NATO and an Enlarged European Union: The Shape of a New "European Identity"

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Global Research, May 31, 2014

Region: Europe

Both NATO and the European Union, respectively, have attempted to unite Europe once again, and for that matter, once and for all. NATO, however, struggled in the summer of 1997 to decide who belonged to the "West" during the altered political economy of the 1990's. Given that NATO, a militaristic alliance formed as a counter-force to Warsaw Pact countries—that those Warsaw Pact no longer existed, and the fact post-World War II Europe had supposedly had enough war—political-economic solidarity as exemplified by the European Union seemed inevitable.

Nonetheless, many claimed that the real risk for an enlarged European Union was not the chasm between old European coordinates and new European coordinates. Instead, some speculated that amid a changing set of shifting alliances across different policy issues, Europe will fail to find strategic direction. Why? Because it would be naïve to say that the NATO vision and European Union was simply a question of who was in and who was out.

The fate of Europe brings to the forefront three questions that have plagued Europe for thousands of years: 'who is European, what does it mean to be European, and most importantly, what do Europeans envision themselves to be? At the center of all such inquiry, "European subjectivity," drenched in a multiplicity of ideological, religious, conceptual, social and economic factors, unflinchingly, ruptures into a series of political moments that are ambiguously correlative to those conditions that provoke them to exist.

Whereas liberal-democratic capitalism, after the fall of Berlin Wall, appears to have "won," as Fukuyama claimed, in May 2004, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia have all joined "Europe." But are these Eastern European, former Communist countries, also, also indirectly shaping European subjectivity, if as Rumsfeld claimed "the center of gravity" was moving East, we can only speculate what New Europe will be like and what are the strengths and weaknesses of those speculations.

In his reading of "EU integration," Peter van Ham argues that even though the task in question could be taken to mean many things—"long term socio-economic convergence among European societies. . . the process of co-operation among European nation-states and regions— that the "different meanings of the European concept "do not necessarily have to develop in a harmonious fashion" (Ham 58). Ham points out that state-formation and nation-formation have not run parallel. That is, if state-formation is defined as an infrastructure of governance based on law a constitution, "the EU has already made significant progress"(58). In other words, Ham is keenly aware that forming laws and creating an infrastructure for those laws to be carried are already en route, though the question of 'European identity' has not. To definitively demarcate the "non-parallelism" between nation and state formation, Ham writes

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When we define nation-formation as the development of a European culture and consciousness within a 'cognitive region,' the EU remains rather backward. In the history of Europe the consolidation of state and nation has in many cases run parallel, but it has also run out of sync.

The Polish state, for example, did not exist for several centuries, but the Polish nation has always persisted. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has survived seven decades without the development of a coherent robust Soviet 'nation.' (Ham 58)

Ham, invoking Ferdinand Tönnies, insists the debate about European identity can summed up by understanding two distinct types of social organization, Gemeinshaft and Gesellschaft. That is, Gemeinshaft, or 'community' in German,

> "relates to a certain sense of belonging based on shared loyalties, norms, and values, kinship or ethnic ties. . . [an] organic association based on a priori unity" (59). Gesellshaft, 'society,' on the other hand, "relates to the idea that people as individuals remain independent of each other, but may decide in a 'social contract…to group together. . . 'a convention'" (59).

Applying these definitions to the EU, then, Ham claims that the EU certainly is "no a truly European Gemeinshaft., a community. "Contemporary Europe shows a diversity of peoples and communities with only marginally overlapping points of references" (59). In other words, Ham insists that although the two types of social organization are, more or less, sometimes in discord, before envisioning a "European community' one must primarily read the EU as a political-monetary 'society.'

Tracking the evolution of 'European project,' a project that was the "product of the Cold War, launched by the integrative stimulus of the Marshall plan. . .hatched under the military wings of the US and NATO," Ham indicates that Europe recognized that "the nation-state was the main source of the hatred and war among European peoples" (64). In other words, the vision, so to speak for the creation of such a 'society' was initially "founded on the notion that European integration is a means to promote peace, rather than merely an economic program to guarantee prosperity" (64). Ham, however, sees the issue of identity as one that should be problematized. He writes:

> But what if this national Self, this national identity, does not really exist, cannot be discovered, and isactually made and continuously remade? This would render national and European identity more complex and turn into something looser, as a aggregate of methods and policies, of clusters of rulesand regulations that ceaselessly interact in a prosaic process with the uncountable other facts off everyday life. Identity must not necessarily be considered a gift and an inborn and primordial quality, but as a dynamic process that requires enormous energy to maintain and that will never be fully 'complete' (65)

