

## ARTICLES

### WILL EUROPE WORK? DEMOCRACY UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF GLOBALIZATION<sup>1</sup>

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*"We put Maastricht before Sarajevo and now pay for it"*  
(Timothy Garton Ash)<sup>2</sup>

The question "Will Europe Work?" is very appropriate and comes at an appropriate time. The question is however legitimate only when we mean by Europe the whole of it and only if that whole of Europe is not taken out of its evident context which is the whole world. This paper will consider main trends of formation of a new, post-1989 Europe from sociological and anthropological points of view, and pose the question of Europe as a question of the world. More specifically I am asking twin question, namely "Will the world work if Europe works?" and "What kind of working of Europe the world needs?". In what follows I shall employ and question the predominantly *emic*<sup>3</sup> civilizational and socio-economic categories of West and East along with the North/South opposition and some commonly used terms borrowed from sociology, anthropology and political studies. My firm conviction is that the problem of democracy, i.e. its spreading and possible relativization under the conditions of globalization, can be best tackled if Europe is confronted with itself as a still divided continent and with the rest of the world.

<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised version of a paper entitled "Democracy under conditions of globalization: east/west and north/south compared" which I presented at the session Globalization in Europe: East and West during the 4th European Conference of Sociology, Amsterdam, August 17-20 1999. I wish to thank the conveners Jan Nederveen Pieterse of the Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, and Marian Kempny of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw for inviting me to the session. Britt-Marie Oberg of the Department of Communication, Linköping University, read the text carefully and suggested various editorial and semantic improvements for which I am very grateful. Neither of these three colleagues can be held responsible for the contents of the paper.

<sup>2</sup> New York Review of Books, 24 June 1999.

<sup>3</sup> 'Emic' in anthropology means the selfreflective viewpoint whereas 'etic' is the outside, e.g. scientific, position on any social phenomenon. The terms are derived from the opposition of phonemic/phonetic.

In Europe, West, Centre and East, the collapse of communist rule in 1989 and since was received with great expectations. The hope of the emergence of stable democracies all over the continent and the eventual unification of the continent, economically, politically and culturally was raised. The ten years that have elapsed since this hope was first aroused and expressed have shown that while the countries of the European Union continue in their self-centred march towards unity at whatever costs, that is fulfilling Maastricht, Amsterdam, Euro and internal functioning criteria, the eastern part of the continent squeaks in cramps of post-communism which some commentators view as even worse than communism itself. The fiction-dream of European unity was during those ten years substituted by ever stronger feeling and reluctant recognition on both sides that East and West in Europe were growing ever more apart. Most central and eastern European countries are at least nominal democracies, in spite of the fact that they have experienced various problems with their political culture, with the respect of the parliaments and political parties for the demands and expectations of the civil society. However, for example in Belarus and Serbia, 'democracy' is evidently only a façade. Also Croatian, Bosnian, Moldovan, Azerbaijani or Russian democracies are dubious.

The West does not make things easier. For example, the cherished freedom of travel which enables direct contact between people from West and East is increasingly curbed by (re-)introduction by several western countries of visa obligation for the visitors from Russia, the Balkan countries, Slovakia<sup>4</sup> (the Czechs may soon have to have visas to Britain as well). Of course, one could quickly say that it is the fault of the Slovaks and Czechs that they do not treat well their Romany co-citizens, but the fact is that the millions of the citizens of these two countries who do not want to escape, settle in the West or spend paid-for holiday as applicants for the refugee status regrettably find themselves under the rubric of collective guilt.

Certainly more serious is the economic gap between western and eastern Europe which does not close at all. Even the most efficient and successful of the 'new democracies' cannot boast catching up in both productivity and income. In the Czech Republic post-communist 'jungle-capitalism' (my term) or 'banking socialism' (Czech journalists) practiced during the last eight years have led to the disappearance of practically all state financial reserves including the revenue from privatization and the general pension fund. 'Tunnelling' is the name used for

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<sup>4</sup> For example as I write these lines Slovak citizens cannot any more travel without visa to the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Norway and Finland which is explained by the exodus of the Slovak Romanies to these countries. The Czech parliament discusses introduction of visa obligation for the citizens of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, referring to the illegal work of their citizens in the Czech Republic and to the fact that western European countries require visa from these nationals. It says that it is desirable that by the time of accession to the European Union, the visa policy of the Czech Republic and the EU should be the same.

method of acquiring money and property by skilfully (ab)using the loopholes in the Czech law.

