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**Multiple nation-states' Europe or multiple non-nation-regions' Europe?
Politicisation of the dilemma and contribution of Poland to the European image.**

Abstract

Contemporary Europe faces two opposing tendencies. The first aims at centralisation and the maintenance of strong individual nation-states in a unified Europe and its roots may be found as early as in Charles de Gaulle's idea of a 'Europe of Nations'. His conception assumed economic cooperation of culturally different European states directed against American domination in Europe. Clearly, 'nations' are identified with states, which follows a conception of nation-states. The other concept pursues a vision of a 'Europe of Regions', to some extent connected to Churchill's 'Homeland Europe', of decentralised, federal states consisting of relatively autonomous, small regions that enable local communities or mini-nations to create and implement their own policies. Within this vision, nation-states are perceived as untenable isomorphisms trying and failing to unite political allegiance (state) and cultural belonging (nation).

Europe of Nations assumes centrally steered states and low scope of power of local authorities, which results in similar approach towards cultural identity. Therefore, a nation is a relevant subject of deliberation. Idea of Europe of Regions provides local authorities with wider prerogatives, which is clearly visible in the rule of subsidiarity. Consequently, local communities smaller than nation are granted rights to constitute separate cultural entities. Accordingly, the ideological dilemma of what Europe are we heading for, may be well expressed in a question whether we opt for Europe of large nations (whether civic or ethnic, is of lower importance) or we opt for Europe of smaller communities.

The hereby paper examines both these concepts, showing reasons for common fears connected with an idea of Europe of Regions. Then European tendencies are presented, with commonly observed decreasing centralism. Centralistic attitudes in Poland and their rationale are explored, including historical background, identity questions, administrative structures of the country and legal regulations.

Introduction

Europe has for centuries suffered from conflicts. The vast majority of them originated on the continent, resulting from imperial ambitions, geopolitical visions, territorial disputes, breakdowns of multinational states, increases of nationalistic feelings, struggles for independence, just to name a few reasons. In its 21st century, Europe has significantly turned to peaceful coexistence of states, cooperating on political, economic and military grounds. This cooperation, extending its spatial range with the lapse of time, is deeply rooted in foundations of the European Union – the most effective multi-state organisation of the continent that ever existed.

The changing geopolitical situation, both within the EU and outside, requires constant adaptation of the EU to meet new challenges we have to face. One of them is with no doubt protecting human rights of all European citizens, no matter what is their ethnic background. In this context, one of the important elements that needs close examination is an internal structure of the EU. Organization of reciprocal relationships between the EU, its member states and their regions is crucial both for proper management of this highly diversified area and for its inhabitants. The possible solutions for said structure vary from European Homeland through Europe of Nations to Europe of Regions. Although this is not explicit, the choice has critical consequences for national and ethnic groups inhabiting the continent, since it implies the scope of self-determination possibilities for them. The hereby paper aims at exposing interconnections between the internal structure of the EU and ethnic structures of its inhabitants and will also try to evaluate possible results of adoption of each of the structures mentioned above. Polish approach will be presented on the background of tendencies observed in Europe.

Conceptual background – various ‘Europes’ confronted

Contemporary Europe faces three opposing tendencies. The first one is rooted as far back as Winston Churchill’s idea, presented for the first time in Zurich in 1946:

There is a remedy which ... would in a few years make all Europe ... free and ... happy. It is to re-create the European family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe. (Zurich, 1946).

Source: Europa. Gateway to the European Union. (<http://europa.eu>)

Churchill and his successors perceived existence of sovereign governments in European nation-states as the main cause of centuries of disastrous wars, that used to destroy human lives and property all round Europe (Europa, 2008). According to his vision, federal Europe with central government, central parliament and highest judicial authorities should prevent an outburst of new conflicts and clashes between nations inhabiting the continent. It would require transferring political competences and aims from a country level onto continental level. Foundation of such a federation of states, similar in its structure and functions to the U.S.A., would create a super-state, an empire that could compete with other empires, namely the U.S.A., Soviet Union, and China (Europa, 2008). Consistently, potential domination zone claims would expand behind the confines of the united continent, securing peace for its very territory. Additional attributes of power would be one army, common foreign policy and one currency. Both real and *de iure* lack of internal state borders would accelerate creation of a European identity, connected with United States of Europe first, only then with its parts. If this concept, usually called *Homeland Europe*, succeeded, it might probably decrease ethnic tensions and ethnic egoisms between national groups and reduce the intensity of ‘Us vs. Them’ syndrome, thanks to leading to inclusion of large groups of people to the ‘We’ group, shaped by the European identity. To date, United States of Europe was not given a chance to prove that its theoretical advantages may come true.

