

Erosion of the Nation-State? : Emergence of the European Union and New Citizenship

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1. Introduction

European integration essentially began in 1945. The Second World War was over, and Europeans asked themselves why the war had occurred and what could be done to ensure security in the future. They were encouraged by Winston Churchill's proposal of 'a kind of United States of Europe' in his speech in Zurich in 1946. The purpose of the EU is the realization of a security organization, and improvement in the political and economic status of Europe. As the process of integration progressed, the sovereign nation states have transferred their authority partially to the EU. To use Peterson's phrase, 'The EU has become a new center of power' in a more multipolar world after the demise of the Soviet Union (Peterson, 1996, p.7). This paper discusses the transfer of sovereignty of the nation states, and the present role of the European Union in the course of the European integration.

2. Theoretical Approaches to European Integration

The impact of the Second World War was traumatic not only for European people but also for international relations in Europe. Urwin states, 'historically, attempts to integrate the territory within one political system never came near to success' (Urwin, 1997, p.4).

However, the idea of united Europe never died. Churchill's suggestion revived the idea and led to Robert Schuman's ECSC plan, which proposes in 1950 that Franco-German coal and steel production should be placed under a common 'High Authority' (Urwin 1995, p.44). Thus, it can be said that the European integration began by 'pooling' Franco-German coal and steel production.

The question we have to ask here is what parts of sovereignty were transferred to the community.

2-1. Sovereignty

The notion of 'sovereignty' offers the key to an understanding of the change in the nature of the nation states in Europe. Sovereignty can be classified into two sides (Jones, 2001, p.36). The internal side is defined as a state that holds supremacy in decision-making (Jones, 2001, p.36), for example the exclusive and comprehensive right to make laws, managing the regulation of currency, to decree taxation as well as to manage the economy (Walker, 1994, p.355). The external is independence of nation states in international affairs (Jones, 2001, p.36). The external sovereignty of a state is a function of its recognition by other countries as being in the right of legitimate possession of rights, for example, the right of non-interference by others in its internal affairs (Goldmann, 2001, p.63). Examples of the cardinal principle of sovereignty in foreign affairs are defence, foreign trade, the negotiation of treaties, immigration.

Jackson and Sorensen consider the challenges for sovereignty from several sides (Jackson and Sorensen, 1999, p.263). Firstly, global market forces more easily penetrate borders and affect national economies in unprecedented ways. Secondly, the development of norms concerning the international protection of human rights and humanitarian law is seen as an infringement of sovereignty. In addition, there is the core area of warfare and control of the means of violence. Dissident groups often control significant parts of the country's territory.

2-2. Intergovernmentalism and federalism

Here, we will examine the notion of 'supranationalism' first. 'Supranational' means above the level of nation-states, whose powers take precedence over the powers of member states. A goal of federalists is an integrated Europe based on the creation of new supranational structures (McDonald & Dearden 1999, p.5). After the Second World War, the idea that European countries needed new forms of co-operation emerged. This idea was to transfer certain elements of sovereignty to a supranational authority in specific fields of policy.

Intergovernmentalism, on the other hand, is 'both a theory of integration ... and a term used to describe institutional arrangements and decision-making procedures that allow governments to cooperate in specific fields while retaining their sovereignty' (Bainbridge, 2000, p.329). The intergovernmental co-operation approach involves 'economic and

political co-operation between sovereign governments'. Bainbridge argues that the 'Common Foreign and Security Policy' (CFSP) pillar, and the 'Justice and Home Affairs' (JHA) pillar of the EU were intergovernmental in character in that both pillars are dominated by the European Council and the Council of Ministers, which both are composed of a representative of each member state (Bainbridge, 2000, p.418).

