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## **Power of the Commission and the Supranationalist Dimension of the Eu**

### **Abstract**

In this work, the power and independence of the Commission are investigated from three perspectives which are the reflection of the supranational dimension of the EU. The first is theoretical perspective that includes two main approaches. The second is the historical (and functional) perspective, and the impact of the member states on the Commission's officials is the third perspective.

By looking from the theoretical perspective, especially through intergovernmentalist approach, it can be seen that, the power of the European Commission has and must have an insignificant role. The member states know that, if they want to obtain integration of the European Union in all fields they will need a powerful, independent and supranational Commission. However, the historical and functional perspective demonstrates that, due to their national interests, the member states are not eager to strengthen the Commission. From the third perspective all the indications show that member states' interests are more important than the European Union's interests according to commissioners.

**Key words:** European Commission, Supranationalism, EU, independent institution

### **1. Introduction**

The structure of the European Union (EU) resembles a familiar national system having a council, a parliament and a court of justice, which are analogues to a national government's executive, legislative and judiciary systems. On the other hand, the other institution of the EU is dissimilar to a national governmental system like the European Commission. The Commission epitomizes supranationalism that lies at the centre of the EU system which is synonymous with the EU itself.<sup>1</sup> In this context, one of the most important debates in European Union is about the effectiveness of the European Commission. In addition, it is also related to the competition of main integration theories: intergovernmentalism and supranationalism (neofunctionalism).

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction To European Union*, 2nd Ed., London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999, p. 205.

The idea whether the European Commission is powerful as an independent agent from the member states or not, can be examined from three different perspectives.

The first is a theoretical perspective, which holds that perceptions of two theories differ from each other about the relative position of the Commission. One is Intergovernmentalists that perceive the Commission as relatively insignificant and the other that contradicts to the former one, is the supranationalists, which maintain that the Commission has an independent impact on policy outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

The second perspective is the historical and functional perspective and according to this perspective, the European Commission is an interesting institution due to its exceptional features compared to the other international organisations. This exceptionality was obvious that the Treaty of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) had mentioned the Commission (the High Authority) as an independent and supranational decision-making organ. However, the High Authority model has expired on account of both some problems which had been occurred in the beginning of the ECSC Treaty and the failure of the European Defence Corporation EDC in 1954. The High Authority, which had blatantly supranational elements found within it<sup>3</sup>, was excluded from the EEC (European Economic Community) and European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) Treaties. Its name and functions both were changed.

Nevertheless, in the period of European integration, the Commission has led very important advances and in the last decade, member states have given more importance to the Commission.

The impact of the member states on the Commission's officials is the third perspective. In respect of the attitudes of the Commissioners, policy-making mechanism and the independent structure of the Commission can be affected by the member states.

This work examines the influence of the relations between the member states and the Commission to the Commission's position. From the aforementioned three perspectives, it is to be investigated whether the Commission is only as powerful as the member states allow it to be.

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<sup>2</sup> Morten Egeberg, "The European Commission" in *European Union Politics*, (Edited by Michele Cini), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 131-147.

<sup>3</sup> Michelle Cini, *The European Commission: Leadership, Organisation and Culture in the EU Administration*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 36.

## 1. Theoretical Perspective

Theoretical infrastructure of the European integration has two different approaches that the supranationalists want to achieve a completely integrated Europe in all fields such as a state (a new federal state), and on the other side, intergovernmentalists who are defending the national states' interests and they believe that, national governments are the real driving forces in the European project.

Diez and Wiener suggest that the development of integration theory can be divided into three phases.<sup>4</sup> These three phases identified as explanatory, analytical and constructive, respectively, which are meant to identify the emergence, development and, from time to time, dominance of particular theoretical tendencies.

By the first phase roughly lasting from the signing of the Treaty of Rome until the early 1980s, the European integration theory<sup>5</sup> begins proper. In this period two theoretical approaches came to dominate the debate. Both contending theories based on rational actor assumptions, while locating the push and pull for the integration process on different levels. On one side, neofunctionalists<sup>6</sup> with their broad definition of integration<sup>7</sup>, and on the opposite side intergovernmentalists who explained supranational institution-building as the result of rational decision-making within a historical context that was conducive to strong and clearly defined interests of the nation state governments involved.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Ed.), 'Introducing the Mosaic of Integration', European Integration Theory, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 1-21.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Rosamond, *Theories of European Integration*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Neofunctionalists built on functionalism and kept part of its normative agenda, but they also introduced both a stronger emphasis on actors with an interest in, and therefore promoting further integration –primarily the Commission- and an explicit social scientific interest in creating a general theory of regional integration that was applicable beyond the singular case of Europe. See Ernst B. Haas, "International Integration: The European and the Universal Process", *International Organization*, 15(3), 1961, pp. 366-392; *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces 1950-1957*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967.

