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A EUROPE OF REGIONS

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Claudio Scarpulla

A Europe of the Regions: Reality, Challenges and Perspectives 7

A thorough analysis of the concept of the Europe of the regions, the study necessarily starts off by assessing the pattern which has so far marked the European integration, namely the “Europe of the Nations”. It is only nation-states that have been able to shape the history of European integration since only they have had the right to make the commitments for the establishment of an international organization and they still are the main actors in the community’s policy-making. Nevertheless, European federalism and regionalism — a trend which has always doubled the nation-state trend, even if marginalised — is now gaining weight both in Western and Eastern Europe: nation-states themselves realize the advantages inherent in the project of a federal Europe and willfully, if not happily, are giving away ever more powers both to the subnational and to the supranational level.

There are three types of regionalism to be distinguished from one another: a cultural, a political-administrative, and an economic one. Cultural regionalism is based on existing distinct regional identities often reinforced by the existence of ethnic minorities and its counterpart in regionalisation mostly consists in devolution of autonomy to the region concerned. Political-administrative regionalism is aiming at achieving greater democracy and popular participation in public policies. While cultural regionalism requires regions to be bestowed certain legislative powers, political-administrative regionalism makes room for more flexibility in the adjusting of uniform rules to local situations and the wishes of the local community, its result being self-administration (regional communities remain more clearly subordinated to the powers retained by the central government than in the case of autonomy). The economic pattern of regionalism is aimed at the efficiency of public administration for the citizens’ sake and, according to this pattern, local and regional authorities should have effective powers in determining local taxation and expenditure in order to let local communities bear only the costs of the services of which they get the benefits, but these powers do not exclude the contextual competence of higher tiers of government whose involvement is necessary both politically (the principle of subsidiarity according to which not all public tasks may be carried out by local authorities) and economically (redistributive policies aimed at favouring the growth of less developed areas).

An important section of the study focusses on the changes in the constitutional structure of the UE members as influenced by the three patterns of regionalism and which display a great variety and unevenness due to their historical background and also to the model(s) they have opted for.

The main aim of a Europe of regions is to modify the institutional structure of the Union in order to allow a direct representation of the regions or, at least, their greater involvement in the European decision-making process. However, it is possible that obstacles may arise to the functioning of the Europe of regions either at the European level itself or by domestic constitutional arrangements, and outstanding among them is the widespread lack of authorization for the regional authorities to establish direct contacts with the European institutions.

The regions’ international activity has gradually developed from just cross-border cooperation to the idea of partnership, both vertical (between different tiers of government) and horizontal (between different regional authorities), finally leading to the evidence that a general forum for a comprehensive partnership among the European regions is needed.

Although the administrative structure and organization of the member states falls within the domain of domestic policy, it may be submitted that a real regional policy of the Union may in the long term produce a sort of voluntary harmonization of the internal structure of the member states. For the moment, however, this is no challenge to the

existence of the member states, since the decision for Europe to become a federation belongs to the member states themselves.

Mihai Chioveanu

Regionalism and National Ideology. The Case of “Greater Romania” 43

The study aims at reassessing — from a regionalist perspective — the role and position of interwar Romania within the projects of cooperation in this area and also of the debates generated by those projects. The end of the First World War brought about the establishment of new nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe; holding strong nationalist ideologies and turmoiled by antagonisms, they were reluctant towards any idea of regionalist and federalist structures, although such a pattern could have been able to strengthen both their political and economical position. In the case of Romania (which had just become Greater Romania) a fatal economic error was its cutting off all the traditional ties its newly acquired provinces have had within the states they had belonged to, and also the attempt to erase minorities' middle class. On the other hand, isolation in the region was doubled by a strong domestic centralisation. Even in the early '40s, when some of the countries in the region (Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia), under the impact of WWII break-out began considering federalist projects, Romania stood aloof — much of this attitude being characteristic for the present too, both in the political and the academic circles.

