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A REVIEW OF REGIONALISM WITH THE EMPHASIS ON THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

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Abstract:

Economic, political, social and cultural integration is taking place in many different historical contexts. The world has experienced the effects of imperial regionalism, aggressive nationalism, and today's new regionalism. That is why regionalism must be considered from a wider historical perspective, through its various stages. This paper presents an overview of regionalism with an emphasis on Europe. The paper follows the most significant moments in the regionalization process.

Key words: regionalism, new regionalism, Europe, European Union

1. INTRODUCTION, Regionalism

Regionalism, in a number of scientific papers, can mostly be encountered as a phenomenon that arises after the World War II. Accordingly, regionalism emerged in Western Europe in the late 1940s and then expanded into other less developed countries. However, it is important to note that there are also scientific papers that also indicate the time of the empires. It is important to study the time of the empires because, in spite of the differences, in some peculiarities they resemble the modern regions, for example: the empire is multicultural, there are no fixed borders, and it alone represents a multilateral system, and so on. In the middle of the 17th century, the Westphalian Peace was a key turning point in the struggle for national sovereignty, as opposed to the imperial one. This struggle begins in the 15th century through the Jeanne d' Arc and the establishment of the first nation state, at a time when Louis XI¹ was in power in France. Today, most scholars agree that the nation state is the main constituent element of the contemporary international political system. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) is an important milestone in the history, marking the official start of the nation state and what is often called the Westphalian System of International Relations. The idea of Westphalia as a new type of political formation refers to the state as an institution that is autonomous from the imperial clamp. Westphalia, which actually ends the Thirty Years' War against the hegemonic power of the Roman

¹Beaudry, Pierre (2002) Peace of Westphalia: France's Defense of the Sovereign Nation, EIR, Volume 29, Number 46, USA.

Empire, delegitimizes the already diminished transnational role of the Catholic Church and confirms the idea that international relations should be guided by the balancing of power rather than by the ideals of Christianity.² But in Westphalia, first and foremost is the separation of the state from the church. This regional system is led by Europe: "European International Society".³ The Westphalian system first appears in Europe, but gradually expands around the world. Contemporary experts often refer to the Westphalian Peace as a major and important political event, which in the modern system has created the autonomous states. Of course, we should point out that the struggle to establish international rules that force leaders to care for their citizens in a certain way takes a long time. Over the centuries, only the emphasis and scope of protection of rights changed, which from the initial religious tolerance later transferred to minority rights, and later to human rights, etc.

The international economy in the 19th century is characterized by the fact that the hegemonic multilateral stability, with the center in the United Kingdom, has already reached its end due to the consequences of the Great Depression of 1873. The crisis was publicly announced in the First World War, and the international system faces its end somewhere in 1931, through the end of the Golden Standard, where the weakening of the pound is one of the direct consequences of the Great Depression of the 19th century. After the failure of the International Economic Conference in 1933⁴, it was finally understood that Britain could no longer play the role of hegemonic power, but also that the United States are still not ready to take on the role. The end of the long era of the self-regulated market and free trade was an international event. The US economic decline had enormous global impact. It undermined the possible economic boom. The international economy shifts from the open trade order and the very beginnings of international liberalization to the emergence of protectionism, discriminatory and regionalist imperialisms. The parallel crisis in the League of Nations⁵ fragile peace system, the failure of the first steps towards the creation of European unity, announced the end of the first attempt to build a modern multilateral security system capable of dealing with the challenges of the twentieth century.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, the world experienced tough times of economic and political "malicious regionalism," all as a result of attempts by Germany and Japan to become regional hegemonic forces. The military and fascist regimes of Japan and Germany replaced the former "paxBritannica"⁶, the bearer of the collateral balance of power, with new conflicts for regional domination, in Asia / Pacific and Europe, respectively, leading to the outbreak of World War II. Until then, despite the financial and economic strength, the United States could not take the place of the declining Great Britain as a hegemonic power in the international system. The post-war American hegemony was in the form of an accelerated path to more institutionalized multilateralism, whose domestic roots should be found in the New Deal model of regulated

² Krasner, S. D. (1999). *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

³ Watson, Adam (1992) *The evolution of international society*, Routledge, London.