<sup>7</sup> "Neofunctionalists explained the move away from the anarchic state system and towards supranational institution-building by depicting particular societal and market patterns as pushing for elite behaviour towards common market building". Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Eds.), 'Introducing the Mosaic of Integration', European Integration Theory, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Eds.), 'Introducing the Mosaic of Integration', European Integration Theory, p. 8.

In the second phase, comparative and institutionalist approaches came to the foreground of integration theory, following questions of what kind of polity the EU really is and how it operates.<sup>9</sup>

In the third phase the influence of the International Relations Theory has enlarged on the integration theory. International Relations Theory was characterised by the rise of a variety of critical and constructivist approaches. This phase focused on substantial questions about constructing and limiting European integration.<sup>10</sup>

Phase	When?	Main Themes
Explaining integration	1960s onwards	How can integration outcomes be explained? Why does European integration take place?
Analysing governance	1980s onwards	What kind of political system is the EU? How can the political processes within the EU be described? How does the EU's regulatory policy work?
Constructing the EU	1990s onwards	How and with which social and political consequences does integration develop? How are integration and governance conceptualized? How should they be?

<sup>9</sup> A key process analysed was the "Europeanization" of governance rules, institutions, and practices across the EU. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Eds.), 'Introducing the Mosaic of Integration', *European Integration Theory*, p. 9; M. G. Cowles, J. Caporaso, T. Risse (Eds.), *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> It is in answering these questions that the critical and constructivist approaches in International Relations Theory were taken up. See Emmanuel Adler, "Constructivism in International Relations" in W. Carlianes, T. Risse and B. A. Simmons (Eds.), *Handbook of International Relations*, London: Sage, 2002; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jorgensen and Antje Wiener, "The Social Construction of Europe", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1999, pp. 528-544.

Since the beginning of the European integration, the efforts for formulating a theoretical account have occurred. For instance, Ernst B. Haas explained the initiation of the six West European countries, a new form of supranational co-operation after the Second World War by neo-functional theory.<sup>11</sup> Neo-functionalism with the core concept of *spill over* was mainly concerned with the process of integration more than end-goals, that is, how an integrated Europe would look.<sup>12</sup>

On a number of occasions, the supranationalists argue that the Commission has even had a profound effect on the outcomes of “history-shaping” and frame-setting IGCs (Inter Governmental Conferences) and European Council meetings. In addition, the institutionalists claim that treaty-based frameworks, which are the main focus of intergovernmentalists, need to be translated into practical politics through day-to-day policy making, and the Commission is one of the key actors, when it comes to this sort of crucial follow-up work.<sup>13</sup>

After the mid-1960s, in the face of supranationalists, intergovernmentalism has been situated at the heart of the European integration theory.<sup>14</sup> Intergovernmentalism is drawn from classical theories of International Relations, most notably from realism or neo-realism. It sees and analyses integration as a *zero-sum game* and as an interstate bargaining.

By the 1990s, the debate on the transfer of sovereignty from the member states to Brussels replaced by a new divide between rationalist approaches, such as liberal intergovernmentalism and rational choice institutionalism, and constructivist approaches, which emphasized the potentially transformative potential of the EU.<sup>15</sup> Liberal intergovernmentalism -whose framework of analysis includes domestic and international interactions<sup>16</sup>- is based on assumptions drawn from the *rational actor*

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<sup>11</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces 1950-1957*.

<sup>12</sup> Mark A. Pollack, “Theorizing The European Union: International Organization, Domestic Polity, or Experiment in New Governance?”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8, 2005, pp. 357-398; Carsten Strøby Jensen, “Neo-functionalism”, in *European Union Politics*, (Edited by Michele Cini), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 80-92.