Éger György

Euroregions in the East and in the West 56

Setting out to survey the chronological and spatial development of euroregions which are one of the most effective and typical for cross-border cooperation, the author first gives a typological description of regionalism and then goes into details in analysing its transnational pattern (chosen from among the triad national/transnational/international). Employing the former Iron Curtain delimitation, the study provides both a history of the regional phenomena (richly illustrated) characteristic to each of the sides opposed till 1990, and the experiments in regional cooperation in the post-communist era (taking also into consideration euroregions which include both Western democracies and the newly emerging democracies in the Eastern Europe, with a special stress on the Hungarian example and of the Carpathians Euroregion). Depicting the historical and cultural background which urge neighbouring regions to associate, to institutionalise themselves, but also the (economic, financial, geopolitical, etc.) reasons for their coming into being, the study provides a useful blueprint of what European regionalisation means in these days.

Josef Langer

Cross-Border Networking of Business Organizations
in the Alps-Adriatic Region — How Is It in Southern Austria? 74

In the context of globalisation and European integration, regions are increasingly gaining weight although with certain differences between Western and Eastern Europe (within the latter the collapse of communism has to a great degree strengthened the nation state). As its title already discloses, the paper is devoted to one specific euroregion and especially to the aspect of business organisation cross-border networking. The author evidences both the differences between the regions participating in the Alps-Adriatic euroregion (Carinthia, Slovenia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia) and between these regions and the others within their respective countries. Economic and political-institutional contrasts (Carinthia being a state within federal Austria, Slovenia a sovereign state and Friuli-Venezia Giulia a region within decentralized Italy) as well as linguistic differences are all liable to make cross-border cooperation difficult, but the participants deem the effort worthwhile, the most advantaged and, consequently, the most active being business organisations (cultural, political and social organisations still remaining rather shy in cross-border cooperation).

ANALYSE

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Reason, Identity and Power 88

One of the central tensions in the organisation of power has been that between reason and identity. Rationalists reject any thought that power might accrue simply by identity while the champions of identity politics insist that reason alone cannot provide for all the contingencies in politics. The author argues that both are needed, that both citizenship (reason) and ethnicity (identity) are essential and interdependent aspects of political power and organisation. Once this mutuality is accepted, many of the conflicts in Europe can be understood more clearly and — as for the potential ones — prevented. However, the legacy of the past is still strong and there is a great reluctance on the part of the rationalists to accept that identity has a role to play. The role of identity has become more salient since the end of the Cold War, partly because the legitimacy contest between Marxism-Leninism and liberal democracy screened out alternatives, but there is an urgent need to admit that identity has a rationality of its own — cultural reproduction — and that it can constitute an authentic part of democratic politics in conjunction with the rationality of citizenship. The left in Western Europe has accepted identity politics as legitimate when the identity of the migrants is concerned, but only very reluctantly when historically established groups demand access to power on the basis of their identity. Assimilation and multiculturalism have posed serious problems in the post-war years and new solutions will have to be found after the collapse of communism. Finally, there are major gaps in the experience of the Western Europe and the post-communist world in the context of identity politics and these will influence the process of eastward enlargement of the European institutions.

CASE STUDY

Oláh Sándor

Romanian Assimilation in the Szeklerland

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The study examines the historic background to an ethnic conflict in a Szekler village — the forced construction of a Greek Catholic Church and its destruction in 1940-41 — in the light of the development of ethnic composition of the population. On the basis of historic sources, documents and personal memories the author describes how the Orthodox (later Greek Catholic) community, which arrived in the 16th century, lived with the majority unitarian Hungarian population. Using detailed registry data the author describes the whole process by which these people are gradually assimilated whilst being aware of their origins but losing their mother tongue. Within this slow and peaceful process, the forced re-Romanisation of the interwar period appears as but a brief episode.

As to what this all means in the lives of the village people, one can deduce a subtle picture from the interviews found at the end of the paper, conducted with Romanian descendants whose mother tongue is Hungarian and who have memories covering almost the whole era of the century.