Under the banner of the treaty of association with the European Union, eastern European countries are being flooded by western goods and know-how. Western tourists wonder why those 'locals' whom they meet in Prague, Budapest or Cracow are treating them rather as personalized bottomless source of money than fellow human beings. These are symptoms of neo-colonialism with which western Europeans have not less experience than with classical colonialism.

On the other hand, apparently the entire population of the eastern European countries whetted its appetite for an instant coming of the western standards of living but on the whole did not acquaint itself with the correct methods of achieving it. Instead millions consider it their sacred right just because they sincerely believe that they are Europeans by virtue of history Europeans. Thus it is no exaggeration if we say that most post-communist populations experience a kind of schizophrenic cargo cult<sup>5</sup> situation when they believe in a combination of the western consumption pattern with the socialist work ethic. No wonder that cargocultist economists and sociologists emerge and futilely try to become Max Webers of this post-communist quadrature of the circle!

Finally a seemingly extreme abnormality is reached when some post-communist regimes are obsessed by the imperative of unity of discredited empires or artificial states: entire populations are punished by bombardment because they obey their leaders (Chechnia, Serbia, the Kurds) while others are left unpunished because their leaders are on the side of the powerful (Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo Albanians, Turkey).

However, I firmly believe that the solution to the problem of creating stable democracies in the East does not lie in looking for a better recipe of how the East should catch up with the West but in the recognition that due to objective conditions of the past and present social, political and economic developments a one-direction unification of values, ethics and practices is not possible. It may even not be desirable. I do not plea for a relativist vision of democracy, but simply appeal to realism that even if you bomb like mad you will not convert people with different historical and civilizational experience. Actually opposite will happen: they will defy you with a new creed – the hatred of the West (or the Moscow or Ankara regimes...).

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<sup>5</sup> Cargo cults, religious and political reactions to colonialism, became famous in their Melanesian forms after the departure of allied forces following the end of the World War II. By building airports, roads and havens where mass prayers took place people expressed belief in that planes will come back and bring the 'kago' to which they became accustomed during the war. Cargo cults are related to any millenarian, chiliastic or nativistic movements. The cargo cult behaviour can be found in many places in the world where false promises are taken seriously. Thus communism, populism and fascism can be seen as cargo cults.

There is a large literature on cargo cultism of which I point out the classical works by Worsley (1957), Burridge (1960) and Lawrence (1964).

I do not say that western democracy should not be an example worth following but I do say that those who try to follow that example should not be scorned, despised and punished when they fail and achieve something else instead. Neither is it admissible that those who possess or believe that they possess exemplary forms of democracy and sophisticated technologies are entitled to teach, order and mock others who do not have these. Let me firmly state that Europe will not work unless it even inside its western part recognizes the pluralism of political culture, economic and social specificity of each country and regions within its boundaries and across them. Too many mandatory European standards (as the seemingly comical stories of European Sausage or European Banana warn us) are and will be counter-productive. More tolerance will be needed in relation to the 'less developed' Europeans and even more towards the rest of the world, whether technologically advanced or not.

Let us first consider the Europe of the European Union which embodies both the West and North. EU leaders do not deny that more countries will be admitted when EU agrees on the criteria of its expansion by the end of 2002. But EU dogmatically sticks to the expansion only within what they call Europe without being able to specify where are the European boundaries. Rightly it was put by *Le Monde* recently: defining Europe is a taboo. The Canary Islands, Madeira or Reunion belong to EU even though they geographically are classified as part of Africa, but Turkey<sup>6</sup> and Morocco are excluded even though the former is partly situated in geographic Europe and on the Moroccan territory Ceuta and Melilla are acceptable for EU just because they belong to Spain. As far as I know the attempt of Morocco to table its application for membership was rejected on the basis of predominantly cultural (racial?) argumentation shrouded in economic and geographical sophistry. Israel which might qualify for membership on many grounds is not considered either and its name was never mentioned among possible candidates. As far as I know no Israeli government ever considered trying to apply for membership. With Morocco and other Arab countries along the southern and eastern Mediterranean shore (Jordan also included) Israel is part of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership which presupposes treaties of close cooperation but explicitly excludes future membership.

Indeed, how does the EU define Europe? I doubt that thus far there exists hardly more than the notion of a club which accepts members under specific conditions which are, however, not universal. The rulers of the Europe of the European Union say it is limited geographically, but in reality economic, legal and human rights requirements are coupled with covert demands and expectations which smack of demographic, religious, cultural and even purely racist paranoia.

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<sup>6</sup> Turkey has become 'candidate' in December 1999 only after tense hagglings with the EU emissars who especially flew to Ankara during the Helsinki EU summit. The date of the start of negotiations was however not announced.

