191	115	115	1.00	60	19	19	1.00
	EP INTERNAL	10	-	--	--	7	-	-	-
	JURI	88	58	52	0.90	141	68	53	0.78
	PETITION	15	-	-	-	12	-	-	-
	REGI	133	59	13	0.22	71	23	17	0.74
	TRAN	263	187	174	0.93	89	76	72	0.95
	Total	4582	1578	1054	0.67	4529	1084	804	0.74

Source: Vote Watch

3.3.3: Operationalization

In order to investigate the effects of the empowerment of the European Parliament on the voting behaviors of European party groups, it is necessary to control for as many other factors as possible. It goes without saying that there are a number of other factors which influence the voting behaviors of the European party groups, such as the composition of the national member parties of the European groups, the balance of powers in the European Parliament, and characteristics of legislatures, and that it is impossible to isolate the effect of institutional changes completely from other factors. However, it is important to note that the composition of party membership is one of the most essential factors for influencing the cohesion of European party group. For example, a number of researchers on the European Parliament have investigated the effect of the increased membership to European party groups after a series of EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007 (Hix et al, 2007a; Hix and Noury, 2009; McElroy and Benoit, 2010, 2012).

Accordingly, when analyzing and comparing the voting behaviors of European party groups from the 6th to EP 7th term, it is necessary to take into account the changes in membership base of the EPP, as British and Czech conservative party delegations —29 members and 14 members, respectively, at that time— left the European party group and formed a new party called European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) in the year 2009. The main reason for the departure of the British and Czech national delegations from the EPP group was that they had different policy-preferences and a divergent ideological view in terms of European integration. Although other major national parties in ECR include Polish right-wing party Law and Justice with the 21 members, this party was a member of the Union for Europe of Nations (UEN), not EPP. It is not unusual that national party delegation members switch from one European party group to another, the departure of British and Czech conservative party had a profound effect on the voting cohesion of the EPP, considering the fact that the two accounted for almost one-sixth of the EPP members. With this background in mind, it is reasonable to exclude those British and Czech members from the EPP when analyzing voting data of 6th EP term to make comparison with 7th term more reliable.

4: Empirical Findings

This section offers an empirical analysis of the voting behaviors of European party groups by comparing the 6th and 7th terms of the European Parliament. The first half of this section presents descriptive data on voting cohesion and left-right competition, and the latter half of the section discusses how the results can be understood within the framework of existing theories.

4.1.1: Descriptive Analysis on Voting Behaviors¹⁰

First, statistical description shows that the average voting cohesion of the four major European party groups in the 7th term is 92.06, an increase by 1.83 from the previous term. Table 6 shows that the EPP group has witnessed an increase in voting cohesion by 1.78 whereas for S&D, ALDE and GREEN, the corresponding figures increased by 1.17, 0.78, and 3.57. Although there is a substantial difference in the changes of voting cohesion among different parties, these findings are in line with the existing theory that the voting cohesion of the European party groups increases as the European Parliament gains more legislative powers.

Second, when looking at the results of voting cohesion in different policy-areas, however, there is a substantial variation in the level of changes. Table 7 shows that agriculture, international trade, budget and gender equality are among the policy-areas where the average voting cohesion declined from the 6th to 7th term, whereas in other policy-areas the corresponding figures have increased. When analyzing and comparing the voting cohesion in newly-empowered policy-areas and other policy-areas, the evidence shows that the increase of 0.679 in the former category is smaller than the 2.49 increase in the latter category. This finding appears to suggest, unlike previous research theory, that the effects of the empowerment of the European Parliament appears to constrain, rather than facilitate, an increase of voting cohesion in given policy-areas. But it is premature to argue that the empowerment of the European Parliament did not contribute to increasing the voting cohesion, as the question remains to be answered why in agriculture and international trade issues the voting cohesion declined whereas the opposite was true for civil liberty, fisheries, economic-monetary affairs. In addition to the differences among policy-areas, there is a

¹⁰All voting data in this section is obtained from Vote Watch : <http://www.votewatch.eu/>

substantial difference in terms of the voting cohesion among European party groups. Although the EPP and GREEN increased their voting cohesion in newly-empowered policy-areas, the voting cohesion of the S&D and ALDE decreased in the corresponding policy-areas. The decline in voting cohesion in agricultural policy is noticeable for S&D and ALDE, which contributed to the downward trend of voting cohesion in the newly empowered policy-areas as a whole.

