

How Sovereign Boundaries of Regional Alliance Member States Are Determined: The Case of the European Union

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Abstract: This essay explores the complex relationship between the sovereignty of the European Union (EU) and its member states. The concept of sovereignty is the base of political science, and the EU's foundation has created tension among its member states regarding the balance between pooling sovereignty and preserving it. The essay uses the case study of Brexit to examine the extent to which EU member states can achieve sovereignty within the current political climate. Theoretical frameworks such as neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism are used to analyze the relationship between member states and the supranational EU institutions. The essay aims to provide insight into the complex dynamics of sovereignty in the EU and offers potential solutions for balancing member-state sovereignty with the need for collective decision-making within the EU.

Keywords: regional alliance, sovereignty, European Union, Brexit

1. Introduction

The concept of sovereignty has been a controversial topic in political science for decades. A state's sovereignty is its capacity to govern its affairs without interference from abroad. After the Second World War, the European Union (EU) was established to promote economic success, stability, and peace among its member states. From the EU's founding, its members have sought to strike a balance between sharing sovereignty and preserving their sovereignty. EU member state sovereignty exists in the evolution of the European Union itself. The EU was founded on the principles of economic integration and political cooperation among its member states. Member states have had to give up some of their decision-making authority to supranational organizations like the European Commission, European Parliament, and European Court of Justice as a result of this integration [1]. However, this has created tensions among member states over the issue of balancing their sovereignty, with some sense that their ability to govern their affairs has been eroded by the EU.

Sovereignty is a fundamental concept in political science, and scholars have debated the extent to which states can truly maintain their sovereignty in an interconnected world. The concept of "shared sovereignty" has emerged as a potential solution to this problem, with states sharing certain decision-making powers to achieve common goals while still retaining their sovereignty. Theories such as neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism have been used to explain the complex relationship between member states and the supranational EU institutions. Neofunctionalism posits that integration in one policy area will lead to spill-over effects, causing further integration in other areas [2], while intergovernmentalism emphasizes the continued dominance of member state interests in the EU decision-

making process [3]. These theoretical frameworks provide a lens through which to analyze the extent to which EU member states can achieve sovereignty.

Case studies can be a useful research method for exploring this topic. This method involves analyzing specific examples of EU member states' interactions with the EU organizations in order to gain insight into the broader question. For instance, the case study of the United Kingdom's choice of leaving the EU, known as "Brexit", provides an example of a member state asserting its sovereignty by choosing to leave the EU in order to regain control over its decision-making processes. Through analyzing the various factors that led to the Brexit vote, such as concerns about immigration and loss of national identity, this case study can shed light on the factors that influence member states' decisions about sovereignty within the EU.

The essay is structured as follows. Firstly, this essay will provide background information on Brexit and the factors that led to the UK's choice of leaving the EU. This may include an overview of the Brexit vote, the arguments put forth by both sides of the debate, and the political and economic factors that played a role in the decision. Then, it will analyze how the UK's choice reflects an assertion of sovereignty. This involves examining how the EU limited the UK's decision-making power, and the UK's desire to regain control over issues such as immigration and trade. Additionally, it may be useful to explore how the EU responded to the UK's decision and the impact of Brexit on the balance of power within the EU. Lastly, discuss the implications of Brexit for other EU member states and their ability to achieve sovereignty within the EU. The essay will examine how other member states have responded to Brexit, as well as the broader result of Brexit for the future of the EU. Additionally, it may be useful to explore potential solutions for balancing member state sovereignty with the need for collective decision-making within the EU. This essay explores the extent to which EU member states can achieve sovereignty in the current political climate. Through analyzing the case study of Brexit and the various mechanisms in place for member-state decision-making, this essay will offer insight into the complex relationship between the EU and its member states in terms of sovereignty.

