

The European idea in Central Europe and Scandinavia as a part of the security and peaceful co-existence policy in the framework of the postwar planning

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THE EUROPEAN IDEA
IN CENTRAL EUROPE
AND SCANDINAVIA
AS A PART
OF THE SECURITY
AND PEACEFUL
CO-EXISTENCE POLICY
IN THE FRAMEWORK
OF THE POSTWAR
PLANNING¹

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This article is dedicated to the development of European unity in Central Europe and Scandinavia as a mechanism of collective security and intergovernmental cooperation development. The cultural and historical features of Central Europe and Scandinavia emphasize the need for a comparative study into the European idea. This article considers the tendencies and factors which affected the development of the European idea in the framework of the post-war planning.

This research sets out to compare and identify similar or analogous features and elements of the theoretical bases of movements for European unity in Central and Northern Europe.

The author comes to the conclusion about the correlation between the "Europe of regions" model and the European unity concept. The ideas of Scandinavian and Central European integration rested on national, cultural and historical connections of the neighbouring countries were expected to constitute such formations, which contradicted and were opposed to by the theoretical framework of Western European integration. On the other hand, regional integration implied that a federation or union of the neighbouring states could be considered a step towards a more universal organisation, which would not mean the isolation of Scandinavia and Central Europe from the rest of the world.

The theoretical and practical significance of this work lies in the comparative approach to the analysis of the phenomena which have been considered individually in the framework of historiography. It is the major contribution of the article to the research on history of ideas and European diplomacy. Moreover, the subject of research is immediately connected to the problem of security in the Baltic region and the Soviet factor, as well as political stereotypes produced in this field.

The author employed historical comparative and inductive types of the historical typological method.

Key words: integration, federation, neutrality, Central Europe, Scandinavia

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When conducting a comparative analysis of the role and place of the European idea in Central Europe and Scandinavia over the given period, one cannot but pay attention to the fundamental differences between these geographical regions from the perspective of political and cultural-historical homogeneity. Central Europe, which in this case is understood in the framework of the projects of Central European integration and thus includes such Eastern countries as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, demonstrates a much lower level of political homogeneity, which suggests stable intergovernmental connections, a similar degree of the development and a quality of civil society institutions, as well as the form of political system and tradition, than Scandinavian countries. On the other hand, if one gets abstracted from an enormous influence on the development of the European idea exerted by the standing of these countries in the system of relations between the USSR and Western allies, one can identify a number of commonalities, which distinguish them from and bring them together with the countries of Western Europe at the same time. This qualitative trend is most pronounced in the discussion and projects dedicated to the post-war European unity.

Throughout the interbellum (1918—1939), Central Europe played an important role in the French foreign policy, but in 1939, due to obvious reasons, the “mentor” function was handed over to Great Britain. In this connection, it is important to identify the two major areas that provided grounds for a heated socio-political discussion: between the USA and Great Britain (if one does not take into account the obvious differences in views on the post-war settlement of Europe with the Soviet leadership) and among European states, namely, in the circle of governments in exile and Resistance movements, which supported the idea of European unity in this or that form. A number of approaches and ideas that emerged in that period became the foundations of the European Union and European integration in general.

The Prime Minister of the Polish government in exile, Władysław Sikorski, was, probably, the most consistent advocate of the federation concept. Theoretically, his idea implied a significant Polish influence within a Central European Federation, which would make Warsaw an equal partner in the relations with London and Paris, thus, German aggression against the USSR was perceived as a factor contributing to the implementation of this plan.

In effect, W. Sikorski’s position fits perfectly within the framework of the New Europe concept presented by Winston Churchill to the Soviet ambassador, I. Maisky, in London in a conversation that took place on December 5, 1941. W. Churchill assumed that the new confederation could bring together Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Greece. And the group of participants could be later extended comprising a zone of states with common defence, foreign and economic policy. Such a federation could have united approximately 130 mln people and led to the integration of the whole Europe [19].

Sikorski put significant efforts in the establishment — alongside the Polish-Czechoslovakian confederation, the idea of which dominated his foreign policy activity — of a bloc of eight European states, whose governments in exile were based in London, namely, Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, the

Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and Yugoslavia. Almost simultaneously, in June 1942, the Belgian, Norwegian, and Danish governments in London presented a joint project of an international security system resting on the regional pacts in North Atlantic, South Atlantic and the Pacific region, which later could become a foundation of the world organisation. The parties that would sign the pact would be guaranteed collective security measures against aggression in the regions mentioned.