Now that Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania and Latvia were invited to negotiations which may last for many years, the possible future membership of Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Ukraine and Moldova, not speaking about Belarus or Russia, has never been mentioned and if at all considered these evidently European countries might be allowed to become candidates only in very distant future that living generations will be condemned to face only the bitterness of exclusion and isolation, both from Europe and from improvement of their economic lot which now in many respects is equal to misery. Nobody yet dared seriously address the future European status and possible EU membership of the Trans-Caucasian republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (of course without bothering with an Islamist Chechnya or Dagestan!), perhaps because Europe's boundaries are arbitrary and the exclusion of these eastern confines Europe suits the hegemons within the Euro-Atlantic civilization defined culturally and racially.

With exception of Croatia<sup>7</sup>, the religion of all these countries is either Christian Orthodoxy or Islam. Thus it seems to me as no coincidence that out of the first group of six future members five are known to adhere to western Christianity. As to the Christian Orthodox Cyprus, which by the way is geographically part of Asia, it was British colony for long enough to have internalized the western values and discipline even better than, for example, Greece, thus far the only Christian Orthodox member state. It would be hypocrisy not to admit that at least some member states of the EU regret that Greece was ever allowed to become a member of the EU. Greece was for centuries the vassal of Byzantium and the Ottomans, a circumstance that left many ineradicable marks on its civilizational profile. In the second group of six candidates for EU membership four are again western Christian: Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia and Malta while orthodox Romania and Bulgaria were included not because of their economic performance but because at present they have pro-Western governments and France favours them as members of Francophony.

Nonetheless, another scenario, still quite possible, is looming: if the powerful Europe of the EU eventually realizes that post-communism is there to last and that in fact it belongs to a different civilization than western Europe, and the candidate countries will not show signs and ability to catch up both economically and politically with the West, then EU leadership would either play the game of delaying by pointing out shortcomings such as low real income and low productivity of work or, ultimately, the card of 'all at once' meaning that level of economic and political in Bulgaria and Estonia, in Romania and Czech Republic would have to be equal and comparable with weaker EU members. Sole possible escapees will be capitalist

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<sup>7</sup> Croatia is a special, and most likely only temporary case. For years it had a bad human rights and democracy record but it is generally hoped that after the death of President Tudjman and the victory of centre-left opposition in the parliament election of January 2000, there will come a new, strongly pro-Europe leadership, which will take the country out of the present deadlock of isolation.

Cyprus and Malta which pose no threat of pulling EU back. In other words the slogan 'Never another Greece!' might soon resurface. Conversely, even if the new tactics of accepting new members one by one in accordance with their preparedness is really adhered to, the same delaying effect will be achieved. Most importantly, however, it is still to be seen how EU tackles the revision of the rules of its internal organization which would allow such an unprecedented expansion by 13 and later further by up to 10 new members. Will it not appear to the EU negotiators as simply too much?

The problem of Europe is to find a new formula for what is Europe and who is European. If these criteria are sought for in the reservoir of cultural, ethnic and racial prejudice then Europe is doomed to isolation. Once these criteria are found in the ability to cooperate and exchange with all, Europe will never again be able to close itself and think in defensive terms of European or Euro-Atlantic or western values but only in terms of openness towards the rest of the world in order to search for common world criteria of democracy and decency, rights and obligations.

The problem of Europe today is the arrogance which mostly resides in its organizationally and technologically most advanced western part. From Europe once came the fallacy of civilizing missions such as crusades, colonialism or communism, from Europe today comes the hypocrisy of controlling the world by the imposition of (eurocentristically defined) human rights, by providing development, humanitarian aid to the less developed.

The West (western Europe, U.S.A. and Canada) is today the richest part of the world. Europe, in turn, is very clearly divided into the rich western part and poor eastern part. Some argue that it is to much extent, especially outside Europe, due to colonialism. Together with the ostensible spread of Christian civilization, economic interests of western Europeans were promoted by force or threat of force. Where the European West could not conquer and rule directly, it found local allies, so called collaborators, and ruled and exploited the riches of non-European areas indirectly. Colonialism was discredited in the 20th century like slavery was discredited and abolished in the preceding one. But the need to expand, grow and rule was not abandoned by the West. Now we are living in the era of neo-colonialism which is perpetuated under the guise of world security, human rights, development and/or humanitarian aid. From time to time wars of proxies are waged, sometimes direct armed interventions of the West take place (e.g. in Guatemala, Egypt, Congo, Vietnam, Grenada, of late in Iraq, Bosnia or Serbia). To be fair, in the same time, often as response to western disciplining of non-Europeans, communist ideologues intervened directly in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Angola and Afghanistan, post-communist pragmatics in Georgia, Chechnya and elsewhere. Often the misleading slogan of ethnicity and ethnic hatred is used for explanation of these uses of force against weaker adversaries.