Third, the statistical analysis reveals that in the 7th term, the average voting cohesion of legislative votes scored higher than that of non-legislative votes. Table 8 shows that the voting cohesion of non-legislative votes was higher than for legislative vote for the three major European party groups (EPP, S&D and ALDE) during the 5th and the 6th terms, while the opposite was the case for the 7th term. This finding is somewhat contradictory to the results of previous research, according to which the voting cohesion of legislative votes is arguably lower than that of non-legislative vote for the reason of electoral control exercised by national party delegations. As legislative votes, particularly under co-decision procedure and consent procedures, have direct consequences on EU policy-outcomes and thus are likely to attract more public attentions, national party delegations put more pressure on their members to ensure that they vote along national parties' line, rather than that of the European party groups.

Table 5: Voting Cohesion for Major European party groups in EP 6 and EP 7

		EP6 (Sep 2004-July 2013)					EP7 (Sep 2009-July 2013)				
Policy Area		EPP	S&D	ALDE	GREEN	(average)	EPP	S&D	ALDE	GREEN	(average)
Five Empowered-Policy-Areas		92.63	89.52	89.24	90.64	90.51	93.19	89.18	88.60	93.75	91.18
	AGRI	86.78	83.91	87.21	89.03	86.73	87.78	73.98	77.36	93.88	83.25
	LIBE	90.71	95.41	88.03	92.72	91.72	93.74	96.09	91.86	96.79	94.62
	ECON	94.27	89.73	91.75	88.97	91.18	95.54	94.04	90.54	90.89	92.75
	PECH	94.18	88.51	83.92	89.09	88.93	93.28	89.63	92.01	91.67	91.65
	INTE	97.22	90.05	95.29	93.43	94.00	95.65	92.17	91.25	95.55	93.66
Other-Policy-Areas		90.83	91.43	88.57	91.52	90.59	91.87	94.24	89.97	95.25	92.83
	BUDG	94.73	92.48	89.56	93.46	92.56	95.04	90.74	85.55	93.15	91.12
	CONT	96.03	92.68	92.7	93.95	93.84	95.69	94.21	96.28	96.25	95.61
	AFCO	94.34	87.68	90.13	85.26	89.35	96.71	94.96	90.59	92.83	93.77
	CULT	93.61	92.65	91.79	90.53	92.15	98.19	98.9	91.85	97.08	96.51
	DEVE	83.5	98.81	95.68	94.63	93.16	88.48	96.63	89.68	98.17	93.24
	EMPL	89.26	92.08	88.24	90.2	89.95	92.48	95.77	88.81	94.45	92.88

	ENVI	88.19	89.85	85.99	90.09	88.53	89.24	91.32	85.66	97.54	90.94
	AFET	90.31	91.66	87.1	89.86	89.73	94.92	93.48	93.32	94.86	94.15
	FEMM	85.61	96.53	86.08	91.77	90.00	74.5	97.23	84.82	95.85	88.10
	INTR	89.35	89.86	82.47	91.53	88.30	93.01	85.99	85.26	94.61	89.72
	IMCO	90.96	86.76	77.3	95.49	87.63	95.79	97.22	94.7	95.69	95.85
	JURI	93.56	89.99	91.1	93.32	91.99	95.92	92.13	85.44	95.42	92.23
	REGI	92.23	91.77	92.03	92.59	92.16	96.58	98.08	96.37	96.25	96.82
	TRAN	90.02	87.23	89.88	88.62	88.94	93.69	92.72	91.36	91.4	92.29
	TOTAL	91.23	90.51	88.15	91.05	90.24	93.01	91.68	88.93	94.62	92.29

