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**The Integrative Process of the European Union from the Perspective of
Intra-Community Secessionist Movements**

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Abstract: The prospect of a fully integrated European Union and, equally, symmetrically developed from an economic point of view, is an ideal desiderate that will go through a long and totally uncertain course. If the accession of the states and the establishment of the European Union as a supranational state materialized in one way or another, the process of integration of these states is altogether different. This cultural and economic diversity must go through a broad interconnection and interdisciplinary process, a process that will take place according to the natural or artificial managers involved in this integrative construction. The natural factors are constituted from the empathy of nations to such a process and the artificial factors are characterized by community instruments developed for implementation throughout the European community. In this paper, we intend to give a point of view on the complexity of the European integration process of the Member States and also to address this process from the point of view of the secessionist movements, that have lately become very visible, from our perspective with very serious consequences on the stability and development of the Community framework. Even if the vast majority of secessionist formations are of a small size, their distribution throughout the European space makes this phenomenon a substantial one in the EU integration and development process.

Keywords: secessionist movements; European Union; European Community; Intra Community

Introduction

The idea of separatism or autonomy is not something new on the world stage, these forms of claim or desire of existing as a form of social organization is an even natural element, we could say, from the perspective of the socio-cultural unity of the communities. Therefore, it is not their existence that worries us, but their development and purpose which are important to be analyzed and understood.

At this point, in the European Union, relying on the idea that Britain will become an extra-EU state, we have a few extremely powerful national states and other national states that are in the process of developing or becoming emerging economies. Considering this point, we notice that in the definition of the above-mentioned artificial criteria, the most important actors are the extremely powerful national states, namely Germany, France, Italy, Spain, which in their turn, have historical problems with the secessionist factions. From the point of view of representativeness in the European Parliament, we can also bring to discussion Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic, which also have substantial representation in parliament and thus contribute to the decision-making process in the field of union policies in all its aspects. From both perspectives, strong economies and those with parliamentary

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representativeness on the basis of the population, we appreciate that the movements of regions that want autonomy are or can become an impediment in the process of European integration and development. In essence, these regions of those states claim an autonomy that would lead to the formation of new states, basically these regions will substitute completely the state they belong to.

The actions of Catalonia, region of Spain, up to now and even the continuation of efforts to declare itself an autonomous region within the Spanish state, is an eloquent example of secessionist action which, despite the arguments for a substantial contribution to the country's GDP and the lack of allocation of European Union funds to the region by the Spanish state does not have a solid correspondent in reality. The fact that the Spanish Government is trying to defuse the situation and allocates considerable funds to this region is not a measure to meet the objectives of the region, which gives rise to a completely different reality of achieving autonomy actions.

The Romanian journalist Bogdan Chiriac says: "For the last hundred years, Spain has seen Civil War, Franco's dictatorship and the Basque terrorism. Spain is a powerful state with a strong nation that has written a significant part of the world history. Considering how determined Madrid is, the secessionist movement in Catalonia has no chances. I have seen the attitude of the Prime Minister Rajoy, of the Parliament and His Majesty Felipe VI. Madrid seems to be willing to enter a long-term battle, as it happened with the Basque Country, rather than give up Catalonia. It is hard to anticipate whether in response Catalonia will develop a secessionist armed movement, after the former model of the terrorist groups in Spain and Northern Ireland. Anyway, the unrests can last for years, maybe decades, until the hot heads calm down."¹

At the level of the European Union, regions that develop movements for autonomy are spread throughout the continent, both in countries with a democratic tradition and in those in which the democratic exercise is in the process of being formed. Thus, as mentioned above, we can speak about the communities in Bornholm and the Faroe Islands (Denmark), Italy in Lombardy with 10 million inhabitants, 17% of the total, Venice (4.9 million, 8%), Sicily 8,25%), South Tyrol (511,000, 0,9%), Germany in Bavaria (12,9 million, 15,6%).

A description of these actions and an analysis of the importance of the European unity within the Union will be followed by our observation on the secessionist movement in Europe and on the effects these movements can have.

Content

The European Union's approach in the integration process aimed at interconnecting national states on all structural levels and started from values and principles that should naturally have played a liaison role in the integration process. However, the reality of this process is obviously much more complex and a number of variables have not been sufficiently analyzed or, better said, have been totally disregarded. It is precisely these variables that will make the European Union demonstrate that it follows the path of this desideratum called the European Community or not.

