Together and apart: The EU from Maastricht to the 2010s

In 1946, following the wartime destruction of Western Europe, Sir Winston Churchill said that Europeans had to develop a “United States of Europe” to rebuilding and prevent future conflict. Starting in 1951, six nations, though but not England including the United Kingdom, began creating a state’s union to go around partially aligned with Churchill’s idea, although the United Kingdom was not involved in part. The founding states would join together, but not as a federation, that in which the states would make all states submit fall under a supranational organization. Instead the six states without England formed, but rather as a union of sovereign states. Since 1993, when the Treaty on European Union (EU), also known as the Maastricht Treaty was signed, the questions have remained over how far much the EU will integrate remained in the discussion. In this paper, I am going to evaluate the EU integration process in the post-Maastricht era until the 2010’s but I am focusing with a focus on the failure of the European constitution in 2005, even. Although ideas contained in the draft were accepted four years later at in the Treaty of Lisbon. And, I argue that the EU members have chosen to decided against their supranational organization in favour of protecting state sovereignty.

Moving together: The Maastricht Treaty, 1993

The formation of the European Coal and Steel Committee in 1951 preserved each of the six member states’ to have control over its own laws and people, or to keep and thereby maintain sovereignty. Integrationists, politicians that who wanted a federal form of government, lost out to nationalists, that who wanted to protect their own states from a
federal union. So, integration was limited to economic issues through which the states could “achieve limited and specific results” (George, Frantz, & Birmele, 1997, pp. 116).

According to Stefanova (2005, p. 52), the concept of integration is a contradiction – the end result of integration is a supranational organization, yet the process of integration means sovereignty is only gradually and partially turned over. Nonetheless, the integration process went on in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome. The treaty, which produced the European Economic Community (EEC) with its functional framework that allowed the states to come together on certain specific issues where coordination was required and agreed upon, Elazar (2002, p. 36) makes a point that suggests that this functional approach took place because collective security was not part of the negotiations; rather, which was instead managed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) could manage that. Therefore, the EEC members made uncontroversial economical treaties and did not if it was controversial or that did not required deeper integration.

Then came The 1993 Treaty of Maastricht, which coincided with the end of communism in Eastern Europe, and was moving past the Single European Act signed in 1987, which was itself the major revision of the Treaty of Rome. Maastricht contained three ideas: the European Communities (economic and monetary union), a common foreign and security policy, and a European Court of Justice (ECJ). Moreover, Maastricht outlined three more institutions after the ECJ: the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, both with legislative functions, and the European Commission (which sets the agenda with executive functions). Although the goal never changed it was of an economic union, political motivations were important too, as the Treaty also wanted to “strengthen
the democratic legitimacy [and improve the effectiveness] of the institutions; develop the Community social dimension; [and] establish a common foreign and security policy.' (Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union EU, 2007).

Maastricht introduced the principle of subsidiarity—a new idea, the principle of subsidiarity that was promoted a positive for the idea of state sovereignty. The principle states, “in areas that are not within its exclusive powers,” the principle goes, “the Community shall only take action where objectives can best be attained by action at Community rather than at national level” (Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union EU, 2007). Fabbrini (2004, p. 559) said that Maastricht resulted in a mixture of supranational organization. He also said that it was, seen in the formation of the communities and intergovernmental processes, like such as foreign policy and the ECJ.
Moving more apart: The big constitutional failure, 2004–2005

In the late 1990s, EU members faced at-changing international and domestic areas and sought to amend procedures and enlarge the membership. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam addressed democratic procedures, such as fairness in voting through weighted votes and qualified majority voting, engendering closer cooperation between the member states, and introduced procedures for increasing the membership ([Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union, 2007]). The Treaty of Nice of 2001 resolved concerns left over from the Treaty of Amsterdam, especially on how to integrate new members ([Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union, 2007]). Nevertheless, they needed to do more. Therefore, the EU started to discuss the Convention on the Future of Europe, established in 2002—a Convention on the Future of Europe.

Procedures to handle enlargement and to streamline decision-making were central concerns for the Convention. With 10 new countries expected to join in 2004, members at the meeting argued that putting all treaties and legislation into one document would provide citizens with better access. More ideas, like revisions to decision-making, including the Charter of Rights adopted in 1999, and allowing the people a voice through the European Citizens’ Initiative, were discussed. These ideas maintained strong support among conference members, which expected the constitution to be ratified after the convention finished its work in 2003.

On May 29, 2005, however, the French voted ‘no’ on the constitution in a May 2005 referendum, ending the constitutional process because all members were required to ratify. Perceptions that the constitution would compromise French sovereignty,
particularly in the area of social rights, inflamed French citizens on the left and the right of the political spectrum. Journalist Katrin Bennhold (2005) from the *New York Times* interviewed a 57-year-old writer who said, "I believe in Europe, but not in a free-market Europe where everyone competes with everyone else and the result is lower wages and less security for all."

Many French citizens felt that the EU was advocating "neoliberal" economic policies of increasing free trade (Hobolt & Brouard, 2010, p. 11). So Bennhold (2005) suggested that they believed the EU would be able to interfere in French labour laws, threaten French workers’ livelihoods and job security, and compromise their welfare system.

A more perfect union? The Lisbon Treaty, 2009

The constitutional process might have ended, but EU growth did not. The Treaty of Lisbon, signed on 1 December 2009, contained 90% of the original convention constitution’s text survived in the form of the Treaty of Lisbon on December 1, 2009. How did the ideas survive when the defeat of a European constitution was said to be a ‘win’ for state sovereignty?

The Lisbon Treaty was passed because of four kinds of changes and they were substantive and procedural changes. First, important ‘supranational’ symbolism was taken out: although a flag, a national anthem, and the motto remained as still EU symbols but not written down in the text. Second, the treaty underwent a different ratification process – it never went to the people for a vote but was voted on by each state government. Third, the treaty did not include the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, given that the British would object to its effects on domestic labour laws, among other concerns (BBC, 2011). Fourth, finally, the new
treaty was not a new start but a revision of older treaties. It just revised the older ones—it was not a new start.

At the end of concerns related to sovereignty in the constitutional referenda were addressed in the Lisbon Treaty. On the EU website, it reads: “The Treaty of Lisbon is an international treaty agreed and ratified by sovereign Member States that agree to share some of their sovereignty in supranational cooperation. The Treaty of Lisbon acknowledges that the Union reflects the will of the Member States and their citizens, and that its powers stem from these States.” (BBC, 2011). As a result, sovereignty maintained its preeminent position.

Conclusion

Throughout its over more than 50 plus-year history, the EU has been guided by a determination to protect the sovereignty of member states would be the guide. In the post-Maastricht environment, member states have agreed to share their sovereignty only but only under very specific conditions, such as the European Monetary Union. When the EU tried to start another constitution, it was viewed as a threat to sovereignty and rejected by member states. In its place came the Lisbon Treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, that which was like the other discussions contained similarities to the constitution but was not because it was packaged like similarly to existing EU treaties of the EU without showing that declaring state sovereignty mattered the most to be the most important overriding principle. So while the future of the EU appears to be strong among member states, this future will primarily be shaped mostly by the needs and demands of those that support mostly a union of sovereign states.
References