2. Sovereignty Boundary of EU Member States

The European Union (EU) was established to enhance economic growth, stability, and peace among its member nations. The EU has its roots in the post-World War II efforts of European leaders to establish a framework for cooperation and integration to avert conflicts in the future. Promoting economic unity and boosting economic interdependence among European nations was one of the main drivers behind the creation of the EU. By fostering shared economic interests and lowering the chance of trade barriers and other economic challenges, this was considered a method to avoid future conflicts. Additionally, the EU was also formed to promote political integration and cooperation among European countries [4]. This was seen as a way to increase political stability and prevent conflicts by creating a framework for cooperation and shared decision-making.

The promotion of social and cultural cohesion among European nations was another major driving force behind the founding of the EU. This was viewed as a means of fostering social and cultural exchange between nations as well as fostering a sense of shared identity and purpose among Europeans. The European Union's evolution has been a protracted, intricate process that has included several phases of enlargement and integration. The European Coal and Steel Community, which sought to advance economic cooperation among six Western European nations (Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom), was established in 1951, marking the beginning of the EU's original establishment. The European Economic Community established a single market and foster economic cooperation among its member nations, which was established in 1957 after that [5].

The EU has grown to expand its member states and deepened its integration in several sectors over time. For example, the common agricultural policy, the common foreign and security policy, and the single currency (euro) were all created as a result of this. One of the major milestones in the evolution of the EU was the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which created the European Union as we know it today. The Maastricht Treaty established the framework for a common foreign and security policy, as well as a justice and home affairs policy. The cooperation has also experienced several rounds of enlargement, with new member states joining the union in 1973, 1981, 1986, 1995, 2004, 2007, and 2013. The most recent enlargement in 2013 saw the accession of Croatia as the 28th member state of the EU [4].

The relationship between member states and the European Union (EU) is complex and multifaceted, characterized by a delicate balance of power and decision-making authority.

On one side, member states retain a significant degree of sovereignty and decision-making power, particularly in areas such as taxation, social policy, and national security. Member states also retain control over their national budgets and can veto certain decisions at the EU level. On the other side, the EU operates through a system of supranational institutions and decision-making processes, which involve pooling sovereignty and decision-making power at the EU level [6]. This means that member states must balance their national interests and priorities with the broader interests and objectives of the EU as a whole.

The relationship between member states and the EU is further complicated by the fact that the EU operates through a system of shared competencies, meaning that different areas of policy are governed by different levels of decision-making authority. For example, the EU has exclusive competence in areas such as trade policy and competition policy, while member states retain exclusive competence in areas such as national defense and taxation.

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3. How to Shape the Sovereign Boundaries of Different EU Countries

3.1. World War II Changed the International Landscape

World War II was a defining moment in the history of sovereignty, as it highlighted the limits of national sovereignty and the importance of international cooperation and coordination. One of the key factors that build the boundary of sovereignty in the consequences of World War II was the creation of the United Nations (UN). The UN was established to foster international peace and security, and it provided a framework for multilateral cooperation and decision-making that transcended national boundaries. Another important factor was the emergence of the concept of human rights, which placed constraints on the exercise of national sovereignty and highlights the

significance of individual rights and freedoms. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations back in 1948, established a set of principles that governments were expected to uphold, regardless of their national interests or priorities. The proliferation of nuclear weapons also played a significant role in building the boundary of sovereignty, as it highlighted the potential dangers of unchecked national sovereignty and the need for global cooperation and disarmament [7].

In summary, the experience of World War II led to a shift in the way that sovereignty was understood and exercised, with a greater emphasis on international cooperation, human rights, and global governance. While national sovereignty remains an important principle in international relations, it is now seen as being subject to a range of constraints and obligations that reflect the interconnected nature of the modern world.