We can currently see an alarming increase in secessionist movements that argue their actions by the right to self-determination, which is not argued in real terms at all. A description of these movements can be described as follows:

Catalonia

¹ <https://trenulnostru.ro>.

The autonomous region of Spain has behind these movements a powerful conflict that has lasted for a long time, at this moment being at its peak. The moment of the economic crisis in 2008 increased the economic differences between the northern and southern regions of the country, thus activating the will of economic independence among a population of Catalans, whose region is one of the richest. The Spanish Constitutional Court also rejected the recognition of Catalan as the main language of regional administration and the so-called Catalan nationality was not recognized in political and governmental terms.

By placing the independents at the head of the region, led by Carles Puigdemont in 2015, a legal encounter was propagated with the Spanish Government on self-determination. The fact that, at this point, the measures taken by the Spanish authorities have somehow stabilized the situation does not mean that these issues have been resolved. Without a consistent and constant policy from the Spanish state, this move will continue to exist.

Scotland

After the Scottish National Party won a clear victory in 2011, the issue of Scotland's independence reappeared. In this direction, a referendum was held and it ended with a rejection of 55%. Scotland has been part of the United Kingdom since the Union Act of 1707 and had two referenda on the creation of its own Parliament in 1979 and 1997. With Brexit breakout and the failure of the Prime Minister, Theresa May, before the British Parliament, the last of March 12th, 2019, a new Scottish independence movement started spreading.

Corsica

In 2015, the Corsican nationalism reached a new stage, namely the winning of regional elections by the independents, a repeated aspect, just as in Catalonia's case. This great political achievement and the deployment of weapons by the Corsican National Liberation Front in June 2014 made the game more dangerous. Corsica wants its autonomy and thus, through this approach, it demonstrates the adaptability and diplomacy of the regional independence movements that are typically specific to state bodies.

Northern Italy

In 1991, the League of the North appeared, an organization that promoted Italian sovereignty with the aim of forming an autonomous region in northern Italy. Under these conditions, Padania would have brought together several territories around a Pad River meadow. At this time, several officials in the organization are supporting the idea of an economic alliance between several rich northern regions. Thus, we can observe the presence of the same fundamental elements of construction and coagulation of an autonomous space, but without absolutely necessary mechanisms of integration into the socio-economic state space.

The Szekler Land

In Romania, through the agitation produced by the Hungarian Democratic Alliance Party in Romania, an area in the centre of Transylvania claims its autonomy under the same argument of self-determination. In this situation we also have a strong involvement from Hungary, which ostensibly and regularly feeds every secessionist approach in the area. The position of the Romanian state is firm and unequivocal in accepting such a compromise.

The Féroé Islands

The Féroé is an archipelago of 50.000 inhabitants, which gained autonomy from Denmark in 1948. This region is under the control of Denmark, but the region is not considered to be a Member State of the Union. However, the region is part of the free movement agreement in the European space and Denmark is responsible for foreign affairs.

In the Balkan space, the pro-autonomous movements are found especially on the territory of the former Yugoslav state, which is also the most unpredictable and difficult to control. One of the most sensitive regions is Kosovo, but the Albanian or Macedonian claims should not be neglected. We can also talk about Moravia region of the Czech Republic and Silesia in Poland, based on the same argument, the principle of self-determination. The most representative case is that of Ukraine, which has lost Crimea and at this moment the Donbas and Mariopol regions are in the same critical situation.

All these regions, from different EU Member States or candidate countries for the European Union, reflect common features of the secessionist movement as well as similar policies in controlling these movements. In this sense, the common voice of the European Commission, through Presidents Jean-Claude Juncker, says: "If we allow Catalonia to separate - and this is not our job - then others will do the same. I do not want this", Juncker said in a speech at the University of Luxembourg, Reuters reports.

Juncker said he was "very worried" about the separatist tendencies in Europe and encouraged the Spanish central government head, Mariano Rajoy, to guarantee that the situation was to be under controlled.¹

The conclusion we can naturally draw is that, apart from a consolidated democracy, in which the individual rights are guaranteed, real and functional, autonomies of any nature lead to secession. In this situation, collective rights are proclaimed as the only solution and they are not and cannot be the guarantor of individual rights either. On the contrary, collective rights can cover and even replace individual rights, which are the essence of any democratic society.