The second concept for Europe is tightly connected to Charles de Gaulle’s vision of restoring empire. Only seemingly similar to Churchill’s vision, this conception assumed Europe consisting of community of independent states, competing with two other super-powers: the U.S.A. and China. De Gaulle’s vision of Europe did not find space for the United

Kingdom on the continent, because he perceived the British as a Trojan horse of the U.S.A. in Europe and rejected their philosophy of Atlanticism (Portal..., 2008). It was reflected in his famous words:

Yes, it is Europe - a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, all of Europe - that will decide the destiny of the world! (Strasbourg, 1959)

Source: BBC (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3954631.stm>)

In 1960 de Gaulle for the first time used another well-known expression, that would later on label his vision for decades: *Europe of Nations*. Europe was described as a confederation of fully sovereign states (homelands), with state governments consulting their decisions on a European forum. Instead of creation of one super-state, strengthening economic links between existing states, with respect to their economic sovereignty, was expected to improve the position of Europe in the face of growing competition on the world market (Szczepeński, 1979). Particularly strong emphasis was put onto maintaining cultural differences between states. In line with the French approach to nation and nationality, nationality was identified with citizenship, and consistently national territories were identified with states. Summarizing, de Gaulle pursued maintaining strong European nation-states (Leksykon..., 2001).

The third competing vision of Europe is *Europe of Regions*. This concept seems to be contradictory to the other ones. Instead of either pushing more decisive power up the ladder, to the very centre of pan-European state (*Homeland Europe* case), or sustaining power in the hands of nation-states' authorities (*Europe of Nations* case), it follows well-known subsidiarity rule and argues for furnishing regional authorities with more decisive power (Bankowicz, 2000). According to EU subsidiarity rule, all decisions should be undertaken by the lowest possible level authorities, who are capable of successful conduction of necessary actions. The said rule follows a conviction, that citizens know best their every-day needs, and the closer the decisive centre to the citizen, the more effective management on local level. Plenty of competences, that used to be secured for state authorities, may be successfully transferred to regions. Consequently, local homelands (regions) are strengthened, become more stand-alone, decide about themselves to a larger extent than ever before, and with the lapse of time may gradually take responsibility over wider and wider aspects of economic, social and political life on their territories. Gradually, the EU becomes a federation of autonomous regions, replacing nation-states in their role as partners on the European arena (Leonard, 2000; Sroka, 2003).

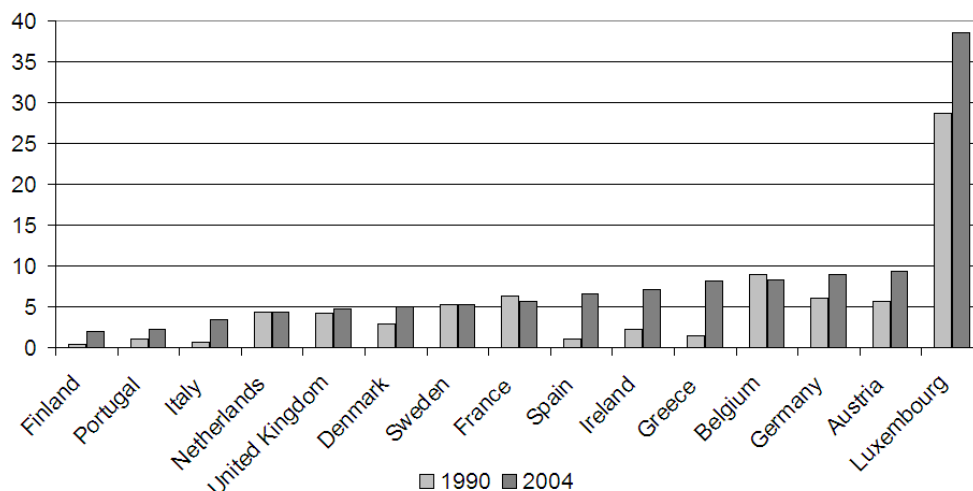
There are only a few features of states that cannot be or should not be seized by regions, because of either their costs or overall character. Undoubtedly, defence, foreign policy and currency can be dealt with much more effectively on pan-European level, than on regional level. Therefore, Europe of Regions needs a common representation to perform such continental-scale duties (Gabiś, 2002). European Homeland seems to fulfil this need perfectly, so an informal alliance of supporters of Europe of Regions and European Homeland appears natural. Therefore, further in the text three concept outlined above will be rescaled to just two: Europe of Nations versus Europe of Regions.

