

BOOK REVIEW:**The European Union and The Return of The Nation State: Interdisciplinary European Studies****Editors**

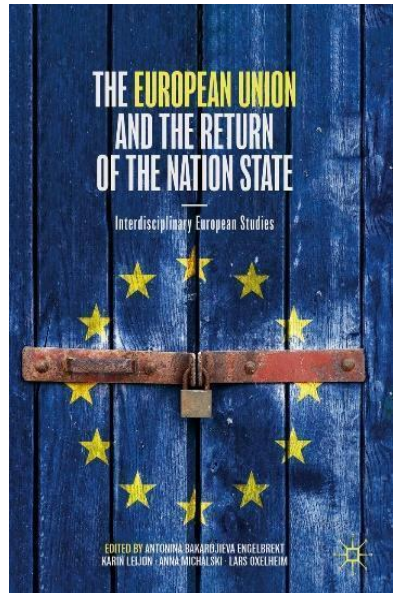
Bakardjieva Engelbrekt, A., Leijon, K., Michalski, A., Oxelheim, L.

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The relationship between the nation-state and the European Union (EU) has been a critical issue since the early 1950s when the first steps toward European integration were taken. In particular, the movement towards deeper integration has followed two distinct and partly contrary lines of development: increased supranationalism, in the form of greater powers for the Union; and intensified intergovernmentalism, in the form of greater reliance on common decisions by member states' governments. The EU has embraced both types of integration since its inception. However, this essentially natural and balancing relationship has recently been challenged by individual member states acting in their self-interest; and the foundations of European cooperation have been called more loudly into question.

In this context, the book, titled "The European Union and the Return of the Nation State", edited by Antonina Bakardjieva Engelbrekt, Karin Leijon, Anna Michalski, and Lars Oxelheim and published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2020, addresses and evaluates the relations between the EU and its member states concentrating on the problems experienced in the economic, political and legal realms. The book consists of 10 different chapters. The first chapter, titled "The EU, the Nation-State, and the Perennial Challenge to European Integration", is written by the editors to serve as an introduction. In the first chapter, looking

into some crises including the new populist movements, migration, Brexit, and economic nationalism, the authors question how the return of the nation-state is realized, based on the member states' gradually increasing "egoistic behavior" in several fields of politics, and whether this return is permanent for the EU. From this viewpoint, the other chapter within the book is based on a detailed analysis of the relations between the EU and member states through these fundamental questions and crises^o and discusses what the likely return of the nation-state means for economic and legal integration.

The second chapter of the book is written by Torbjörn Bergman and Magnus Blomgren on how the relations between the member states and the EU, distribution of power, and democratic functioning are supposed to be. The chapter, titled "The EU Hybrid: Incrementalism with Democracy?", is about the discussions as to the return of the nation-state, includes the discussions of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism over the economy, defense, migration, and social problems. The authors argue that the tension and conflict between these two traditional positions turned the EU into a hybrid regime. In addition to these two traditional positions and fields of politics, the authors focus on how the representatives of the member states see the relation between the EU institutions and member states. They include Charles Lindblom's (1959) "incrementalism" approach in their analysis as the third position and develop new approaches. Incrementalism, in this regard, means that the reforms are gradually applied in EU negotiations, and harmonization is based on willingness to some extent. The writers suggest that the EU can be seen as a hybrid regime. From this point on writers emphasize that considering the balance and sharing of power, a democratic model should be discussed, and, consistent opinions must be developed on how the EU's system and values function and how they can be protected. However, it must be noted that the association to be formed between the incrementalist approach and the EU's democratic values is disputable. Thus, the incremental position is a pragmatic approach, and these are important political outputs (Howlett and Migone, 2011). The prevailing opinion, on the other hand, associates democracy with the national identity, hierarchy, and accountability (Bergman and Damgaard 2000; Bergman and Strøm 2011).

