

EUROPE: A MACRO-HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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To explore macro-European dynamics today a glimpse of history is indispensable. For this purpose one might divide the macro-European region, roughly speaking Europe and the coastal states of the Mediterranean into four parts, by drawing two lines. One of the lines coincides with the Alps and their continuation in the Carpathians; it might also be continued towards the West, cutting through France, perhaps ending with the Pyrenees. And it may be argued that Occitanie is to the south of the line. The other line runs from north to south, following the linguistic border between the Slavonic and Germanic speaking people, down to the Adriatic, but placing in the Eastern part of Europe the Hungarians and the Rumanians, the Albanians, and the Greeks and the Turks. The "pure" East would be orthodox, and even use Cyrillic letters. It is not, however, so important to define the lines in very precise terms since the conceptual tools to be used are only rough ideas about a distinction between northern and southern Europe on the one hand, corresponding to the old distinction between cis-alpina and trans-alpina, and anybody's intuitive notion of distinction between western and eastern Europe.

What is important, however, is that this conception of southern Europe, could also include West Asian and North African coastal states, composing the Mediterranean region when we include the Arab states bordering on the Mediterranean and Palestine/Israel. Maybe this leads to something like 25 countries, it is not so important to know. In extension

it would not be too different from the Roman empire at its heyday except for its northern and eastern outposts; enclosing the mare nostrum, the Mediterranean sea itself. In what follows, however, we shall stick to a more conventional conception of Europe.

The problem to be discussed can now be phrased using the concept of power-gradient: given the two axes, where are the highs and lows of power in various phases of history? We shall then distinguish between three types of power: military power ultimately defined as "who controls/invades whom"; economic power ultimately defined as "who exploits whom" (whether it is through simple robbery or the more intricate practices of investment in capital goods and transfer of surplus characterizing industrial capitalism, or corresponding practices in mercantile capitalism); and cultural power roughly defined as "who forms (shapes) whom". Needless to say, these forms of power are related and have all kinds of spill-over effects from one into the other. They are, in fact, the three classical types of power: the stick, the carrot and the idea; coercive, remunerative and normative power. On top of this there is also political power, the power to decide which type to use, or which mix of power types.

There is no doubt that the Roman empire put the center of power in the south. They invaded the north, they exploited the

north and they shaped the north--the latter so much so that even in this century the concept of being a person with culture, with Bildung, is related to internalization of southern culture, for instance knowledge of Latin and Greek, in other words southern languages, today not even spoken in the region. Nobody in the south derives cultural prestige from speaking Norwegian; in fact not even from English and German that are seen as more instrumental languages. Moreover, the power center was in the west rather than in the east by the mere fact that Rome was located in that part. But that part collapsed in the fifth century, and after that there was a transfer of power from south-west to south-east till the Arabs equalized the South.

The Middle Ages can perhaps be seen as a period in which the power distribution between the four parts of the region we are discussing became more symmetric, with the exception of the clear cultural power emanating from Rome, now in the form of the Catholic Church. It was only with the advent of Protestantism that a certain symmetry in cultural power was obtained, with strong islands of Protestantism established in the Catholic sea, and almost unchanging borders for the last three hundred years or so. The economic counter-part included the Hanseatic League that--of course--started much earlier (13th century). Gradually the Northwest was to emerge as the power center it still is.

It may perhaps be said that Protestantism gave a more clear expression to some basic items of western social cosmology inherited from Greek antiquity: a strong accent on individualism and competition, expansion in space and a highly dramatic conception of time. Life was perhaps safer, more protected, more collective under Catholicism than it became under Protestantism, after the Reformation, although the difference should not be exaggerated. At the same time mercantile capitalism was so successful in the North that large-scale capital accumulation started taking place.