We can also notice that the republics are less adapted to a regime of autonomies, because they have as their primary objective the ensurance of individual rights. It is the register of these rights that establishes the level of democracy, their observance being understood. Kingdoms, at least the European ones, are state formulas that accept territorial autonomies because they are based on the sovereignty of the crown, not on the sovereignty of the citizens. We see that Spain and the United Kingdom include different forms of territorial autonomy, but the level of democracy ensures that individual rights are guaranteed to such an extent that autonomies are only forms of decentralized administration. Catalonia case seems to be enlightening - the independence claimed by a political group, even in the name of a republican ideal, has proved to be unrealistic precisely as citizens' individual rights are provided in a satisfactory manner by the democratic system in operation.

We can see that the way from autonomy to secession is opened when democracy in that state is in distress. The lack of individual rights naturally require the claim of collective rights as a form of protection for the groups of citizens. That is why, consolidating democracy, ensuring individual rights for all citizens, without any discrimination, whether positive or negative, is the only solution to ensure the stability of the state in order to protect the society from adventurous political or extremist actions.²

The most interesting aspect of the integrative process that the European Union promotes and implements is found in the Member States' funding policy through the various programs made available, programs

¹ <http://www.ziare.com/europa/spania>.

² <https://www.punctulcritic.ro/eugen-uricaru>.

that are generally intended to be instruments designed to reduce social and economic disparities between the Member States or regions of Member States. Thus, we consider the financing mechanism insufficiently analyzed in terms of impact risks in the area of regional or national interest, which, not few times recently, has proved to coagulate or provoke certain separatist trends that are more meant to sustain an economic selfishness than to achieve the goals for which it was created. Obviously, against the background of a certain economic status of the regions, from our perspective it is erroneously demonstrated that in this open cooperation there are also hidden interests, even strategically thought, we could say. An economic and regional funding policy must be thought and analyzed much more deeply or should be designed to such an extent that the supply effects of subsequent secessionist tendencies cannot be taken into account.

The European Union's new concept of territorial cooperation, transposed into law by EU Regulation 1302/2013, describes and puts at hand a legal instrument which can be considered more than interesting. The fundamental aspect in our area of interest is that some secessionist interests can be materialized through a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, meaning that by using substantial financial resources and the legal instrument of coordination, one can create a delayed trigger mechanism which may endanger the socio-political or socio-economic stability of certain states or macro-regions.

Point 4 introduces Article 3a of the Regulation which states that: *2. A European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation may be made up of members located in the territory of a single Member State and one or more third countries neighbouring that Member State, including its outermost regions, in case the respective Member State considers that such an Economic Cross-border Cooperation Grouping is in line with the scope of its territorial cooperation in the context of cross-border or transnational cooperation or its bilateral relations with the third countries concerned.*¹

From our perspective, in the assiduous wish of the union to hurry the integrative process somehow, it is about to make some errors of analysis and implementation with unpredictable long-term effects. The overall objective of a territorial cooperation grouping is to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation with a view to strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion policy of the European Union. The analysis should be considered upon the way of constitution, but also upon the members of such a grouping, as they are transposed into the legislation.

A cooperative grouping may consist of partners from at least two Member States (or one Member State and one or more third countries) belonging to one or more of the following categories:

- Member States or authorities at national level;
- regional authorities;
- local authorities;
- public enterprises or bodies governed by public law;
- enterprises entrusted with the provision of services of general economic interest;
- national, regional or local authorities, bodies or enterprises from third countries (subject to specific conditions);
- associations composed of bodies belonging to one or more of these categories.

The European Territorial Cooperation Groupings have legal personality and are governed by a convention unanimously concluded by their members. They act on behalf of their members, which adopt

¹ <http://www.renascce.eu/documente>.

statutes by means of special conventions, setting out the organization and activities of the groupings. As a minimum requirement, a grouping must have two bodies: an assembly of its members' representatives and a board of directors, representing the group and acting on its behalf.

Conclusions

The complex integrative process through which the European Union passes has to be understood and sustained in its depth. This complex national and sectoral interconnection mechanism is often subject to pressures and variables that cannot be properly predicted or managed from the beginning. The cohesion and integration policy of the Member States is defined as a set of measures and actions aimed at ensuring the international balance but also the security of the European construction. Movements regarding the autonomy of regions or macro-regions should be taken into account as seriously as possible since the reality of this integration process demonstrates social behavioural characteristics that can become a source of instability or, moreover, a type of element triggering the start of movements promoting secession towards the national state.

The European Union must adopt clear macro-territorial and macroeconomic security mechanisms without prejudice to the security of the national member state. In our point of view, promoting some well-founded territorial integrity policies is the key to union's unity.

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