1 Is Europe Cosmopolitan?

For some, the cosmopolitan character of Europe in general, and the EU in particular, is not in question. Is Europe not par excellence the region where humans emancipated themselves from unreflected traditions and primordial loyalties and preached, sometimes even practised, ideas of the brotherhood of man or, as we would now say, the siblinghood of humanity? And is European integration not by definition a cosmopolitan project, marked in its current version by the powerful image of the West German and French coal and steel industries fused together in the ECSC a mere half decade after the end of the War?

There is much to be said for these views, which have been powerfully argued in the recent past by Gerard Delanty, Ulrich Beck and others. Jürgen Habermas (2004), for example, has stressed the way in which Europeans have ‘painfully’ learned how to handle their differences and to recognise one another in their difference. Delanty (2005) has put forward the idea of Europe as a privileged site of cultural translation, while in Beck and Grande’s *Cosmopolitan Europe* (2004) the adjective is built into the title. The EU’s most recent enlargement in 2004 brought in an eminently cosmopolitan, or at least eclectic, mix of three former Soviet republics, one former Yugoslav republic, four members of the Visegrád group of relatively privileged postcommunist countries and one and a half Mediterranean islands.

Unfortunately, there is also a good deal to be said also for the contrary, or perhaps complementary, view which sees Europe as the chief defendant in the court of world history, responsible for imperialism, ‘scientific’ racism, ‘scientific’ communism, for two world wars and for planning (and almost initiating) the third and final one. Similarly, the EU can be seen as self-obsessed, protectionist and unconcerned or unable to take on a serious role in the governance of the
world, thus leaving a dangerous vacuum for US hegemony. The old slogan ‘Oui à l’Europe: non à Maastricht’, has been echoed in some at least of the left opposition to the ill-fated 2005 constitutional treaty.

This chapter is concerned with Europe in the narrower sense, that of the EU as it has evolved over the past half-century and particularly since the end of the ‘short’ twentieth century in 1989. My concern is with the ways in which Europe as a whole has been reshaped by what has taken place on its own territories, as distinct from, though of course also taking account of, external or global processes, in the past 10-15 years. To put it pretentiously, and with a bow to the phenomenological tradition, I am interested not only in what is happening and is likely to happen, but in its meaning for Europe. And I am interested as much in what did not happen as in what did.²

2. Postcommunist Transition and 2004

I am struck, in particular, in the EU Enlargement of 2004, by the mismatch between the enormous importance of what happened in May 2004 and the restricted form in which it was reflected both before and after the event. On the one hand there was the sense of a momentous transition, in which the European integration process finally embraced almost the whole of the subcontinent, including a majority of the European states excluded for forty years not just from the European Community/Union but also from the post-war democratisation process itself.³ On the other hand, there was an essentially technical and administrative process of harmonisation and coordination. Hannah Arendt spoke (of course in an entirely different context) of the banality of evil, and we might speak here of the banality or the banalisation of accession.

The bureaucratisation of the enlargement process, though hardly unexpected, was one of its most striking features. The imposition of the Union’s acquis was of course to be expected, though the over-neat specification of chapters and check-lists looks like an exercise in Analerotik. As my colleague Alan Mayhew (2000) pointed out, this enlargement has been more protracted (p.7), partly because it was left in the hands of a somewhat lame-duck Commission at the end of the 1990s (p.8), and with a much more substantial acquis whose adoption was made a precondition subject to verification and not just, as in the past enlargements, a condition for accession. On the other side there was some quite good public relations: a well-sustained Commission website, providing regular email reminders to check out recent developments, some imaginative activities involving schools, a fair amount of speech-making and some high-profile meetings. ⁴

Alongside all this, there was a third element, the constitutional convention, contingently related to the impending enlargement in that it could (and perhaps should) have taken place well before 1989, but intrinsically linked in its mission to make a larger Union viable that the new
members were fully represented in its deliberations. Although the Convention failed to produce an acceptable constitution, in other respects it was quite an impressive deliberative assembly which may be remembered when more immediately successful ventures are forgotten (Norman 2003). It was also one in which Old and New Europe met on relatively egalitarian and open terms; as Fraser Cameron (2004: 152) notes, ‘it was difficult to distinguish speakers coming from existing or future member states’. For all this, however, the dominant impression of the current enlargement remains that of a bureaucratic process managed in a bureaucratic manner, and tinged with arrogance on the part of the existing members. Like, some would say, the European Union itself...