Regional ideas – anticipations and fears

Europe of Regions is disregarded by many on behalf of fears that arose around this concept. One of the most often expressed potential threats is loss of national identity that would inevitably follow loss of power at national level. Such conviction is especially strong

among representatives of nation-states, as they believe state is the most important guard of national identity. This approach is rooted in historical experiences connected with ethnogenesis, that in case of most European nations is believed to have taken part in 19th century. However, as Kułakowski (2002) notices, such attitude is a clear example of misapprehension of mutually identified sovereignty of states and identity of their inhabitants. Political unity identified with cultural identity creates a situation, where within the borders of one state there is space just for one nation. In case of civic nations of North America or western part of European continent, the very concept of a civic nation determines and justifies such isomorphism. However, in case of multiethnic nations of Central-Eastern Europe it creates strife towards ethnic or national homogeneity of citizens of a state, which is alarmingly close to an increase of ethnic egoisms and rise of nationalisms and inter-ethnic tensions. According to Antonsich (2006), isomorphism between cultural identity, exemplified by nation, and territory, identified with state, is untenable. Cultural and political borders do not follow the same lines. Even if they ever did, immigration we are facing significantly changes ethnic structures, and share of non-nationals in most of the EU countries is constantly increasing (see Fig.1). It finally makes nation-states rather ephemeral beings, with their beginnings around the turn of 18th and 19th century and incoming, not yet defined decay.

Fig.1. Share of Non-Nationals in the EU 15, in 1990 and 2004.



Source: Eurostat.

The second commonly raised fear linked to Europe of Regions is disintegration of states, that is presumed to result from increase of centrifugal forces inevitably connected with transferring more power down to the regions. Consequently, regionalism is implied to be synonymous with separatism. It is worthwhile to reveal, what may be the results of such approach. If the state reacts with a defensive feedback to seemingly centrifugal forces, it leads to intensification of struggle towards possessing more power by regions and therefore to increase of tensions. In case a region is dominated by an ethnic group different from the ethnos dominating in the whole country, rising nationalism is likely to be observed at both sides of the bearing conflict (Malendowski, Szczepaniak, 2000).

The opposite direction seems to be a better medicine enabling to successfully fight centrifugal forces. Federalisation of states, obviously connected with transferring competences and funds down the administrative ladder, may meet the local or regional needs of decisive power, and therefore prevent future fragmentation of the country. Belgium, Spain

and Italy, outlined in the following section, are shining examples of success of this strategy (Pietrzyk, 2000).

European tendencies

Although not perfectly clear, there seems to exist a link between a type of regime of a state and an attitude of its authorities towards regionalization of Europe. Already federal Germany or Austria, where the centre shares competences with regions, if not directly support ideas of Europe of Regions, at least do not reject them. Some countries have experienced a shift towards federation, with luminous example of Belgium, where in 1993 three regions were created and three cultural communities lawfully identified. The case of Italy, having implemented gradual regionalization of state at least since 1946 till 1977, may be interpreted in similar categories of drift in the same direction (Pietrzyk, 2000). For centuries fragmented, then united only in 1861, now the country does not seem to suffer fears about the breakdown or less-centralized state, even despite Northern League's struggle for independence of Padania. Spain in 1978 introduced new constitution, increasing competences of regional authorities (Pietrzyk, 2000), and in 2006 allowed their largest minority – the Catalonians – to officially declare a separate nationality. United Kingdom in 1998 granted Scotland the right to have its own Parliament for the first time since 1707, and the spectrum of its legislative domain covers as diverse fields as agriculture, education, environment, health, police, research, social work, income tax and many more (Scotland Act, 1998).

