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EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND CROATIAN INDEPENDENCE

INTRODUCTION

Considering the totality of the historical development of the 20th century, it can be undisputedly concluded that change and an aspiration for change have remained the hallmark of both the natural and the social spheres of life. According to this feature, the 20th century does not fundamentally differ from previous historical periods. However, an ever-increasing speed and magnitude of change, continuously increasing the rhythm and aspiration for change have marked this process in the 20th century. Thus, in this way change has become a **state** of human civilization. One may also conclude that the **need** for faster rhythm of movement has even turned into and imposed itself as a kind of addiction.

That addiction, among other things, implies a substantial decrease, or even a total absence, of a need for rational questioning or understanding of objectives, procedures, facts, phenomena, perspectives, etc.

Thus, the human being, as a rational being – in both individual and social senses – has been facing a predicament which mainly entails a denial of fundamental rationalist principles; such as *clarae et distinctae* (clarity and distinctness), and *Omnibus dubitandur est* (no acceptance without doubting and questioning).

By leaving these principles out of the sphere of social life, we have condemned ourselves to an ignorance of historical experiences, that is, their unconscious repetition. Namely, due to the ever-increasing rhythm of contemporary events and ever more complex and less clear perspective of the future, it is frequently observed that any discussion of historical experience as a way to learn about the future is considered non-functional, superfluous, useless, and unimportant; promoting at the same time unfounded *a priori* orientations.

These brief, fundamental observations should be borne in mind when discussing, planning or dealing, in whatever way, with the problems of European integration and the

variety of possible aspects of independence within those integrative processes. Clearly, most of the global as well as particular issues and problems raised today in connection with the process of European integration are not new. They represent a fundamental continuation or a mere repetition of both theoretical and practical models of European integration offered to numerous earlier generations of Europeans. However, it is significant that the proponents and supporters of current integration interests have been stubbornly turning a blind eye to this fact, trying to publicly present themselves as new, original and desirable designers-builders of a better, integrated future. Such an approach, that is contrary to the rational requirements of an objective comprehension, is, at the same time, an additional stimulus for intelligibly questioning the goals and quality of the current model of European integration.

From a historical standpoint, this paper reviews some of the main features of 20th century European history as well as the key determinants of the problem of European integration that basically repeat themselves today. A special emphasis will be placed on independent, national, state and social identity groups in general; all of which are meant to be constituent parts of a broader European integration.

Moreover, it stands to reason that such a general and abstract level of discourse as such a general approach implies, will include shortcomings and understatements.

By way of introduction, it is necessary to emphasize as historical fact that issues of various military, political, economic, cultural, religious or other collective interest attempts at European integration can be traced back, both in terms of facts and interpretation, to at least the Roman period. In addition to the Roman Empire, at a political-military level, a wide range of historical examples of European integration can be recalled. These periods of integration have been identified with well-known conquerors such as Attila, Charlemagne, Charles V, Turkish Sultans, Napoleon, etc. For such integrative processes in the realm of the spiritual, religious, cultural, and artistic, it is sufficient to recall Christianity, Latin, philosophy of history, the European literary and artistic styles, common ethnological characteristics, etc.

COMMON CONDITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF 20TH CENTURY EUROPE

From the viewpoint of world history, and as testified by a series of historical and civilizational indicators, the European continent entered the 20th century as a clearly identi-

fiable entity with a number of recognizable features. European individuality at the beginning of the 20th century was most clearly collectively manifested by the almost total European domination over the rest of the world.

Most non-European states, peoples and continents were European colonial property. In that way, Europe directly controlled world political processes and economic resources. The efficient organization of European states, societies, and production as well as Europe's infrastructure, new technologies, natural science potential, new inventions, etc., all contributed to its privilege and advantage. On this basis, world domination of Europe's culture appeared even more convincing, as well as the desirability of the European way of life. Even the U.S. was in many ways subordinate to Europe. These include world colonial domination of European states, the European positive balance of payment in economic exchange, American dependence on European immigrants as well as the identification of American elite with their European roots.