Ham points out that what is commonly referred to as 'identity politics', therefore, has "been a strategy and compensatory technique to draw attention to underprivileged groups, and it has often led to more fragmentation, divisiveness and continuous lack of unity" (69) In other words, according to Ham, national identity contradicts the very tenets of the vision for the EU, as outlined by the participants at the Congress of Hague in 1948. Ham, flat-out rejects "static" definitions of identity. That is, Ham, who draws a distinction between community and society, insists nationality or national identification may be an impasse to

European unity, but it is a superficial one, at best. In other words, even though political-economic 'society' of Europe does not be "harmonious" and can run counterpoint to national identity, it must be taken as a given that such an "identity" of is constantly being constructed and rearranged.

'Identity politics' as it stands within the European conceptual domain, for Ham, more or less, "creates and perpetuates an understanding of public identity composed of the suffering self: the oppressed are innocent selves defined by the wrongs done to them" (69). Ham, therefore, understands Gemeinshaft, 'community,' that which elucidates national and/or ethnic identity runs into a certain risk within the context of the European Union, because " it would merely legitimize exclusion based on clear-cut division between 'us' and 'them,' especially since the social construction of identity is such an indivisible part of the discourse on security" (71).

Whereas Peter von Ham demarcates the distinction between national and/or ethnic identity and political-economic identity, seeing 'identity politics' as an impasse to be overcome, other scholars, such as Riva Kastoryano, have focused on such an impasse in its legal dimension. Citizenship, the political construction of the EU, Kastoryano claims, like Ham, runs messily parallel to the nation-state issue "These two phenomena," Kastoryano claims, "which are a priori separate, raise the question of the relevance of the nation-state and its constitutive elements. . .as well as that of the relation of nation-states and citizenship to identity (Kastoryano 120). Kastoryano hones in on France and Germany in particular, underscoring that while France

"is typically represented as an instance of the ideal nation-state. . .on account of its commitment to egalitarian principles. . .national assimilation," Germany, on the other hand, "is considered 'exclusivist' because of the significance accorded to criteria of membership based on ancestry" (121).

A child born to foreign parents, under French citizenship laws, for example, can become "French" at the age of sixteen. A child born in Germany, on the other hand, after the year 2000 is "automatically German if one of its parents was born in Germany or has resided in the country without interruption during the previous eight years" (121). Kastoryano, then, unlike Ham, emphasizes that "politics and the rights of citizenship, particularly in relation to the strategies and degree of participation of immigrants, have a vital impact"(120).

In other words, for Kastoryano, because the

"politics of citizenship pertains to agents' political engagement, to their participation in public space. . .the multiple allegiances resulting from political participation raise the question of an individual's belonging and loyalty to the national community" (121).

France and German (Rumsfeld's old Europe), particularly in those instances which rely on confronting immigration issues and citizenship, have different conceptions of "being French," of "being German." Kastoryano, in this vein, claims that the

"triple link between citizenship, nationality, and identity. . .the link between a political community and cultural community, functions as a source of right and

legitimacy, and the latter as source of identity" (122).

In short, whereas Ham employs the Gemeinshaft/Gesellschaft bifurcation, positing the distinction between political-economic and non-political-economic identification, Kastoryano emphasizes legitimacy as one that runs to the political-economic dimension, and "identity' as not necessarily running into that dimension. Like Ham, Kastoryano, insists the cultural identity is distinct from citizenship, from nationality. Kastoryano writes:

The separation of three of the nation-state's constitutive elements—citizenship, nationality, and identity—(the fourth being territory) is reinforced by the political construction of Europe. In fact, political participation within the European Union multiplies the memberships and allegiances of individuals and groups and increases the ambiguity between citizenship and nationality, between rights and destiny, and between politics and culture (122)

Like Ham, then, Kastoryano insists that "European society" and "European community" are ambiguously concurrent with one another. That is, the "political construction of Europe," specifically in those instances where"political participation. . .multiplies the memberships and allegiances of individuals," according to both scholars, is further problematized, particularly in those instances when citizenship might not entail ethnic belonging, where "legitimacy" might run counterpoint to "destiny," where political-economic identification might have absolutely nothing to do with 'identity' in any "strict" sense of the word. However, in Kastoryano's account, there indeed is no clear picture on what this parallelality, between citizenship and identity, signifies, given the various conceptualizations of immigrant status among countries already in the so-called European 'society.' Ham claims:

. . .European identity will not have to be modeled on the national identities that we know now.