The Polish government pinned their hopes on the transatlantic ally — the USA. But the States, as well as Great Britain, expressed growing concerns regarding the Soviet factor. In the messages of February 29, 1942 to the US Secretary of State, C. Hull and his deputy S. Wells, the US ambassador to the UK, the US diplomat A. J. D. Biddle emphasized the need to monitor the steps taken by the Polish government, which, in the American public opinion, inflicted damage to Russia [17, p. 58]. As a result, on March 6, the White House authorised A. J. D. Biddle to inform W. Sikorski that they were not interested in further discussions of his proposal regarding a post-war commonwealth and the concept of uniting Central and Eastern European states [17, p. 59].

Next day President F. Roosevelt reiterated his disagreement with W. Sikorski's declaration on the post-war cooperation of small states. Roosevelt emphasised in his directive for the Department of State that there is a need to interfere in Sikorski's plan. He believed that it was not a good time to touch the issue of the post-war position of small states, since it would result in serious problems with Russia [9, p. 113].

On March 16, 1943, the UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden and the British ambassador to the USA, the Viscount of Halifax, met the deputy Secretary of State, S. Wells. The British government was inclined to support the idea of two federations in Europe: the Balkan and Central European one. S. Wells shared the British point of view, foreseeing the possibility of the establishment, alongside the Balkan federation, of a federation bringing together Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland [17]. At the same time, it was clear that W. Churchill is changing his opinion on the federal system of the post-war Europe, trying to distance himself from the idea of a Central European federation.

Probably, this circumstance could explain why, on March 21, 1943, W. Churchill returned to the idea of the Council of Europe. It is worth noting (despite leaping ahead) that the history of the foundation of the Council of Europe, which took place in 1949, is apparently connected with the idea of the British Prime Minister. The Council was supposed to incorporate "a High Court to adjust disputes". In his opinion, the small states united by the confederation would become equal partners of great States. Churchill proposed the creation of three unions: the Scandinavian, Danube, and Balkan [15]. Apparently, he avoided the definition of "Central European" union with Polish participation on purpose — in order not to irritate the Soviet government.

In early 1943, it became evident that any discussions relating to the changes in the post-war European organisation are impossible without the participation of great powers and the problem of keeping peace cannot be solved exclusively at the European level.

In May 1943, W. Churchill announced in the course of negotiations with F. Roosevelt that, after the war, Europe will consist of twelve states or confederations, which will form the European regional council, where the US participation would be extremely appreciated. Moreover, he expressed his hope that several unions would be established in Southeast Europe — the Danube Federation with a capital in Vienna, which would fill the vacuum that had been created by the dissolution of Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Balkan federation. As to Poland and Czechoslovakia, they are supposed to cultivate friendly relations with the USSR [2].

To a degree, the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paul-Henri Spaak was right to say that Stalin had deserved the right to be called the father of the European unity [10]. His extreme position on the European integration and all its possible forms made European countries gravitate to each other.

The last illusions as to the Soviet position on the federation issue were dispelled at the Moscow Meeting of the Allied Foreign Ministers on October 19—30, 1943, when the UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden — in conformity with instructions — tried to put the issue of a Central European Federation on the agenda. He put forward a proposal that the representatives of three powers adopt a declaration on joint responsibility for the post-war Europe based on four principles: universal freedom of government elections, right of states to accede to international associations or confederations, support of great powers for states interested in acceding to such confederations, opposition to the formation of “spheres of influence” [1, p. 161—162]. V. Molotov accused him of an attempt of resuming the “sanitary cordon” policy between the USSR and the rest of Europe [1, p. 180]. Since C. Hull did not support A. Eden, he found himself isolated and had no other choice than to withdraw the issue from the agenda.

As a result, the Soviet delegation handed over to their American and British counterparts a statement on the future of Poland, Danubian and Balkan countries, including the issue of confederation. It was meant to summarise the Soviet position, namely, that the establishment of a federation through the decisions of governments in exile, which by definition cannot be closely connected to their nations, can be interpreted as imposing decisions that do not reflect the desires of the nations. Moreover, the statement emphasized that certain federation projects reminded the Soviet people of the sanitary cordon policy aimed against the Soviet Union and thus perceived negatively in the country [1, p. 329].

Among the few who adhered to a more reserved position were the Soviet ambassador to the UK, I. Maisky and the deputy People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, M. Litvinov. In January 1944, they stressed that it is not in the Soviet interests to facilitate the establishment of various federations — whether Balkan, Danubian, Central European or Scandinavian — at least immediately after the war. The consensus was believed to lie in the USSR remaining an impregnable power in Europe [20, p. 85].