The approach sketched above occurs contradictory to the one in countries with little regional competences, like Ireland, Portugal, Finland or Luxembourg. Even France, although undeniably unitary, in 1982-1982 introduced 22 regions as planning units, which may be judged as a small step towards decentralization. Greece faced a different move, although in the same direction. Greek central government in 1994 introduced local authorities onto the second level of administration (Pietrzyk, 2000).

Despite the fact that, according to the LOGON Report (2002, p.94), '(...) nowhere are there any tendencies for increased centralism; but almost everywhere the regions have increased their powers', unitary countries continue to perceive Europe of Regions as a threat to their integrity. Their central authorities do not share, but transfer down to regions some parts of their competences, but are still in power to withdraw them back up. Hence, the position of regions defined through their capabilities is relatively weak in both economic and socio-cultural terms. This is usually followed by lack of regional identity in most of the regions, and quite often also by changes of their borders, being politically-driven manipulations (Janicki, 2008).

In Europe, there exist many organizations explicitly supporting regional ideas. The only one official voice of the EU in this context is the Committee of Regions of the EU. The prerogatives of the Committee are limited, although the European Commission and the European Council have to consult with it on a number of precisely enumerated issues that have repercussions at regional or local level. The Committee provides also a forum for political debates (Alwasiak, 2000, Europa 2008). The EU has got a variety of formal tools and documents, specifying role of regions, including Single European Act, budget of European Regional Policy (approx. 1/3 of EU budget) and Euro-regions. European Parliament hosts European Free Alliance, a political party pursuing its vision of Europe: decentralized, regionalized and federalized.

Apart from the central institutional solutions, European regions form organisations, associations and other legal bodies, whose goals usually have in common strengthening the role of regions in the European Union. Among others, we may emphasize the role of AER – Assembly of European Regions, RETI – European Regions of Industry and Technology,

AEBR – Association of European Border Regions, CRE – Constitutional Regions of Europe, CPMR – Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions and others.

Attitudes in Poland

Role of regions in the regime of Poland is of rather marginal character. The country is not only highly centralised, but any regionalization attempts are more or less purposely and consciously hampered. Regions hardly exist in people's minds, there are no regional 'imagined communities', to relate to national terminology (Hall, 1992; Anderson, 2006). This is mostly due to the fact, that regional borders are not stable. They have not only changed because of amendments of external state border, but even within relatively short periods of time of territorial stability they were constantly moved. Since the World War 2, Poland experienced three significant changes of administrative units of the first order, not even mentioning tens of less important changes: the number of provinces jumped from 14 in 1946 to 17 in 1950, then to 49 in 1975 and fell back to 16 in 1999. Presently, most of the borders of administrative units do not follow either the historical borders of regions or physical (geographical) ones, and economic regions. Historical Upper Silesia has been divided between Silesian and Opole Provinces, mostly due to great effort of Opole region inhabitants (including German minority), struggling for provincial status for this town (Faruga, 2004). As a result, Silesian Province contains only about one third of historical region of Upper Silesia, but almost half of the present Silesian Province is constituted by lands that have never been a part of Silesia (Waniek, 2004). At the same time Małopolskie Province includes only about one third of historical region of Małopolska. The name of Lubuskie Province comes from a non-existent region, and from a small town located westwards from Odra River, in Germany – just to provide a few examples.

The number of provinces that were about to be created in 1999, was subject to lengthy political bargaining. The number of raised proposals was large, with the following numbers of provinces: 5, 6, 7, 8 (big, relatively autonomous regions), 12 (governmental proposal), 16 (final shape), 17 (a comeback to 1950-1961 state of the art), 25, 31, 35, 40 (elimination of weakest units) and finally 49 (no change). The number of proposals itself is a proof of lack of real regions in the country. If they existed, there would not be such a discussion. Four regional movements succeeded and four additional provinces, compared to governmental proposal, were created.