<sup>13</sup> Morten Egeberg, “The European Commission” in *European Union Politics*, p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> Michele Cini, “Intergovernmentalism”, in *European Union Politics*, (Edited by Michele Cini), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> Mark A. Pollack, “Theorizing The European Union: International Organization, Domestic Polity, or Experiment in New Governance?”, *Annual Review of Political Science*.

<sup>16</sup> Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games”, *International Organization*, 42(3), 1988, pp. 427-460; Andrew Moravcsik, “Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31(4), 1993, pp. 473-524; “Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Integration: A Rejoinder”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 33(4), 1995, pp. 611-628; The

*model*, that it is influenced by the supposition that states behave rationally. This “means that the actions of states are assumed to be based on utilizing what are judged to be the most appropriate means of achieving their goals”.<sup>17</sup>

According to the intergovernmentalists (especially the liberal intergovernmentalists), the Commission has an important role to play in first pillar policies. Nevertheless, the pretension of liberal intergovernmentalists is the authority it exercises as an agenda setter and overseer of implementation at the national level is merely a derived and delegated authority.<sup>18</sup> “The Commission may facilitate intergovernmental co-operation, but it has no real power basis of its own, as the Commission’s powers are decided upon and framed by the member states within treaty negotiations”.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. The Evolution of the Commission and its Functions

The first European Commission was set up in 1952 with the creation of the ECSC; under the name of High Authority which was a new type of institution responsible for both legislation and execution. Although these were not very fertile in this short period of ECSC and High Authority but it was the basis of the Commission. It resembled the French administration in terms of its structure and technocratic character<sup>20</sup>, and by the establishment of the European Commission in 1958, the functions of High Authority, the executive organ of the ECSC, was changed.

Walter Hallstein was the first president of the Commission (1958-1967) who mainly shaped the existence of the Commission and fulfilled the setting up of Commission departments and the fortification of staff quickly, in order that policy-making could get under way.<sup>21</sup> In the period of 1958-62 the Commission was more concerned with promoting the Community concept than with seeking an unambiguous institutional identity for itself. “It did assert the political nature of its own role and it did try to increase its powers, but it did so within the basis institutional

Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht, London: UCL Press, 1999; Ben Rosamond, *Theories of European Integration*.

<sup>17</sup> Neill Nugent, “The leadership capacity of the European Commission”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2(4), 1995, p. 609.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*.

<sup>19</sup> Morten Egeberg, “The European Commission” in *European Union Politics*, p. 135.

<sup>20</sup> S. Mazey, “Conception and Evolution of the High Authority’s Administrative Services (1952-1956): From Supranational Principles to Multinational Practices” in E. Volkmar Heyen (Ed.), *Yearbook of European Administrative History* 4, Early European Community Administration, Baden Baden: Nomos, 1992, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Michelle Cini, *The European Commission: Leadership, Organisation and Culture in the EU Administration*, p. 37.

framework laid down by the treaty and failed to propose measures designed to change the institutional system to its own advantage".<sup>22</sup> Although, in the first few years of the Community's existence, despite the most administrative and organisational problems the policy issues continued.

After the establishment of institutional structure, the Commission has started to take shape by stages, in point of its functions and responsibilities. In spite of the changes of its functions in the process (from 1958 up to now), the Commission has always had an important role in the EU.

As an important milestone in the Commission's shaping process, the Luxembourg Compromise of January 1966 brought to an end the so-called "empty chair" crisis that France having refused to take its seat in the Council since July 1965. This appeared to set limits on both, the integration process and the independence and initiative of the Commission. Even if the rhetoric was retained, it introduced a period of disenchantment with supranationalism in practice.<sup>23</sup>

It is described precisely in the Treaty of the European Union and reinforced by the Commission's house rules that the European Commission has a constitutional obligation to set the legislative agenda in the European Union (Article 211, Treaty of the European Union). The Commission, unique among international institutions and unparalleled among executives in national democracies, has exclusive formal competence to initiate and draft EU legislation.<sup>24</sup>

As an organ of the EU, the Commission has several functions and responsibilities. It can be said that the Commission is a think-tank and policy maker/initiator, manager and administrator, defender of the legal order, consensus-builder, mediator and broker, mobiliser, guardian of the legal framework.<sup>25</sup> In another words, the Commission proposing and shaping legislation, administering and implementing Community policy, managing the budget, conducting external relations, policing Community law and pointing the way forward.<sup>26</sup> With regard to the

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<sup>22</sup> Christoph Sasse, "The Internal Functions of the Commission", in Sasse, C., Poulet, E., Coombes, D. and Deprez, G. (eds), *Decision Making in the European Community*, London: Praeger, 1977, p. 185.