In brief, at the beginning of the 20th century, the European continent was the center of the world in every respect. It was well aware of that, and it believed in the immutability of such a position.

On the other hand, the internal structure of Europe at the beginning of the 20th century was founded on national states, which had come into being through centuries-old historical developments of different internal and international processes. In that way, the national states of Europe came to represent the highest organizational type of human society, within which various interests were developed and brought together at a common, that is, national level. Namely, in international relations the state and its related interests were identified with national interests, which was also revealed in cases of international cooperation and conflict.

For example, international-law conventions did not infringe upon the national sovereignty of particular states. On the contrary, they maximally guaranteed protection of national-state interests. Inter-state cooperation and treaties, alliances, and pacts were founded upon and oriented toward a full realization of particular national interests. In the same way, different forms of suspension of international cooperation as well as state participation in local and world wars were primarily motivated by a desire to achieve particular national interests.

The European model of structuring national interests within the framework of a national state was gradually taken over by other continents. This was particularly evi-

dent during the process of de-colonization whereby the maturation of national consciousness in the colonies unfolded in a parallel way with liberation movements and the creation of independent national states.

Thus, during the course of the 20th century, the national state has established itself as an almost exclusive form of social community organization, be it in Europe or elsewhere. Moreover, national-state interests have become, both in formal and real terms, almost without exception, the foundation of international relations most lucidly demonstrated by world organizations such as the League of Nations or the United Nations.

Within such a world structure and experience, it is logical that the longest-lasting and greatest state crises with the most serious consequences of the 20th century, occurred in multinational state communities. This has been true regardless of different time periods and political system. It is also noteworthy that a number of multinational states collapsed during the 20th century, only to be replaced by independent national states.

In that context, it is sufficient to recall the downfall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the second Yugoslavia, or the length of the Irish, Basque, and Kurdish crises.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the European national states with a well-defined historical identity have demonstrated convincingly that they have the most stable and most durable form of social community. In terms of their sovereignty and integrity, they have perseveringly withstood various internal crises and foreign challenges, as their histories clearly testify. For example, Germany survived and recently was reunited in spite of grave political upheavals of the 20th century and defeats in both World Wars. Similar political vicissitudes, social and economic challenges have been endured by Italy in the 20th century. French national policy, both internal and foreign, has for centuries been a superb example of skillful representation of national interests. In 1918, Poland was reestablished as a national state thanks to its powerful national identity, after more than a century of being the property of neighbouring states, etc.

However, the power of national identity and the deeply rooted foundation and restrictedness of national interest of the most powerful European states during the 20th century has also had a fateful impact on world as well as on the collapse of traditional power of the European continent on a world scale.

Namely, among other things, the irreconcilable clashes of interests of the most powerful European states were the

cause of two world wars. These were started on European soil, which subsequently served as the primary battlefield and in every respect suffered the most difficult consequences of war. This means that the economic and demographic potential of European states were wasted on world warfare, accompanied by the destruction of material and spiritual assets, and the extreme suffering of the European population.

During the course of the First World War, the European states from an economic perspective had already become debtors rather than creditors of the United States. This trend continued in the aftermath of the war and had an identical influence in other aspects of social life and world geopolitical significance.

The course and results of the Second World War were crucial for a total dethronement of Europe on a world scale. They influenced the general marginalization of Europe, a process that has continued since the end of the war until the present day. There are a number of heterogeneous indicators that can be used as evidence. For example, the Cold War was fought most intensively between European states, which were, in terms of their security, politics, and economy greatly dependent upon the interests of the two superpowers – the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. In terms of natural science, technology and economy, Europe not only fell behind the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., but it also started to lag behind the Far East (Japan, Korea, and China).

Furthermore, the traditional European worldview, values, cultural creativity and way of life have also been increasingly marginalized, not only in the world, but within Europe itself to be replaced by the views and products of ohlocratic, that is, mass consumer societies. In terms of future life perspectives it is especially disturbing that Europe has become the most ecologically polluted and demographically least productive continent.

