

FROM THE EUROPEAN IDEA TO THE EUROPEAN UNION. INTEGRATION AND FEDERALIZATION

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Abstract. The process of integration and federalisation in a Europe beaten by wars and a long queue of theoretical debates regarding the path to follow known generically as the “European Idea” represented the only solution to exit the crisis generated by the Second World War, the integration representing a process of adopting some common values and leadership, a confederation of multi-ethnic states that can cover great geographical regions. Federalism is founded on European culture, on its profound unity and its rich diversity, as well as its common values, democratic principles and human rights. In many different ways, it lends itself to particular forms of organization and the means of functioning of democratic societies.

Keywords: integration, federalisation, European construction, unity, internal market, customs union

Introduction

It is very difficult to identify the different stages of the European construction. It is necessary to ask ourselves questions regarding the turning points of this construction after 1945. “From Stettin in the Baltic Sea to Trieste in the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended over the Continent” - Winston Churchill, March 5, 1946 (the Fulton speech). This phrase resumed for a long time a European geography that was rather political than natural as the notion of Europe was identified only with Western Europe, which was capitalist and democratic. The rest of Europe was named through terms without geographical connotation: the Eastern countries or the popular democracies as if these countries were excluded from the European continent because of their political belonging to the Communist bloc. So, their re-integration in the line of democracies at the end of the ‘80s was translated especially by the modification of their names which reflected their re-introduction in the European geography: the states from Central, Eastern Europe and the Baltic States.

A great part of the European history took place during the ideological break East/West, period that ended on November 9, 1989, the historical end of the Cold War. After 1989, Europe’s political construction must be analysed as an attempt to

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find an answer specific to globalization under all its (economical, cultural, political) forms.

The turning point is represented, it seems, by December 1969, date at which the French government did no longer oppose Great Britain's adhesion to the European Communities: this date structures the period in two phases, the first one characterised by "the externality of Great Britain" in rapport with the European construction, and the second one by its integration in the European Community. The waves of extension that followed (Greece, Spain, Portugal) represent a precocious manifestation of the end of the Cold War or, at least, we are allowed to analyse them as first signs of the defrosting. In fact, it was about the integration within the European Economic Community of some ex-dictatorships, of some authoritarian regimes whose legitimacy was based on the fight against Communism and whose re-integration along with the democracies was eased by the calming of the relations between East and West. The period is marked by a certain stability, especially in the eve of the falling of Berlin Wall.

Federalism has always been a point of reference and a source of inspiration for European construction. Many European politicians, from Robert Schuman to Joschka Fischer, have called for the development of a federal form of organisation for Europe. However, rarely has a concept been so little known: in old nation states like Great Britain or France, federalism often evokes the threat of extreme centralisation even though this form of political organisation is based on a desire to preserve the autonomy and the diversity of the federated entities. In order to fuel the debate on the future of Europe, following the provisions of the Treaty of Nice, it was deemed appropriate to clarify the contribution of federalist thinking on European construction.

European Construction, Result of the Ideological Fight

The idea of European unity evolved towards integration on the basis of the tensions between East and West from the beginning of the Cold War. These tensions were expressed by Churchill in his speech from Fulton from March 5, 1946, and clearly expressed the separation created by "the Iron Curtain", by Stalin in his speech from February 9, 1946 that announced the return of the Soviet policy to the Comintern theses, by the Truman Doctrine from March 1947, announcing the Marshall Plan on June 5, 1947 and the creation of the Cominform as reaction to it in September 1947.

In February 1947, while Great Britain was declaring itself incapable of efficiently opposing the action of the Communists in Greece and help Turkey resist the Soviet pressures, "the Truman doctrine" announced by the new president of the United States on March 12, 1947 and ratified by the American Congress in May, consists in offering assistance, including military one, to the movements that were fighting for the independence of Greece and Turkey against Communists.

