

*Paper prepared for*

*The Fourth Euroacademia International Conference*

*Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities*

*Venice, Italy*

*4 – 5 March 2016*

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# THE ROLE OF SECESSION IN THE THEORY OF ANARCHY: Deconstruction of collective identities

Aleksandar Savanović

Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Banja Luka  
e-mail:alexandar.savanovic@gmail.com

**Abstract:** In this paper we will try to analyze the concept of secession in the contemporary theory of political anarchy, as suggested by Murray Rothbard and his followers, as a concept of deconstruction of wider collective identities. Secessionist movements have a fundamental support from the anarchistic theory, because any case and situation of secession leads to reduction of the state sovereignty as a consequence. Having in mind that theory of anarchy claims that concept of the state sovereignty [as a monopoly of legitimate force] and moral autonomy of person are in fundamental contradiction, follows that secession leads to growth of liberty and protection of moral autonomy. This kind of political theory, obviously means specific model of identity; namely deconstruction of collective identities not only to the smaller entities, but to the individual itself. If we accept anarchy as a political model, we cannot stop at one level, for example region, federal unit, even city [polis] etc. Such decision is always arbitrary. Consequently, theory of anarchy leads us to the “secession from the secessionist”, and, finally to the individual existence. Of course, human being is *politikon zoon*, and some kind of political community is necessity. But basic “political” fact is “Solitary Man”, an individual.

**Keywords:** Anarchy, Secession, Identity

## 1. Introduction: the Theory of Anarchy

In this paper we will employ the concept of anarchy as a strictly political concept, in specific sense that has been suggested by Murray Rothbard<sup>1</sup>, titled anarcho-capitalism. As other anarchist theoretical concept, it means some kind of deconstruction [destruction] of the state. That follows from the basic point of the political anarchy: conflict between moral autonomy of the person, on the one side; and sovereignty as a monopoly of “legitimate” force over people, on the other side.<sup>2</sup> Rothbard develops discussion about this conflict within theoretical model of “the nonaggression axiom”.<sup>3</sup> According to the main line of the political anarchy, there is no possibility to find any solution to the problem of violation of the moral autonomy of the human being under the political framework of the sovereign state. As it has been obviously suggested above, a term “the state” refers to the “Westphalian” or “Weberian” model of the state sovereignty. Such kind of sovereignty implies two fundamental tenets: (i) the right to command, and, (ii) the claim that the sovereign is the only legitimate owner of that force, or, that sovereign has monopoly to the legitimate force. Second point is critical for anarcho-capitalism, because, as Rothbard pointed, problem is not the existence of political power, but monopoly over that power. Anarchy, as the political concept means: suspension of the monopoly over the political power. That does not imply the absence of the political power.<sup>4</sup> Anarcho-capitalism is a political concept which promotes the model of free market, competitiveness, in all aspects of political life. Even, (and especially), in the area of so-called “public” security, or other sorts of “public necessity goods”, environmental protection etc. Many types of “public” services and political coercion are socially necessary. For example, army, police, security agencies, prisons, courts, and others. But it is not necessary to claim that the only way to provide these services is through the state.<sup>5</sup> All of them can be, and can be more efficiently, provided by private sector and private agencies.

## 1.1. Secession<sup>6</sup>

Within this theoretical approach, the theory of secession plays important theoretical, analytical and empirical role. Namely, if we accept basic position of the anarcho-capitalist theory, there is a question: how can we realize this concept within real world that is composed of the countries? Anarcho-capitalist proposal is: through gradual and progressive secession from wider political entities towards small communities. The concept of secession is a model of political action that has final aim to decompose the current system of states. Therefore, anarcho-capitalists allow and support secession for any reason and in any situation. The ideal type of anarcho-capitalist world is the network of small political communities, like medieval Italian cities or ancient Greek polis, connected by the free market.<sup>7</sup> Such kind of world is a system of hundreds and thousands cities, villages, districts, regions, states, independent territories, informal communities etc. Secession is a model how that vision can be realized and reached without using force and coercion. Simply, it is necessary to provide opportunity for any member of certain political community to leave that community when he/she decides to do that. (Of course, previously fulfilling obligation from the contract or agreement of entrance). But, this empirical model, and practical proposal, has an important far-reaching theoretical consequence: where is a border of the process of secession? Can we, being theoretically correct, stop the secession process on some point – on the level of the federal units for example? Or nation, as suggested famous formula “the right of nations to self-determination”? All these levels are obviously arbitrary decisions, even if they are actually created on the cultural, national, ethnic, religious grounds. Logically and theoretically correct position is:

“If Canada and the United States can be separate nations without being denounced as being in a state of impermissible ‘anarchy’, why may not the South secede from the United States? New York State from the Union? New York City from the state? Why may not Manhattan secede? Each neighborhood? Each block? Each house? Each *person*? But, of course, if each person may secede from government, we have virtually arrived at the purely free society, where defense is supplied along with all other services by the free market and where the invasive State has ceased to exist.”<sup>8</sup>

“Is it legitimate for West Ruritania to secede from Ruritania? If not, why not? And if so, then how can there be a logical stopping-point to the secession? May not a small district secede, and then a city, and then a borough of that city, and then a block, and then finally a particular individual? Once admit *any* right of secession whatever, and there is no logical stopping-point short of the right of individual secession, which logically entails anarchism, since then individuals may secede and patronize their own defense agencies, and the State has crumbled.”<sup>9</sup>

So, the consequence of the anarcho-capitalist theoretical attack against the state and practical proposal how it can be realized, finally stops on the level of personal human being. This leads us to the main topic of this paper: concept of an individual within anarcho-capitalism.

## 2. The concept of human being

“There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families.” [Margaret Thatcher]

First of all, from the previous introduction, we can understand what anarchy is not, in a sense that is relevant for our intention in this paper. Firstly, anarchy is not some kind of isolation or drastic atomization of persons, a vision of isolated “monads” in the social space. When Rothbard explains “Myths” about libertarianism, the first “myth” is: “*Libertarians believe that each individual is an isolated, hermetically sealed atom, acting in a vacuum without influencing each other.*”<sup>10</sup> As he pointed out, such kind of interpretation of anarchy can be found only in works of “fanatical individualist” as Max Stirner is, for example. Contemporary concept of anarchy is *the theory of political community*. Within such kind of theory, human being is the “political animal”. But, there is not a metaphysical or above-person sovereign power.<sup>11</sup> When a group of persons create political community, they always have a right to exit or withdraw. Also, they have a right to choose agency for all demands, including so-called “public” protection etc. We have “loose” connection in political sense, and highly fluent communities. So, political concept of anarchy is not a political system of Robinson Crusoe, although “Solitary Man” is the starting point in *analytical* sense.

Second, anarchy is not a “utopia” – vision of the Golden Age or Paradise (ancient or future). This is also typical and often repeated mistake, which comes from a wrong interpretation of Lockean description of the state of

nature (“a *state of perfect freedom*” and “*state also of equality*”<sup>12</sup>). Wrong argument is simple: anarchy cannot functioning if we understood relation between individuals into the state of nature as *homo homini lupus est* situation. Anarchy is possible only if the state of nature is peaceful and “natural” cooperation. This “utopian” objection to anarchy has two contents: (a) anarchy can be possible only into the world better than the real world is; (b) anarchy can be possible only between people that are better than real people are. Both contexts have same point: anarchy is a utopian system that could not work within the real world and between real people.<sup>13</sup> Rothbard recognizes source of this misconception in Rousseau’s description of the state of nature, - “the *locus classicus* of the idea that man is good but is corrupted by his institutions”<sup>14</sup>, also in some “romantic writings...of anarcho-communists”. Contrary to this, concept of evil/good as a description of the human nature does not exist within the anarcho-capitalist theory. Rothbard constantly repeated that his theoretical concept of anarchy *is not* a moral theory, it is a political theory. This means that this theory describes connection between individuals as political facts, whatever they are in moral or aesthetic sense. In fact, his concept of political anarchy works in both situations:

“If all men were good and none had criminal tendencies, then there would indeed be no need for a state as conservatives concede. But if on the other hand all men were evil, then the case for the state is just as shaky, since why should anyone assume that those men who form the government and obtain all the guns and the power to coerce others, should be magically exempt from the badness of all the other persons outside the government? ...In no theory of human nature, then, whether it be goodness, badness, or a mixture of the two, can statism be justified.”<sup>15</sup>

