

# Sovereignty and Integration in the European Union: Reduction or Unification and Strengthening?

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## Abstract

Carrying the responsibility for state sovereignty in a multi-national organization spread over the European territory has often brought dilemmas about the division of powers between the member states and the preservation of the sovereignty of a state against the ambition to strengthen the common sovereignty of the EU. Many countries that have been integrated into the supranational organization have been forced to review and change their Constitutions to harmonize the jurisprudence system. Therefore, the unification and strengthening of the jurisprudence system is the key factor for guaranteeing common sovereignty within the EU. With the direct revision of the Constitution of a state that has joined or aspires to join a justice system with common values in the European Union, the aim is to guarantee the future of the sovereignties of all member states. With the unification of sovereignties in a common sovereignty within the EU, lasting peace and well-being for all citizens will be strengthened and ensured.

**Keywords:** sovereignty, integration, reduction, unification, empowerment

**JEL Classification:** D78

## Sovereignty in Transition

Sovereignty as a concept has been discussed by many authors and from many multidisciplinary perspectives, but neither of them would be complete without mentioning of Jean Bodin who defined the concept of sovereignty. Bodin prominently contributed to political-legal thinking about sovereignty. The basic concept of sovereignty according to Bodin's theory was described as an unlimited sovereignty with supreme and indivisible power: an absolute sovereignty that would be exercised within the borders of a state. The unconditional obligation to the ruler's orders according to Bodin stemmed from the origin of his divine authority since the ruler was appointed by God (Bodin 2000: 15-6). In the presentation of this kind of absolute sovereignty a myth was created which lived for a long time until it moved to the royal level. Stripping the concept of sovereignty from the divine myth by wearing the royal robe was the initiation of the transition of sovereignty.

Despite the transition of sovereignty, however, its functioning has not been lost because it is always useful as it is considered a regulatory key for the state and for its systematization in the structure of inter-

national relations. In the past, with the help of the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), sovereignty was used as the mechanism to end the European Thirty Years' War and brought peace. The Treaty of Westphalia was a peace road map which has been used to establish a new systematic order in Europe, in which the concept of the sovereign state is based. The Westphalian principle involved the recognition of another state's sovereignty and its rights, and it still exists in international law. With this positive experience, the concept of sovereignty has been used and continues to be used as a mechanism to express the capacity of a state to protect its territory. Therefore, states have compiled normative lines which are sanctioned in their constitutions and laws and therefore must be implemented within their borders.

Looking at the transition of the concept of sovereignty, its effects on international relations are also seen after the period of the Treaty of Westphalia, with a revision of the concept of sovereignty that has taken the form of relative sovereignty. However, the initial change in the essence of this concept is the distancing from the reference to supernatural power as well as its later modification by referring to royal dynasties. With the fall concept meaning from supernatural power to royal power, the opportunities to further modify the meaning of a sovereign state in relative sovereignty consisting of the sovereignty of 27 states in a supranational organization – meaning the EU – opened. The sovereignty of a state is carried within the EU by state representatives who are elected by citizens in local elections. The transfer of sovereign state powers has made the concept more flexible by integrating state sovereignty into a shared sovereignty within the EU. Achieving the integration of a state's sovereignty into a common sovereignty is done through the ratification of Treaties, such as the Treaty of Lisbon, which is otherwise also considered the EU Constitution. With the integration of many sovereignties into a common sovereignty, the concept is presented with a unification operating with harmonized norms and rules. In addition to the empowerment from this integration process, common responsibilities emerge for the smooth running of this process from the individual level of states and regions to the federalist/confederalist EU. The final goal of the integration process is to unite the power and strengthen the sovereignties of all states within the supranational sovereignty of the EU.