⁴ The World Economic Conference of 1933 (or the London Monetary and Economic Conference) was a meeting of the main economic forces to coordinate the strategy to deal with the Great Depression. It happened in London from July 10 to July 28, 1933, but it collapsed after President Franklin D. Roosevelt said the United States would not agree with the main proposal. The European powers, especially France, proposed an emergency deal to stabilize the currencies under a gold standard. The head of the US Secretary of State's delegation Cornel Hul made a compromise on the stabilization of the US dollar, the British pound and the French franc.

⁵ The League of Nations (French: La Société des Nations) was an intergovernmental organization that was founded on January 10, 1920 as a result of the Paris Peace Conference, which ended the First World War. It was the first international inter-governmental organization with the main mission was to maintain world peace.

⁶ PaxBritannica is a period of relative peace between the great powers, during which the British Empire became a global hegemonic force and adopted the role of a "global policeman" (1815-1914).

capitalism. Despite the development of the global system, which has its center in European colonialism for four centuries, the main tendencies of globalization after World War II were no longer coming from Europe. The multilateral political and economic institutions from 1944/47 - the new monetary system based on the convertibility of the US dollar, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations, and so on - have provided an effective framework for overcoming the catastrophic instability of the interwar period. Between 1944 and 1947, these institutions attempted to include former as well as potential enemies.

The onset of the Cold War (1947) was a fundamental historical change, diminishing universalistic perspectives. The new type of multilateralism with the US in the center will be the basic architectural principle for international cooperation and growing interdependence for three decades. The dual purpose, the protection from the Soviet threat and the creation of a transatlantic community, made it possible to reconcile the interests and ideals of the US New Deal⁷, associating itself with peace, prosperity and democracy. This was typical of the new stable hegemonic international system.⁸ The second type of regionalism, economic regionalism, was formed during the 50s and 60s and was compatible with such American hegemonic stability and its vision of multilateralism.

There is no doubt that the collapse of the dollar as an international factor of stability undermined US hegemony, and also the idea of "trilateral" diplomacy in the capitalist world. Trilateral diplomacy refers to an idea promoted in the 1970s, that Western European countries, the United States and Japan share common interests as democracies and industrialized nations. The idea inspires the establishment of a Trilateral Commission⁹ to promote co-operation between the three regions in order to achieve common goals related to security, politics and economy. This commission, the famous Triad, including Japan, Europe and the United States, was supposed to save the former path of stability, but it only announced the forthcoming transition period. However, the question of the relationship between the US leadership and the new regionalism seems to be crucial in the new era of transition in the current international system. On the one hand, the scientific and public debate of the 1980s on the abolition of the role of the United States, although overstated, has since begun to speak of a "post-hegemonic" international system. On the other hand, the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the 9/11 consequences confirmed the strength of the tendency towards a single superpower.

2. REGIONALISM AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Although mainly of economic character, the initial intentions behind the first generation of regional agreements can also be long-term political intentions. This is the case with the European Community: the driving force between the idea of connecting the economies of France and Germany is security and the prevention of war, but the tool for achieving these goals was through economic integration. Particularly important was the regional integration of the European Community, which would have been unthinkable without taking into consideration the enormous influence of the American hegemony in the process. Old regionalism has its roots in the disastrous

⁷ NewDeal was a series of programs, public works projects, financial reforms and regulations passed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the US between 1933 and 1936. He responded to the needs for relief, reform and recovery from the Great Depression.

⁸ John Gerard Ruggie (1993) *Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations*, International Organization, Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 139-174 Published by: The MIT Press.