Globalization is a useful concept in that it exposes the power politics of the West, i.e. western Europe and north America continue the practices of unequal treatment of the 'Third World' and of late also the 'Second World' (the latter merging fairly quickly with the former). The very ideology of the division into three 'worlds' where the western 'First World' is the obvious leader, is transparent. Here I am not in disagreement with Ernest Gellner when he writes that western or west-derived know-how is at the source of modernity which changed the world (Gellner 1994: 73-80. The problem is the inequality of distribution of the application of this know-how which leads to inequality of opportunities, unsurmountable social cleavages within each society. Rare exceptions are the middle-class West and perhaps few egalitarian, proudly poor communist dinosaurs such North Korea or Laos.

One of the conspicuous results of the last ten years in the central and eastern Europe is the *de facto* disappearance of the once powerful middle classes and the formation of polar societies with tiny upper class of nouveaux riches, who lack tradition and culture, and poor 90 odd per cent of population which includes a larger portion of each nation's intellectuals and other people usually marked by the epithet 'people with class'. Thus it seems no exaggeration to say that in many parametres central and eastern Europe has joined the ranks of the Third World or the South. The Second World, formerly perhaps a kind of middle class in global comparison, has disappeared. At best few profiteers and some decent capitalists in the countries of the former Second World would without leaving their respective niches become so to say extraterritorial parts - sort of islands - of the First World. Thus Raisa Gorbachev had means allowing her to try curing her dreadful illness in a German clinique while thousands of Russian leukaemia sufferers have to contend with local Russian treatment which is of course incomparably cheaper if not worse. 'Nouveau Russes' buy property on the Côte d'Azur or in Karlovy Vary while their compatriots lose their life savings in bank swindles.

The future of Europe would be doomed and Europe would not work unless it realizes that not only all geographic Europe belongs to 'Europe' but that the ideas on which the new Europe of the European Union is built must be available to the rest of the world. Here I do not necessarily mean some slavish employment of the model of Franco-German reconciliation, and the subsequent building of the EU, in the future reconciliation and cooperation between Israel and the Arabs, between India and Pakistan, between China and Japan or Iran and Iraq. I namely mean that western Europe at last consciously rescinds its arrogant and intollerant expansionism for which it is infamous. This 'we know better' attitude must finish or Europe will be finished. It is not only insulting and creating enemies, it is highly unproductive and against the genuine interests of the western Europeans themselves. Even if it were patently true (which it is hardly) that western liberal democracy, social market capitalist economy and human rights as defined by the western tradition are all really superior and universally valid as such, western Europeans, whether their

states, non-governmental organizations or individuals, have no god-given right to impose those values and practices outside of their cradle.

Only when this is deeply internalized in western Europe (and other Europe-derived societies such the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), it might have the right of criticizing the similar arrogant attitudes in Russia, Japan, China, Saudi Arabia or anywhere else in the world. However, it appears that thus far the construction of new Europe was largely a one-way process: the founders set the tone and all others had, as the saying goes, to love it or leave it (Norway indeed refused to enter). In this way Europe might soon not work even within Europe, even in the existing western Europe of the present member states of the EU, where each country and sometime region display different political culture and are increasingly annoyed with the bureaucratically uniform dictate of 'Brussels'.

Europe will certainly and increasingly not work if the original model would have to be literally followed by the new candidate countries from among the former Soviet satellites of Central and Eastern Europe. If that closed isolationist concept of Europe wins, the Europe of the 21st century will be a fortress-Europe, paranoid of Islam, Orthodoxy and other 'hostile' or 'non-European' ideologies and political arrangements situated on the in or outside of its culturally and in fact racially defined borders. In order that 21st century does not become a century of clash of civilizations and of widespread 'ethnic' wars, Europe must come of the closet of paranoia and arrogance, must open itself and start reflecting and digesting other models, be they political, moral, economic or ideological. Without a grand global compromise there would be not future for Europe and the 'old' continent will become liability, indeed enemy of the rest of the world. Once Europe embarks upon search for new models of cooperation and common world values where those originally European would be accepted and internalized voluntarily alongside with others from outside of it, then Europe would start to be an integral and equal part of the world and not a self-appointed exception. Conversely the world would become voluntarily and spontaneously European. Then Europe will at last work and work with confidence. Then also western Europe's role in the new integral European globalization and indeed in world's globalization would begin to be fulfilled.

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