Returning to the historical process since the time of Bodin, the concept of sovereignty during its evolution and modeling has undergone changes, surpassing the characteristic in its consistency from the initial stage. Absolute and indivisible sovereignty from the initial stage to the stage of the 21st century era has been transformed: moving from absolute sovereignty it has taken the characteristic of relative sovereignty. This transition from absolute to relative sovereignty has coincided with global developments. With this adaptation, the sovereignty of the state has managed to survive by strengthening the common sovereignty of the states, i.e. by transferring the sovereignty of a state to the supranational sovereignty of the European Union based on the norms of the Treaty of Lisbon. This uniform development of a process of transferring the authority of the state as a legal subject to a subject of a common authority has included the 27 common sovereignties within the EU.

With this progress of the integration process, transforming the state sovereignty, the political, economic and social structure of the state has been affected and new relations in international relations have been created. In this way, the frameworks of a state's jurisdiction have been shifted in a meaningful sense through the elasticity of the concept of sovereignty, which moves from the position of being absolute to relative sovereignty. However, relativism is not so easy due to its specific nature and divergences may appear between countries as changes to the basic legal framework are required to harmonize legal acts and regulations under the Treaty of Lisbon. These requirements can cause confusion and hesitation that this transfer of sovereignty may reduce the sovereignty of the state.

However, concerns about the transformation and redefinition of the character of sovereignty and its scope, continue to be expressed even by such voices in the field as i.a. Keohane (2002: 743; Jackson 1993: 433). Some experts think that this process needs to define a limited transformation in order to preserve the essential consistency of sovereignty.

Even Bodin in his analysis of sovereign government pointed that the alternative to the monarch under the government of monarchy or the aristocrat under the government of aristocracy is the form of state power through national representation under the government of democratic power. In this form of representation

the power of a sovereign state, although it always belongs to the majority, nevertheless is not absolute because it is stripped of absolute sovereignty and has been transferred by representation and adapted to the form of relative sovereignty. This process, which has awakened concerns and thoughts about whether sovereignty is being strengthened or alienated, requires clarification. In answering these concerns, it is best to orient ourselves with an analytical focus of good and bad practices and to inquire about the background of voluntary and violent integration of sovereign authority. An extremely good example of the voluntary integration of the sovereignty is provided by the Swiss cantons in the Swiss confederation, while an extremely bad example is provided by the violent integration of the sovereignty of the federal units in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Voluntary transfer of sovereign power of a state differs in four ways from the integration of sovereign power by force. The willingness to freely determine to integrate a sovereignty into common sovereignty is a strong indicator of support for supranational sovereignty within the EU. This free will appears and dominates even for the states that are candidates or potential candidates for the membership in the EU to shape the concept of sovereignty through laws in a constitution or treaty that will be valid for all states integrated into the common sovereignty. In this dimension, we can describe that the EU with its own treaties can be accepted as an organization with the development of a supranational sovereignty that is functioning since the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon.

The orthodoxy of the Constitution of a sovereign state in Western countries is consistent with references to legal justice and accountability for the implementation of the jurisdiction of the sovereign state. The same consistency is intended to apply when the sovereign state transfers its sovereignty to shared sovereignty in a supranational organization with the same values. Looking more closely at the consistency of common sovereignty derived from the regulation and harmonization of the constitutions of the states, this process requires time and commitment for coordination to extend its operationalization. The common sovereignty of the EU cannot contain unresolved contradictions that could lead to negative changes in the quality of life of Europeans or to the violation of the guarantees of their rights. Supranational sovereignty can gain stability and credibility if it is based on and always applies the principle of equality and justice for all. Justice and equality cultivate credibility and stability that are elements which can be used for unification and strengthening of the sovereignties of states within the framework of supranational sovereignty. With a balance between justice and equality, the aim is to make prosperous Europe stronger with supranational sovereignty and common values to face any threat or danger from outside.

With this finding, it appears that sovereignty has not been lost, but has been modified and is working and contributing in practice to the construction of a new European order by compiling basic principles in directives and other normative documents to ensure a common territorial sovereignty of Europe. The EU attempted to adopt a common Constitution and after its failure the Treaty of Lisbon was adopted in its place. The main objective of this Treaty was to improve and strengthen the position of the states of Europe and to represent the EU internationally.