We have of course been here before. I am thinking not so much of the previous accessions as of the special case of German Reunification, which produced ‘Enlargement without Accession’ (Spence 1991). Here, of course, even the accession was occluded by the incorporation of the territory of the GDR, without the sort of constitutional debate which Habermas and others called for. In the German case, of course, incorporation into the Federal Republic and hence into the EU coincided with all except the first months of postcommunist transition. In the 2004 accession, by contrast, we had effectively a second transition, again widely desired in general though not necessarily welcomed in all of its details. We can only guess how this will pan out in the longer term. On the one hand, the EU’s new citizens may feel that any trauma is as nothing compared to that of the 1990s. Alternatively, they may feel that, having been through all that, they are less willing to put up with such social dislocation a second time. We therefore need to reflect in rather broader terms on the transition process as a whole and what it means for Europe.

It is tempting to define postcommunist transition out of existence, suggesting that it is either essentially over, as many in East Central Europe would argue is the case in the parts of their states which interest them, or not yet seriously begun, as jaundiced observers of points further East often say. Either way, for this reductive view, the implications for the rest of Europe are seen as relatively limited and can be handled under the category of transitional arrangements, where ‘transition’, like ‘convergence’, now refers to EU accession rather than the shift from totalitarian socialism to liberal capitalism. It is certainly true that the world-historical significance of the transition, rightly stressed by analysts like Andrew Arato, hardly seems to be reflected in the observable phenomena. Everything, so to speak, was tossed up into the air, but it fell down again into relatively familiar structures and patterns. As against this view, I intend to start from the premise that ‘we are all postcommunist now’, not in the sense of ideological demobilisation or what Habermas, as early as 1985, called ‘the exhaustion of utopian energies’, but in the sense that Europe, as well as the EU, are radically transformed by what has happened. It now makes sense once again, as in the period immediately after World War 2, to think of a political Europe which in
principle includes the whole sub-continent, but where East and West have experienced radically
different trajectories over half a century. Habermas’s concept of the nachholende Revolution was
prophetic of the phenomenology of the transition, especially as it appeared from a West German or
West European perspective, but ultimately, I think, misleading. The apparent banality or normality
of the transition, in Germany and in much of the former bloc, and reinforced in the Enlargement
process, conceals, I believe, more fundamental changes.

3. Does More Mean More Cosmopolitan?

Will the new EU be more or less cosmopolitan in the sense in which theorists of
cosmopolitan democracy, and most recently Ulrich Beck, have been using the term? At first sight,
an enlarged EU, a real Grosseuropa compared to the old western Kleineuropa, is by definition
more inclusive, embracing new languages, religions and cultures. Already the budget airlines are
criss-crossing the old EU external border with more and more routes; EasyJet, Ryanair and their
Eastern counterparts have taken up where Gorbachev left off and made Lviv or Vilnius realistic
destinations for a cheap weekend break. On the other hand there are countervailing pressures, for
objective as well as subjective reasons.