⁹ More: Brzezinski, Zbigniew (Oct., 1970), *America and Europe*, Journal Article, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 49, No. 1, pp. 11-30, Published by: Councilon Foreign Relations, USA.

experience of inter-war nationalism and the Second World War. It is therefore closely linked to the discussion of "regional integration" in Europe, especially in the formation of the European Community. Immediately after World War II there was a lot of discussion about European regionalism, not only in the direction of reconstruction and reconciliation between France and Germany, but also wider. The first step in the process of establishing the European Community was made by French Foreign Minister Robert Schumann. In a speech inspired by Jean Monnet, Schuman proposed France and Germany and all other European countries wishing to join them, to pool their resources for coal and steel. This economic integration plan required the development of cooperation between France and Germany, which would definitely end the war in Europe. A number of initiatives were launched, which resulted in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951¹⁰. The process was led and chaired by Jean Monnet, in the presence of: France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Luxembourg, which made up this first European community.

The same year, the French government proposed the creation of a European Defense Community (EDC)¹¹. This project was interrupted in 1954, when the French legislative assembly vetoed its application. It was concluded that economic integration was the only practical way towards a political union, which should be achieved after a long time. The failed attempts showed that the political and military union was still a utopian goal and difficult to accomplish. In the long run, the goal was more ambitious, and in 1957 / in force in 1958, through the two Treaties signed in Rome, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC)¹² were founded. The Rome Treaties marked the triumph of a very realistic and gradual approach to building the European Union. This method was personified by Jean Monnet. Economic co-operation and integration paved the way towards achieving the long-term goal of a political union.

The first plans for a European Regional Monetary Union (Werner Plan) began in 1969, although the single European currency was not established before 1999. At The Hague Summit on 1st and 2nd December 1969, the heads of the six member states decided to give a decisive impetus to the final phase of the common market. During the Summit, they adopted the principle of a European Economic and Monetary Union and ordered Pierre-Werner, the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, and the Minister of Finance to prepare more detailed proposals and to establish a phase-by-phase procedure. The interim version of the Werner Report was presented to the Council of Ministers on May 20th, 1970. The final report was submitted on October 8th, 1970, after consultation with the Committee of the Central Bank Governors of the European Economic Community (EEC). In this context, it is important to recognize that the dream of a united Europe has a long history with different intellectual roots. Many and various "early" visions and projects for European cooperation and unity were composed of different views on the importance of culture and identity, security, political economy, and law. Some ideas of the European unity were internally viewed and dealt with intra-European aspects, while others were perceptible and usually

¹⁰ The Treaty of Paris (formally the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community - the European Coal and Steel Community) was signed on 18 April 1951 between France, West Germany, Italy and the three Benelux countries (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was formed, which later became part of the European Union. The agreement came into force on July 23, 1952 and expired on July 23, 2002, exactly fifty years after it came into force.

¹¹ The Treaty establishing the European Defense Community, known as the Paris Treaty, is an unratified treaty signed on 27 May 1952 from six European countries: the Benelux countries, France, Italy and West Germany. The treaty was aimed at creating a European Defense Community (EDC) with pan-European defense forces. The treaty failed to get ratified in the French parliament and was never ratified by Italy, so it never entered into force.

¹² The European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) is an international organization established by the Euroat Treaty of 25 March 1957 with the primary objective of creating a specialized nuclear energy market in Europe.

dealt with the protection of Europe from the outside world. There are deep roots behind the many plans for European unity and integration that, after the end of World War II, led to the formation of European Communities (EC) and other regional projects in Europe.

The European Union (EU) is an ambitious project for international integration, which resulted in the creation of a vast geopolitical region. For such a group to exist, its numerous actors - local, regional, national, and supranational - must actively devote to the idea of integrating and unifying Europe. This assumes a great commitment to the European integration process itself, which is possible only if a European state shows economic interest and credible common values and commitments.

Today, the Westphalia system is challenged and transformed by a number of forces and events, but, at the same time, paradoxically, amplified by them. The most important changes are perhaps the changing nature of a constituent unit, a sovereign state combined with what is conventionally called globalization. Globalization is a concept in progress which denotes a continuous process of structural transformation with world implications. The process of globalization reaches a qualitatively new phase in the post-Cold War era. Economic interdependence is enabled by political stability after World War II and then increases during the Cold War. Since then, globalization has intensified further, which further enhances the transformation outside Westphalia. The current process of globalization implies a wider and deeper new type of regionalism. In the last twenty years the world has witnessed, in parallel with the boom in international trade and foreign investment, the simultaneous development or the revival of numerous and diverse regional arrangements and regional organizations.