The Treaty of Lisbon introduced reforms such as defining new voting rules that include limiting the decision-making by unanimous votes in various councils of ministers with the acceptance of qualified majority votes. Also, the European Parliament gained more power as a legislature and became equal to the Council of Ministers. Despite the numerous reforms that were undertaken simultaneously, the rules related to common foreign policy and security, EU membership rules, taxes and finances were preserved. The Treaty of Lisbon also includes a clause for voluntary solidarity when an EU member state is affected by terrorist attacks or natural disasters. This clause, together with other principles for increasing the power of joint decision-making in the fight against climate change and facing energy challenges, are evidence of the protection of the common future with a strong security and stability. In order to strengthen the common future, the Lisbon Treaty has also sanctioned the legal obligation to respect the European Convention on Human Rights. With these principles, a new moment has been created in the European international system, recognizing the sovereignty and equality between states and protecting each of them in case of danger. Therefore, the

Treaty of Lisbon is considered as the Constitution of the EU and is used to build international relations in the European territory and beyond, maintaining the basis of justice and equality, in respect of the crucial common principles to unify and strengthen the supranational sovereignty of the EU.

## Sovereignty and Constitution

In a literal reading of sovereignty in the internal sense, it is related to the jurisdiction and borders over a territory of a sovereign state that enjoys the right to issue a constitution, laws, and other normative acts. Also, in the name of sovereignty, it is determined who can be a citizen of a country and the criteria to enter or live within a country. Different from internal sovereignty is external sovereignty, which is seen as the starting point of participation or operationalization of the capacity of the sovereign state in the international system since the dividing lines with other states are located there. Precisely, this border demarcation with other states has reinforced the status of the sovereign state according to the Westphalian model. Border demarcation represents external legal sovereignty within the framework of membership in international organizations and a state participation in the system of intercommunal relations (Mostov, Julie 2008:20). In the process of integration, the border demarcation is subject to the procedures of the unification of the sovereignty of a state within the legislative corpus of the EU to strengthen the supranational sovereignty.

In fact, since 1957 the design of European integration basically had an approach to building an interdependent organization that would rebuild and strengthen the European continent and overcome bloody rivalries and make wars between them unthinkable. After the renaming of the European Union, as a formal and institutional term derived from the Treaty of Maastricht, the path of integration has been used intensively and a considerable number of states have been given the opportunity to become members of the EU. With the entry of new members into the European Union, the transfer of the powers of the sovereign constitutions of the member states begun. The process of integration in relation to state constitutional powers brought in hesitation, questions, and doubt related to ceding state sovereignty that may lead to reduction of the sovereignty of the member state. As a result, reservations have appeared to support the idea of strengthening supranational sovereignty of the EU.

To understand more clearly the sovereignty of the state constitution and its integration into the sovereignty of the supranational constitution, we need to return to the premise of what kind of integration process we are aspiring for. The process of voluntary integration based on the values of democratic and universal principles does not reduce but strengthens the sovereignty of the state constitution within the framework of its inclusion in the sovereignty of the supranational constitution. The strong argument for that might rely on the mass will of members states to share to same principles. For instance, with the same values of the sovereign constitutions and their unification in a supranational sovereign constitution, there is no risk of conflict between them. The opposite can happen if the texts of the constitutions are not harmonized with the same democratic and universal values. Then it may happen that the subjectivity of the member state and consequently the sovereignty of the state's constitution are violated and damaged.

Since the integration process affects all dimensions of a sovereign state, including regulations and laws in general, the transfer of state powers was part of the provision from the aspiration phase of the states aspiring to the EU. With this approach, member states act in support of the European legal corpus and adapt the scope of their sovereign power through the amendment of local laws to harmonize with it in order to continue the integration process in the EU and to reach the stage of supranational sovereignty.