Thus, it may be justifiably concluded that at the end of the 20th century, Europe found itself in a disadvantageous position compared to the one it held at the beginning. In other words, Europe has lost during the course of the 20th century its decisive and central position in the world, which it had held for centuries. In terms of civilization, the 20th century may be thus marked as the century of Europe's greatest crisis. The reasons for this are complex and beyond the scope of this paper. Yet it should be emphasized that throughout the 19th century a profound crisis of European civilization was announced by a number of outstanding European thinkers (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, etc.).

ATTEMPTS AT EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
IN THE 20TH CENTURY

If we define integration as a procedure of linkage or unification, or of combining several parts into a whole, then it can be noted that several integration-oriented processes, ideas, and attempts were at work in Europe throughout the 20th century. In principle, one may speak of cultural, ideational, economic, geopolitical, and other forms of integration. In terms of space, the forms of integrations can be simply classified as regional and continental. Systematization in terms of the way integrations were carried out is more complex, but basically it can be reduced to dichotomies which moved between self-initiative (spontaneity) and organization, voluntariness and coercion.

It is clear that the real processes of integration, in terms of content, time, space and mode, were developed at various levels of mutual intertwinement and inner contradictions in relation to the classifications listed above. However, this problem will not be discussed here.

From a general standpoint one may conclude that cultural and ideational forms of European integration were predominantly self-initiating and voluntary, and in terms of space, ranged from regional to continental. Numerous examples of cultural integration may be found in the fine arts and literature (expressionism, cubism, dadaism, surrealism, etc.), as a way of life (ohlocratic society) or ideational integration that ranged from worldviews (existentialism, positivism, etc.) to ideologies (for example, pan-Slavism, pan-Germanism, social democracy, communism, Christian democracy, etc.).

The basic theoretical starting point for the need for economic integration indicates self-initiative and voluntariness that stems from the principle of production and consumer effectiveness, but the implementation of economic integration was mostly organized by national state interests, accompanied by threat or use of force (economic, military, and political). It is illustrative to recall here the problems linked to interstate economic associations such as the European Union (EU, formerly the European Community – EC), the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), or those associated with multinational states, as for example, with the unique Yugoslav market, etc.

Geopolitical, political, and military integrations represent the most interconnected and complex form of integration. They were, in principle, carried out in an orga-

nized manner and were accompanied by economic, political, and military pressures.

Another essential characteristic of these integrations was that they endeavoured to be comprehensive, i.e., to incorporate all other forms of integration: cultural, ideological/ideational, economic, etc. Only by creating and recognizing a totality of interests and identities could the existence of more durable political entities created through integration be expected.

European historical experience, including the 20th century, also confirms that these most complex types of integration were often preceded by various levels of economic, cultural, and ideational integration. Alternatively, these forms of integration served as a stimulus and justification for the implementation of geopolitical, military and political integration. The half-century establishment of the EU is a good example of this, which, due to a number of components, clearly should be oriented toward complete political integration.

It is interesting to note that after the Second World War, the integration of the European communist countries into the politico-military *Warsaw Pact* (1955) was preceded by the worldview (dialectical and historical materialism), ideological-party (dictatorship of the proletariat, Informbiro – Information Bureau of the Cominform, etc.), economic (Comecon) and cultural (socialist realism in culture, information, and education) integration. Likewise, the creation of the Yugoslav State was preceded by ideational integration (South-Slavism as an aspect of pan-Slavism and so-called "cultural Yugoslavianism").

Certain forms and levels of geopolitical and military integration in Europe and the world belong to various forms of interstate and other alliances or unification that were drawn up during preparation for world or regional wars. Thus, the alliances *Entente* and the *Axis Powers* were connected to the First World War whereas the *Anti-Comintern International* and *Triple Alliance* (Germany, Japan, Italy and a number of other countries, which joined under various circumstances), were formed in connection with the Second World War. Alternatively, a complex cooperation of states, movements and organizations opposed to the states of *Triple Alliance*, such as the *Comintern* and the *Popular Fronts* were also formed.