The EU will now abut some of the more problematic European states such as Russia,
Belarus and Ukraine, whose citizens may have for the foreseeable future more compelling reasons
to attempt to emigrate than do Poles, Czechs or Hungarians. This has the potential to ignite
renewed anxieties around the EU’s ‘near abroad’, which form part of the explanation for why 2004
came so late. It is instructive to look back at some of the surveys conducted around the turn of the
century, in which existing EU citizens warmly welcomed the idea of Swiss or Norwegian (and
Maltese) accession but were more lukewarm or even negative about the ECE countries (CEC 2000)
and emphatically negative in the case of Turkey. This partly explains, in a process of reciprocal
influence, the EU’s remarkably slow response to 1989, which provoked considerable resentment in
Poland (Blazyca, 2002: 206-7; 212) and elsewhere in the region. A more cosmopolitan Union, one
must conclude, would have been more responsive and understanding - not least since it had just
emerged from a potentially lethal cold war. A more wholehearted response by the West as a
whole and the EU in particular might have spared Eastern Europe a ghastly decade of negative
growth and impoverishment, giving it some at least of the benefits of the capital flows
accompanying German reunification, without the latter’s catastrophic downside. The failure of the
EU’s cosmopolitan imagination when it was most urgently needed contrasts very unfavourably
with earlier European initiatives such as European Nuclear Disarmament and the Helsinki process –
the latter combining official and social movement activity in an exceptionally fruitful blend.
For their part, the ECE countries tend to have a more ‘traditional’ and positive (‘pre-postcolonial’) conception of Europe than Westerners. Very many western Europeans, for example, belong to states which have had substantial colonial empires, and although they react to this past in very different ways (compare the positive and nostalgic image of empire in the UK with the tendency to embarrassed denial in the Netherlands) it has perhaps given a more cosmopolitan and multicultural angle to their thinking about Europe. Habermas (2004:51) emphasises the effect of the experience of colonial rule and decolonisation: ‘with the growing distanciation from imperial rule and colonial history the European powers have had the chance to take up a reflexive distance to themselves’. In the East, by contrast, ‘Europe’ in general and ‘Central Europe’ in particular have operated in part as tokens in a political strategy of distanciation from the ‘asiatic’ USSR. To put it bluntly, Easterners, even more than Westerners, often talk about the European heritage in up-beat language which provokes hostility or embarrassment in parts of the West and the rest of the world.

The boot is perhaps on the other foot if one turns to a related issue, that of ethnocentric prejudice. The somewhat higher levels recorded in the East of Europe than in the West have generated something of a moral panic, starting with skinhead riots in the East German port of Rostock in 1991?. I do not wish to belittle the unpleasant character of these manifestations, and the extremely serious levels of anti-Roma prejudice, but the pattern overall seems to be that such attitudes are driven by specific current crises rather than linked into nationalism and extreme-right ideology, as they have tended to be in the West (Hjerm 2003). Very crudely, one might say that there is an intra-European cosmopolitan multicultural tradition in Eastern and Central Europe, historically tied to local empires, where the West has a more extra-European one more oriented to the Atlantic and the rest of the world via the Western European world empires. Both traditions of course are counterposed by explicit racism in the West and ethnic prejudice in the East, but the possibility of their fusion is one of the more optimistic scenarios in play here.

The ultimate destination or finalité of what has become the European Union remains more or less as unclear as when Andrew Shonfield examined it in 19?? Briefly, however, the EU is incipiently postnational, despite or because of its continuing symbiotic relationship with its member-states. It is post-imperial, in that however much it might superficially come to resemble the Austro-Hungarian Empire it will surely retain principles of democracy more characteristic of the national state (Beck and Grande 2004). And it is perhaps (and this is part at least of its appeal), the beginning of a form of post-European cosmopolitan democracy attractive not just to Europe but to many other parts of the world. Jürgen Habermas (1991) has aptly described this as ‘Europe’s second chance’. A federal or semi-federal Europe which was not just a ‘fortress Europe’ but a
Europe for others as well as for itself might be a happier transformation with which to round off the European half-millennium. As Habermas (2004: 47) puts it, why should a Europe which has at least partially solved two major problems by developing forms of postnational governance and welfare and social justice ‘not also set itself the further task of defending and furthering a cosmopolitan order…?’

Cosmopolitanism is, then, perhaps the most tempting label to attach to this vision. Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande lay down the challenge on the back cover of their recent book (2004; cf. p.11):

> Cosmopolitan Europe is in Europe the last really effective utopia. It is about something completely new in the history of humanity, namely the projected image of a state structure which makes its foundation the recognition of cultural otherness.