Therefore, before entering the integration process, the states begin to harmonize their constitutions and sovereign laws, all legal documents and issue local regulations in accordance with European and international documents and directives. In regard of the application of international documents, one can mention the respect and protection of the rules on natural resources that were sanctioned in the 1962 Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources resolution of the United Nations General Assembly that aimed to strengthen the sovereign equality of states and economic equality in the international order. Viewed from this dimension, currently sovereign states are affected by climate change and are pushed to think about ex-

tending the powers of permanent supervision in environmental protection through programs for the protection of nature, not only at the European but also global level. With the extension of these powers, sovereign states are being protected by respecting the norms on the right to natural resources and climate change management. With these effective measures, survival and sustainability are aimed at by collectively protecting the natural environment with shared ecological systems. This is a standard example of merging the powers of a state's sovereignty into supranational sovereignty and is a good indicator of the usefulness of protecting and guaranteeing collective security at the international level.

Similar arguments to those related to the 1962 UN General Assembly resolution are also valid for the EU treaties and directives, which replace the body of legislation of the member states. With the ratification of the EU Treaties, the powers of the EU have been determined which are governed by three principles:

- Delegated powers – the EU has only the powers defined in the EU Treaties, which all member states have ratified;
- Proportionality – the EU measures should not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the treaties;
- Subsidiarity – in the areas where the EU and the member states have authority, the EU can take measures only if they are more effective than the measures of the respective countries.

In this reflection of the process of integration in the EU, it appears that it requires a concentrated attention and an intense commitment to ensure stability and extend its operationalization. In essence, intensive efforts are directed to the development of the integration process aiming at the establishment of a supranational sovereignty. With the democratic values of supranational sovereignty, it is intended to guarantee every sovereign state and every citizen of it a safe life and well-being, and above all, a peaceful development without threats or war between member states, as well as protection from any external threat. Despite this intention to move towards permanent peace with the unification of powers, there is a separation and structuring of “exclusive” powers and “common powers” of the EU. They have been foreseen since the Treaty of Rome in article 300 and 308 and have been incorporated in subsequent EU Treaties in e.g. the flexibility clause that enables the EU to extend powers if the EU institutions find that the extension of the exercise of the power is in the interest of protecting objectives that are consistent with EU Treaties. In support of exclusive competences, the EU has a special role and can go beyond what is normally allowed under the treaties in three dimensions:

- coordinate economic policy and employment policy;
- define and implement the common foreign and security policy;
- to use the “flexibility clause” that gives the EU the possibility to take measures outside its normal competences in exceptional cases.

Looking at the methods for integration and harmonization of legal frameworks, the revision of a country's laws is subject to the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon. As an initiative for the realization of this aspiration for integration, the harmonization of the laws of the candidate or potential candidate states in accordance with the *Acquis Communautaire* of the EU is required to extend the validity of the legislative corpus of the EU. If one starts with a careful reading of the Single European Act (1987) as well as a subsequent Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon, a clear path towards a common sovereignty emerges in the supranational EU. With this extension of normative harmonization, the process of European Union integration developments continues, affecting the laws derived from the constitutions of the member states and unifying state sovereignty in a treaty or constitution, thus strengthening the sovereignty of common, supranational sovereignty.

In essence, sovereignty is an exclusive competence that legitimizes a right to rule over a certain territory, but the stability of sovereignty is interdependent on the ability of sovereignty, that is, if it possesses sufficient autonomy to articulate its objectives in relation to other forces and agencies in international structures. The effectiveness or capacity of sovereignty is not predicted to need logical or empirical influences in Westphalia, but Stephen Krasner thinks that external sovereignty (recognition and non-intervention) shows very little about the organization and efficiency of internal sovereignty (Mostov 2008: 20). With this opinion, Krasner

urges us to further look at the organization of sovereignty by other theorists. Julie Mostov (2008: 20-1) disagrees with Stephen Krasner's view and counters by underlining that external sovereignty and internal sovereignty are intimately connected, arguing that the efficiency of internal sovereignty is affected by the compromises of external sovereignty – in the ability to resist intervention – as well as by the practices of exclusion or inclusion of internal and external borders. All these powers of the sovereign state are sanctioned in the state constitution, which defines the territorial boundaries of the sovereign state and provides that the state as an authoritative entity supervises and manages the main areas of the state such as the military, economy, politics, demography and culture. Based on this point of view, the capability of sovereignty defined in the constitution of each sovereign state can be analyzed. In reference to the impact of internal sovereignty by compromises of external sovereignty, the capacities of the Constitution of Kosovo as a sovereign state with sovereignty of the relative sovereignty model can also be noted.