Between the two wars, as a way of stopping the "*red*" menace (Communist) danger in Europe, various types and levels of regional integration were established. For example, the most powerful West-European states (initially France) considered the area between Poland and the first

Yugoslavia as a *sanitary corridor* and controlled it by various economic, political, cultural, and intelligence means, but without formal unification. For the purpose of preserving the *Versailles treaty*, a military-political alliance called "*The Little Entente*" (Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the first Yugoslavia) was created in the early twenties followed by "*The Balkans Pact*" (Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey) in the mid-thirties.

All in all, it can be concluded that the majority of mentioned alliances and other forms of cooperation were formed, to serve the interests of the most powerful European states and the nation of Europe. In every respect, they had a decisive influence and were the carriers of these processes, so that a number of smaller European states were compelled to participate in integration processes and to adjust their national interests, and even identities. Thus, the most powerful European nations/states were the subjects of integration in Europe, while the smaller nations or states were merely the objects of those integrative processes. Obviously, the criteria of integration were inequitable, which subsequently aggravated or led to the failure of European integrative processes.

This relationship between the powerful and the powerless was best exemplified by the *Versailles* structuring of Europe in which decisions on creation, territorial borders and even the international status of a series of new (and existing) states was both formally and actually dictated by a few of the most powerful states. The same approach was used during and after the Second World War at the Teheran, Jalta, and Potsdam Conferences. An extreme example whereby smaller states are literally sacrificed is illustrated in the *Munich Pact* (1938), when France and Great Britain ratified the German breaking up of Czechoslovakia. Although this was contrary to bilateral agreements and international law, it was believed that this would satisfy Germany and preserve the remaining French and British national interests.

The most powerful European states failed to establish a single continental interest during the 20th century. Therefore, it is understandable that all the integration processes were partial, revealing an inner paradox. In other words, they simultaneously deepened European divisions and contributed to Europe's disintegration.

A strategic need for the complete integration of the European continent was envisaged and supported by many individuals and organizations throughout the 20th century. At the beginning of the century, on the basis of class, such ideas were advocated by social democrat parties,

who were assembled in the *First International*. However, this attempt failed miserably at the beginning of the First World War, as all social democrat parties (with the exception of the Russian Bolsheviks) rallied to support their countries' national interests. The attempts of the *Second International* ("Comintern") between the two wars and in the first years of the Second World War revealed similar patterns. A continuation of this process after the Second World War is represented by the *Eurocommunism* movement in Western Europe as well as the ideas and intentions grouped around the slogan "Socialism as a world process", in Eastern Europe.

However, it is important to emphasize that the most comprehensive spatial and substantial integration of Europe in the 20th century was carried out by the totalitarian power of Nazi Germany prior to and at the beginning of the Second World War (1935–1941). In many ways, this has remained a telling example for future periods. By using various methods, which included economic privileges, political pressure, and military threats – Germany succeeded in accomplishing a dominant position in the majority of the Central and Southeast European states in addition to annexing Austria and occupying Czechoslovakia.

At the time of Germany's lightning conquest of Western and Northern Europe in the first years of the war (1939–1940), powerful European states had developed a significant relation toward Southeastern Europe. Namely, economic interests (petroleum and food) primarily determined the German relation towards Southeastern Europe. Moreover, Germany was, at that point in time, the only state in Europe that was seriously interested in the stability of that area – as long as the states of Southeast Europe were pro-German oriented. On the other hand, Great Britain and France, following their own war interests, did their best to light the "Balkan tinderbox", that is, push it into war against Germany.

Thus, Germany went to great efforts to curb Italian aggressive plans against Yugoslavia while on its own territory it banned any activities that were anti-Yugoslav oriented by Croatian émigrés. In contrast to Germany, Great Britain undertook several political steps and carried out special war operations to push the Balkans and Yugoslavia into war against Germany.