<sup>23</sup> Geoffrey Edwards and David Spence, "The Commission in Perspective", in Edwards, Geoffrey and Spence, David (Ed.), *The European Commission*, London: Cartermill, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Liesbet Hooghe, "Several Roads Lead to International Norms, but Few Via International Socialization: A Case Study of the European Commission", *International Organization*, 59(Fall), 2005, p. 863.

<sup>25</sup> Michelle Cini, *The European Commission: Leadership, Organisation and Culture in the EU Administration*; Neill Nugent, *The European Commission*, London: Palgrave, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction To European Union*, p. 223.

interaction between the member states and the Commission, the following three functions are more important than the others.

i. *Executer*: The Commission is the EU's executive body in spite of it has only limited authority and ability to execute EU policies. This authority can be divided into two parts that are, some of these authorities are given to the Commission by the Council, and some of them are its own authorities. At the beginning it was a discussion matter that the Council would give an authority to the Commission according to which criteria, but the article 145 of Treaty of the EC (Article 202 Treaty of the European Union) put this entitlement in a rule. In order to this article the implementation authority of the rules that are in the Councils' decisions will be given to the Commission as a principle.

The Council took the decision (date 13 July 1987 and number 87/373) unanimously, concerning the Commission's executive authority, which is called "Commitology" in the EU literature. The European Parliament declared its desire to be more active in the implementation process of the decisions which taken by co-decision procedure, when the Maastricht Treaty had come into force. Thereupon, the Commission prepared a proposal in accordance with the *modus vivendi* which was signed on 20th December 1994 between the Council-the Commission and the European Parliament (OJ C 102, 4.4.1996). Consequently the decision dated 13th July 1987 was abolished and the new Commitology decision was taken on 28th June 1999 by number 99/468 (OJ, L 184, 17.7.1999).

Commitology is an important point that exhibits how an authority is divided into three. "When performing its executive functions, the Commission is controlled by the member states through 'comitology'".<sup>27</sup> In other words, the member states do not want to give this authority to the Commission itself.<sup>28</sup>

ii. *Initiator*: In accordance with the article 211 of Treaty of the EU, the Commission prepares the regulations of the Council and the Parliament. This authority is quite important that some writers call the Commission as "engine" in this framework (e.g. Burban 1997). It decides when regulation is necessary and how it should be devised. The Council of Ministers, which represents national governments, and the European Parliament, which is directly elected, may request the Commission to draft an initiative, but the Commission can, and sometimes does, refuse. The Treaty

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<sup>27</sup> Hussein Kassim, "The Institutions of the European Union", in Colin Hay and Anand Menon, *European Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 192.

<sup>28</sup> Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction To European Union*, p. 227-229.



also instructs the Commission to serve the European interest. It also requires the Commission to be independent from any national government.<sup>29</sup>

iii. *Guardian*: The Commission is responsible for defending the European legal order, ensuring that member states and in some cases, companies and individuals, comply with the European rule of law.<sup>30</sup> This means that under article 226 of Treaty of the EU, the Commission may bring a member state before the European Court of Justice (ECJ) for alleged non-fulfilment of treaty obligations. Member states constantly fail to live up to their commitments, and the Commission betweenwhiles institutes judicial proceedings.<sup>31</sup> Owing to this function of the Commission, some scholars call it a “watchdog (chien de garde)” (e.g. Prof. Pierre Henri Teitgen).<sup>32</sup>

This obligation of the Commission includes two dimensions. The Commission has to detect any kind of implementation deficit as a supervisor at first, and secondly it has to solve this deficit which essentially involves an enforcement mechanism.<sup>33</sup>

The other milestone of the Commission's evolution is the White Paper (reforming the Commission) which spells out the approach the Commission is taking as it operationalises its reform ambitions and also sets out the key themes that will structure the reform process.<sup>34</sup> According to the White Paper the Commission has to be independent, accountable, efficient, transparent<sup>35</sup> and guided by the highest standards of responsibility.

