European Integration and the Re-conceptualization of State Sovereignty: A Challenge for Neorealism[1]

George Koukoudakis

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the challenges that the political and constitutional development of European Union (EU) poses to the neo-realist paradigm. European integration constitutes a unique experiment in international integration and, especially since the mid-1980s, in large-scale polity-formation. Moreover, a "security community" in the sense of Deutsch has emerged among the component polities of the EU, something that comes in stark contrast to the Hobbesian view of international politics as an arena within which power-hungry states find themselves in constant competition with each other. Instead, the EU represents a unique exercise in peaceful voluntary integration and has played a crucial role in the transformation of the domestic orders of the component states, shaping their interests and behaviour, while contributing to a re-conceptualisation of state sovereignty. It thus challenges the explanatory power of state-centric neo-realism. Also, the building of a European polity challenges the unitary character of the state - an assumption underlying most realist premises - as questions of subnational representation and mobilisation are now part of the EU's system of governance. Hence, a multilevel polity has emerged in Europe characterised by complex patterns of interaction among state and non-state actors. The proposed study, by examining normative discourses on European polity-formation, challenges the analytical validity of the neo-realist paradigm and raises the question for new theoretical orientations in international relations of post bipolar Europe.

Keywords: *European Integration, Neorealism, European Union, State Sovereignty*

Introduction

The main aim of this article is to outline the challenges that European integration poses to the neorealist paradigm. Having first pointed out how neorealism explained European integration during the Cold War and what it predicted for its post Cold War future, this article argues that neorealism fails to explain European integration due to its inability to accept the re-conceptualization of state sovereignty within the EU. The study of

---

[1] This is an updated version of a paper entitled "European Integration and the Limits of the Neo-realist Paradigm" that was presented within the context of the 10th METU Conference on International Relations, "International Relations: Theory and Practice", June 15-17, 2011, METU Ankara.

policymaking within the EU indicates that a new kind of statehood has emerged that has contributed greatly to the maintenance of peace in post-Cold War Europe. As a result, a new theoretical orientation in security studies in particular and international relations in general is required. Within this context, European integration constitutes a direct challenge to the explanatory power of state-centric neorealism "which treats the sovereign state as an ontological given and draws from it the permanent condition of anarchy which must lead to self-help." As it will be argued, it is indeed this multilevel sovereignty sharing, a result of sixty years of integration, that has enabled the European Union to "avert anarchy" and conflict in the post-Cold War and create a post-sovereign system of governance.

In contrast to the assumption put forward by prominent neorealist scholars that a multipolar European security environment will be prone to conflict and instability,[2] international politics in Europe since the end of the Cold War, with the exception of the civil war in Yugoslavia, has actually been characterised by exactly the opposite. Integration among the members of the European Union (EU) has intensified and co-operation between the EU and the newly independent states in Central and Eastern Europe has been strengthened through economic aid and association and trade agreements which eventually lead to their accession to the Union. As a result, the EU is considered a stabilising force and the organisation due to its political and institutional development, most able to cope with the "new security threats" in the post- Cold War Europe.[3]

Neorealism presents European integration as a response to the bipolar system, which was characterised by superpower rivalry that emerged after the Second World War.[4] With the end of the Cold War; however, neorealists argued that further integration and co-operation among the EU member states will not be possible. European states would return to a condition of anarchy where mistrust would rein and the fear of imbalances in gains would made co-operation unlikely and conflict possible.[5] Contrary to neorealists" predictions; however, the European Community (EC) did not dissolve as soon after the end of Cold War. The progressive assignment of

---

[2]   See for example, Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security* (Vol. 25, No. 1, Summer 2000), pp. 5-41; Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics", *International Security* (Vol.18, No.2, 1993), pp. 44-77; Kenneth Waltz, "The New World Order", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (Vol. 15, No. 1, Summer 1990), pp. 187-196; John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future, Instability in Europe after the Cold War", *International Security* (Vol. 15, No. 1, Summer 1990), pp. 44-79.

[3]   Michael Kahl, "European Integration, European Security and the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe", *Journal of European Integration* (Vol. 20, Nos. 2-3, 1997), pp. 152-185.