Within the anarcho-capitalist theory a concept of person is an analytical tool that has purpose to decompose collective identities, firstly the state, but also other. This is “negative” step – deconstruction of “quasi-divine”<sup>16</sup>, “metaphysical” entities. This deconstruction includes anthropological space: deconstruction of “We” as a non-empirical construction. For example, when we use the term “a chess player”, or “an European” it is a metaphysical category because it creates some essence and put it over me, *eo ipso*, leads to reduction of existence of “I” – some aspects of my existence have to be defined by metaphysical category “European”. Within anarcho-capitalism, the concept of “I” refers to the hyper-empirical here-and-now man. Anarcho-capitalism is “eminently realistic” doctrine. Of course, all cultural, national etc. facts have influence and, in fact, create a person in real life. But, in theoretical sense, these facts are irrelevant, on a fundamental level of discussion. Some aspects of human existence can be described as universal features that transcended all local or collective identities. But, the point is a here-and-now individual. Concept of deconstruction of collective identities as “metaphysical” entities has utmost importance in the theory of secession, and this has usually not been recognized by political theorists and philosophers. Namely, the theoretically dominant concept of secession is clearly explained by the contract theory of the constitution: secession is justified only-and-only-if there is a consent of both sides. The constitution is the social contract, and as any contract, cannot be rejected by unilateral decision. The constitution has “metaphysical” role in previous sense. At some far point in the past (maybe ancient) political community has been created by consent (express or tacit) of all members. Theoretically, all members (and, their followers - by the concept of “tacit” and/or hypothetical consent) accepted the political order. They are *de facto* bounded by ancient decision (that is hypothetical or “metaphysical” in present). Without agreement of other side they do not have possibility to exit. Obviously there is a gap between *de facto* obligations and hypothetical consent to the political order. Anarcho-capitalist theorists reject such kind of abstract agreement. Only real contract is *prima facie* (here-and-now) contract between sides. If one is accepted by some political community, only obligation that has been accepted by the act of entrance is *de facto* agreement.<sup>17</sup> When one side fulfils obligation from this *de facto* contract, there is no obligation and the act of secession is possible.

“Positive” and crucial step is description of the man as political fact.<sup>18</sup> Anarcho-capitalism reinterprets the classical concept of the *animal rationale*. The man is understood as an “egoistic” and rational being – “as rational and mutually disinterested” in Rawls’ understanding of these terms<sup>19</sup>, for example. What remains after the final “secession from the secessionists” is the network of rational and egoistic human beings. Their rationality and egoism leads to the community: everyone recognize that the “Pareto-optimality” situation can be reached in cooperation with others, not in isolation. Rothbard explains this by using the famous model of “Robinson Crusoe economy”, especially after including of “Friday”.<sup>20</sup> Analytical process of isolated Crusoe explains the basic fact about man, as well relation between man and nature. There is the man and there is nature. What Crusoe can do depends only of his capacities – capacities of his body and mind. This is the correct sense of Lockean interpretation of “freedom” in the state of nature. By “the homestead principle”<sup>21</sup>, Crusoe has a right to take anything what he wants from nature. Appearance of “Friday” serves to explain interpersonal relations. Even if we suppose extreme imbalance between the capacity of Crusoe and the capacity of Friday, still, for Crusoe rational choice is to cooperate with Friday, but not the master-slave relation. Even within this “optimistic” anthropology, problem still exist: misunderstandings and conflicts between different people are inevitable. What is a mechanism

for decision-making in conflict-situation between Crusoe and Friday? To make it more clear – there is no necessity to claim that some entity with monopoly to command (the state) is the only way to provide such arbitration. What Crusoe and Friday need is some kind of independent third side, and their decision to accept third side *as* arbitrator (promise to accept arbitrator's decision whatever be). In the world of anarchy there will be an infinite number of the “third side” – it can be any person (private citizen or professional judge). Crusoe and Friday should choose one of them. What if Crusoe withdraws his consent after arbiter's decision which is not considered as a just solution, from the Crusoe's point of view? Theoretical solution is simple: Crusoe and Friday, as an aspect of the contract, can hire a security agency for implementation of arbitrator's decision. Why Crusoe and Friday make a decision to create such arrangement? As it has been explained before: as rational beings, both of them recognize that political community is “Pareto-optimality” situation in regard to the state of nature.