Source : Vote Watch

Table 6: Changes in Voting Cohesion from EP to EP 7

Policy areas		EPP	S&D	ALDE	GREEN	(Average)
Five Newly empowered policy-areas		0.566	-1.7	-0.636	3.108	0.674
	AGRI	1	-9.93	-9.85	4.85	-3.48
	LIBE	3.03	0.68	3.83	4.07	2.9
	ECON	1.27	4.31	-1.21	1.92	1.57
	PECH	-0.9	1.12	8.09	2.58	2.72
	INTE	-1.57	2.12	-4.04	2.12	-0.34
Other policy-areas		2.03	2.81	1.4	3.73	2.49
	BUDG	0.31	-1.74	-4.01	-0.31	-1.44
	CONT	-0.34	1.53	3.58	2.3	1.77
	AFCO	2.37	7.28	0.46	7.57	4.42
	CULT	4.58	6.25	0.06	6.55	4.36
	DEVE	4.98	-2.18	-6	3.54	0.09
	EMPL	3.22	3.69	0.57	4.25	2.93
	ENVI	1.05	1.47	-0.33	7.45	2.41
	AFET	4.61	1.82	6.22	5	4.41
	FEMM	-11.11	0.7	-1.26	4.08	-1.9
	ITRE	3.66	-3.87	2.79	3.08	1.42
	IMCO	4.83	10.46	17.4	0.2	8.22
	JURI	2.36	2.14	-5.66	2.1	0.24
	REGI	4.35	6.31	4.34	3.66	4.67
	TRAN	3.67	5.49	1.48	2.78	3.36
TOTAL		1.78	1.17	0.78	3.57	1.83

Source ; Vote Watch

Table 7: Voting Cohesion of Major Party Groups by Different Voting Procedure

	EP5 (Sep1999-July 2003)				EP6 (Sep2004-July2008)				EP7(Sep 2009-July 2013)		
	EPP	S&D	ALDE		EPP	S&D	ALDE		EPP	S&D	ALDE
Non-Legislative	87.31	90.59	88.4		91.83	91.25	89.47		92.68	91.14	87.84
Legislative	85.54	89.48	87.44		89.72	88.96	85.85		93.92	93.17	91.96
Co-decision	84.26	89.02	86.61		88.35	88.82	85.87		93.64	93.58	91.94
TOTAL	86.65	90.43	88.12		91.24	90.51	88.14		93.01	91.68	88.93

Source: Vote Watch (EP 6-7) and Database by Simon Hix (EP5)¹¹

Forth, as for left-right competition, the statistical description shows that the competition rate obtained from voting dissimilarity between the biggest two European party groups (S&D and EPP) has decreased from 31.31 to 27.16 from the 6th to 7th term, the result of which points to the opposite of the general proposition suggested by previous literatures (Table 9). When looking closely at the variation in different policy-areas, an increase in left-right competition is observed for civil liberty (+7.12), fisheries (+2.53), budgetary control (+24.06), environment (+4) and legal affairs (+6.53). Furthermore, when focusing on the newly-empowered policy-areas, the decrease in the level of left-right competition is smaller than in other policy-areas. Considering a substantial difference in the level of changes among newly-empowered policy-areas, it is reasonable to argue that there is no clearly recognizable distinction between newly-empowered policy-areas and other areas.

Fifth, the statistical analysis shows that the voting cohesion of the European Parliament as a whole increased to 64.72 in the 7th term, from 58.82 in the 5th term. As Table 10 shows, an increase in voting cohesion of the European Parliament as whole is particularly noticeable for legislative votes, leading to a rise from 58.53 in the 5th term to 69.31 in the 7th term. An increase in the voting cohesion of the European Parliament as a whole suggests that European party groups increasingly tend to vote with one another in a more consensual manner than before. These findings contradict the results of existing empirical studies, which suggest that as the European Party groups become more likely to compete with each other along left-right ideological lines as the European Parliament gains more legislative powers in the decision-making process.