In the chapter titled "When the Return of the Nation-State Undermines the Rule of Law: Poland, the EU, and Article 7 TEU", Andreas Moberg commentates whether the reforms pose a threat against the EU's values, based on the judicial reform initiated by the Polish government in fall 2015. The article starts with the definition of the tension between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism within the EU, with the author considering Poland's judicial reform as the return of the nation-state. He discusses the consequences of the first application of Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)

containing the provision for the suspension of a member state's voting right in the Council of Ministers in case that it breaches the Union's fundamental values. The author highlights that this application drew the EU towards supranationalism. However, he states that the Commission should refrain from using Article 7, which complicates the intergovernmental decision-making process. Thus, he suggests that solving these problems through the traditional supranational way-i.e., through the Court of Justice of the EU-would remove the confusion.

In the chapter titled "The Refugee Crisis and the Reinvigoration of the Nation-State: Does the European Union Have a Common Asylum Policy?", the migration crisis is discussed. Magnus Henrekson, Özge Öner, and Tino Sanandaji analyze what the possible responses to the crisis may be by the EU and its member states. It is detailed and set out with the data that the differences in the number of migrants who came to member states in 2019 were quite high and systematic, and argued that it is not reasonable to talk about a common migrant policy within the EU. The authors set out in detail that the member states are responsible for border controls, evaluating asylum applications, and regulating the rights to be enjoyed by migrants, and stated that the EU could contribute to the solution of the migrant crisis by protecting their borders, conducting rescue activities in the Mediterranean and providing third countries with aid. They argue that due to economic, political, and cultural differences, a common migrant policy would weaken the trust in the EU cooperation, and supranationalist attempts are not required in this field.

The next chapter is titled "Brexit and the Survival of the Union". The authors, Rikard Forslid and Sten Nyberg, analyze in detail how Brexit affected Europe's harmony. Before commentating on the chapter, it would be relevant to take into consideration that Brexit negotiations were ongoing while it was being written. The authors detail and present England's relationship with the EU by putting it in a historical perspective. They analyze the Brexit process in the context of four freedoms, trade, and migration as well as whether Brexit would set an example for the other member states. Also drawing attention to the different relations nourished between England and the EU in the historical process, the authors conclude that it would not set an example for the other member states in the context of the agreements, the challenging negotiation process, and the harmony of the Union. The authors emphasize the importance of acting sensitively to legitimate criticisms and clarifying the advantages of membership.

With the disclosure of the fact that multinational companies, including Apple, escape basic taxation through convenient agreements with the Irish tax authorities, the taxation system between the EU and its member states was brought up for discussion again. In this context, Cécile Brokelind studied how

the EU tried to solve the problem in her chapter titled “EU Tax Law and the Return of the Nation-State”. She analyzes how the opportunities that multinational companies are provided with by the globalizing world economy to reduce their tax liabilities by utilizing the differences among different countries’ tax systems changed member states’ taxation systems. Stating that in the beginning, the EU followed the model set forth by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), but later on, abandoned that approach with the regulations realized. The author also brings up the thesis that member states manage to defend through the EU their interests in protecting their corporate tax revenues, on the pretext of providing financing for welfare. When the taxation policies are considered in the context of the relationships between the EU institutions and member states, the author interprets the recently taken measures as the return of the nation-state. The author argues that these measures also strengthened the EU.

In his chapter titled “The Euro and the Nation-State that Never Disappeared: Would Europe Benefit from the Return of National Currencies?”, Fredrik N.G. Andersson analyzes the Euro’s current problems and uncertain future expectations after establishing that the problem regarding the Euro is not the return of the nation-state, but the fact that the nation-state has never disappeared, in the light of the Euro crisis and the developments experienced thereafter. The author brings up to the discussion the unwillingness of the states in the Eurozone to delegate their authorities over their economic policies stating that this led to an economic disintegration, pointing out that it made political cooperation even more difficult. Relying on the study he conducted with Sonja Opper in 2018, the author stated that the imbalances in the dates back to long ago, and this situation increased rather than reducing in the following process, and opened up a different discussion by suggesting disintegration of the Eurozone. The author finds on the Northern and Southern Europe distinction of the possibility of reduction in the social and economic pressures crumbling the hopes for cooperation. Furthermore, the author not only notes that it would be too expensive to do that in the short term but also concludes that Europe is a greater fact than Euro, and this situation would increase the likelihood of cooperation in the areas such as climate crisis, security and trade. However, even though the author states that leaving the Eurozone would be costly in the short run, the issue which the article does not address may be considered as the failure to conclude that the pressure put on the leaders by their societies and voters may conflict with the leaders’ and political elites’ short-term objectives.