[4]   Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 71.

[5]   Mearsheimer, op.cit. in note 2, pp. 47-48.

powers to Community institutions, at least until the beginning of 2000s, as this article aims to demonstrate, suggests that anarchy is not the main structural feature of international politics in this region and that states ascribe importance to international institutions in contrast to what neorealists argue.[6]

The neorealist explanation of European Integration

Neorealism assumes that states are sovereign unitary rational actors that interact in an anarchic international system characterised by zero-sum self –help competition. As a result, they draw a strict division between domestic and international politics and they do not attach any significance or any independent role to international institutions. International institutions are viewed by neorealists as mirrors of states" interests. As a consequence, states will not willingly surrender sovereignty to them.[7] Stone notes that: "neorealism is a theory of why, in international political society, the establishment of stable norms is either unlikely or impossible, why formal institutions do not develop meaningful autonomy, and therefore why a constitutional international regime is unimaginable."[8]

Neorealists argue that peace and stability in Cold War Europe was maintained thanks to the bipolarity between the two blocks and the existence of balance of power between them. The main concern of political and military leaders was to maintain this balance of power, mainly in military terms, as the only way to guarantee peace and stability. This is the explanation that neorealists give for the absence of a European war between 1945 and 1990.[9] Furthermore, for neorealists, given the realities of an

---

[6] Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security* (Vol. 25, No. 1, Summer 2000), pp. 5-41.

[7] The main representative of neo-realism or structural realism is considered to be Kenneth Waltz. His book *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979) is regarded as the cornerstone of neorealism. However, since 1979 two distinct trends have developed within neorealism, that of "aggressive" and "defensive" neorealism. This categorization is mostly due to Jack Snyder's work, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). John Mersheimer and Stephen Walt are some examples of "aggressive neorealists". See John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future, Instability in Europe after the Cold War", *International Security* (Vol. 15, No. 1, Summer 1990), pp. 5-56; Stephen Walt, "An Unnecessary War" (with John Mearsheimer), *Foreign Policy* 133 (January/February 2003), pp. 50-59; and Stephen Walt, "The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition", in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (eds.), *Political Science: State of the Discipline III* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2002). Representatives of defensive neorealism are considered to be Robert Jervis, "Realism, Neo-liberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate", *International Security* (Vol. 24, Summer, 1999), pp. 42-63 and Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[8] Philip Stone, "What is a Supranational Constitution? An Essay in International Relations Theory", *Review of Politics* (Vol. 56, No. 3, Summer, 1994), p. 449.

[9] Mearsheimer, op.cit. in note 5, p. 6.

anarchic international system, a bipolar balance of power is a more stable power configuration than a multipolar one. "Uncertainties about who threatens whom, about who will oppose whom, and about who will gain or lose from the actions of other states accelerate as the number of states (or poles) increases."[10]

It follows that European integration during the Cold War was viewed "as a mechanism for interstate co-operation that fulfilled the survival imperatives of a group of western European states in the context of an emerging bipolar order".[11] Waltz alleges that the European great powers refrained from co-operating with each other in the interwar period (1919-1939) because they were afraid of asymmetrical gains. The uneven growth of power among states is perceived by neo-realists as one of the fundamental causes of war.[12] Bipolarity, Waltz argues, ended this problem of mistrust between the western European states. This is not to say that all impediments to co-operation were removed but that an important one was. The fear was that greater advantages for one would be translated into military force to be used against the others.[13] This can be attributed to the fact that "living in a superpower's shadow", Britain, France, Germany and Italy quickly realised that war among them would be pointless. This was justified on the grounds that the security of all of them came to depend ultimately on the policies of others rather than their own.[14] At the same time, neo-realism perceives European Integration as a state driven process. As a result, the claim for the erosion of state sovereignty within the context of this integration progress is not valid. "Without government decisions the Coal and Steel Community, The European Economic Community, and the European Union would not have emerged."[15]