¹¹ Roll Call Votes in the European Parliament : accessed on May 10th 2013 <http://voteworld.berkeley.edu/eurodata/HixNouryRolandEPdata.HTM>

Table 8 : Left-Right Competition Between EPP and S&D (EP6-EP7)

Policy-Areas		EP6	EP7	Changes in left-right Competition (EP6-EP7)
Five Empowered Policy-Areas		30.81	28.21	-2.59
	AGRI	23.31	16.95	-6.36
	LIBE	36.7	43.82	7.12
	ECON	45.51	32.7	-12.81
	PECH	15	17.53	2.53
	INTE	33.53	30.07	-3.46
Other-Policy-Areas		29.35	22.6	-6.75
	BUDG	17.25	11.42	-5.83
	CONT	10.77	34.83	24.06
	AFCO	18.73	13.82	-4.91
	CULT	24.56	2	-22.56
	DEVE	41.1	30.3	-10.8
	EMPL	53.09	28.81	-24.28
	ENVI	41.63	45.63	4
	AFET	28.31	25.63	-2.68
	FEMM	47.67	35.33	-12.34
	ITRE	39.38	37.63	-1.75
	IMCO	41.88	20	-21.88
	JURI	3.41	9.93	6.52
	REGI	18.05	4.23	-13.82
	TRAN	25.1	16.85	-8.25
TOTAL		31.31	27.16	-4.15

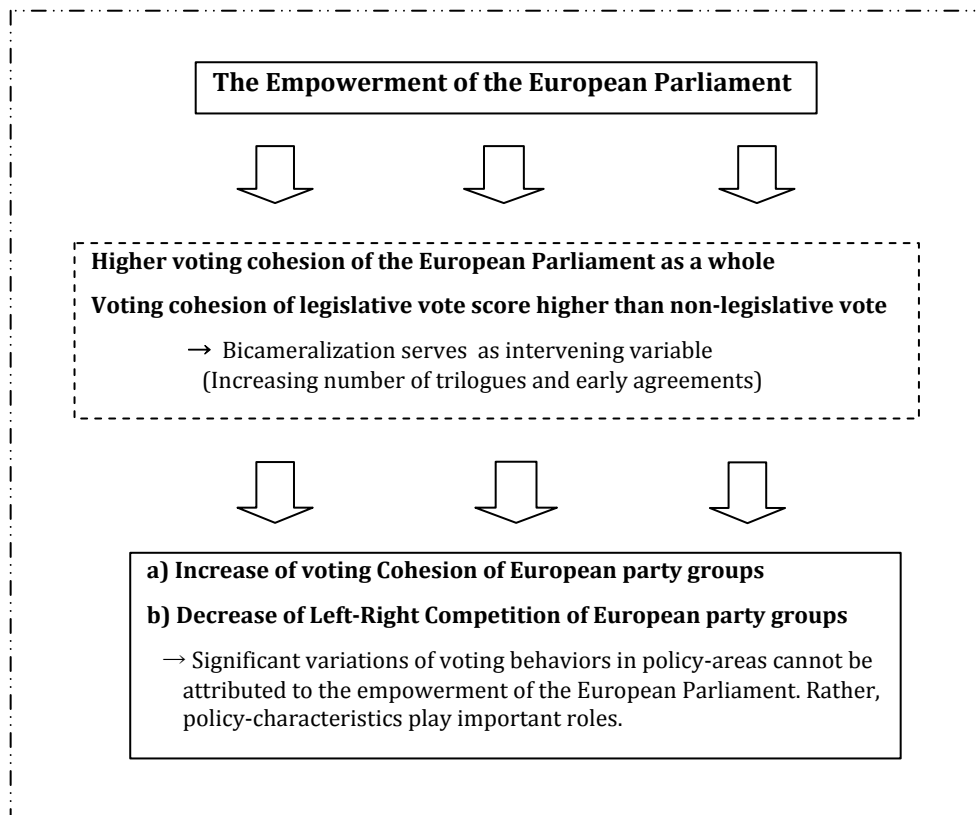
Table 9: European Parliament Voting Cohesion as a whole

	EP5 (Sep 1999-July 2003)		EP6 (Sep 2004-July2008)		EP7 (Sep2009-July2013)
Non legislative	59.83		61.61		62.08
Legislative	58.53		62.69		69.31
Co-decision	57.91		60.52		68.47
Total	58.81		62.19		64.72

4.1.2: Discussions on the impacts of the European Parliament's increased role on voting cohesion and left-right competition