Although since 1999 no essential changes were made, almost the same day the new administrative structure was endorsed, a discussion about new reform started. Among the most often repeated proposals are [1] Staropolskie Province, containing the whole of present Świętokrzyskie, northernmost part of Silesian and southern part of Łódzkie Province, [2] Środkowopolskie Province, consisting of south-eastern part of Wielkopolskie and south-western part of Łódzkie and [3] Środkowopomorskie Province, joining bordering areas of Pomorskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Wielkopolskie (see fig.2). The latter case has been subject to governmental deliberations. On March 2nd, 2006 Council of Ministers led by Jarosław Kaczyński voted against creation of Środkowopomorskie Province, justifying the decision with high costs of introducing and maintaining another province. Interestingly, on October 10th, 2007 the same politician, then already former prime minister, during electoral campaign declared publicly: '*... if PiS¹ wins the election, creation of Środkowopomorskie Province will be reconsidered.*' (Kancelaria..., 2007, transl. by the author). It became exposed, that administrative division of Poland is a strictly political issue.

¹ PiS is an abbreviation from *Law and Justice*, the name of a political party led to date by Jarosław Kaczyński, former prime minister quoted above.

Fig.2. Proposals of new administrative reform in Poland



Source: own elaboration based on: Ustawa o zmianie ustawy z dnia 24. lipca 1998r. o wprowadzeniu zasadniczego trójstopniowego podziału terytorialnego państwa. (<http://orka.sejm.gov.pl>); Częstochowska republika (www.czestochowska.republika.pl). Nowe województwo? TVP Poznań, 25 lipca 2006 (<http://ww6.tvp.pl>).

Another example of regional struggle aiming at creation of a new province is the case of Częstochowskie Province. One of the Polish catholic newspapers published an article (Skubiś, 2006), whose author in the course of discussion supporting the town of Częstochowa in its role of the capitol of this province, used the following arguments: ‘... *Częstochowa has been discriminated against...*’; ‘... *it is our spiritual capitol...*’; ‘... *so important events for our country as defence of the monastery against the Swedish Deluge...*’ (Nov.-Dec. 1655, added by the author); ‘... *politicians used to talk about their catholicism...*’ or ‘... *4 million pilgrims yearly...*’ (transl. by the author). These arguments are of clearly emotional nature, trying to prove that a town important for religious reasons deserves the status of the province capital.

No matter how quality of the discussion outlined above is judged, it is itself just another proof showing, how strong in Polish society is the desire to get more power down to the regions. People believe they will better deal with their every-day socio-economic problems, than the central government does. It inevitably requires fighting centralism and transfer of more competences and financial resources down. Regrettably, most of such moves are obstructed by central authorities and regionalization of the country is perceived as disintegration threat. Regional tendencies were commented by former prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński in a characteristic manner as ‘...*introducing Landisation through back door...*’ (TVN24, May 26th, 2008, transl. by the author). Therefore, administrative structure of Germany was used as a threat and a scarer for the Polish audience. Additionally, electoral system in Poland strongly supports whole-country parties, regional parties are marginalized

and any change of this situation seems unfeasible. Among the formal reasons explaining such attitude of Polish central authorities, an expression contained in the Republic of Poland Constitution of April 2nd, 1997, currently in force, may be referred to: '*Republic of Poland shall be a unitary state*' (art.3) (Sejm..., 2008). Hence, any regionalization attempts are recognized as breaking the foundations of the Polish state.

Another reason explaining hostile attitude of the Polish central authorities to regionalization of the country is the fact that national identity is considered to be tightly interwoven with state belonging. Despite the fact, that Polish researchers entirely separate nationality and citizenship, acknowledging ethnic-states eastern European model and treating citizenship as an expression of belonging to a state, while nationality is deemed as an indication of belonging to a nation, in the Preamble to the Polish Constitution we may see the following: '*(...) We, the Polish Nation – all citizens of the Republic (...)*'. (Sejm..., 2008). Hence, increase of importance of regions is imputed to be a threat for national identity. Therefore, regional policy goes hand-in-hand with Poland's one-nation-one-state policy.