In its report, the Commission declares its expectations and aims that a strong, independent and effective Commission is essential to the functioning of the European Union as a whole and its standing in the world. Substantial improvement in structures

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<sup>29</sup> Liesbet Hooghe, “Several Roads Lead to International Norms, but Few Via International Socialization: A Case Study of the European Commission”, *International Organization*, p. 863; Neill Nugent, “The Deepening and Widening of the European Community: Recent Evolution, Maastricht and Beyond”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 30(3), 1992, 311-328.

<sup>30</sup> Michelle Cini, *The European Commission: Leadership, Organisation and Culture in the EU Administration*, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup> Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Union*, p. 233.

<sup>32</sup> J. L. Burban, *Les institutions européennes*, Paris: Vuibert, 1997; Michelle Cini, *The European Commission: Leadership, Organisation and Culture in the EU Administration*, p. 25-28.

<sup>33</sup> Michelle Cini, *The European Commission: Leadership, Organisation and Culture in the EU Administration*, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> Morten Egeberg, “The European Commission” in *European Union Politics*, p. 134; Neill Nugent, *The European Commission*, London: Palgrave, 2001, p. 58-60; Hussein Kassim and Dionyssi G. Dimitrakopoulos, “The European Commission and the future of Europe”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14(8), 2007, pp. 1249-1270.

<sup>35</sup> See: John Peterson, “Playing the Transparency Game: Consultation and Policy-Making in the European Commission”, *Public Administration*, 73(Autumn), 1995, pp. 473-492.

and in systems is important for fulfilling the tasks established by the Treaties requires. The Commission's effectiveness is inhibited now by working practices, conventions and obligations that have accumulated over decades. "Administrative reform will help the Commission to fulfil its institutional role as motor of European integration. It is thus a political project of central importance for the European Union".<sup>36</sup>

As is seen at times and in different kinds of proposals, drafts or reform projects, the Commission wants to be independent and powerful for working ease, yet the member states always share out the authorities of the Commission with the other institutions as much as possible, albeit they show themselves such as willing for delegation of authority. If they want to obtain integration of the European Union in all fields the member states will need a powerful, independent and supranational Commission. Due to their national interests, they do not enable to strengthen the Commission.

### **3. The Relationship between the Officials and the Member States**

By looking at the attitudes of commissioners/officials, the impact of the member states and the Commission can be understood, whether they decide neutrally during the preparation of proposals or they are under pressure and affected by the member states. There are some important studies and surveys which investigate the behaviours of commissioners, especially during the controversial commission proposals, which demonstrate the strong and enduring coalitions between member states (national governments) and the officials of the Commission.<sup>37</sup> Commissioners' country role informs their actions more so than their duties (as a commissioner) or ideological affiliations.<sup>38</sup>

The commission has been variously theorized as a supranational actor with decision-making processes that are insulated from the interplay of national interests

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<sup>36</sup> European Commission, *Reforming the Commission*, Consultative Document, Communication from Mr Kinnock in agreement with the President and Ms Schreyer, CG3 (2000) 1/17, 18 January, Brussels: European Commission, 2000, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Fiona Hayes-Renshaw and Helen Wallace, *The Council of Ministers*, 2nd Ed., London: Macmillan, 2006, p. 227; Neill Nugent, *The Government and Politics of the European Union*, London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1999, p. 474; Robert Thomson, Jovanka Boerefijn, and Frans N. Stokman, "Actor alignments in European Union decision Making", *European Journal of Political Research*, 43, 2004, pp. 237-261; Vincent Wright, "The National Coordination of European Policy Making", in Jeremy Richardson (Ed.), *European Union: Power and Policy Making*, London: Routledge, 1996, p.152.

<sup>38</sup> Morten Egeberg, "Executive Politics as Usual: Role Behaviour and Conflict Dimensions in the College of European Commissioners", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(1), 2006, pp. 1-15.

and as an agent of national interests.<sup>39</sup> On the other side, as noteworthy findings show that, the practice can be different as it is seen from some research.