Previous research in general agrees that the European party groups have become more cohesive and vote more competitively as the European Parliament gains more legislative powers for the past decades. However, the empirical analysis on voting data from 6th and 7th terms shows somewhat mixed results: while a) the average voting cohesion of the major European party groups has increased in comparison to the 6th term, b) the left-right competition score has declined. Although the question of to what extent the empowerment of the European Parliament actually affected these results is debatable, this paper argues, based on empirical analysis, that the empowerment of the Parliament did not directly affect the voting behavior of the European party groups but changes the inter-institutional game between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. This so-called increasingly bicameralized EU politics serves as the intervening variable that produces the voting results of the European party groups. Furthermore, when looking at changes in voting behaviors in different policy-areas, the variations are such that it is difficult to verify whether or not there has been an increase in voting cohesion and left-right competition in newly-empowered policy-areas. Therefore it is rather reasonable and logical to argue that, together with bicameralization, policy-characteristics play an important role in explaining the voting behavior of the European Parliament (see, Graph 3)

First of all, the increase of voting cohesion of the European party groups can be largely explained by an increase in voting cohesion of the European Parliament as a whole, because there is a general correlation between the voting cohesion of the European party groups and that of the Parliament. When the voting cohesion or majority size of the European Parliament becomes larger, then the party groups' voting cohesion is likely to get higher than otherwise (Hix et al, 2007b: p 823). In contrast to the increased voting cohesion, the level of left-right competition declined from 6th to 7th term. This "decoupling" is not puzzling since, as explained above, the voting cohesion of the European Parliament as a whole increased during the period. When the majority size of the European Parliament increases, it automatically means that the competition between the European party groups will go down. These empirical findings clearly challenge the conventional wisdom that as the European Parliament gains more powers, the European party groups increasingly compete with each other along their ideological lines.

Graph3: The Effects of the Empowerment on Voting Cohesion and Left-Right Competition

A possible cause for the decrease of left-right competition is the adaptation of the European Parliament to an increasingly bicameralized EU's political environment. This explanation was originally proposed by Amie Kreppel, who argued that the European Parliament is more likely to succeed in getting concessions from the Council of Ministers when it is united (Kreppel 2002). Although this argument was dismissed by subsequent research works (Hix, Kreppel, Noury 2003 and Hix, Noury, Roland 2005), there is a growing number of new literature supporting the view that the biggest two parties cooperate with each other to form a united front against the Council of Ministers. Under co-decision procedure, any legislative proposal cannot be materialized without the approval of the Council's qualified majority vote (see the previous chapter 1.4). As the European Parliament acquired and gradually expanded its co-legislator's status with the Council over various policy-areas, the number of legislative proposals under co-decision procedure increased dramatically from 93 in the 3rd to 587 in EP 6th terms. In response to the practical necessity of dealing with the increased workloads of co-decision procedures, the informal trilogue meeting was officially

introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty, allowing for early agreements already before the first reading. As a result of this institutional arrangement, a greater number of legislative proposals under co-decision procedure are concluded at the first reading. The proportion of legislative proposals under co-decision procedure concluded at a first reading rose to 86 % in 7th term, up from 33 % in the 5th term and 72 % in the 6th term.

One may question why the European Parliament increasingly rushes to conclude deals at a first reading. Recent research pieces agree that the European Parliament benefits from concluding at a first reading, because while a simple majority is necessary at first reading (i.e. support from a majority of the MEPs present at the plenary session) whereas an absolute majority is required for approval at a second reading (i.e. support in plenary from the majority of the entire membership of the European Parliament). For example, Hoyland Bjorn analyzed when the European Parliament gains most legislative influence against the Council of Ministers and came to the conclusion that “the best option for the Parliament is to make a proposal to the Council that can be accepted at the Council’s first reading. If this is not possible, the Parliament needs to ensure that it has the necessary support amongst its members to find an absolute majority willing to amend any counter-proposal from the Council that would make the Parliament worse off than the initial proposal” (Hoyland, Hageman, 2010b: p 816). Therefore, the European Parliament has every reason to enter into a trilogue meeting at an early stage and conclude deals at the first reading. However, it is also important to add that the influence of the European Parliament over negotiation is largely dependent on its internal cohesion as well as the cohesion of the European party groups. Without consolidated support from the party groups, the European Parliament faces difficulties in gaining concessions from the Council of Ministers (Kardasheva, 2012: 21). This inter-institutional factor creates a culture of consensus and a feeling of legislative and electoral responsibility in the Parliament that reduces the scope for political conflict (Ariadna, 2011; p 61)¹².