As to Scandinavia, it is worth noting that the problem of collective security system, the Soviet factor, and the concerns of small states that cannot

oppose on their own the threats posed by large aggressors played an equally important role in the framework of a Central European federation.

It is worth focusing on the Swedish approach, since it was the Swedish political and public circles that played the leading role in the Scandinavian initiatives towards integration at the intergovernmental level in the interbellum. At the same time, the history of the Swedish idea of establishment of intergovernmental associations of European and even world level was almost always limited geographically to Scandinavian countries and was significantly influenced by the ideas borrowed from the continental Europe, first of all, France. The Swedish approach is characterised by an increased interest in the neutrality of Scandinavian countries and international and intergovernmental arbitration.

The policy of Scandinavian neutrality was relatively successful in the years of both World Wars and it became a serious argument for the supporters of Sweden's remaining a neutral state and avoiding limitations and obligations imposed by international alliances and unions. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the fact that the neighbouring countries, which also pursued the neutrality policy — Denmark and Norway, were involved in the war this or that way. It became obvious — the countries of the world are interconnected to such a degree that they are interdependent and neutrality could not be the only possible model for Sweden anymore.

It is worth noting that the idea of a European federation was discussed in Swedish public circles during the interbellum. In this context one cannot but recall R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi's *Pan-Europa*, published in Sweden in 1930 several months after the famous initiative of the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, on the establishment of a European Federation in the framework of the League of Nations [6]. After the war had begun, a book by the former Czechoslovakian President, Edvard Beneš, entitled *Democracy Today and Tomorrow* was published in the Swedish language. The author expressed a hope that the European crisis would lead to the development of more democratic structures in the framework of the European state, as well as a better intra-European organisation. And such a reorganisation was expected to start with the foundation of regional federations, including a Scandinavian one [5].

Sweden acceded to the League of Nations after World War I and began to pursue a policy of qualitative development of cooperation between the Nordic countries. The events of World War II forced its foreign policy to become more flexible and adapt to the dynamically changing power ratio rather than to be a policy of the firmly established principles. While the Polish and Czech counterparts were actively exploiting the theme of the post-war integration, in Swedish governmental circles, first serious considerations about the post-war policy emerged only at the end of the war, when the correlation of opposing powers became more evident.

But an increased cautiousness and pragmatism of the official circles did not hamper public debate on the post-war international organisation, which followed the federalist model. However, there is little evidence of the direct support of a European Federation. The idea was actively discussed by Swed-

ish authors, but it was not the only one and, moreover, was not considered as a preferable solution to the problem of the post-war security. A Nordic or, as strange as it sounds, a World Federation was perceived as a more viable scenario. Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-Europe was actively discussed [6]. But, except for H. Stolpe, there was no other author, whose works were dedicated immediately and exclusively to this issue [18]. A consistent moderate attitude to the "European idea" is characteristic of Scandinavia in general, but as to Sweden, there was also the factor of a "medium" state, which was manifested in certain cultural and historical features. If there had been a need to protect its social and political traditions, Sweden would have preferred a union with only its Scandinavian neighbors, which, unlike it, would have been more orientated towards continental Europe (Denmark) or transatlantic relations (Norway). Anyway, the Pan-European movement "constituted a public space where both the meaning of Europe and the vision of united Europe were discussed. This public space, however, was not homogeneous, but rather, multi-layered and controversial" [3, p. 25].

Karl Ekblom, one of the leaders of Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, was one of the first Swedes to discuss the opportunities for the establishment of an international federation after the end of the war. However, he emphasized that, when putting forward new ideas of a world or European organisation, one should keep in mind that the old structures have not been demolished, nor have they lost their relevance [8, p. 4].

Another advocate of an international federation, Halvar Khennet, supported the idea of a Nordic federation as a part of a global one. He stressed that it is desirable that the member states would not differ dramatically in size or economic and cultural features. Thus, it would be preferable that small states united in subfederations, which would form unions in the framework of larger alliances [12, p. 43—44]. Of course, Scandinavia was considered promising grounds for such a federation. Thus, Khennet wrote that the United States of the North — Nordern — should become a member of the future world organisation and an integral element in the broad context of keeping peace. He concluded that only a true supranational union can provide such a level of security for a group of small states, which they cannot ensure independently [12, p. 45].

One of the most eminent Swedish advocates of an international federation is the philosopher and enlightener, Alf Ahlberg. In his works, he mentions a European Federation as an element of the new world order [4].

