

Konstantin I. PAKHORUKOV
EXTERNAL ACTIVITY OF THE REGIONS

**(ON THE EXAMPLE OF PARADIPLOMACY OF
TERRITORIAL ENTITIES OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC
IN THE EARLY XXIst CENTURY)**

Scientific specialty: 5.6.7.

History of International Relations and Foreign Policy

**Dissertation submitted for the degree of Candidate of
Historical Sciences**

Report

Konstantin Pakhorukov, hereafter “the author”, brings to bear a rich experience in diplomacy, notably in France, and accumulated research in the field of international relations as demonstrated in his bibliography. The present dissertation, in partial fulfillment for the doctorate in the History of International Relations and Foreign Policy, serves as an exegetic overview of the laborious construction of the European Union, ranging from the initial post-war efforts to establish the underpinnings of a common market, through the negotiations and arduous ratifications of treaties, to a detailed study of paradiplomacy as it relates to regions.

The author rightly provides pertinent historical precedents beckoning as far back in time as the Merovingian kings, and thus underscores the complexities of centralized nation-building and the challenges of delineating the borders of successive monarchies and republics. This is a necessity if one is to understand the dynamics between Paris, the decision-making hub vs. the provinces, tributary of the capital. One always “goes up” to Paris even one lives in Lille. Through his detailed analysis of subsidiarity, the author follows the emerging political itineraries that try to promote direct relations between regions and Brussels, site of the Commission, and between regions and other regions: Toulouse bypasses Paris and talks directly with Brussels or with Barcelona. But is it that simple and unimpeded? The author cautions against naïveté and asserts that the process is at best

incomplete and certainly wrought with obstacles stemming from entrenched practices within and among constituent regions, and among divergent nation states. Mr. Pakhorukov shows ably the intricate balance between national, subnational, and supranational policies. Within France, he chronicles the important changes realized in decentralization all the while hinting that it has often translated into re-centralization, what critics call the wasteful *mille-feuille administratif*, with costly duplicate functions at the town level, the *communauté des communes* level, the departmental level, and the regional level. He rightly mentions and postpones consideration of the status of Corsica and thereby paves the way for future thorny questions of its autonomy “within the republic” and the even thornier questions of Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guyana; the nagging problems in Mayotte, and the explosive situation in New Caledonia.

By straddling both history and international relations, the author fosters a better understanding of the evolving perceptions French presidents have nurtured, from Charles de Gaulle’s sense of independence and grandeur to Emmanuel Macron’s penchant for federalism and beyond. How both have faced the challenges and risks of decentralization, while preserving their bailiwick in foreign affairs, proves that the process is not for the faint of heart and has often resulted in *dissatisfaction*, which the author underscores.

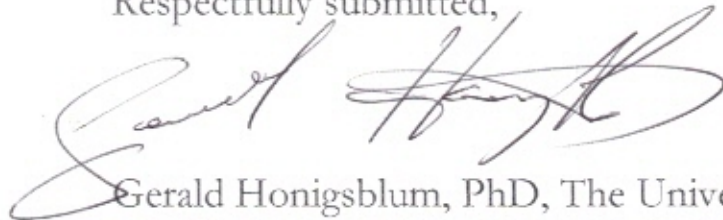
The dissertation does not fail to take up major questions relative to paradiplomacy such as the Common Agricultural Policy, cross-border cooperations, twin-city programs, all mixes of economics and culture, and, last but not least, the cross-year agreements between France and Russia. If the latter have taken a back seat in the recent climate, surely this considerable effort of research and documentation constitutes a valuable contribution to understanding the mosaic of regionalism as it relates to European Union, to other economic zones of influence, including the Russian Federation, given its long quarrels between Europhiles and Slavophiles, and given its unique dual status of a European and Asian country.

The author is to be commended for providing clear and readable content and arguments, as well as copious footnotes, and spanning bibliography that includes numerous links to on-line material. He provides a state-of-the-art synthesis of scholarship and a bridge to

further research. One is tempted to recommend adding an often-forgotten play, in riming alexandrine verse, attributed to the Cardinal de Richelieu, entitled *Europe*, in which the prelate builds an allegory of European nations ravaged by the 'Thirty-Years' War. The belligerents -- Iber, Germanique, Albion, and Italique -- all await the grand gesture of Francion to stop coveting the virgin queen Europe. There is a happy ending. Would that France today pull off a miracle to bring about harmony and a little more brotherhood. Hard to vouch for that.

The author, Konstantin I. Pakhorukov, deserves to be awarded the degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences.

Respectfully submitted,



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