However, as a result of the overall superiority that Germany achieved in South Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia, this area became ever more dependent upon Germany. This was particularly evident in 1940 owing to general circumstances, i.e., when Germany overpowered France and

set out to conquer Great Britain. This generated a belief and atmosphere, in a number of European countries including Yugoslavia, that the systems of authority thus far led and represented by Great Britain and France was about to collapse, and that Germany was about to win and establish the *New Order* in Europe. Therefore, wishing to retain positions of power, the ruling and public structures in those countries initiated processes of an inner state adjustment to the *New Order* on their own and this is still significant today.

In this context, a text published by a Belgrade newspaper, *Vreme*, that had close connections to the Yugoslav government in July 1940, speaks loud and clear: "A New Europe is being created, new principles will rule European political life and woe to the countries in which those principles find the nation's heart closed, locked by horrible tales of a need for the continuation of a weak system." Similar thoughts were at the same time expressed by the *Hrvatski tjednik,* a weekly backed by the Croatian Peasant Party: "We are on the eve of radical changes in the structure of Old Europe. The outlines of a new political and economic system may be clearly seen. A New Europe must become a political and economic community securing fortune for both big and small nations. Germany and Italy will succeed where Great Britain and France, bearers of old concepts, have failed."

In mid August 1940, the Yugoslav government held a formal session in which they issued a press release. Among other things, the press release states that the Royal Government "expresses its desire to emphasize that its friendship with Germany and Italy is not of a temporary character, but based on essential interests. Recent years have clearly revealed the efficacy of this cooperation that have become closer each day. Today, when the whole world is facing a turning point as well as new directions with respect to the restructuring of European order, Yugoslavia is fully conscious that it must take part in all of these new developments". Additionally, the Government, during its regular sessions, often debated about the need to adjust the Yugoslav economic and social system to the *New Order* and carried out appropriate by personnel changes within the Government itself.

Under such conditions favoring integration, any public questioning of the *New Order*, and of its criteria, interests, modalities, foundations, goals, or objectives was undesirable and proscribed. Instead, public life was saturated by unfounded affirmation of the *New Order.* Unfortunately, in a number of smaller European countries, and especially

in the Republic of Croatia, an approach bearing a funda-
mental and stylistic similarity to the events just described,
is being repeated in the sphere of controlled public life
within the current processes of European integration or
world globalization at the end of the 20th century.

CROATIAN INDEPENDENCE WITHIN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Croatian national identity has for almost nine centuries
been formed within political frameworks which rightly in
many ways and to various degrees can be represented as in-
tegrated wholes. This relates to the personal union with
Hungary (since 1102), and of joining the Habsburg mon-
archy (since 1526), and both Yugoslavias (1918–1941 and
1945–1991). This long history undoubtedly influenced the
shaping of many determining factors of Croatian national
identity, facilitating Croatian openness for participation
in integration processes, which has manifested itself at sev-
eral levels: from worldview and cultural openness to the
centuries-long pluralistic attitude of Croatian elite toward
religious persuasions, ethnic background, social character-
istics, political orientations, etc.

On the other hand, Croatia's continual centuries-long
closeness to integrated entities has provided a legacy of
both positive and negative experiences, which should es-
sentially contribute to an objective consideration of inte-
gration models which are either offered or imposed today.
In other words, from this standpoint, contemporary cur-
rent Croatian questioning of integration models cannot be
considered as an *a priori* reaction, nor is it a result of un-
conscious prejudices or stereotypes, but a well-founded un-
derstanding and reaction to first-hand lived national expe-
rience.

In accordance with the mentioned European stan-
dards, the Croatian national entity, during the 20th cen-
tury, realized to a greater extent that the national state is
undoubtedly the most stable model for securing national
interests. Along these lines, it is important to consider
both the starting-point of Croatian awareness and all its
practical strivings to establish an independent state.