For neorealists, the disintegration of the Warsaw pact and the resulting power vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe was perceived as a preamble to conflict and instability. They expected that the disappearance of super-power rivalry from Europe would make co-operation among the European states difficult since they would begin to view each other with greater fear and suspicion and they would worry about the imbalances in gains and the loss of autonomy resulting from integration. Consequently,

---

[10]   Waltz, op.cit. in note 4, p. 165. See also Kenneth Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World", *Daedalus* (Vol. 93, No. 3, 1964), pp. 881-902.
[11]   Ben Rosamond, *Theories of European Integration* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 133.
[12]   See for example, Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 94 and Joseph Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institution", *International Organization* (Vol. 42, August, 1988), p. 487.
[13]   See Waltz, op. cit. in note 10, pp. 881-902.
[14]   Waltz, op.cit. in note 4, pp. 70-71.
[15]   Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security* (Vol. 25, No. 1, Summer 2000), p. 52.

European integration would not move further.[16] As a result, Mearsheimer argues that with the end of the Cold War Europe would be multipolar, with four or five major European powers, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Russia, and several minor defining the system.[17]

The prospects, therefore, for major crises and war in Europe would be very likely to increase significantly.[18] Neither the EU, nor any other international institution nor the spread of democracy can avert this situation.[19] In contrast, the EU's rapprochement with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will be perceived by Russia as a relative gain and may foster an arms competition in the region. Neorealists reject the argument put forward since the end of the Cold War that peace can be maintained in a multipolar Europe on the basis of a more powerful EC/EU.[20] Institutions have minimal influence on state behavior and thus hold little promise for the promotion of stability in the post Cold-War world.[21] For them a "back to pre-Second World War period" is the most likely scenario for the future of European security.

The persistence of European integration in post-Cold war era and the limits of the   neorealist paradigm

In this section it will be argued that the intensification of European integration in the last two decades is a strong indication that neorealism has become obsolete due to its theoretical rigidity that prevents it from responding to changes. In particular, it will be suggested that neorealism failed to predict the future of European security due to its inability to take into account the changing nature of state sovereignty within the context of European integration.

In contrast to the neorealist predictions peace and stability was maintained in post-Cold War Europe, with the exception of the internal conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Co-operation between the EC/EU and the newly independent states has intensified and many of them applied for EU membership and eventually joined it.[22] Furthermore, the unification of

---

[16] Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics", *International Security* (Vol.18, No.2, 1993), p. 69.

[17] Mearsheimer, op.cit. in note 5, p. 7.

[18] Ibid., p. 6.

[19] Ibid., pp. 47-48.

[20] Ibid., pp.45-48.

[21] John Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions", *International Security* (Vol. 19, No. 3, 1994-1995), p. 7.

[22] For the Enlargement of the European Union see, Graham Avery and Fraser Cameron, *The Enlargement of the European Union* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press for the University Association for Contemporary European Studies, 1998) and   Charles Jenkins, *The Unification of Europe? An Analysis of EU Enlargement* (London: Centre for Reform, 2000)

Germany, contrary to neorealist expectations, did not have the destabilising effects on the continent that might have been expected due to the unequal increase of German power in relation to the other European states. Instead integration among the EC/EU members has been intensified as manifested in 1992 with the signing of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) or the Maastricht Treaty, with its subsequent amendment in 1997 the Amsterdam Treaty (AMT), in 2001 with the Nice Treaty and in 2010 with the Lisbon/Reform Treaty. Within this context it can also be claimed that as was the case back in the 1950s, the intensification of European integration at the beginning of the 1990s also served one of the basic aims of European Integration. To keep Germany under control by engaging it in a mutually reinforcing co-operation with the main European powers at the time. The fact that post-Cold War relations amongst the European countries have remained peaceful and open, and economic integration and institutionalised co-operation have actually expanded in very important areas has encouraged many scholars to present the EU as a stabilising force for the continent. Furthermore, the establishment of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) with its executive branch the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and the rapid reaction force, indicate that the EU has entered the realm of "high politics." Surely, the integration process had serious problems and setbacks like the constitutional Treaty and its rejection by the French and the Dutch voters in 2005. Overall, however, during the last 20 years, that followed the end of the Cold War, the steps forward are more than the setbacks. Even more, the EU is considered an international actor with great validity due mainly to its economic strength and influence in world affairs.[23]