However, it is premature to argue that the empowerment of the European Parliament automatically leads to an increase of voting cohesion and decrease of left-right competition. As the empirical data suggests, there is no distinctive pattern of changes between newly-empowered policy-areas and other policy-areas in the European Parliament. Moreover, it goes without saying that just as inter-institutional factors play an important role, policy-

¹² Burns, C., and N. Carter. 2010. Is co-decision good for the environment? An analysis of the European Parliament’s green credentials. *Political Studies* 58, no. 1: 123–42.

characteristics matter in defining the voting behavior of the European party groups. For example, there is much variation even among newly-empowered policy-areas such as agriculture, civil liberty and fisheries. According to the voting data of civil liberty and fisheries, both voting cohesion and left-right competition have increased from 6th to the 7th term. This is a starkly different result than that of agricultural policy, an area of which saw a decrease in voting cohesion and left-right competition, despite the fact that those three policy-areas are all newly-empowered with the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty. Recently published research confirms that the high majorities in the European Parliament have been essential in internalizing the need for consensus inside the European Parliament – especially if the Council and Parliament are not in line and “the development of early agreements gives time and space to negotiators from each institution to work informally and cast a vote only when they can gather enough support both in the Parliament and in the Council” (Ariadna 2011: p 60).

An interviewee (D), working for the civil liberty committee agreed that the European party groups tend to form a united position against the Council of Ministers in the field of data and privacy protection¹³, while emphasizing that the S&D and EPP tend to compete with each other in the field of border control and migrant workers and visa issues. Particularly noticeable difference between the S&D and EPP is to what extent the EU should offer right and support for migrant workers from third countries to the EU (single work and residence permit)¹⁴. However, the interviewee stressed that as the level of left-right competition in this policy-area varies from one issue to another, it is difficult to verify whether or not the empowerment of the Parliament leads to an increase or decrease in left-right competition.

On the other hand, an interviewee (C), working for agricultural committee makes an interesting comparison between the different voting behavior of the European Parliament in the areas of fisheries and agricultural policy. This MEP emphasized that, despite the fact that both policy-areas are main beneficiaries of the empowerment of the European Parliament, “the Lisbon Treaty provided a window opportunity various environmental groups to influence the process of policy-makings in fisheries whereas in agriculture, civil and environmental organizations are more or less marginalized behind farm interest groups”. This interviewee

¹³ European Parliament actually rejected a number of proposals involving concerns over the infringement on individual privacy: the proposal on the processing and transfer of financial messaging data from the European Union to the United States (SWIFT), Proposals on Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA).

¹⁴ Directive on Single work and residence permit for non-EU workers: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?id=555363>

argues that agricultural lobbying groups are far more wide-spread across member states than those of fisheries and therefore the European Parliament's participation did not produce much change in the Common Agricultural Policy reform (Swinnen and Knop, 2012).

Another interviewee (A), working for the agricultural committee, points out that an important change is that an increasing number of MEPs with expertise in environment protection participate in the fisheries committee, which used to be dominated by MEPs who have connections with the fisheries industries, whereas the composition of membership of the agricultural committee has remained unchanged with farmers' interests still powerful. Two interviewees (A, F), working for the fisheries committee, confirm that this difference in the balance of power of lobby groups explains the difference in the outcomes of policies. Unlike for agriculture, the European Parliament adopted an ambitious draft for Common Fisheries Policy reform with an overwhelming majority of 402 votes to 137¹⁵. For the success of this reform, the S&D played a more active role in promoting stricter environmental and resource protection together with ALDE and GREEN whereas some EPP members, particularly ones from member states with high dependency on the fisheries sectors, resisted in order to maintain status quo, but in vain. The ALDE and S&D group's confrontational attitude against EPP in fisheries explained partly for the increase in left-right competition rate in the 7th term,

By examining the three policy-areas of agriculture, civil liberty and fisheries by using expert interviews and secondary documents, this paper suggests that the empowerment of the European Parliament does not automatically lead to an increase of the voting cohesion of and left-right competition between the European party groups. Although the voting cohesion and left-right competition has increased in civil liberty and fisheries, these are rather due to their policy-characteristics. The overall trend is that the European party groups increasingly form grand-coalitions in order to secure a credible position against the Council of Ministers.