TRANSYLVANIAN CONVERGENCIES

Peter Weber

From Kolozsvár to Cluj. The Last Episode of the Hungarian Regime
in the Transylvanian Capital

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The study is devoted to the events in 1918, when in the aftermath of the First World War, the province of Transylvania became a part of Romania. In the eighty years since, both Romanian and Hungarian historical discourse have been biased by overemotional approaches. As the case of the Cluj city evidences, the shift of political authorities took place neither smoothly, nor at once, just by virtue of the solemn Proclamation of Union with Romania. This shift was gradual: as the Hungarian local institutions waned, Romanian authorities strengthened, a certain confusion prevailing for the moment.

FACES OF EUROPE

Thomas Steensen

The Frisians in Schleswig-Holstein

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The study depicts the main features of the history, geography and culture of Northern Frisia, the close links and interdependence of these aspects, and also the influences exerted by Denmark and Germany along centuries. Northern Frisians have never established a state of their own and never strived to; their major political objective has

been to secure self-administration. The Frisian movement for the preservation and development of the distinct Frisian identity, initiated within the “awakening of the nations” in the 19th century and passed over to the present day, has pervaded the whole Frisian culture, but it is only now, in the context of the newly established European institutions, that it enjoys the status it deserves.

RESTITUTIO

Steliu Lambru

The Two Romanian Nations. Romanian Political Controversies
between 1865-1872 under the Habsburg Rule 176

The study contends that, during the Habsburg period, the political stand of Romanians in Transylvania was not monolithic as Romanian official history would have it. Although Romanian political leaders all strived for the emancipation of their people, the content and form of their activity was different, if not downright opposite. While one (deakist) trend favoured a civic understanding of the nation and, consequently, dismissed the idea of Transylvanian autonomy within the Empire, the other (nationalist) militated for the parliamentary representation on ethnic criteria and for separation. Both trends were mirrored, developed and reinforced by the papers of the time. In this context, the “Patria” newspaper furthered a consistent, moderate stand, considering as a solution for the Romanian minority rather a brotherhood of nations within the Empire than a separation from it.

ALTERA PARS

Szokoly Elek

”The Transylvanian Issue” between Mission,
Melancholy and Reality 194

The study is conceived as a response to the debate initiated (in a previous issue of the journal here) on the validity of Huntington’s geo-political theory for the Romanian space. Transylvania’s multicultural background, its supposedly superiority over other regions of Romania continues to be dealt with in two equally harmful ways: it is either deliberately ignored or unscrupulously put to political misuse. The author sets out by remarking the correspondence between the views held by the intellectuals participating in the debate and their placing “inside” or “outside” the province. After the collapse of communism, the long-suppressed differences of the countries in Eastern Europe have become more and more obvious, but their distance from Western values and European integration has increased or diminished according also to their very recent political development. Against this background, Transylvania, being traditionally closer to the Western set of values, could act as a tank-engine able to pull Romania into Europe, if only the province’s potentialities were not blocked by the centralised pattern of the country. But here other problems arise: is there a distinct Transylvanian regional identity still left after the communist levelling? is the Romanian majority/Hungarian minority reconciliation real and sustainable? is the political class committed to removing Romania from the “grey zone” to Europe? The constitutional framework is unlikely to produce a positive solution to such questions, being too stiff to allow borrowings from European models of devolution. Huntingtonian theory should be made justice to by viewing it not from a geographical perspective, but an axiological one, where Western ideas, even if not unanimously accepted in the world, still hold their universal value. On the other hand, this theory should not be perceived in an essentialist manner, reality is not given once and for all, but it constantly develops, and herein lies hope for Transylvania and, consequently, for Romania.

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The European Studies Series, published by Intellect Ltd., displays — both by the mosaic of themes depicted (the titles range from “English Language in Europe” to “Children and Propaganda” or “Food in European Literature”, for instance) and by the manner they are approached (unconventional but, nevertheless, thorough) — the variety of European voices in culture and their fruitful interaction.