As a result, European integration constitutes a direct challenge to the neorealist ability to explain international politics in post-Cold War Europe and direct security studies in particular.[24] The successful negotiations of the various Treaties that have been mentioned above accompanied by the progressive transfer of traditional state powers to Community institutions, as it will be demonstrated in the following sections, suggest that anarchy is not the main feature of international politics in the region. Furthermore, the fact that EC/EU states have ascribed importance to international institutions despite the end of the Cold War bipolarity, which according to neorealist allowed European integration to survive, challenges the neorealist assumption that international institutions are not important and that states

---

[23]   Stelios Stavridis and Fernandez Sola, "Conceptualizing the EU as an International Actor after Enlargement, Constitutionalization and Militarization", Phd Programme on EU Studies www.unizar.es/union_europea, University of Zaragova, 2005, Accessed on 5 April, 2010.

[24]   For the critique that was raised against (neo) realism due to its theoretical weakness to predict the end of the Cold War and explain the peaceful transformation of the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, see Richard Lebow, "The Long Peace, the end of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism", *International Organization* (Vol. 48, No. 2, 1996), pp. 249-277.

are rational and unitary actors that avoid institutionalised relations. Neorealists would expect, as a result of the presence of a unified and powerful Germany, that other EC/EU states would have avoided further integration and co-operation with Germany and instead resorted to balancing behaviour since international institutions merely serve the interests of the most powerful states.[25] On the contrary all the EC members of the period accepted the unification of Germany. Furthermore, as Rosamond points out, "if anything the Maastricht process consolidated the hegemonic status of Germany within the EU."[26]

So why did neorealism miscalculate to such an extent the future of European security? The explanation is that neorealists do not attempt to entertain new or alternative interpretations of recent European events and political developments. On the contrary, by "treating the sovereign state as an ontological given they draw from it the permanent condition of anarchy which must lead to self-help facing the security dilemma and balance of power politics."[27] For Waltz "a state is sovereign means that that it decides for itself how will cope with its internal and external problems, including whether or not to seek assistance from others and doing so to limit its freedom by making commitments to them."[28] In this way neorealism presents the state as an integrated social order. Its foreign interests are constituted entirely internationally according to the structure of the international system without any reference to its internal system.[29] This perception of the nation-state dominated the security studies during the Cold War and it cleared the field for a purely interstate theory. If neorealists relax this assumption the coherence of their accounts of security and political action begins to fade. In other words, for neorealist the concept of sovereignty is unchangeable.

It is this theoretical rigidity that renders the neorealists unable to explain the endurance and intensification of European integration in post Cold War Europe and has prevented it from paying attention to the re-conceptualisation of state sovereignty as a result of sixty years of European integration. Werner and De Wilde note that: "it is hard to find a field where the end of the sovereign state has been more often proclaimed than in the field of European integration."[30] It is indeed this aspect of European integration that managed to keep the European states in peaceful co-

---

[25]   Waltz, op.cit. in note 2, pp. 18-20.
[26]   Rosamond, op.cit. in note 11, p. 134.
[27]   George Sorensen, 'An Analysis of Contemporary Statehood: Consequences for Conflict and Co-operation", *Review of International Studies* (Vol. 23, 1997), p. 255.
[28]   Waltz, op.cit. in note 4, p. 96.
[29]   Ibid. p. 97.
[30]   Wouter Werner and Jaap De Wilde, "The Endurance of Sovereignty", *European Journal of International Relations* (Vol. 7, No.3, 2001), p. 302.

existence and thus provide a point of reference for the newly independent states.

European integration and the re-conceptualisation of state sovereignty

Neorealism failed to explain the persistence of European integration in the post-Cold War era. This is due to its theoretical conservatism which prevented it from accepting the changes in the nature of state sovereignty within the EU. By studying the policy making within the EU, this section will show how this change in the perception of state sovereignty has taken place as a result of European integration.