Certainly, this paper only covered the 6th and 7th term and thus it is not sufficient to argue that existing theory is flawed entirely. In order to grasp a full picture of how the empowerment of the European Parliament affects the voting behavior of the European party groups, the future research is required to pay a sufficient attention to the increasing bicameralized EU politics.

¹⁵ European Parliament Press Release "Stop overfishing : MEPs vote for ambitious reform", February 6th, 2013, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20130201IPR05571/html/Stop-overfishing-MEPs-vote-for-ambitious-reform>

5: Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the impacts of the empowerment of the European Parliament on voting cohesion and left-right competition. The findings of this paper suggest that the latest voting data from the 7th term of the European Parliament does not necessarily confirm the proposition of the previous studies. Although the average voting cohesion of the major European party groups increased from the 6th to 7th term, the left-right competition declined. Considering the fact that there is so much variation even among the newly-policy-areas such as agriculture, fisheries and civil liberty, it is next to impossible to argue convincingly whether the empowerment of the Parliament leads to either higher or lower voting cohesion and left-right competition. This paper instead found that other factors such as increasingly bicameralized EU political environment and policy-characteristics play important roles as intervening variables in influencing the voting cohesions and the level of left-right competition. First, the main cause for an increase in the voting cohesion and decrease in the left-right competition is the greater necessity for inter-institutional coordination. As the European Parliament acquires further legislative powers as a co-legislator to the Council of Ministers, the European party groups find it necessary to form broad-coalitions in order to influence negotiating outcomes. Secondly, by using expert interview, this paper reveals that policy-characteristics also influence the voting behaviors of the European party groups.

Before concluding, the question needs to be tackled: if the European party groups are more likely to collude rather than compete as the European Parliament gains more legislative powers, what does this imply for the democratization of the EU? Does this trend become a hindrance to the improvement of the legitimacy of the EU in the future? This question on the implication of politicization of the EU through the empowerment of the European Parliament needs to be answered in terms of input-legitimacy (i.e. transparency and accountability) and output-legitimacy (i.e. efficiency and outcome). From this point of view, the European Parliament's empowerment is likely to weaken the input legitimacy of the EU because the political competition is reduced in favor of coordination between the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. In addition, an informal trilogue meeting plays an important role in speeding up the process of decision-making undermines transparency and accountability as it replaces public debates. It is important to point out, however, that there is a possibility that the Parliament's participation contributes to strengthening the input-legitimacy by enhancing

its functionality as platform where various actors and stakeholders debate and interact with each other. Given the fact that the European Commission and the Council of Ministers alone dominated the decision-making in the past, the European Parliament's participation arguably provides an opportunity for considering various policy-choices with more public debates. On the one hand, the Lisbon Treaty's empowerment of the European Parliament probably contributes to the success of the Common Fisheries Policy reform in fisheries, as mentioned in the previous chapter and therefore the European Parliament's increased roles in decision-making can be beneficial both for the input and output legitimacy. On the other hand, the European Parliament's involvement may open the door for powerful business and corporate lobbying organizations for influencing policy-making. If one powerful lobbying group over-represents and hijack the process of policy-making, this would be detrimental to input-legitimacy of the European Parliament. However, the experiences from the 7th term of the European Parliament tell us that the voting cohesion of and left-right competition between the European party groups increased in the newly-empowered policy-areas such as fisheries and civil liberty. While the empirical evidence provide optimism for further politicization of the EU politics through the Parliament, additional studies of other policy-areas such as international trade and economic monetary affairs are required for generalization.

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