In her chapter titled “Sanctions Against Individuals and the Rule of Law: Can the Member States Let the EU Decide?”, Jane Reichel analyzes how citizens’ legal rights are protected in the context of the direct effect and rule of the EU law. In her analysis, she asks whether respect for the rule of law and

fundamental rights is under either the EU's or its member states' guarantee in the case of imposing sanctions against individuals in the framework of EU law. The author delves into the association between EU rules and national constitutions and establishes that member states' compliance with EU rules is situational. Stating that since 2010 the EU has set more rules that directly affect persons, basing her argument on the negative reaction of the member states such as Hungary, the author concludes that the EU has to enact legislation that limits the exercise of public authority in the scope of EU law, to ensure the due legal process for individuals and companies.

In the chapter titled "Europeanisation and the Longevity of the Nation-State: Survival by Transformation?", Malin Stegmann McCallion analyzes how the EU and its member states affect each other based on the discussion as to whether differentiated integration may solve the problems experienced. She also scrutinizes the different strategies used by the member states to counterbalance the pressures of change from the EU. Considering that the member states veto the decisions at the Council of Ministers and that Hungary and Poland object to the relocation mechanism, she explains how common policies have been prevented. She concludes that although practices such as the EMU and Schengen are considered as good examples for differentiated integration, they pose the risk of reducing the transparency of the EU's political system. She underlines that it would be more difficult for citizens to identify how influential any member state is at the EU level or who is responsible for which citizens. In her view, additional differences among different member states would make European cooperation even more complex, and she suggests that member states must carefully choose the area to proceed in differentiated integration. Stating that politicians must avoid systematically blaming the Union for their own unpopular decisions, the author suggests that the leaders and political elites in member states need to focus on the content of the policy proposals instead, and, explain how they can influence the policies of the EU.

In the last chapter of the book titled "The Dream of the Nation-State: Is Regional Secessionism a Threat to European Integration?", Niklas Bremberg analyzes the relationship between regional secessionism and integration by considering politicians and citizens in some regions that intend to create their own nation-states. Reviewing the literature on regional secessionism, national independence, and integration since the 1990s, the author not only discusses the different ways to analyze the impact of European integration on regional secessionist movements but he also evaluates how EU law and enlargement policy can be applied. The author presents a comparative analysis of the cases of Scotland and Catalonia and draws attention to the political and normative difficulties that regional secessionist movements present for the EU. Lastly, he lists possible ways of dealing with the issues of regional secessionism within

the EU, such as the replacement of the Committee of the Regions by a “Council of the European Regions” or, as a radical alternative, constitutionalizing the right to secession in EU member states. However, considering that these alternatives might be rather hard (or even impossible) to realize, he then suggests that the Commission should “initiate a proposal to investigate the role of regions in the EU with the explicit purpose of studying the extent to which and how democratic governance in the EU would be enhanced if autonomous regions were given a more pronounced role in EU decision making” (p. 263).

To conclude, it can be argued that although many topics addressed in “The European Union and the Return of the Nation State” have been a subject of debate for years, it can be regarded as a valuable attempt to reveal that the tensions arising from the return of the nation-state cannot be ignored and to offer pragmatic ways of dealing with the problems caused by this return. The book argues that it is not a must to choose between intergovernmentalism or supranationalism and that setting democratic, legal, and economic principles can achieve a balance and reduce the risk of further disintegration within the EU. In this context, the common approach to the EU’s crises developed in this book makes a significant contribution to the literature. However, it must be noted that although the problems mentioned in the book are closely related to EU integration and the return of the nation-state, they arise from member states’ application of different policies. Coupled with the impact of the external environment, varying national interests make it rather difficult for the EU-27 to come together around common principles, especially over sensitive issues.

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