Followers of this concept seem to ignore results of research concerning identities of Polish citizens. According to one of the polls (see Firlić, 2002) vast majority of the questioned respondents feel attached very much (79,8%) or much (16,6%) to the Polish nation. The same analysis reveals, that as many as 88% is proud to be Polish (51% - very much, 37% - much). Interestingly, the share of respondents attached at most to their private homeland (town, city) is much higher (57%), than the share of respondents attached at most to their ideological homeland (country; 22%). 'My region' comes next with 15% and Europe is on the last position with 2%. The distribution of answers is strikingly similar to what Scartezzini (2000) projected. According to his deliberation, in the future national identity will be maintained and European identity will be the weakest among all other identities. As Rokita (2002) noticed, regional identity does not have to disturb national identity – it is possible to feel attached to Cracow, Poland and Europe at a time. For that reason, patriotism may be identified not only with state level, but also and at a time with regional and continental level. In these contexts it seems reasonable to ask, what is the real reason for disturbances for development of regional ties, often clearly visible in state government policy – with its particularly explicit expression in a shape of changes of administrative units in the country, outlined above. In the presented circumstances, it is really hard to create and maintain regional identity. Such actions prove the lack of regional policy and lack of interest in real regional policy – at least over the decades. The only visible goal that can be seen here is that it is done to undermine any embryo of regional identity.

Dilemma transformed

The tough choice for the future of our continent between *Europe of States* and *Europe of Regions*, along with questions arising around this issue, may accordingly be transformed into another question: *Europe of Nations* versus *Europe of Regional Communities*. If states are identified with nations inhabiting their territories, then regions could successfully be identified with people conscious of their regional identity at least to some degree. That being the case, differences between regional identities would be smaller, than differences between national identities, across borders. Strong cultural distinctiveness of state borders would be substituted by much weaker cultural distinctiveness of regional borders, which might decrease tensions between neighboring regions, when compared to tensions at national level.

Putting national identity first in interstate relations usually triggers tensions, therefore there is a need to redefine traditional approach to national identity. Contemporary national identity should be open and reactive. As Sowiński (2002) puts it, the modern identity

might be modeled as follows: born – Poland, studied – France, working – Spain, speaking – English, married – to a German etc. Building and protecting own culture, understood as one of crucial milestones of identity, needs points of reference – to be aware what it means to be Polish, we need to be acquainted with other cultures (Skotnicka-Illasiewicz, 2002). This is diffusion of cultures that leads to interculturalism and constant shaping of identity, not sealing own culture and barricading behind strong cultural borders (Konopczyński, 2002).

Conclusions

According to Council of Europe (1991), multicultural society is one of the goals for the whole continent. *Sine qua non* conditions on reaching the goal are social integration, equality of citizens, respect for cultural differences and preventing discrimination of immigrants. Nation-states constitute political organisms that, because of their very nature, limit the cultural diversity and because of putting nationality first, they trigger tensions. As W.Safran captured it, ‘(...) *one-nation and one-language state poses the main problem, because it is not capable of appropriate reacting to multiethnic reality*’ (after: Ratajczak, 2003). It is hard to overlook the fact, that because of demographic and economic reasons, in the foreseeable future of European continent replacement migration is indispensable, which will undoubtedly result in further development of multiethnic and multicultural societies. Consequently, nation-state time will have gone, and this will affect also relatively homogenous countries to date, like Poland. Hence, the aim should not be whether or not, but how to transform from Europe of Nations (nation-states) into Europe of Regions (local communities).

In case of Europe of Nations states that decide about all its regions, especially in strong, unitary states, while in Europe of Regions, these are regions that decide about themselves. Within the first solution, nations constitute separate cultural entities, while in the latter regional communities compose units being relatively homogenous cultural objects. As a result, a borderline between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ gets down from high, national level to much lower, regional level. It is likely to decrease tensions between national groups and reduce the intensity of ‘Us vs. Them’ syndrome. Last, but not least, Europe of Nations is a solution supporting nations that were lucky enough to have got their states, while Europe of Regions provides an opportunity of limited self-governance also for stateless nations and ethnic groups, to date hopelessly fighting for their rights. It is especially emphasized by many, including Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, an international body trying to protect human and cultural rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

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