3.2. The Need for Economic Development and Recovery

The concept of economic sovereignty refers to a nation's ability to control its economic policies and decision-making without external interference. However, several factors can limit a country's economic sovereignty. One such factor is globalization, which has created a highly interconnected global economy that is characterized by the free flow of goods, services, and capital across state borders. This has resulted in the emergence of a worldwide market, largely beyond the control of individual countries, limiting their ability to control their economic policies. Another factor that can limit economic sovereignty is the power of multinational corporations. These companies often have significant influence over the policies and practices of governments and can use their economic power to shape the regulatory environment in which they operate. International trade agreements can also have an impact on economic sovereignty. These agreements often require countries to make significant concessions to gain access to foreign markets, limiting their ability to set their economic policies and regulations [8].

Overall, economic sovereignty is also limited by the role of international institutions for instance the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These organizations have significant power over the global economy and can exert pressure on individual countries to conform to their policies and guidelines.

3.3. Impact of Geopolitics

The concept of sovereignty is closely tied to geography, as the physical borders of a nation-state are often seen as a key element of its sovereignty. However, several factors can limit a country's geographic sovereignty. One such factor is the presence of international borders, which can create tensions and disputes between neighboring countries. These borders can be a source of conflict and can limit a country's ability to exercise full control over its territory [6]. Another factor is the impact of environmental and natural disasters. These events can have significant impacts on a country's infrastructure, economy, and population, and can limit its ability to respond and recover promptly. Climate change is also an important factor that can limit a country's geographic sovereignty. Rising sea levels, changing weather patterns, and other environmental impacts can all have significant impacts on a country's territory and population and can require international cooperation and coordination to address.

The presence of international organizations and agreements can also limit a country's geographic sovereignty. These organizations and agreements often require countries to work together and make compromises to achieve common goals, which can limit a country's ability to exercise full control over its territory and resources.

3.4. The Pursuit of International Status

International status refers to a nation's standing in the international community and its ability to exercise influence and power on the global stage. Several factors can limit a country's international status and therefore its sovereignty. One important factor is military power. Countries with strong military capabilities are often seen as having greater international status and influence, as they can project power and defend their interests on the global stage. In contrast, countries with weak or outdated military capabilities may be seen as vulnerable or less influential. Another factor that can impact a country's international status is its level of economic development. As a result of the ability to influence others and advance their interests, nations with solid economies and significant levels of trade and investment are frequently regarded as having a greater influence on the global stage. International organizations and treaties can also impact a country's international status. Membership in organizations such as the UN, NATO, and the EU can provide countries with greater influence and legitimacy in the international community, while exclusion or rejection from these organizations can limit a country's international status [9].

Finally, a country's level of diplomatic engagement and cooperation with other nations can impact its international status and influence. Diplomatic relations and alliances can provide countries with access to resources and support, while tensions and conflicts with other nations can limit a country's ability to pursue its interests and exercise its sovereignty.

4. What Influences the Boundary Definition of National Sovereignty in Regional Alliances

4.1. Historical Factor

Regional alliances, such as the European Union, have become increasingly important in the modern era, with member states often sacrificing some level of sovereignty in order to gain the benefits of greater economic, political, and social cooperation. However, historical factors can form resistance to such alliances, particularly if member states perceive them as a threat to their sovereignty.

One key historical factor is the extent to which member states share a joint cultural, geographical, religious, or historical basis. If member states have strong historical ties and a shared cultural identity, they may be more willing to cooperate and share sovereignty within a regional alliance. However, if member states have a history of conflict or mistrust, this can create resistance to the concept of giving up sovereignty to a bigger alliance.

The example of the United Kingdom and Brexit provides a case in point. The UK has a long and complex history with the rest of Europe, including both cooperation and conflict. While the UK was a founding member of the European Economic Community in 1973, has always been a strong current of Euroscepticism within the country. In particular, the idea of "taking back control" from the EU was a key factor in the Brexit campaign, with many Britons feeling that their sovereignty was being eroded by the EU's regulatory framework and the free movement of people [10].

Generally, historical factors act as a crucial role in shaping the sovereign boundaries of geographical alliance member states. The case of the UK and Brexit highlights how historical factors can form significant barriers to cooperation within a regional alliance, and underscores the importance of understanding historical dynamics when examining the relationship between sovereignty and regional alliances.