3. THE NEW REGIONALISM

The 1970s and early 1980s is a period of "Euroscepticism" in Europe, but also in the rest of the world, and regionalism is in a state of oblivion. However, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the 1985 White Paper¹³, and the Single European Act¹⁴ of 1986 resulted in a new dynamic process of European integration. This is the beginning of what is called "new regionalism". The new regionalism brought a number of new trends and developments, such as: the increase in the number of regional trade agreements, externally oriented through the abandonment of the protectionist type of regionalism; an anti-hegemonic type of regionalism that emerged within the regions, rather than being controlled by the superpowers; the rise of a multidimensional and pluralistic type of regionalism; increased importance of many actors of the civil society in the process of regionalization. It is a "multidimensional form of integration that includes economic, political, social, and cultural aspects and thus goes beyond the goal of creating regional free trade regimes or security alliances. On the contrary, the political ambition for establishing regional coherence and identity seems to be of primary importance. The new regionalism implies close cross-sectorial ties, for example, trade and economy are not isolated from the rest of society. As a result, regionalism also includes non-economic issues, such as justice, security, environment, culture and identity. Mario Telò calls the new regionalism "post-hegemonic regionalism,"¹⁵ which appears in

¹³ On 14 June 1985, the European Commission submitted to the Council White Paper on Completion of the Internal Market, setting out a timetable for the measures needed to complete the Single Market by 31 December 1992 at the latest.

¹⁴ The Single European Act (SEA) - on February 17 and 28, 1986, in Luxembourg and The Hague, the foreign ministers of the twelve states signed the Single European Act.

¹⁵ More: Telò, Mario (2001) *European Union and new regionalism: regional actors and global governance in a post-hegemonic era*, Publisher Ashgate, USA.

a new and more turbulent world order. Not only did the collapse of the communist regimes end the Cold War and created a vast geographical zone of political uncertainty and instability, but it also created profound repercussions for the Westphalian system. A working paper of the most influential approaches, the new period of regionalism (NRA), claims that there are no "natural" regions, but they are made, processed - intentionally or unintentionally - in the process of global transformation by collective human action and identity formation.¹⁶ Regions are social constructions, none of them is "given", nor has it given regional interests, but interests and identities are shaped in the process of interaction and mutual understanding.

Until the emergence of the new regionalism, civil society is largely neglected in the study of regionalism. Now, regionalism scientists point to the increased importance and force of the regionalization of civil society in the world.¹⁷ Regionalization of the civil society has arisen for a number of different reasons, such as functional problem solving and service delivery, the need to overcome the structures and boundaries of individual national states, information sharing, and learning. The point is not that national civil societies have disappeared, but that they become intertwined on a regional basis and to some extent become integrated into a new global civil society.

One of the most significant events in the world economy for the past fifteen years is the sharp increase in the number of international economic integration agreements. Economic integration agreements are between economic units (between nations) in order to reduce barriers controlled by the flow of goods, services, capital, labored. Most, although not all such agreements, tend to be regional. According to the World Trade Organization, in 2006 there were about 300 regional trade agreements that were either planned in negotiations, or in force. GATT (signed by 23 countries in 1947) evolved over time and turned into a World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1993. The WTO presides over a rule-based trading system, based on norms that are almost universally accepted and respected by its 163 members. The last decade a virtual explosion occurred in the number of regional agreements.¹⁸ This is the new regionalism.

The most impressive proof of the trend towards regional associations based on common culture and traditions is the gradual tightening and geographical expansion of the European Community. This voluntary association of sovereign countries in the European community is acceptable because it brings economic and other advantages, which means that the area (state) is now only part of a much wider system. The European Union (EU), as a project for international integration, can be said to be a political model that challenges conventional governance assumptions and even sovereignty. The European Union (EU) is really a new thing. It is not a conventional international organization because its member states are now so intimately connected with each other that withdrawal is almost an impossible and not an easy option. The EU does not comply with the conventional rules of sovereignty. Its member states have created supranational institutions (the European Court of Justice, the European Commission and the Council of Ministers) that can make decisions against some member states. Judgments of the court have direct effect and authority in national judicial systems, although these doctrines have never been explicitly supported in any treaty. The European Monetary Union has created a Central Bank which now controls monetary affairs for three of the Union's four largest states. The Single

¹⁶ More: Björn Hettne & Fredrik Söderbaum (2008) *The Future of Regionalism: Old Divides, New Frontiers*, pp. 61 - 79, Publisher: Routledge.