The famous Swedish author, Alva Myrdal, paid significant attention to the problems of the post-war planning. A large number of her works is dedicated to the economic recovery and social transformations after the war. She wrote that the balance of power between small and large states is a problem that lacks clear formulation in any official project. In this connection, she referred to W. Churchill's statement made in April 1943, which focused on the establishment of a "Council of Europe", the members of which could be federations of small states. Sweden was expected to analyse whether this framework was too limiting for it, since Scandinavia, not unlike Great Britain, was not used to considering itself just a part of Europe. A. Myrdal em-

phasized that the closest cooperation should bring Sweden together with the Nordic neighbours and doubted that it would serve Swedish or Scandinavian interests to accede to a purely European organisation. She supposed that a Nordic Union could be a better alternative [14, p. 137—138].

Lt.-Col. Torsten Holm paid significant attention to the issue of international security and military history in his works. He thought it was obvious that the Nordic isolation policy is incompatible with the idea of an international peace organisation [11, p. 76]. It is worth recalling that the idea of a defence union between Finland, Norway, and Sweden was put forward in March 1942. After Denmark and Norway had been occupied, the debate on a future Nordic defence union was resumed. It also focused on common foreign policy. A manifestation of this approach is the document entitled *Nordens forenta stater*, which was published in spring 1942. The ideas presented in it implied, inter alia, a total coordination of the security mechanisms in Northern Europe. The authors were quite optimistic to suppose that such measures as the consolidation of air forces will make it possible to repel any military attacks. They also maintained that the Nordic countries would be able to preserve their traditions of law and equity, if they cooperated in the sphere of politics, which required the establishment of a Nordic Union with a common government, foreign policy, defence system, supreme court, and parliament [16].

In the Swedish public circles, the dominant trend, which gained most support, was ensuring the post-war security in the framework of the Northern or exclusively Swedish dimension. There was a considerable scepticism towards the possible world organisation, thus, it was a general sentiment that Northern Europe should develop a strong security system. On the other hand, the Swedish peace movement emphasised that a Northern association should be considered a step towards a more universal organisation, which would help avoid the isolation of Scandinavia from the rest of the world.

Czechoslovakian and Polish politicians often voiced ideas about the need to establish a Northern alliance. In his report delivered in Chicago on May 22, 1943, Edvard Beneš forecast that many small nations would create a large alliance in the future Europe [7]. In an interview given on July 2, 1943 in Cairo, the Polish Prime Minister, W. Sikorski, maintained that peace should rather be protected by a pan-European federation featuring Poland and Czechoslovakia as the central bloc and with the participation of the Nordic Union.

It becomes clear that the diplomatic opposition between the Western allies and the USSR in regard to the problem of the post-war planning in Europe, and the ensuing Cold War could be called the “midwives” in the birth of the contemporary European community. The projects of a Central European and Scandinavian integration as variants that did not properly fit the model of the “common Europe” in its classical Western European understanding were no exception in this context, whereas for the “eastern bloc”, the aspiration to join the European community was a driving ambition throughout the second half the 20th century.

The Soviet leadership of the Stalin era considered the European integration, first of all, as a potential threat to the security interests of the USSR; this attitude was based on numerous examples from the 19th and 20th centuries. However, Moscow did not pay due attention to the economic aspect and thus interpreted this European process as a strategic step towards the future conflict with the Soviet Union.


As to another key aspect, it is worth noting that the inclination of the advocates of Central European and Scandinavian integration towards the model of Europe of regions is rather ambiguous. The European community cannot be built on the basis of an abstract schematic federalisation of artificial regions or through disassembling the national level structures [13]. However, this circumstance was often ignored by the advocates of Eastern European and Scandinavian integration.

As to Scandinavia, one can mention that over the post-war period, the relations between the Nordic countries increasingly became a matter of political prestige rather than those of pure security. In the first post-war years, Scandinavian countries hoped that the gap between the West and the East could be gradually overcome. The economic manifestation of these attitudes was, in particular, the Swedish-Soviet credit agreement of 1945—1946, which had both economic and political motives, whereas the importance of forging friendly relations with the USSR was unambiguously emphasised.

The Swedish aspiration for Nordic cooperation in the post-war period was partially determined by the need to use it to ensure collective security and create a wider platform for the neutrality policy than the one available at the national level. It is due to this reason and non-involvement in the war and stable economic conditions at the initial stage of the Cold War that Sweden took on the initiative to organise cooperation in the field of security between Scandinavian countries, which would bring about a thaw in relations with the USSR. The bipolar structure of the post-war world attached major significance on the political agenda to the projects with Nordic participation.

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