All of this contributed to the industrial revolution in the northwestern corner of the region, probably based on a combination of capital accumulation (that actually derived from Spanish conquista capital used to buy goods) used for investment in capital goods, not only for buying merchandise, and the clear expression of individualizing western cosmology found in various types of Protestant thinking, also expressed in the Magna Carta/Glorious Revolution syndrome in England and the French Revolution in France. Alone none of these factors would have made it. Together they probably account to a large extent for the rise of modern capitalism in the northwestern corner of Europe and with that the relative symmetry of the Middle Ages come to an end. The rest of Europe had the more hierarchical, and also more collectivist, Catholic and Orthodox traditions, less individualizing and "entrepreneurial", not only economically, but also religiously.

In short: the power-center shifted towards the North and it shifted towards the West--later on to proceed to the Far West, the United States. And thus it became a highly lopsided region with political/military, economic and cultural gradients running from west to east, and from north to south. It was the Swedes, the French and the Germans that invaded the Slavs, not the other way round. It was they who had command over the trade between west and east, not the other way round. And it was they who, particularly since the times of Peter the Great, started shaping the east, not the other way round. And similarly for the north/south gradient: the trade pattern quickly became industrial goods from the north against foodstuffs etc. from the south, after the British, the Low Countries and the Hanseatic League had created a balance relative to the traditional trading superiority of the Italian city-states that corresponded to the Protestant religious counterbalance to Catholicism, responsible for much of the capital accumulation. Of course, the north also invaded the south, an early example being northern France relative to southern France. Later came the establishment of the colonies, mainly by the French and the British on the southern and eastern Mediterranean seaboard.

Actually, an image of concentric circles is more adequate than the four boxes for this period. There is a first circle, a center in the north-west, including US/Canada, a second circle consisting of the south-west, the south-east and the

north-east; and then a third circle of the eastern and southern Mediterranean seaboard ultimately to be extended through colonialism all over the world.

The Ottoman empire enters the picture as a barrier and a menace that lasted almost five hundred years but was restricted to the southeastern corner. After its breakdown its function became more clear: as a bulwark against northwestern penetration which immediately took place, politically/militarily, economically, culturally when the Ottoman empire collapsed. This also has to do with the Soviet Union and its hegemonial position relative to most of eastern Europe: northwestern economic and cultural penetration would probably have been even more pronounced had it not been for the political/military balance created after the Second World War. In fact, I would see the whole gamut of NE, SE and SW revolutionary populism between the world wars, from Lenin/Stalin via East-Southeast European dictators (Pilsudski, Antonescu) and Kemal Atatürk to Mussolini, Franco and Salazar as the second circle trying to rise against the first. Pétain could also be seen in this light. After all, Vichy is located far south of Paris.

In this paper we are concerned both with the east-west and the north-south axes. They are both important in any understanding of Europe. The east-west axis prevails since the East has military power, the South not. But it is important to start thinking not only in terms of contradictions and con-

flicts along the west-east gradient, but also along the north-south gradient, pitting northern Europe not only against southern Europe, but against more of the south, the Mediterranean region as such. Thinking should not lag too much behind reality. And reality today is that the northwestern corner once more is penetrating into the South, using the European Community as its instrument, probably with a second uprising in the coming.

Concretely the contemporary power-gradient has forms that are well known to any observer of current world affairs. Thus the military political headquarters of the world are in the north: Washington and Moscow to mention the super-powers, NATO (in Brussels) and the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) to mention the alliances. It is they who use the Mediterranean for the deployment of their ships, not the south that uses the northern waters for the deployment of theirs. The block system meets at times in a network of conferences in the north with the super-powers and alliances meeting each other; there is very little contact of a politically/militarily meaningful kind between their more peripheral members in the south. Economically the headquarters are all in the north: New York for the American Economy, Brussels for the European Community, Moscow for the CMEA system. This is where decisions are taken regarding the south, not vice versa. The economies of the south are shaped by the demands from the north, not vice versa.



With the integration of Portugal, Spain from Southwest and Greece (later Turkey) from Southeast into the European Community the break-away tendencies of a more or less fascist type will have been reversed--at least for a while. The inter-European currency is the dollar, and the inter-European lingo English--with the International Herald Tribune the closest there is to a European newspaper.