The intergovernmental approach needs to be examined a little further. Jones mentions two means of transferring sovereignty. One is the transfer of functions to a supranational authority. That is, elements of decision-making power may be transferred from the national governments to 'supranational' authorities. This is called 'supranationalism', in other words 'federalism', which involves 'the creation of powerful institutions above the level of the nation states' (Jones, 2001, p.9). Many key policies, such as justice and taxation remain the government of member states. The other is 'intergovernmentalism' in the sense of shared decision-making by national governments. There are two interpretations for shared decision-making, in its minimalist form (loose intergovernmentalism) and in its maximalist form (tight intergovernmentalism). (Jones, 2001, p.37). The former does not jeopardize sovereignty as individual governments can veto certain decisions. However, the later imposes limits on sovereignty as it based on the majority voting, therefore, member states are forced to accept the collective decisions.

A substantial degree of state sovereignty would be transferred to these supranational institutions. Siedentop describes federalism as having to do with authority and power between the centre and the periphery (Siedentop, 2000 p.79). Siedentop explains that the character of federalism is the resolve to leave to each locality and region enough authority and power to manage its own affairs while carrying to the centre only enough authority and power to deal with matters of general interest (Siedentop, 2000 p.94). Furthermore, Bainbridge defines federation as a form of political organization characterized by a division of responsibility between a central authority and component parts (usually states, regions or provinces) enjoying autonomy in certain fields (Bainbridge, 2000, pp.278-279).

The aim of transforming the EU into a federation was expressed well by the German foreign minister Joschka Fischer in a speech entitled 'From Confederacy to Federation' in Berlin in May, 2000. Fischer emphasized that the foundation of integration is in the nation state. The completion of European integration can only be successfully conceived if it is done on the basis of a division of sovereignty between Europe and the nation states. To be concrete, the foreign minister proposed the creation of a European federation with 'a written constitution, a government and a two-chamber parliament' (Jones, 2001, p.100). Although Fischer made it clear that he was speaking in a personal capacity, it is clear that the federal dream is very much alive in some parts of continental Europe, including in some high places in Germany (Jones, 2001, p.46).

The transfer of sovereignty will be examined in the next chapter.

3. Transferral of authorities and the current role of the European Union

State sovereignty has partially and gradually been transferred to the community, as we will see below.

3-1. Economic to political integration: Historical survey

Over the years, the EU has gained authority in the economic and political areas.

There have been several significant stages in the transferral of power and authority from national governments in the history of the European integration, partially at the expense of the nation state.

The first was the formation of ECSC. Robert Schuman proposed that French and German coal and steel production should be ‘pooled’ and placed under a common supranational authority, an initiative that owed its origin to Jean Monnet. The coal and steel industries were necessary to both the waging of war and economic recovery. Monnet’s original preference was for a sovereign ‘High Authority’ (Bainbridge, 2000, pp.191-192). The ECSC’s High Authority was the pioneer of the European Commission. Monnet’s proposal had the merit of meeting not only the French national interest in the control of German steel but also a wider interest in the development of European political institutions.

The transfer of sovereignty at the earlier stages was based on economic considerations. The partial transfer of sovereignty has progressed gradually in the economic sphere. The European Economic Community (EEC) was created as a trading bloc in which trade in goods was to be free between its six member states. To quote Piening, 'There would be no tariffs, no restriction, and no quotas' within its borders (Piening, 1997, p.13). Although common commercial policy went smoothly, the transferal of authority in the field of highly political issues such as diplomacy, security and defense cooperation was slow in progress. The CFSP was delayed because disagreements between member nations frequently occurred. Despite its considerable economic weight, the EU lacks commensurate political power. Dinan argues that efforts to strengthen the CFSP have been unavailing, especially in regard to security and defense and the EU's inability to share sovereignty (Dinan, 1999, p.483).

More policies have come to be formulated at the level of the EU, including CFSP and JHA. The Union also introduced a new concept of the citizenship of the European Union in Maastricht Treaty (TEU) in 1992. This is to grant the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 amended the Maastricht Treaty and the EC treaty, incorporating the Schengen agreement, a commitment to create a border-free zone, and strengthening transparency. TEU is modified to prevent 'a clear risk' of a breach of human rights by a member state (Bainbridge, 2000, p.515). The EU has

further assumed a new role in preventing terrorism, organized crime and drug-trafficking by police cooperation.

4. Nation state and Globalisation: Is the nation state in decline?

It was pointed out in the third chapter that parts of sovereignty were transferred to the community. This now raises the question of how the nature of the nation state has transformed.