Thus, with the compromises made in the Constitution of Kosovo, the sovereignty of Europe's newest state has been ensured, which rests squarely on the foundations of EU and UN Treaties and Directives. To prove the efficiency of the extension of the jurisprudence system throughout the territory of Kosovo, compromises have been made in the text of the Constitution that coincide with the highest standards in the world regarding human rights and particularly the rights of minorities. However, when the legal right is attempted to be abused and this type of abuse hinders the development of the sovereign state, then appropriate measures are needed to eliminate obstacles of this nature. One of the specific rights for the adoption of laws is the qualified voting of minorities in vital matters of the state. Difficulties have been created with this specific right of the Serbian minority and this right has turned into an obstacle for 90% of the majority population in Kosovo. In fact, this obstacle is not only for the majority population but also for other minorities that do not have Serbian ethnicity, such as the Ashkali, Bosnians, Egyptians, Croats and the Turkish minority etc., which are harmed by the abuse of legal rights by the Serbian minority in Kosovo.

The incitement to abuse the minority rights of Serbs is being made by Serbia, which still does not recognize sovereign Kosovo as a neighboring state and has not yet changed its constitution in relation to the new reality, but considers Kosovo to be part of Serbia, even though Kosovo is sovereign and independent state. The misuse of these rights is being done in cooperation and planning of Serbia's strategies to finalize its claim to occupy the state of Kosovo. This situation between the two states with frozen conflict has directly affected the relationship of sovereign power between internal sovereignty and external sovereignty, laying the need for the establishment of border demarcation to be marked with thicker lines.

Although both Kosovo and Serbia aim for EU integration, however, the sovereignty of the state of Kosovo is constantly threatened by Serbia's claims to the territory of Kosovo. Therefore, on the border line with Serbia, Kosovo's borders are closed and supervised at the highest level by the Kosovo army and the forces of the NATO peacekeeping mission, who after the invasion of Serbian terrorists in Banjska, in the northern part of Kosovo in October 2023, were forced to increase the number of troops. Serbia's direct threat to Kosovo's sovereignty is also a threat to security and peace in the Western Balkans. The continuation of Serbia's claims against Kosovo is harming the entire process of integration into the EU and the unification of its constitution with EU directives, endangering the future of European states and the sovereignty of neighboring countries.

Another dilemma in the stability of sovereignty and power relations with all member states within the EU are indications of the ability of the extension of the Treaty of Lisbon to guarantee the sovereign power of each state even from numerous risks. One of the dangers that threaten the sovereignty of member states in general are the contemporary traffic that find ways to avoid the rules and overcome the obstacles of their territorial borders. Such risks are, for example, the transfer of financial capital or the distribution of electronic messages, as well as movements that carry pollution or diseases. These and any other risks are concerns that, according to Mostov (2008: 21), call into question the fragility and external sovereignty.

However, the very dynamism of the processes and the changes that are taking place towards an integration process reveal the need for an alternative approach to the regulation of ethno-national borders and to take into consideration the security episteme for peace within the EU. To achieve this transformation,



according to Mostov (2008: 22), denaturalization/removal of citizenship is necessary. In this dimension, moving towards denaturalization can be achieved through a common constitution, as a resistant political-legal framework. Therefore changes can be required within the framework of the constitution for a supranational sovereignty and to accept a voluntary denaturalisation. When the harmonized principles and norms will be validated, then we can consider that the regulation of the collective political-legal system has been achieved and the expectation increases that the common interstate values are respected by all sovereign member states of the EU. With the finalization of this process, it is possible to legitimize the governing body of the EU de facto and de jure and to accept the cooperation and peaceful interaction between the states in the EU as an organization with supranational sovereignty.