Also, within the "confinement" policy, whose aim was to oppose the extension of the Soviet zone of influence in Western Europe, general Marshall, advised by the under-secretaries Dean Acheson and William Clayton, decided to propose a plan of economic aid for Europe. On June 5, 1947, at Harvard University,

general Marshall, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, proposes a global financial aid from the United States of America for the recovery of the Europeans. The aid depends on the reunion of these states within an institution that had as task the collective handling of the aid (after the evaluation of the needs and actions that had to be taken) and the elaboration of a program of European reconstruction (“It is the Europeans’ job”).

The invitation addressed to all Europe’s states put the Soviets in front of the alternative to accept the Marshall Plan or to assume the responsibility of dividing Europe. On July 2, 1947, the Soviets refused to take part at the conference regarding the Marshall Plan. The reaction immediately prepared Europe’s scission. The Soviets’ refusal is explained by the fact that they considered the redressing plan a breach of the national sovereignty and were opposing to the idea that other states could also benefit from this help, except for Germany’s victims. The Soviet refusal also prepared the refusal of the satellite states, such as Czechoslovakia, which was obliged to step back despite its intention to accept.

The Marshall Plan becomes a purely “Western” operation. Even if it did not divide Europe, it revealed the profound break between the two Europe. The Western states were to organise themselves and together with the European Union, while the Soviet Union was to consolidate its control on Eastern Europe. In October 1947, the Cominform was created and in 1949 an economic cooperation is settled by the creation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.

Movements for Europe’s Unity

The strengthening of the ties between the countries of Western Europe was a consequence of the idea of protection and resistance against the Soviet danger. This new climate stimulated and promoted the European idea, so that in September 1949 at the University of Zurich, Winston Churchill gave his famous speech in which he proposed the recreation of the European family and a regional construction named “the United States of Europe” after mentioning the dangers that threatened Europe. This regional construction was restricted basically to the frontiers of Western Europe, the English leader having in view a union of the European states around France and Germany, Great Britain being excluded, having only the role of godfather together with the United States.

This speech is considered by many historians and journalists as being the point of departure of the European Union after the Second World War. As a consequence, The Union of European Federalists (UEF) was born in Paris in December 1946, then the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe, the European Parliamentary Union (of Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi) and others. The Council of Europe was making the first steps towards constituting a political Europe and it represents a regional political organization that appeared as expression of the preoccupations for Europe’s unity¹.

“The Coordination Committee” of the movements for Europe’s unity convoked a Europe Congress at Hague (May 7-10,1948) that reunited a great part of the pro-European movements, 800 personalities from 19 European countries amongst which 16 ex heads of governments, even a few representatives in exile of Eastern Europe. This congress presided by Winston Churchill, the most prestigious figure at that moment, allowed the pro-European movements to alert the public opinion and to put in front of it the European problem in all of its complexity. Denis de Rougemont, remarkable figure of the European Federalist Union, a high prestige intellectual, professor at the University of Geneva, founder of the Institute of European Studies will say “Message to the Europeans”. The famous man of letters, reminding the Europeans from the beginning that the threat was coming from the states’ impossibility to solve the problems with which they were dealing by themselves and the threat that unless a free-will union is set, the anarchy that was reigning in Europe would expose it to a forced unification, either by means of the intervention of an empire from outside, or by means of usurpation of a party from within. His message announced the principles that had to stay at the base of the United Europe: free movement of persons, ideas and goods, liberty of thinking, reunion and expression consecrated through a Charta of man’s rights, the free exercise of political opposition, a Court of Justice to apply the necessary sanctions for not respecting human rights and the constitution of a European Assembly formed from all living forces of all nations.

The Hague Congress was followed in the spring of 1949 by *the Conference of the Western European states* that adopted *The Status of the Council of Europe*², the headquarters of the organization being set at Strasbourg. This status, being an international multilateral treaty, was signed by the treaty’s 10 founding states: England, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden. The Council of Europe’s status came into effect on August 3, 1949.

Afterwards, other states from western and southern Europe also adhered at this status, becoming members of the Council. But, a period of somnolence, that could even have led towards extinction, followed the enthusiasm of the years from the beginning regarding the activity of the organization. The Council of Europe was, though, reactivated spectacularly after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Communist regimes from Eastern Europe, when it saw itself invested with a new mission: to help at the implementation of democracy in ex-Communist Europe and to check if it is realised by the adoption and respect of some rules that had already been checked. The acceptance of the ex-Communist states in the Council of Europe was equalized to allotting a true certificate of compliance with the principles of democracy³, and prepared these countries for the adhesion at the European Union. Reuniting almost all the states from the continent (47, at the end of 2009), the Council of Europe became today a pan-European organization⁴. Only now can we say about it

that it is “the organization in which all the European countries, attached to some democratic ideals, can find themselves again to examine in common any European matter.”⁵ The political, economic and social events from Europe’s life are the object of some profound discussions within the Council of Europe⁶. Regarding these matters, the Council adopts different acts and initiates the conclusion of some international conventions. Its broad competence makes it be regarded as “a sort of United Nations for Europe”, but it cannot deal with the problems of defence and it does not have institutions that are specialised on certain areas. Also, the cooperation within the Council of Europe is not ensured only at state level, it also has a parliamentary dimension, going even further, to the level of local and regional communities⁷. Romania is member of the Council of Europe from 1993, but it continued to be monitored until 1997.

The European Communities

In the inter-war period, *the idea of European unity*, launched by illuminated men, confident in a common destiny of the European people, stayed at the base of some daring initiatives and projects regarding the creation of the United States of Europe or Pan Europe⁸. Re-launched after the Second World War, in the context of the preoccupations linked to the reconstruction and future of the continent, the European idea spread fast, determining the birth of some political currents and movements for Europe’s unity that were to be unified in 1948 in a single and ample pan European movement. The Organization for European Economic Cooperation, Europe’s first common house, Western European Union and the Council of Europe, but also three European Economic Communities: the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or EURATOM) and the European Economic Community⁹ were created on this historical background.

The first community organization is the result of the French-German collaboration that found its expression in *Schuman Plan* through which France proposed the Federal Republic of Germany (ex-Western Germany) the unification of the coal and steel industries of the two states. This plan was also proposed to the other Western European states. It was initially accepted only by six Western European states that signed *The Treaty of Paris* in 1951 by which The European Coal and Steel Community was created. This treaty became effective on July 25, 1952, being concluded for a period of 50 years. The Treaty of Paris stated at Article 1 that the idea of realizing a common market for the industry of coal and steel of the member states stays at the base of the Community.

The European Atomic Energy Community was created on the basis of *The Treaty of Rome*, signed on March 25, 1957, and which became effective on January 1,

1958¹⁰. The European Economic Community was also created on the basis of *the Treaty of Rome* adopted on March 25, 1957 and that became effective on January 25, 1958. It is the most important and complex community of the three Western European communities, also known as *the Common Market*. The creation of an economic and monetary union would also be added through the Treaty of Maastricht regarding the creation of the European Union (that became effective on November 1, 1993) at the mission of the European Economic Community regarding the set of a common market. On this occasion, it's official name would be changed into the European Community.

At the beginning, the European Economic Community was formed of the six founding states of the Western European Communities. It knew, together with the other 2 communities, an increase of the number of members, as follows: England, Denmark and Ireland joined the founding members on January 2, 1973; Greece joined in 1981; and in 1986 Portugal and Spain joined the European Economic Community. After the creation of the European Union, the number of the members of the Community reached 15, by the adhesion of three other states on January 1, 1995: Austria, Sweden and Finland. "The wave of the 10" (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, Cyprus, Slovakia, Lithuania, Letonia and Malta) followed in 2004, completed with the adhesion of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

A Vision of the Federal Union

In order to fuel the debate on the future of Europe, following the provisions of the Treaty of Nice, it was deemed appropriate to clarify the contribution of federalist thinking on European construction. Dusan Sidjanski's work has the great merit of bringing up to date the multiple facets of this concept. It justifiably highlights how numerous aspects of the European institutional edifice belong to the federalist systems, whether through the adherence to community rules or via the quest for a balance between large and small states. It also highlights the range of these systems, which try to respond to relatively diverse functional necessities. At the risk of exaggeration, one is almost tempted to say that there are as many federalisms as there are federal systems. It appears to me that from this arises an important lesson for everyone who thinks or ponders about the future of Europe. A political undertaking without precedent, European construction calls for innovation: it cannot fit into any pre-existing mould, nor can it reproduce former ones. On the other hand, reflection can only benefit from a close analysis of the structures that have sought a synthesis between unity and diversity.

Federalism appears to be an appropriate counterweight to globalization and the most appropriate form of social organization, to assemble Europeans into a union that guarantees national, regional and local identities with the necessary interdependence and the affirmation of a European identity. Under a new heading of "governance on multiple levels" which takes into account the participation of many

actors, the formation of horizontal networks and the effects of communication, we find the essential traits of the federal method and a new federalism. As much as by its founding principles, as by its guiding principles and its flexible methods, federalism offers the possibility of creating synergies between two opposing poles of attraction: the trend towards globalization under pressure from the new technologies and the fascination of cultural, national, regional even local singularity; interdependence by solidarity according to the division of labour, which leads to continental regroupings as opposed to solidarity based on ethnic, national and cultural identities. Their development, according to the federal method, allies the major economic spheres with the diversity and richness of the countries and people in the Union which are underpinned by a web of solidarities, multiple loyalties and a sense of belonging.

The control of this complex world is rendered possible by the contributions of advanced communication technology and management. In light of past experiences, developments in the post-industrial world and the necessity to develop multinational areas, as a spirit, method and organisation of society, federalism seems to be promised a new role, as is witnessed by the European Union.

This new developing federalism is founded on European culture, on its profound unity and its rich diversity, as well as its common values, democratic principles and human rights. In many different ways it lends itself to particular forms of organization and the means of functioning of democratic societies.

The overview of the experiences of federal states and the analysis of the European Union expose both the common traits and the distance that must be covered before the Union can consolidate its democratic legitimacy, and increase its ability to act and to influence. The size and diversity of the Union make these steps difficult, especially as its core federator cannot yet ensure a dynamic equilibrium between the centre and the peripheries, between foreign and security policy and economic integration, and between converging and centrifugal forces. Two main reflections result: which group of avant-garde countries and which institutional core federator would lead to political integration and the formation of an original European federation? Referring to the first point, a certain convergence is emerging between the ideas of the avant-garde and the dynamic core, the centre of gravity and the heart of Europe, they are the pioneer group. Whatever the term, on the eve of enlargement there is a concern: which countries could form the dynamic core at the heart of the Union to ensure that it does not get dispersed into a too wide a market? The experiences of the formation of other federations are witness to the primordial role of the lead group to integrate the members of a developing federation. As of now, the question is to know which member countries of the Union would like to, and would be capable of, becoming part of the pioneer group. It is essential that they progress, whilst adhering to standards and common policies in the institutional framework of the Union. If the founding countries, together with those at the heart of the euro zone, all seem destined to take on the role of core federator, they must leave the door open to other members of the Union, and encourage their participation in this federal adventure.

Conclusion

Federalism has always been a point of reference and a source of inspiration for European construction. Many European politicians, from Robert Schuman to Joschka Fischer, have called for the development of a federal form of organisation for Europe. However, rarely has a concept been so little known: in old nation states like France, federalism often evokes the threat of extreme centralisation even though this form of political organisation is based on a desire to preserve the autonomy and the diversity of the federated entities¹.

Many states from the Western Europe were named Europe's parents or North-Atlantic Organization's parents during the last 20 years. None of them deserves this title. It belongs to Stalin. Without Stalin, his aggressive policy, the threat that he represented for the free world, the North-Atlantic Organization would have never seen daylight and the movement towards a united Europe, and including Germany would never have known its extraordinary success. In both cases, a reflex of defense was at the base of the two important accomplishments (Paul-Henri Spaak). Europe's construction is always identified with the unification of Western Europe. The community construction will find all the economic and political ways to allow it to be the common frame of development for all the states of Western Europe, one being able to recognize it in the plan of the market economy and the parliamentary democracy.

For a long time, our leaders' unpredictability regarding the events of 1989 will seem amazing. Nothing was anticipated: Germany's reunification perceived as a soft extension of the Community, the European Union launched by the Treaty of Maastricht with the single currency, "The quasi-end" of the European Free-Trade Association and the economic unification with the West. It seems that there were no fears from the geopolitical point of view regarding the event. Still, once passed abruptly from a closed system to an open one. The reasoning that prevailed at that moment is more about the post-war period than the one that followed to the Fall of the Berlin Wall. The Treaty of Maastricht is inscribed in the continuity of the Single Act and the community practice beginning with 1969. The extension from 1995 closes the cycle of the European unification of the states from Western Europe that began in 1973 with Great Britain, Denmark and Ireland's adhesion. The Treaty of Maastricht created the European Union based on three pillars: a community pillar (the first pillar) and two inter-governmental pillars (the second pillar and the third pillar). But the treaty states that "the Union disposes of a unique institutional frame". Today, the European Union renounces to try to solve the problems that divide it, as immigration, security and defense and the cooperation in solving them becomes rather bilaterally than centralized.

References

¹ Chivu, G., *Contemporary inter-state organizations* (Cluj Napoca: Argonaut Publishing House, 2002), 119.

² Published on the occasion of Romania's adherence in *the Official Monitor of Romania*, Part I, no. 238 from October 4, 1993.

³ Moreau Defarges, Ph., *Contemporary international organizations* (Iasi: The European Institute, 1998), 93.

⁴ Israel and Vatican take part at the Council's work but only having status of observatories. This status was also given to other countries outside the continent: USA (1995), Canada and Japan (1996).

⁵ Chivu, G., (2002), 120.

⁶ See Savu, D.V., *European integration* (Bucharest: "Oscar Print" Publishing House, 1996), 67 on the Council's objective, on domains and sectors of activity.

⁷ See Popescu, A., Jinga, I., *European and Euro-Atlantic organization*, (Bucharest: Lumina Lex Publish, 2001), 14. Also Berend, I.T., *The History of European Integration: A New Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 106.

⁸ Regarding the idea of European unity and its evolution in time, sustained with the presentation of some projects, speeches or documents, see Vese, V., Ivan, A.L., *The Treaty of Nice* (Cluj Napoca: Dacia Publishing House, 2001), 14-42. Also Horga, I., *European construction. Tradition, reality and perspective* (Oradea: The Publishing House of the University of Oradea, 1998), 24-33; Bibere, O., *The European Union between real and virtual* (Bucharest: ALL Educational Publishing House, 1999), 11-18; Ferreol, G., (ed.), *The Dictionary of the European Union* (Iasi: Polirom Publishing House, 2001), 126-127.

⁹ For the constitution of the 3 communities, their specificity and their community performances please see: Bari, I., *Global economy* (Bucharest: The Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, 1994), 153-175; Savu, D.V., (1996), 39-65; Vese, V., Ivan, A.L. (2001), 56-89; Chivu, G., (2002), 176-186.

¹⁰ The text of the Treaty of Rome can be found on the official Internet page of the European Union. http://europa.eu/index_ro.html, citet 25.09.2021.

¹¹ Berend, I.T., (2016), 68-69.