

Europe and Sovereignty: Realities, Limits and Projects

Colloquium – 29 September 2016 – Brussels/Egmont Palace, Salle orange

The major challenges facing Europeans today – the euro area crisis and other external challenges, notably the refugee crisis - before which they seem to be powerless, call for an exploration of the exercise of sovereignty at national and possibly sharing it at European level. It seems that these various challenges cannot be addressed in a fragmented manner. They need to be brought into perspective and tackled in a coordinated fashion. They all involve the Europeans' ability to stand united in the face of a series of crisis which they have to overcome.

Given the crises experienced by the European Union it has to strengthen its internal cohesion and continue integration of the euro area, not only from an economic but also from a political point of view. This is incidentally what is advocated in the “Five Presidents’ Report” presented to the European Council in June 2015 by Jean-Claude Juncker. The latter acknowledges that if the EU is to more than simply “survive” and for it to “prosper”, it will be necessary for Europeans to share sovereignty within common institutions based on mechanisms of legitimacy and sufficiently strong political responsibility. But beyond that the external political dimension also has to be addressed – as it is often and excessively disconnected from the imperatives of internal cohesion. Reviving the European project supposes responding to the following questions: “What are Europe’s common goals? Which public goods need common action? Of course this exploration goes beyond the single area of the economy, it also covers vital factors of power, technology, energy and even foreign policy and security. Public investments in these common goods are incidentally centralised in federations. In the European Union we are from achieving this. However we face the same challenges on an international level”¹.

For several centuries power has been associated with State sovereignty. It results from three levers: diplomacy, defence and the police. Diplomacy and war are the concern of the State *par excellence*, the heart of sovereignty, the expression of the “Westphalian” approach to international relations. As illustrated by France’s operations in Africa, the crisis between Russia and Ukraine and developments in Iranian politics, the Westphalian approach has not become totally irrelevant; however it seems that the power of European States in a globalised world is being chipped away from the bottom by regionalism and from the top by interdependence and the need for “critical mass”, if they are to have influence and protect their interests. However the concept of the State and its corollary, sovereignty, are a problem

¹ Benoît Coeuré, Member of the ECB’s Board of Directors in his speech at the Quai d’Orsay during the Ambassadors Conference, Paris, August 2015.

in European affairs: the European Union is not a State and the respective competences of the EU's Member States are the focus of discord in terms of their distribution. The European Union has grown on the basis that the Union would not be granted regalian missions² because the States protect their sovereignty. Hence, what room is there for a European power that has been trying to form the foundations of European political cooperation for over forty years and which has constantly developed new tools for action?

This confusion in political European vocabulary potentially leads to damaging misunderstandings. In the international arena it affects thought into the development of a European foreign and defence policy. But thought of this nature is necessary given the downturn in European security. To start debate on a clear basis the terms need to be clarified and developed. As an example, the analysis of the idea of influence – a key factor in the politics of power is inevitable. Beyond “a major federal leap”, which still seems out of reach for the time being within the EU, we need to move forward pragmatically and try to overcome the stumbling blocks that are preventing the EU from developing as an international player. How can this shared desire be brought about? On which jointly based strategy can we base our common interests? Is it possible to imagine the pooling of means to achieve the ensuing objectives? Etc. These questions are the focus of a seminar co-organised by the Egmont Institute, Eurodéfense and the Robert Schuman Foundation.

² From 1954 on France has refused with the rejection of the European Defence Community to form European Defence.

PROGRAMME

8.30-9.00 Registration

9.00-9.05 Welcome address: *Jo COELMONT, Senior Fellow, Egmont - Royal Institute for International Relations*

9.05-10.00 Introduction: *Michel BARNIER, Defense Adviser of the President of the European Commission and Klaus WELLE, Secretary General of the European Parliament*

10.00-11.30 Round Table 1: Sovereignty, power, influence: what does this mean in the 21st century?

Moderator: Jean-Paul PERRUCHE, EuroDéfense-France, former DG EUMS

Pierre VERCAUTEREN, Professor, UCL Mons

Maxime LEFEBVRE, Ambassador, Professor, Sciences Po

Giovanni GREVI, Senior Fellow, European Policy Centre

11.30-12.00 Coffee / Break

12.00-13.30 Round Table 2: National Powers and European Influence: how can these be articulated? How can the EU become an emerging power?

Moderator : Jean-Dominique GIULIANI, Chair of the Schuman Foundation

Pierre VIMONT, Associate Fellow at Carnegie Europe, Former Secretary-General at the EEAS

Rosa BALFOUR, Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States

Pedro SERRANO, Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and crisis response/EEAS