That self-awareness was fully expressed at the beginning
of the nineties when, within the context of the historical
disintegration of European communist systems of power
and Croatia's defense against Serb armed aggression, an in-
dependent Croatian state was finally established. After the
collapse of communist states, various West-European inte-
gration associations that had existed for decades, (such as

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the *Council of Europe, EU, NATO*, etc.) hurriedly became interested in integratively and globally conquering areas that had long been inaccessible in the east and south of Europe.

Decades of experience with models and procedures had at least two clearly linked goals. The first goal was to insure stability and security of South Eastern Europe so that uncontrollable processes would not spread or have a negative impact in Western Europe. The other goal, pursued at the same time for stabilization purposes, was to firmly place Eastern and Southern Europe under total (security, economic, and political) administrative control in the interest of the most powerful states of Western Europe. In addition to all the complex activities, both goals are best illustrated in the *Stability Pact* draft.

Thus far, as it has been possible to read several fundamental flaws in this entire integration operation, which raises serious questions about the feasibility of the above-mentioned goals, as well as about the actual success of the current attempt to integrate the European continent. First, the model in *communication* terms, allows for adjustments insofar as it suits the interests of West European countries. Any diversity with respect to East and South European identity and state communities and their related interests are simply not *heard* or taken into consideration.

Hence, inconsistent, repeatedly uniform and inappropriate criteria and procedures that are outside of international customary and legal norms are being used. Such activity has had certain – more formal and less real – consequences, thanks primarily to the application of political, economic, and military pressure. However, it surely does not enhance lasting integration that is, profound cultivation and stability of the area. On the contrary, it has been generating dissatisfaction, which may sooner or later be articulated as more powerful and more direct forms of resistance and confrontation.

Furthermore, West-European integration models have been shown to be outdated and inadequate in the new situation at the beginning of the nineties. Namely, the *Council of Europe*, the EU, and NATO were formed during the intense *Cold War*, upon which their concepts, methods, and structure were based. This means, they were established primarily as defensive and secondarily as offensive structures. Moreover, the territory they covered was smaller in comparison to that of Eastern and Southern Europe. In this sense, it was far more ordered and thus simpler to manage.

In support of such a thesis, one should recall the course of West European relations and organization to-

ward the problem of Serb aggression against the Republic of Croatia, and especially against Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, no distinction was made between the aggressor and the victim and the arms embargo effectively denied victims their legitimate and lawful right to defense, etc. Moreover, the temporary results established in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, were achieved only after intensified U.S. involvement (the *Washington* and *Dayton Accords*, and especially the treaties between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with NATO).

CONCLUSION

The general continual marginalization of the European continent during the 20th century was first of all a consequence of an irreconcilable clash of interests between the most powerful European national states. Numerous and various attempts at European integration have occurred within this context, but they all proved to be unsuccessful, because the integration concepts were both exclusive and limited. The main reason for such an approach was determined by the fact that the proponents of integration (one or a few states) offered models that served their national interests.

In doing so they neglected or violated achievements, which belong to the spiritual heritage of European civilization. This heritage was founded on humanism in both an individual and a social sense. As such, by the 20th century, it became ingrained in most expressions of European consciousness – from law to the most abstract forms of creativity. Thus this heritage became an integral part of both individual and social (as well as national) identities, regardless of the real power these identities have in the European balance of power.

Therefore, it is comprehensible that European integration, insofar as it intends to be successful, must be founded on true humanist principles, which from a spiritual viewpoint have already integrated Europe. Similarly, it is also understandable that due to suspension of such principles, attempts at primarily economic and political integration have so far actually contributed to the disintegration of Europe.

Under such circumstances, the current insistence of smaller European nations and states, including the Republic of Croatia, on national independence on one hand, and defense of European spiritual principles on the other, represents a stimulus to accept such models of European integration which, when applied, will not deviate from

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these declared standards. Moreover, the historical course of both European and world history in the 20th century, and particularly current globalization processes clearly indicate that demands for protection of European prosperity imperatively impose a need for European integration.