Then, the third circle. Again, we could do the same exercise and divide the world in four parts, with a first world of rich capital countries, a second world of not-so-rich socialist countries, a third world of very poor, mainly capitalist countries and then a fourth world, the world SE corner of East and Southeast Asian countries headed by Japan. But we do not need that much specificity. Suffice it to say that the first country to get into the world capitalist market from the third circle, Japan, already is second to none in very many fields and that there are other countries in the same region following suit. Japan was the first country to practice the precepts of the New International Economic Order one century before it was conceived--how many will or can follow in its wake remains to be seen.

But the point to be made here is very simple. The third circle is not a passive or dependent variable any longer. There are efforts to co-opt, to tame (Trilateral Commission, OECD,

European Community, the UN System for that matter, in part). The first world is certainly not a part of it yet profoundly moved by the third circle--and feels immensely threatened by non-first circle religions and ideologies. The spiritual/cultural challenge was seen by the youth of the late 1960s travelling east to sources of wisdom, and the economic challenge above all in Japan, but also in OPEC and NIEO. But the military challenge is not yet there, only as terrorism. Of course, it will come--one day if the first world continues to dominate.

The pressure on the rest of Europe from the northwestern corner was tremendous. Northwest had the basic instruments, science and technology, industry and commerce, efficient politics and military and a feeling of despair must have engulfed the rest. Fascism and communism can both be seen in this perspective, as quick ways of catching up. They are both based on a popular appeal, on mobilization of the masses, ultimately for the nation-state. They both aimed at building strong states. They were both defensive relative to the outside, wanting to become self-reliant. And they could both point to the obvious: the northwest became strong first and democratic later, even much later.

One interesting question is why the East of Europe became communist and the South fascist, and the Southeast of Europe both fascist and communist, in that order usually. Difficult

to say. From the point of view chosen here some could be attributed to "chance". There was a basis in the highly vertical, hierarchical structures created by the Catholic and Orthodox churches both of which went along with the single party, authoritarian state constructions. Maybe the two churches predispose for the two ideologies, with the Orthodox church being more all-embracing, God loves all of us, and more optimistic. However that may be, essential was popular mobilization and the building of a strong state, as a bulwark against the Northwest in the attempt to become at least as rich, good and strong as they. England was the centerpiece of the Northwest and the country to the southeast, Germany, became the centerpiece of the reaction, with both fascist and socialist features, and violently anti-British.

The Second World War was the clash between Northwest and fascism, and between fascism and the Northeast, the Soviet Union. It was actually the fight of the South against the North in Mussolini's terms (the second coming of the Roman empire), of the Center against the rest from Hitler's point of view (Neuordnung). The North won, of course, being stronger. But the two parts of the North also fell out against each other, and the Northwest learned again that resistance against Northwest dominance could take communist, not only fascist form. New types of penetration were tried: Marshall aid and incorporation in the European Community. And this is, more or

less where we stand today with the EC making great inroads into the South, even the Southeast.

It is important to try to understand the giant forces at work here. The Northwest had an edge over the other parts which they do not want to give up; the rest of Europe admire and imitate, yet want to preserve their identity, autonomy and perhaps also try to obtain parity relative to the Northwest. And thus it is that in the second circle Europe we have those who try to become self-reliant and those who prefer to become a periphery. A struggle that will continue still for a long time, with an equilibrium more like what we had during the Middle Ages as the only stable outcome. No effort to dominate Europe from any self-appointed center will succeed, be that from the Northwest or the Northeast--or from the Center. There is so much strength in Europe, so much tradition to preserve that there will always be independence movements against London and its successor Washington/New York; against Berlin and Rome; against Moscow and against Paris (and Brussels) if they should try to step into any "vacuum" when/if the super-powers loosen their grip. If anything is the lesson from European history this is it.