In my review for the “malá obhajoba” I suggested that the work has the potential of making a relevant contribution to the field of European studies. I argued that the author studies a topic, i.e. the role of the national parliaments and their potential for the legitimation of the EU, which lately has received increased attention both in the Czech and in the international scholarly literature, but still remains understudied. I, however, argued that the thesis to a large degree was underdeveloped, and that the research objective as well as theoretical framework was not well enough developed and fragmented. I especially criticized the ad-hoc way the author introduced new hypotheses into the study and then failed to follow up and evaluate the application of the hypotheses to the empirical material. Therefore, in this review I go through the critical remarks I made towards the previous version of the thesis, and discuss to what degree the author has made relevant revisions. Finally, I give an overall assessment of the dissertation.

If we look at the first point, the author has largely reformulated the introduction chapter, and the research objectives of the thesis are now presented in a more comprehensive way. When it comes to the theoretical perspective this still remains rather underdeveloped. The author, however, has included a new paragraph in the introduction where she explains her view on the national parliaments as independent actors, operating within a multi-level environment co-created by the national parliaments. There is also a clarification of the theoretical perspective in chapter 1 (1.2). Yet, the theoretical framework used for the analysis remains rather minimalistic and consists of a few references to, and a brief description of, sociological neo-institutionalism. The thesis, however, makes a clear contribution to the democratic deficit literature. To this point the author has included in the revised version a discussion on the implication of the work for the democratic deficit debate. This discussion, even if rather brief, makes a good work in explaining the relevance of the thesis for this particular set of literature. Therefore, even if the thesis largely remains fragmented into its four chapters, it is clear it as a whole makes a contribution to this literature. The author also gives a comprehensive introduction to the democratic deficit literature within European studies.

In the second chapter the author has erased the initial hypotheses referring to rational choice, which previously were presented without further elaboration. Of the hypotheses remains merely the statement that the chapter “… starts from the assumption that national parliaments aim to increase their power in the European decision-making process…” After this revision the chapter works better and is now also more clearly integrated into the overarching structure of the thesis. Yet, still the discussion on the incitements for parliaments’ is underdeveloped.
It is puzzling why the chapter starts with this reference to the parliaments’ strive for power, when the author soon turns to the idea that there can be other motivations for parliaments joining collective action. If the author wanted to include a discussion on norm based and instrumental behavior, the discussion should have been more sophisticated, and taken into account some of the very broad existing literature on the topic. Since the discussion is not really used for the evaluation of the parliaments’ activities on the European level, I wonder why it is there. Also for instance when the author discusses the different levels of activity between the Slovak parliament and the Czech senate, she concludes that the answer “…probably lay mostly on the personal level” (p. 118), and one wonders if this conclusion could have been enriched by a thorough discussion on incitements for action.

Regarding the comparison of the national parliaments in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia (chapter 4), I am still missing a more detailed elaboration on what the comparison of these very chambers are likely to bring. The author’s findings, however, are interesting and relevant especially concerning the differences between the Slovak parliament and the Czech senate.

In sum, the author has made revisions on the points I raised in my previous review. The thesis provides solid empirical analysis. Viera Knutelská also shows she is familiar with the democratic deficit literature and through here empirical studies she makes a contribution to this literature. The thesis, however, could have been improved if she would have engaged more with the theoretical dimension of the analysis.

I recommend the Ph.D. thesis to be defended.

Mats Braun