Jackson and Sorensen explore the question and argue that, if states are weaker, they face new constraints on sovereignty, and that if states are not weaker, they have increased capacities and no rivals exist (Jackson and Sorensen, 1999, p.264). Kenichi Ohmae and Nicholas Negroponte offer the view that the nation state is in decline in the context of globalization. According to Ohmae, as a result of globalization we increasingly live in a 'borderless world' in which national identity is becoming weaker (qtd. in Giddens, 2001, p.446). By the same token, Negroponte declares that 'I expect the nation-state to evaporate... Without question, the role of the nation-state will change dramatically' (qtd. in Gray, 1998, p.68). Their ideas raise the question of whether the nation state is in decline, whose sovereignty has indeed been weakened by globalisation. Ohmae and Negroponte argue that globalization weakens the role of the nation state.

Gray takes a different position. He denies their view, saying: 'No one... expects the world to become a truly single market, in which nation-states have withered away and have been supplanted by homeless multinational corporations' (Gray, 1998, p.64). Gray argues that it is only fantasy that nation-states will disappear in the process of globalization.

Milward, specifically in terms of European integration, also denies the view that the nation state is declining or that it will become weak and eventually disappear. Furthermore, Milward goes on to say, 'To put a finite limit to the process of integration would be to weaken the nation-state, to limit its scope and to curb its power' (Milward, 2001, p.3). Milward characterizes European integration as the European rescue of the nation-state from collapse after 1945. He states that the rescue of the European nation state is the most salient aspect of Europe's post-war history. The rescue Milward discusses is the one in which the European nation states created a new political consensus as the basis of their legitimacy, therefore reasserting themselves as the fundamental unit of political organization. He goes on to say, 'The new political consensus on which this rescue was built required the process of integration, the surrender of limited areas of national sovereignty to the supranational' (Milward, 2001, p.4). Milward insists that the post-war state had to be constructed on a broader political consensus in response to the need of citizens. Western European states promoted the community's interests through common policies regarding labour, agricultural

producers and the welfare state. If the governments of the nation states independently pursue these policies, they will reach a finite limit; therefore, the post-war nation had to be internationalized at certain points in order to survive. This is the rescue of the European nation-state. Milward concludes that the common policies of the European Community came into being in an attempt to uphold and stabilize the post-war consensus on which the European nation-states were rebuilt. They were a part of the rescue of the nation-state (Milward, 2001, p.44).

The economical situation in Europe has been influenced by globalisation. This in turn required a new political consensus. Each country was limited in its ability to deal with each situation, therefore, co-operation between the nation states was required for survival.

5. The role of the nation states and the Principle of Subsidiarity

In order to consider the role of the community, it is necessary to expand on the role of the nation state a little further, specifically referring to European integration. As integration has promoted a shift of state functions to the EC and international institutions, it has also generated mounting confusion about the proper role of the state and national government authority in European societies (Baun, 1995, p.156). As Daniel Bell observes, the government of a nation state has become 'too small to respond to the big questions', such as the destruction of the world's environment; but it has become 'too big to deal with small

questions', issues that affect particular cities or regions (qtd. in Giddens, 2001, p.429). An environmental policy is the most typical of the EU's collective policies. The governments of nation states have little power to deal with the trans-border environmental problems, such as Chernobyl in 1986. On the other hand, many citizens believe that the government is too big to deal with local issues such as crime and homelessness in communities. Therefore, for those problems, it is necessary to cope with them on various levels, including the EU, nation states, and regions.

At the same time, there is a growing dissatisfaction among citizens about the process of policy making which is remote from the lives of citizens. Transferal of authorities has occurred in policy areas such as currency, foreign policy, security, and defence. Since these areas are generally regarded as core aspects of national sovereignty and identity, the integration has provoked strong reactions among European citizens. At the same time, it is doubtful that the citizens of European nations will assent to the further transfer of national sovereignty and substantial decision-making authority to EU institutions without democratic accountability. Until now democratic accountability and legitimacy have been the exclusive properties of nation states (Baun, 1995, pp145-147).