4.2. Economic Factor

Economic factors are another key influence on the sovereign boundaries of regional alliance member states. Globalization and the increasing interdependence of economies around the world have made it more difficult for countries to maintain full sovereignty over their economic policies, and regional

alliances can be seen as a way to pool resources and gain greater economic power. However, this can also create resistance to regional alliances, particularly if member states feel that they are giving up too much sovereignty in exchange for economic benefits.

The example of the United Kingdom and Brexit again provides a useful case study. One of the key arguments in favor of remaining in the EU was the economic benefits to access to the single market and the ability to reach a compromise to trade deals as a bloc. However, many Brexit supporters argued that the EU's regulations and bureaucratic structure were holding back the UK's economic growth and that departing from the European Union would allow the United Kingdom to obtain more control over its economic policies.

At the same time, the economic realities of Brexit have been complex and difficult to predict. The UK has struggled to negotiate favorable trade deals with other countries, and many businesses have faced significant challenges as a result of new trade barriers and regulatory changes [11]. Meanwhile, the EU has continued to grow and develop, with member states cooperating more closely in areas such as trade and investment.

The influence of globalization and the desire for economic development can push member states to join regional alliances and share sovereignty, but this can also create resistance if member states feel that they are giving up too much control. The case of the UK and Brexit illustrates how economic factors can be a significant factor in debates over regional alliances and sovereignty, and underscores the importance of carefully weighing the costs and benefits of such alliances.

4.3. Political Factor

Political factors are also influential in shaping the sovereign boundaries of regional alliance member states. Differences in political regimes can create significant resistance to regional alliances, particularly if member states have different political systems or values.

The example of the United Kingdom and Brexit provides a useful case study for understanding the political factors that can influence the sovereign boundaries of regional alliance member states. One of the key issues in the Brexit debate was the perceived loss of sovereignty to the European Union, particularly in areas such as immigration and the regulation of financial markets. Many Brexit proponents contended that departing the EU would give the UK back control over its political framework and that the EU's political institutions were undemocratic and unaccountable.

At the same time, The EU has long been known for its steadfast support of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. These ethics have been a key factor in promoting cooperation and solidarity among member states, but they have also been a source of tension and resistance for some member states that do not share these values [12].

Political factors can be a significant influence on the sovereign boundaries of regional alliance member states. Differences in political regimes can create resistance to regional alliances, particularly if member states feel that their political systems or values are being threatened. The case of the UK and Brexit illustrates how political factors can be a significant factor in debates over regional alliances and sovereignty, and underscores the importance of carefully considering the political implications of such alliances.

5. Conclusions

The research on the factors that influence the sovereign boundaries of regional alliance member states has yielded several important insights. Firstly, historical, economic, political, and international status factors all play important roles in shaping these boundaries. Secondly, the Brexit case study has highlighted the complex and multifaceted nature of these factors, and how they can interact with each other to shape national and regional politics. Regarding the academic contribution of this research, it

sheds light on the challenges and opportunities associated with regional alliances. It shows that while these alliances can offer many benefits, such as increased economic integration and political cooperation, they can also face significant resistance and pushback from member states. As such, this research can help policymakers and scholars to better understand the dynamics of regional alliances and how they can be managed to maximize their benefits and minimize their drawbacks.

However, there is still much research to be done in this area. While the case of Brexit provides a useful lens through which to understand the factors that influence the sovereign boundaries of regional alliance member states, it is just one example. More research is needed to explore how these factors play out in different contexts, and how they interact with other factors such as domestic politics, geopolitical considerations, and public opinion. In addition, there is a need for more empirical research on the impact of regional alliances on member states, particularly in terms of economic and political outcomes.

This research on sovereign boundaries of regional alliance member states is an important area of inquiry with many insights and implications. Although there has been significant advancement, there is still considerable work to be done to completely comprehend this intricate and dynamic field.

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