Liesbet Hooghe<sup>40</sup> examines the supranational and intergovernmental dimensions of the commissioners' positions in her work. According to one of her studies, the effect of national governments on the commission officials and the three factors (prior experience of living abroad, socialization in the workplace, and learning in the political system of their country of origin) may influence them. In one of her work she evaluates the findings consequently:

Top commission officials are embroiled in a fierce struggle among political actors for control over EU authoritative resources. One would expect them to actively defend the power of the commission. If not, one would think that national governments successfully control them as agents serving national interests. However, variation in views among top officials is not easily understood in terms of principal agency. Commission officials are not simply supranational activists or intergovernmental agents. Rather, when they enter their office in the morning, they bring with them views on European integration that have matured as a result of experiences from various institutional contexts.<sup>41</sup>

On the basis of her surveys it can be seen that the senior officials of the Commission are not insulated and they are aware of the fundamental issues that divide Europe's parties, public and governments. As active participants in these debates they interpret, live and help reshape European governance day by day.<sup>42</sup>

A recent survey demonstrates the commissioners' attitudes during the decision process are important as well. Thomson's survey is about the prime

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Thompson, "National Actors in International Organizations the Case of the European Commission", *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(2), 2008, p. 187-188.

<sup>40</sup> Liesbet Hooghe, "Supranational Activists or Intergovernmental Agents? Explaining the Orientations of Senior Commission Officials toward European Integration", *Comparative Political Studies*, 32, 1999, pp. 435-463; "Images of Europe: Orientations to European Integration among Senior Officials of the Commission", *British Journal of Political Science*, 29(2), 1999, pp. 345-367; *The European Commission and the integration of Europe: Images of Governance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; "Several Roads Lead to International Norms, but Few Via International Socialization: A Case Study of the European Commission", *International Organization*, 59(Fall), 2005, pp. 861-898.

<sup>41</sup> Liesbet Hooghe, "Supranational Activists or Intergovernmental Agents? Explaining the Orientations of Senior Commission Officials toward European Integration", *Comparative Political Studies*, p. 460-461.

<sup>42</sup> Liesbet Hooghe, "Images of Europe: Orientations to European Integration among Senior Officials of the Commission", *British Journal of Political Science*.

responsibility of commissioners in 70 controversial commission proposals introduced during the Santer and Prodi Commissions. He reaches three results after the investigation:

*...First, the division of policy responsibilities among commissioners has a significant impact on the level of agreement between the commission and member states' positions... Second, this finding implies that commissioners' country affiliations are an important guide to their behavior. This contrasts with the view of commissioners as being insulated from national pressures... Third, decision rules in the council condition the commission's policy positions. When the unanimity rule applies in the council, the commission must appeal to all member states because all states must prefer or be indifferent between the commission's proposal and the disagreement outcome.<sup>43</sup>*

The above results indicate that, according to commissioners, member states' interests are more important than the European Union's interests.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From a theoretical perspective, two different approaches can be seen formulating the European integration process. Supranationalists look at the EU as idealists, which the popularity of this theory increases when the integration process succeeds – e.g. period of the ECSC, EURATOM and EEC's establishment during the 1950s and early 1960s. On the contrary, when the national interests differ from European goals, as it was from the 1960s through the early 1980s, intergovernmentalism comes into importance by its realist approach and since the “empty chair” crisis, intergovernmentalism has gained more supporters. The analysis (the level-of-analysis) of the intergovernmentalism is an important factor for its attractiveness in this point that, it analyses both national and international dimensions of the integration.

Thus, the Commission, as a supranational organ, cannot be independent from member states in the issues that are based on interstate bargaining. On the other hand, all member states do not have the same ideas and considerations about European integration. The UK wants not a very strong European Union, whilst Germany wills a strong integration. On this point, member states might not desire a powerful and independent commission.

Secondly, in the evolution of the Commission the member states have not allowed the Commission to have sole authority. Despite the recent progresses in the

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Thompson, “National Actors in International Organizations the Case of the European Commission”, *Comparative Political Studies*, p. 187-188.

Lisbon Agenda (Reform Treaty), they have always shared out its authorities and rights to the other organs.

From the third perspective, it can be seen that, both the member states always struggle for taking advantages in the Commission, particularly during the controversial proposals, by lobbying and the officials take decisions accordance with their national identities. Therefore the Commission's neutrality and independence suffers.

Finally, this essay demonstrates that, by looking from three perspectives, in spite of its important and independent functions, the Commission is affected by the member states strongly and it is only has been as powerful as the member states have allowed it to be, so far.

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