With these issues in mind, let us take a look at a referendum in Denmark in 1992. The Danish people voted against the Maastricht Treaty, which the Danish Parliament had

approved. What the 'No' vote made clear is that there was anxiety among citizens that the interests of a nation state might fall victim to the interests of the community and people's lives would be threatened by integration. They felt that decision-making was done not by their government, but by bureaucracy in Brussels. They were also becoming increasingly uneasy about EC bureaucratization and the centralization of political power in Brussels. The public demanded the openness of the decision-making procedures. This is the problem of 'transparency', which will be discussed below.

This is not restricted to Denmark. Confrontation between the interests of the EU and national interests has occurred in many spheres, such as the problem between the farm products of Poland and those of the EU. Ministers frequently spoke for national interests and often opposed the more Community-minded European Commission or European Parliament. By the same token, the European Commission has been able to negotiate with economic organizations on the European level rather than the domestic level, and has urged formation of EU level interest groups. Dinan accounts for this situation well: 'The proposal-drafting stage in the Commission is an opportune time for interest groups to try to modify the shape and content of the contemplated legislation' (Dinan, 1999, p.225). Furthermore, the European Commission heard the interest groups' opinions in advance and often reflected them when creating a bill. The Danish rejection of the TEU provoked a controversy, bringing 'democratic deficit' to public attention. Baun describes 'Democratic

deficit' as 'the limited accountability of EU decision-making institutions to democratically elected representative assemblies and the lack of transparency and openness in EU decision-making' (Baun, 1995, p.145).

'Transparency' refers to the clarity of the decision-making procedures used therein. The need for greater transparency was one of the important themes in the 1991 Maastricht Treaty. Transparency of the decision-making process, to use Bainbridge's phrase, 'strengthens the democratic nature of the institutions and the public's confidence in the administration' (Bainbridge, 2000, p.507). It should also be added that one of the cause of 'democratic deficit' is the weakness of power of the European Parliament (EP). Despite the democratic legitimacy deriving from the fact that members of the European Parliament (EP) have been directly and democratically elected by the citizens of the nation state, the EP was given little power as a decision-making institution. The problem of the powerless EP figures in the discussion of the EU's 'democratic deficit'. One proposed solution to 'democratic deficit' is the reform of the EP that the role of the national parliament had better to strengthen in the EU decision-making process.

To solve the problem of 'democratic deficit', the principle of subsidiarity was introduced. According to Dinan (1999), 'subsidiarity was a vital safeguard of national sovereignty and a way to prevent the EC from involving itself unduly in member states' affairs' (Dinan,

1999, p.153). In order to dissolve uneasiness about EC bureaucratization and the centralization of political power in Brussels and to promote transparency, the Maastricht Treaty introduced the principle of subsidiarity. Member states of the EU exploited subsidiarity, advocating it as a means of creating allegiance with popular concern about excessive centralization in Brussels. Bainbridge states, 'Subsidiarity is the principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest level consistent with effective action within a political system' (Bainbridge, 2000, p.491). One of the aims of this principle is to transfer decision-making from the EU to the level such as the government of nation states. This principle applies the brakes to the centralization of political power in Brussels, and secures the autonomy of member states. Therefore, 'Nation states shape the direction of EU policy and are ultimately responsible for its implementation' (Sweeney, 2002). Sweeney highlights that the role of a nation-state is still significant. The authority of the government of each country does not become smaller as Europe integration progresses.

6. Conclusion

Originally, European integration was started to avert future European wars. However, the purpose of integration has been gradually changed. The global economy has grown beyond the control of the nation states; it is more complex, multi-faceted and certainly more global. The nature of the nation state is changing through formation and development of the EU in response to such situations. One of the purposes of the EU may be the realization of a

security organization, as well as improvement in the political and economical situations of European nation states.

In the process of integration, although the interests of participant countries were sometimes at conflict, certainly the pursuit of national interests has been the driving force of European integration, and the construction of a system for realizing that objective has been progressing steadily. It can be said that the European integration is one response to globalization and an experimental attempt to compensate for the declining power of the nation states by building a supranational association of European states.

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