Instead, it should be focused on a set of shared values that underpin (or at least most) European cultures. It should be associated with the idea that there is certain 'European way of life,' analogous to the 'American way of life' that has become one the instrumental myths of the United States' culture of capitalist individualism. Europe's identity would than (sic) be molded on the belief that Europe has found a unique balance between 'market' and 'social protection;'a unique balance between 'commerce' and 'culture,' between 'capitalism' and 'socialism...'

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, such a 'European way of life' does not really exist...the process of Europeanization remains an elite-driven project (73).

In light of these two scholars' claims, who correctly point out the problems inherent in political-economic, and cultural identifications, stressing how these spheres of identity are not always "harmonious," are "ambiguous," it would be difficult to deny that the parallelality between the political-economic apparatus will not, at time butt heads, with ethnicity. Kantian cosmopolitanism, universalism, European "inclusiveness," the vision for "a New Europe," which Ham, correctly points out, remains "elite-driven project," will never 'materialize' unless nationality and ethnicity can be at least loosely reconciled, subsumed, partitioned, so to speak, for the sake of political-economic solidarity. That is, if "the European way of life" truly does not exist as Ham insists, and 'identity politics,' according to

Kastoryano, surfaces within respective nation-state contexts—-some which uphold "legitimacy" based on ancestry, others upholding more a more egalitarian approach—perhaps the nationality question needs to be probed all the more. If in the nation-state context, as Kastoryano points out, identity and citizenship, in respect to one country to another differ, how is one to place the different nation-states into Europe as whole? Has Europe not repeatedly attempted to "unify"—i.e. the Crusades in wake of the Schism of 1054, the Counter-Reformation in wake of the Protestant Reformation, Napoleon in the wake of monarchy?

Moreover, political, religious, secular identifications, in its various forms, however inconsistent or shifty, within the European Union, should look outside "old Europe," perhaps, to better "see" itself. In fact, a Eurocentric subject-positioning (creating Others to know what Europe is or represents) might even be indispensable in integrating "Europe." Such an irony might only anger much of the financial and academic elites in Europe, who insist they are beyond their Eurocentricism and are transparent to themselves, no longer want to fight, wanting to unify, to talk, negotiate. Philosophers like Habermas, for example, have already began promoting the importance of "communicative action," a universe of discourse to be opened up for the sake of perpetually defining various dimensions of identification, so there is no confusion among Europeans. Unfortunately, unless Eurocentric tunnel vision does not become self-critical, the preferred approach, reinforcing Rousseau-esque, Kantian ideals, "shoulds" and "oughts," "argue as much as you like, but obey" would prove naught save "talk." That is, reconciling citizenship, and civic duty, nationality, ethnicity, by applying French and German standards to Europe, to put it bluntly, in affect, coordinates European integration as some kind of Post-Cold War Enlightenment project. Hugh Miall and Robert McKinlay, for example, underscore that:

> The European Union now embodies…liberal principles in its treatises: 'the Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principle which are common to the member States.' No other institution comes so close to Kant's aspirations for a European confederation of republics with a juridical basis that aims at a state of perpetual peace among its members (243).

In this respect, if "perpetual peace" is the state of the art, and the "confederation of republics" is what European integration entails, perhaps, one should then look to Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Russia as examples. Was not the Soviet system a single political-economic apparatus, inclusive of nationality and ethnicity? Does the disintegration of the former-Yugoslavia not elucidate that ethno-nationalism involves "choice" just as much citizenship, rather than the kind of "static" identification that Ham of which directly opposes? Despite "obvious" ideological disparities with Western Europe, some of which, of course, are not stark ones, Eastern Europe and Russia, quite frankly, if anything, are worth exploring to some extent for the purposes of understanding how a political-economic apparatus can very well be (in)compatible between ethnic, cultural, or "community" oriented identifications. But how does this underscore the hypessentiality found within Eurasian/Slavic peoples in respect to Western temporality and progress?

Bearing in mind how the Western gaze falls upon these countries, not only for prospective inclusion, but also through Western cultural influence (Coca-Cola, Hollywood, etc.), if anything Western ideology is now subversively commingling with Eastern European ethnic, religious, political orientations and such commingling, invariably, constitutes "New

European" conceptual spaces.

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