European integration has resulted in a polycentric form of governance where state sovereignty is shared among national, supranational and subnational actors. The power of the nation-state is being simultaneously undermined from above by the process of European integration and from below by sub-national actors. Consequently, the political and constitutional development of the EU poses a direct challenge to the neorealist conception of state sovereignty that presents the nation-state as a unitary and rational actor and draws from it the permanent condition of anarchy and the separation between domestic and international politics.

At the supranational level, the introduction of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in the Council of Ministers with the signing of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986 means that a Member State may be outvoted over the enactment of legislation.[31] As a result it may have to apply legislation domestically that it did not support. Consequently, the decisions of an EU institution are capable of penetrating Member States' boundaries and being imposed on national institutions. Aspects of the sovereignty of the Member State have therefore been undermined. Since the signing of the SEA, the QMV has been extended to wider policy areas with the Treaty of Maastricht, the AMT, the Treaty of Nice and the Lisbon/Reform Treaty. Marks et.al argue that: "the most obvious constraint on the capacity of national government to determine outcomes in the EU is the decision rule of Qualified Majority Voting in the Council of Ministers for a range of issues from the internal market to trade, agriculture and the environment."[32] Policy areas, however, like defense, foreign policy, taxation and social security are administered by unanimous voting procedures where member states retain the right to veto the decision making procedure.

---

[31] For the powers and the role of the Council of Ministers see, Hayes-Renshaw and Helen Wallace, *The Council of Ministers* (London: Macmillan, 1996).

[32] Gareth Marks, et.al. *Governance in the EU* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 350.

The European Court of Justice's (ECJ) legal activism has further contributed to the undermining of state sovereignty.[33] Despite the fact that it is not mentioned in the founding Treaties of the Community the ECJ has established the principle of Supremacy of EC law over Member State's law (in Costa v. ENEL 6/64). This means that EC law takes precedence over any conflicting national law and that the parliaments of the Member States are not allowed to enact any legislation over a policy area that is covered by EC law. This implies a loss of national parliamentary sovereignty and as a result a loss of state sovereignty in favour of an EU institution. This is also manifested with the direct applicability of Community law. The ECJ in its Van Gend en Loos v. Nederland ruling (22/62) has established this principle as an integral aspect of EC law.[34] Direct effect means that citizens of a member state have rights under Community law that they can invoke against their state in a case of a breach of European Community law. In other words, the jurisprudence of the ECJ penetrates Member States boundaries and becomes the "law of the land". Furthermore, with the TEU the ECJ has acquired the power to impose fines on Member States that do not comply with Community law. In other words, the ECJ has also played a significant role in promoting and safeguarding the integration process and within this context in limiting member states sovereignty.

The neorealist account of sovereignty, which perceives the state as the ultimate authority within its territory, could not adapt to incorporate these developments. The neorealist perception of state's sovereignty as impervious cannot be upheld. Instead, an "international constitutionalisation" is taking place where international Treaties are becoming relevant for the individuals of the Member States as a part of a process of a wider polity formation.[35] The distinction between international and domestic politics has become blurred. This can be illustrated further with the role of the other supranational institutions of the EU and the emergence of European pressure groups.

The constantly increasing powers of the European Parliament (EP) have resulted in a complex inter-institutional system that does not permit Member States to pursue their national interests to the extent that they could if they were acting unilaterally.[36] Therefore they have to compromise their attitude in the Council. The introduction of co-decision with the TEU

---

[33] For the powers and the role of the European Court of Justice see, Renaud Dehouse, *The European Court of Justice* : *The Politics of Judicial Integration* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

[34] See Trevor Hartley, *The Foundations of European Community Law* (4th edition) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[35] Sorensen, op.cit. in note 27, p. 255.

[36] For the role and the powers of the European Parliament, see Julie Smith, *Europe's Elected Parliament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) and Francis Jacobs, et.al, *The European Parliament* (London: John Harper Publishing, 1995).

and its extension to other policy areas with the AMT, the Treaty of Nice and the Lisbon Reform Treaty highlights the important role of the EP over the enactment of legislation. In policy areas where co-decision applies the EP can block legislation if its proposals are not taken into account. A supranational institution therefore, although to a limited extent, can influence the enactment of legislation that has a direct applicability into the internal domain of the Member States.[37]

In addition the European Commission has emerged as the executive institution of the EU. Its monopoly over the initiation and drafting of legislation combined with its agenda setting powers render it the most powerful supranational institution of the EU.[38] The Commission together with the CM, where decisions over a wide area of issues as was stated above, are taking by QMV are deciding the enactment of all EC legislation. In other words, a supranational institution shares authority with an intergovernmental institution in such a way that no one can trace a predominant actor. As a result nation-state sovereignty is also undermined by this role of the European Commission since it can influence decisions that apply to the internal domain of the Member States.

At the same time, after the introduction of the Euro, the European Central Bank (ECB) has acquired the exclusive responsibility for monetary policy.[39] This means that decisions regarding monetary growth, interest rates and exchange rates vis-a-vis third currencies are not located in the Member States but in the ECB. This involved a dramatic shift of sovereignty from the Member States to a supranational authority.

Finally, policy making between supranational and intergovernmental institutions in the EU has resulted in the emergence of European pressure groups whose lobbying aims to influence decisions at an EU level in return for them granting EU institutions with valuable information and expertise. Some of the most important of them are: the Union of Industrial and Employers Confederation (UNICE), the Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES), the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT), the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the European Environment Bureau (EEB), the Migrants Forum and

---

[37]   Marks, op.cit. in note 32, p. 372.

[38]   For the role and the powers of the European Commission, see Michelle Cini, *The European Commission* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) and Jeoffrey Edwards and David Spence (eds.) (2nd edition), *The European Commission* (London: Longman/Cartermill, 1997).

[39]   See Hugo Kaufmann, "The Importance of Being Independent: Central Bank Independence and the European System of Central Banks", in Caroline Rhodes and Sonia Mazey (eds.), *The State of the European Union* (London: Longman, 1995).

many other.[40] Nation-state sovereignty is again undermined given that those European pressure groups influence decisions that can apply on a national level.[41] Hence, European integration has resulted in institution building on an EU level that has caused the erosion of nation state sovereignty.

The sharing of state sovereignty with subnational actors

In addition to being undermined by supranational institutions state sovereignty has also been undermined on a sub-national level. This is shown by the study of the cohesion policy of the EU. "Cohesion policy refers to the set of activities, aimed at the reduction of regional and social disparities in the European Union".[42] Cohesion funds have always been in existence in the EU but in a minimalist way. The EC used to give money to national governments to spend them in the regions. As Hooghe notes, Jacques Delors launched the cohesion concept in 1986 as the counterpart of the free market. Cohesion had several rationales. "It summarised a novel policy rational to deal more effectively with the old problem of regional economic disparities, but it also held a political promise to involve subnational actors more openly in European decision-making."[43]

Dramatic reform came in 1988. The main change was the introduction of the principle of partnership. Partnership "refers to a set of rules and procedures which prescribe that the European Commission, national authorities and subnational authorities collaborate closely and continually in the design and implementation of EU-funded programs."[44] In other words, "partnership became the central guiding principle in this policy area."[45] It can therefore be argued that EU cohesion policy elevates subnational authorities in being co-actors in cohesion policy implementation. As a result, there is an equality of the actors involved in the formulation and implementation of cohesion policy. Thus, despite neorealist argument that European Integration is a state-driven process the analysis of the cohesion policy that follows demonstrates a completely different situation.

---

[40] See Justin Greenwood, et.al. (eds.), *Organized Interests and the European Community* (London: Sage, 1993).

[41] Elizabeth Bomberg and John Peterson, "European Union Decision–Making: the Role of Subnational Authorities", *Political Studies* (Vol. 46, 1998), pp. 219-235.

[42] Liesbet Hooghe, *Cohesion Policy and European Integration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 3.

[43] Ibid., p. 89.

[44] Ibid., p. 2; see also Mark Pollack, "Regional Actors in an International Play: The Making and Implementation of EC Structural Policy", in Caroline Rhodes and Sonia Mazey (eds.), *The State of the European Union, Vol. 3* (London: Longman, 1995).

[45] Simon Hix, *The Political System of the European Union* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), p. 199.

The Commission's role is crucial in all stages of the implementation of cohesion policy. The EC negotiates the annual amount of funds to each Member State with national administrators. It also provides guidelines and advice by being in constant contact with national and subnational administrators. Nation-state institutions are also important to deliver the funds to the subnational actors but also to negotiate the budget and enact the relevant regulations. Subnational actors are crucial in the final implementation of the policy but also in its conception since they provide expertise and valuable information for local issues. Thus an interdependence relation emerges between the three actors that result in the formation of policy networks.[46]

The TEU recognised the importance of the regions by establishing the Committee of the Regions (CoR). The CoR today consists of 344 members and is entitled to be consulted on a range of EC policies including public health, education and culture, trans-European networks as well as policies leading to economic and social cohesion. It is also able to make suggestions on policies or issues of regional importance. Its views and recommendations however are not binding. The CoR has not any veto powers however it concentrates valuable and important information for the implementation of cohesion policy.[47] It is consequently an integral part of the cohesion policy network. Hence, the CoR is another manifestation of the growing importance of regional sub-authorities and of the fact that such authorities can influence decision making which applies both on a supranational and national level.

The partnership principle has also encouraged the growth of Brussels information offices which represent subnational interests. These offices are trying to lobby the main participants in cohesion policy in order to take part in the cohesion policy network. This indicates the importance that subnational authorities attribute to the EU. There are more than one hundred such offices that exist at the moment.[48] In addition the TEU under article 146 allows a Member State to send subnational (or regional) Ministers to act as its delegate on the CM as long as they are authorized to commit the government of the Member State to certain policy decisions. In this way regional officials become national representatives when sitting in the Council. However subnational representatives from only a few Member States enjoy this privilege i.e. Germany and Belgium. Different constitutional structures between the Member States do not allow for uniformity

---

[46] Ibid., pp. 17-18.
[47] Michael Keating and Barry Jones, *Regions in the EU* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 295. See also Christopher Harvie, *The Rise of Regional Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[48] Bomberg and Petersen, op.cit. in note 41, pp. 228-229.

application of article 146.[49] Despite this, the growing importance of partnership is once again manifested.

Finally the TEU introduced the principle of subsidiarity (Art. 3b). This, much debated, principle can be seen as a possible way for the Community to bypass state executives in order to implement policy. The Article reads: "In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale and effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community."[50]

This shows that state sovereignty has been undermined by the cohesion policy since competencies are dispersed amongst national, supranational and subnational institutions. The EU partnership has bypassed state territory and has enabled subnational actors to become equal actors in the policy making process. At the same the cohesion policy has challenged the neo-realist thesis on relative gains given that some member states benefit more than others. The same of course goes for the Common Agricultural Policy (GAP) on which the EU spends more of its budget.

The emergence of a post- sovereign system of governance

Overall, it can be argued that European integration and subnational actors have undermined the power of the nation-state. On the one hand, at an EU level, nation state institutions have to co-operate and negotiate with supranational institutions and even follow their binding decisions. On the other hand, within the context of cohesion policy national institutions have to co-operate and negotiate with supranational and subnational institutions. This, however, does not imply the death of the nation-state. It is merely that the traditional perception of state sovereignty and the neorealist perception of state as a unified and rational actor no longer stands. The nation-state, by taking part in a multilevel form of governance, has voluntarily consented to share its power with supranational and subnational actors. This renders the EU a post-sovereign political entity and has important implications for the way EU member states behave towards each other.