## Political-Juridical Cohesion of Sovereignty

Remodeling of the concept of sovereignty has not weakened the consistency of the sovereignty of the state in the political-legal aspect nor in relation to international relations. Sovereignty – either absolute or relative – remains a political-legal connection for resolving conflicts and maintaining peace within the EU. With the cohesion of the sovereign powers of the states within the EU, the key elements of justice, equality and solidarity have been incorporated to ensure a secure environment and common well-being for all member states and citizens of the EU.

The political and legal cohesion of a shared sovereignty in the European Union, guaranteed by the Treaty of Lisbon, has for its fundamental purpose the preservation of peace and respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law. These fundamental values are common to the member states striving towards a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality prevail, regardless of ethnicity or gender. The Lisbon Treaty have united the political will in legal sanctions to guarantee non-violation of the sovereignties of the member states and ensure a level playing field through legal norms. This political-juridical cohesion of the union of sovereignties during the process of integration into the European Union contributes to ensure a stable and permanent peace in Europe as well as prosperous development in all development spheres of the European territory.

Sovereignty integrated into a supranational sovereignty should be viewed through the lens of benefits and general utility, as mentioned above, for all Europeans within the framework of shared sovereignty. With the help of this point of view, the hesitations about the risk of weakening the sovereignty of the member states can be mitigated if the legislative integration is applied through the full harmonization of the constitutions of the states with EU Treaties and norms. The legality of the integration of the sovereignty of a member state in European supranational sovereignty is based on the above arguments.

The European leaders have already started expressing declarations for a closer unification of the sovereignties of the European states and have started to use the term “European sovereignty”. This term was used by the French president Emmanuel Macron in his speech at the Sorbonne in Paris on 26 September 2017. The use of the same term “European sovereignty” after Macron has often been heard in the German Bundestag as well as in Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s first statement in the Bundestag. This terminology follows the ideas of the originators of the establishment of the EU who wanted to increase the capacities for the overall strengthening and protection of the European territory.

Based on the protection of the sovereignty of the member states even during the process of integration into the European Union and after accession, each state can call on its own sovereignty. In case of dissatisfaction or disagreements in the integration process, there are guarantees that the sovereign state will maintain its sovereignty. A sovereign state can request to leave the EU and this right is enshrined in Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Transnational cohesion of sovereignties is happening through the transfer of the authority defined by a state constitution for decision-making at a supranational level. However, in the transfer of sovereignty, Protocol no. 2 of the EU Treaty, which provides for the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality is a defender of the traditions of sovereign states. By respecting those, member states can request adaptation and ac-

ceptance of specific conditions for each member state. Precisely in Article 2 of the Protocol, it is required to consider the local and regional dimensions of the planned measures before proposing any legislative act. If the principle of subsidiarity is not respected, then according to Article 8 of Protocol no. 2, the Court of Justice is competent to review any claim for possible violation. With this approach of transferring state sovereignty to a common sovereignty, the supranational sovereignty of the EU is regulated and operationalized. As can be seen, the surrender of a state sovereignty in the integration process is not unwavering because protective mechanisms exist that allow the sovereign state to maintain or restore the specifics of sovereignty according to the constitution and laws of the respective state.

## Conclusion

Sovereignty is usually guaranteed by the constitution of a country or by a treaty or normative agreement. Although the concept of sovereignty dates to the 1500s, its understanding is still debated. The reason for the continuation of the debate is its evolution from the classical form with absolute sovereignty to relative sovereignty. With this transition, the competence of state sovereignty has been transferred to relative sovereignty during the EU integration process. Member states transfer state sovereignty to unified sovereignty within the EU, aiming for a supranational sovereignty. The achievement of a supranational sovereignty within the EU is being constituted in support of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) which was ratified after the failure of the Draft Constitution of the EU in 2004.

With a pragmatic approach with peaceful objectives, it is possible to guarantee the rights of every European citizen under the umbrella of supranational sovereignty which is the future of all its citizens. Common forces with the same values that pull in the same direction are more useful and more stable and this can be achieved with a unification of the constitutions in a Common Constitution of the European Union by integrating the powers of the sovereign states in the supranational sovereignty of the EU.

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