¹⁷ Söderbaum, Fredrik (2007) *Regionalisation and Civil Society: The Case of Southern Africa*, Vol 12, No 3, 319 - 37, *New Political Economy*.

¹⁸ Baldwin, Richard (2016) *The World Trade Organization and the Future of Multilateralism*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives* — Volume 30, Number 1, Pages 95–116.

European Act and the Maastricht Treaty¹⁹ provide a majority or a qualified majority, but not a unanimous vote in some areas of concern. In one sense, the European Union is a product of the sovereignty of the state, since it was created through voluntary agreements between its member states. But in another sense, it is essentially inconsistent with the conventional understanding of sovereignty, since the same agreements undermined the legal autonomy of its individual members.

The initial steps towards integration could not have taken place without the political and economic support of the United States, which in the early years of the Cold War were much more interested in creating a strong alliance that could effectively resist the Soviet Union, which in any case was a potential European challenge for the US leadership. Germany, one of the largest states in the European Union, is the oldest consistent supporter of an institutional structure that will limit its own freedom of action to Berlin, which reflects lessons learned from two devastating wars and the attractiveness of the European identity to a country still struggling with the sins of the Nazi era. However, the European Union is not a model that other parts of the world can imitate. It is hard to imagine that other regional powers, such as China, Japan, and even less the United States, would have an interest in networking in similar ways. (Regional trade agreements, such as NAFTA, have very limited supranational provisions and show some signs of development in broader monetary or political unions.) The EU is a new and unique institutional structure. Of course, one of the largest proponents of the European Union, and especially of Europe as a region, is France. Due to the location of France and the open side in the part towards the North European Plain, France's main geographical challenge is to protect its eastern border on the path of this historic so-called road invasion. Of course, here are the threats to France coming from their powerful eastern neighbor, Germany. Between 1871 and 1945, France and Germany fought in three major wars - all in the Northern European Plain. After the Second World War, France tried to protect itself from Germany largely through the creation of the European Union. And today, the only one with an initiative and plan for Europe is President Macron.²⁰ On September 26th, 2017, in front of the students at the University of Sorbonne, President Macron presented his vision for the European project and proposed a series of ideas for the future of the EU, where he said: "The only way to ensure our future is the rebuilding of a sovereign, united and democratic Europe."

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the process of regionalism is constantly active and never finally set. According to the changes that have occurred over the years, via Westphalia, the shift of the primacy/ hegemony from the United Kingdom to the United States, etc., the European project and its emergence as a new major geopolitical actor, a new wave of regionalism may soon emerge. In fact, certain phenomena already announce this: Brexit, the rise of support for populists, enhanced migration movements, Trump, "the awakening" of China, etc. What is important to point out is that all countries in the world that are part of the international society insist or at least agree that as well as their predecessors, now and in the future, societies must take care of common principles and the existence of common values, not just for personal interests, all along with well-established rules and respect for the (multilateral) regulation by each country. And other countries in the world

¹⁹ The Treaty of Maastricht (officially the Treaty on European Union) was signed on February 7, 1992 by members of the European Community in Maastricht, the Netherlands, for further European integration: https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/treaty_on_european_union_en.pdf

²⁰ President Macron's Initiative for Europe: A sovereign, united, democratic Europe (26.09.17), link: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/european-union/events/article/president-macron-s-initiative-for-europe-a-sovereign-united-democratic-europe> .

outside the regions should strive to accept the "Western values", ethical standards, codes of conduct, etc. The global multicultural society is still something new and is still experimental, and it has not yet found a form that adequately corresponds to the reality of the system.

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