In other words, this sovereignty sharing in the EU, resulting from the creation of institutions above the nation-state and the allocation of authority to subnational actors has established and consolidated co-operatively peaceful patterns through equal participation, common interest building and

---

[49] Ibid., p. 228.
[50] Dimitris Chryssochoou, *Theorising European Integration* (London: Sage, 2000), pp. 148-152.

a fair sharing of benefits. Furthermore, it has reduced conflict potential through the creation of policies with significant support services for poorer and less developed members.[51] In addition, this form of sovereignty sharing within the context of European integration has resulted in a complex network of interactions and socialisation at all levels that has contributed to the construction of a common civic identity. In other words, it has resulted in a security community in Karl Deutsch's terms, i.e. "a group of people that has become integrated to the point that there is a real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their dispute in some other way."[52]Sixty years of constructive peace in Europe is the best evidence of such a claim. Within this context, the current severe economic crisis in the Eurozone, contrary to past European experience, is bound to be resolved in a peaceful and mutually acceptable way. To put it in a different way, neorealist zero-sum calculations within the context of security dilemma that dominated European security studies in the past, does not seem to stand.

Conclusion

This article has tried to demonstrate that the political and constitutional development of European Integration poses a series of challenges to basic assumptions of neo realism. "In the context of the EU, states are achieving security and prosperity by incrementally eroding and forfeiting their sovereignty."[53] At the same time, the depth of interstate co-operation stands in stark contrast to neo-realists prescriptions of self-help and autarky with the aim of survival. "If structural theory is based on the assumption that survival is the primary goal of states, then drastic theoretical renovation will be required to make neo-realism relevant to the EU."[54] Alan Milward may be right in arguing that in its early conception European integration contributed significantly to the rescue of the nation state during the post Second World War reconstruction years,[55] but with the passage of time and especially since the mid-1980s European integration is coming very close in achieving its founding goals which have been set in the

---

[51] Robert Seidemann, "Perspectives for a New European Security Order after the End of the Cold War", *Journal of European Integration* (Vol. 14, Nos. 2-3, Winter/Spring 1991), pp. 115-116.

[52] Karl Deutsch, et.al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 5. For the concept of security community in the post-Cold War era, see mainly Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and George Koukoudakis, *Security Communities in the post-bipolar Era: The Transformation of European Experience to the Greek-Turkish Relations* (in Greek) (Athens: Papazisis, 2011).

[53] Simon Collard-Wexler, "Integration Under Anarchy: Neorealism and the European Union", *European Journal of International Relations* (Vol. 12, No. 3, 2006), p. 432.

[54] Ibid., p. 426.

[55] Allan Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation State* (London: Routledge, 1992).

preamble to the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. "To create by establishing an economic community the basis for a broader and deeper community among people long divided by bloody conflicts, and to lay the foundations for institutions which will give direction to a destiny henceforward shared."[56] Furthermore, neo- realist assumptions of relative gains as an impediment to co-operation do not seem to be valid in the context of European integration. Obviously, neo-realism is not theoretically equipped to acknowledge that sixty years of close co-operation entail not only geopolitical considerations but also a social learning process which has lead to normative change that has significantly altered the way in which international politics is conducted in Europe. As Adler and Barnett argue "social Learning explains why transactions and institutional actions can encourage the development of mutual trust and collective identity….and it also leads people to identify with those who were once on the other side of cognitive divide."[57] Within this context, "Neorealists may be right to stress the importance of the geopolitical context in the early stages of European Unity, and yet wrong in ignoring the degree to which both informal integration and successful institutionalization altered the dynamics of European International relations over the ensuing 50 (60) years."[58] For these reasons, international relations theory has to move beyond Cold War perceptions and incorporate multidisciplinary approaches that are able to encompass the changing nature of European international politics. The claim for "a Constructivist Turn in International Relations" theory seems more relevant today than ever before.[59]

---

[56] Preamble to the Treaty establishing the ECSC, Treaty of Paris, 18/04/1951.

[57] Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, "A Framework for the Study of Security Communities," in Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 45.

[58] Andrew Hurrel, "Explaining the Resurgence of Regionalism in World Politics", *Review of International Studies* (Vol. 21, No. 4, 1995), p. 358.

[59] Jeffrey Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory", *World Politics* (Vol. 50, No. 2, January 1998). For the Constructivist thesis see Emmanuel Adler, "Imagined Security Communities: Cognitive Regions in International Relations", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (Vol. 26, No. 2, 1997); Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Friendrich Victor Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms and Decisions on the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, "Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism", *European Journal of International Relations (*Vol. 4, No. 3, 1998); Nicholas Onuf, *A World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).