### 3. Conclusion

After previous short explanation it is clear that all critical points in Rothbard's theory of anarchy are interconnected and make one comprehensive unit, and logically consistent system. The cause of anarchy-request is conflict between moral autonomy of the man and sovereignty as the monopoly to command. The secession is the practical effect of this. Logically correct interpretation of the secession finally leads to the concept of an individual human being. At first glance, this can be understood as a parole for absurd and impossible program of “atomization”. If we interpret the concept of anarcho-capitalism correctly, then this is not a case: Crusoe is the analytical tool, strictly abstract model that serves to explain why human being is political animal, and why political community is necessity, if we understand men “as rational and mutually disinterested”. The point is: cooperation between individuals is not necessary under the sovereign “metaphysical” entity, as the state is. The only necessity is an arbitrator for the case of misunderstandings and conflicts. Infinite secession is not the program of destruction of political community – it is destruction of monopoly of political force. In this context, theory of anarchy can be fruitful approach for understanding of wide range of possibilities in the globalization process, especially alternative ways, opposite to the dominant line of “integration” as stronger connection between countries, but, unfortunately too often, not equally strong connection between peoples. Why? Because there are too many “abstract” or “metaphysical” mediators, which produces lack of “direct”, “de facto”, “here-and-now” (by dictionary of anarcho-capitalist) connections. Radical concept of secession, paradoxically, can be an interesting way to provide this.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty – The Libertarian Manifesto* (Macmillan, London 2002); Murray Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York University Press, New York 1998); Aleksandar Savanović, *Anarhokapitalizam* (Fakultet političkih nauka, Banjaluka 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Wolf Robert Paul, *In defense of Anarchism* (University of California Press, Berkeley 1998),x.

<sup>3</sup> Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*,22-37.

<sup>4</sup> Savanovic, *Anarhokapitalizam*, 69-84.

<sup>5</sup> Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *A Theory of Socialism and Capitalism* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> See: Savanovic, *Anarhokapitalizam*, 89-97.

<sup>7</sup> Hans-Hermann Hoppe, “The Future of Liberalism - A Plea For A New Radicalism”, *Polis 1* (1998):141. ; Hans-Hermann Hoppe, “Small is Beautiful and Efficient: The Case For Secession”, *Telos 20* (1996): 95-101.

<sup>8</sup> Rothbard, *Power and Market*, 4-5.

<sup>9</sup> Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*, 182.

<sup>10</sup> Murray Rothbard, “*Myth and Truth About Libertarianism*“, *Modern Age*, (Winter 1980): 9-15.

<sup>11</sup> “No individualist or libertarian denies that people influence each other all the time, and surely there is nothing wrong with this inevitable process. What libertarians are opposed to is not voluntary persuasion, but the coercive imposition of values by the use of force and police power. Libertarians are in no way opposed to the voluntary cooperation and collaboration between individuals: only to the compulsory pseudo-‘cooperation’ imposed by the state.” Rothbard, “*Myth and Truth About Libertarianism*“, 9.

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<sup>12</sup> Locke John, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett Publishing Company, Cambridge 1980),8.

<sup>13</sup> Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, 310.

<sup>14</sup> Rothbard, "Myth and Truth About Libertarianism", 13.

<sup>15</sup> Rothbard, "Myth and Truth About Libertarianism", 13-14.

<sup>16</sup> Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, 37, 49-50,79.

<sup>17</sup> See: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Blackwell Publishers, Oxford 1999), 300-303.

<sup>18</sup> See: Savanovic, *Anarhokapitalizam*,136-163.

<sup>19</sup> John Rawls, *Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1999),12.

<sup>20</sup> Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*,29-50.

<sup>21</sup> Locke, *Second Treatise*,18-20. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*,34,47-50,57,150-151,172-173. *The homestead principle* usually has been taken as a description of ownership and property rights by the Lockean mechanism of „mixing labour and resources“. But it has sophisticated and important role for the theory of secession. In a way I take to be intuitive, the concept of secession includes the homestead principle. Namely, moral autonomy of person has two senses: (in) self ownership as intrinsic moral value; and (ii) „borders of person“ or the natural (or human) rights proposition. Both are protected by the nonaggression axiom. Selfownership is fundamental aspect of the theory of property: I am owner of some resource because I mixed my labor with these resources, and, from the fact that I am only “owner” of my body (which works) ipso facto I am owner of resources that has been changed by my labor. But, in present situation almost all “basic” natural resources (such land is) are divided by “sovereign” countries. According to Weberian definition - the state has a monopoly on the territory. Problem is: there is no place for the homestead principle. If Crusoe cannot be human being without possibility to employ his human capacities under the homestead principle, is there possibility to talk about „autonomy“? So, secession has an important anthropological content.

*Author's biography:* Aleksandar Savanovic, PhD in political sciences. Aleksandar's work has focused on political theory, political philosophy and contemporary theories of liberalism. He is currently an assistant professor at the Faculty of political sciences at the University of Banja Luka, where he also on the position of Head of department of politiology. During mandate 2010-2012, and from 2015, he is Advisor to the Speaker of the House of Peoples at the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina.