



# Flashback: European Architects Always Intended Technocracy

The EU was largely architected by members of the Trilateral Commission, who intended Technocracy from the very start. The EU formally started with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, in the same year of the Earth Summit in Rio, Brazil, which created Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development, aka Technocracy. □ TN Editor

Leafing through the British press over the last week, you can't but notice the increased sightings of a rare political subspecies: [the "technocrat"](#). Prominent technocrats include the Italian prime minister designate, [Mario Monti](#), and the Greek PM, Lucas Papademos, who have been parachuted into the top job, the papers say, in order to act out diktats of their "paymasters" in Germany and France. In the Telegraph, Christopher Booker has revealed that "[EU architects never meant it to be a democracy](#)": technocracy was always the plan. In the same paper,

Charles Moore has proclaimed that [“left and right should agree that this is not the time for technocrats and Frankfurters”](#), but real democrats.

And largely they do. On these pages, there have been a number of comment pieces and editorials pointing out Europe’s “democratic deficit”, questioning whether the “rise of the technocrats” is wise ([“economics is not engineering”](#)) or even [effective](#). Even the sober FT has a concerned editorial entitled [“Enter the technocrats”](#) - no less than 10 months after proclaiming the [“strange death of technocracy”](#). I counted at least half a dozen articles that saw glaring parallels to European appeasement a la Munich '38; the Telegraph is already pondering [sending Spitfires across the channel](#).

Well, when the Guardian, the Telegraph and even [those arch-contrarians at Spiked Online](#) are in agreement over something, some alarm bells should go off. So let’s at least try to see if there might be another side to the story here.

The word “technocracy” comes from the Greek words “tekhne”, meaning skill, and “kratos” meaning power. Technocrats thus literally promise to be “problem solvers” - politicians who make decisions based on their expertise or specialist knowledge of a particular subject, rather than to please a particular interest group or political party. The term is commonly attributed to the engineer William H Smyth of Berkely, California in 1919, though the idea that a country should be organised and spiritually led not by the church, feudal landowners or the military but by industrial chiefs and men of science, goes back to the early socialist thinker [Saint-Simon](#).

Yes, there’s no harm in saying it: technocracy once used to be a big idea for the international left. In 1930s America, for instance, it wasn’t a term of abuse but the programme for a new social utopia. In the middle of the Great Depression, an emergent technocratic movement led by engineers and dissident economists such as Thorstein Veblen and Howard Scott proposed that populist politicians simply weren’t capable to fix the system: “The maladministration and chaos imposed upon the industrial mechanism by arbitrary rule of extraneous interest has reached such a point that many technicians feel the urgent need of confederating their

forces in a program of industrial co-ordination based, not on belief, but exact knowledge,” thundered a pamphlet by the Technical Alliance.

The American technocratic movement was short-lived, not least because the flaws in its thinking were so apparent: their belief that anyone could ever be completely apolitical in their decision-making now strikes us as naive. No one remembers the technocrats’ “Plan of Plenty”, and everybody remembers Roosevelt’s New Deal.

Over the course of the next few decades, technocracy got a dodgy rep. Veneration of industrial progress and unchecked rule by bureaucrats became a trademark of totalitarian regimes in Nazi [Germany](#) and Soviet Russia. George Orwell describes technocracy as a precursor to fascism. What was Adolf Eichmann if not a technocrat?

Some might say, though, that technocratic ideals and practices never really went away. Henry Elsner’s critical account of the movement floats the idea that the New Deal, with its embracing of social engineering, was [more of a synthesis of technocratic and democratic ideals than an alternative](#).

In many European countries, the word technocrat still has positive connotations. In the 1950s, [Jean Monnet](#) envisioned growth as something that required expertise rather than party politics. Smaller democracies, such as Holland, often rely on technocrats as negotiators between unruly coalition governments, or between employers and employees. Belgium, without a government for 17 months and counting, [is a technocrat’s paradise](#) and has weathered the crisis fairly well so far. In the former communist states of central and eastern Europe, technocrats played a key role in negotiating the transition from authoritarian regime to democracy.

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