This analysis of cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2004) and cosmopolitan Europe builds on Beck’s earlier concepts of risk society and of a second, reflexive modernity. European integration is driven, among other things, by an awareness of global risks of, in particular, environmental damage and terrorism. Neither can be meaningfully confronted just at the level of the national state. Conceptions of security must be rethought in political and social, rather than merely technical and military terms. ‘The 11th of September 2001 is the Chernobyl of the military conception of power’ (Beck and Grande, 2004: 376). Concretely, this means that Turkey must, if it wants, be in the EU and not just NATO; ‘a continent of Europe affirming itself against Turkey would endanger itself’ (373). A cosmopolitan Europe is also reflexive not just in the sense of responding to humanly generated risks (the sense of reflexivity which Beck had stressed in his earlier work, but also in that it relativizes conceptions of inside/outside, self/other, Europe or the nation-state: ‘Europe is another word for variable geometry, variable national interests, variable concern (Betroffenheit), variable internal and external relations, variable statehood, variable identity.’ (16) As Beck and Grande argue at length, a reflective and cosmopolitan conception of Europe can to some extent escape the dilemmas of in/out, us/Them, nation-state/federation.

If this bold attempt to transcend the dilemmas which have constantly accompanied the process of European integration over the past half-century seems a little too easy, Beck and Grande stress that the cosmopolitanism of the EU is still a ‘deformed cosmopolitanism’, deformed economically by neoliberalism, politically by
nationalism and internally by technocratic bureaucracy (chapter 5, section 3). The last of these applies also, of course, to the EU’s own cosmopolitan elites: the EU embodies the paradox of a civil society from above aiming to establish one from below (p.196). The remedy however lies in more Europeanization: the concept of European civil society offers the EU the opportunity of ‘opening up the transnational space in such a way that this organises itself’ (197).

This is indeed a powerful image, engagingly presented. It is paralleled in the cultural sphere, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, by Gerard Delanty’s image of Europe as a site of intercultural translation (Delanty, 2005; see also Delanty, 2003). Against these, of course, one must set the counter-image of a Europe with a dubious past, egocentric and self-obsessed, traditionally ignorant of cultural otherness outside its borders except as something exotic. An approach which takes seriously the political economy of the EU as a region of globalised capitalism is a welcome counterweight to more culturalist and voluntaristic analyses. But it is at least true, I think, that to conceptualise Europe, or to pursue the project of European integration, requires a degree of cosmopolitan imagination and will which might at least anticipate a more cosmopolitan future.

The question, in a nutshell, is whether a Europe which is becoming post-western in the trivial sense that it is no longer composed of Western and Central Europe (plus Greece) will also become post-western in a more interesting sense of multicultural cosmopolitanism. (The Turkish case, discussed elsewhere in this volume, is of course exceptionally important in this regard.) The EU, which is on the away to becoming coextensive with almost all of the sub-continent, is of course a permanent building site. It remains to be seen whether, as a result of the 2004 Enlargement and the one which is planned to succeed it in 2007, it will be less of a Fortress and more of a community, for itself and for the rest of the world.
References


CEC (2000) Eurobarometer 53: p.54


Garton-Ash, Timothy (2007?) In Europe’s Name.

Spohn, Willfried (200?) ‘The Role of Collective Identities in the Eastern Extension of European Integration – A Western/Eastern Comparison’.
As Étienne Balibar (2004: 24-5) has suggested, ‘we should resist the illusion of believing...that some national traditions are open, tolerant, and “universalist” by “nature” or on account of their “exceptionality”, whereas others, still by virtue of their nature or historical specificity, are intolerant and “particularist”. Balibar was referring to national traditions and to their attitudes to foreigners, but the point has a more general application. See also Nederveen Pieterse (2002: 141): ‘A cultural analysis of Europe points toward traveling light, in the sense of leaving behind the heavy luggage of imperialism and colonialism, racism and chauvinism, nationalism and parochialism.’

Of the things which did not happen, two stand out in particular. First, a rapid and much more substantial Marshall Plan – type response by the West as a whole and the EU in particular to the challenge of 1989. Second, a very different scenario in which either the EU was even less welcoming to the east, or in which part or all of the East deliberately rejected full membership of the EU in favour of a looser attachment in the European Economic Area. On the latter question, however unlikely it may look at present, the prospect of an Eastern European Norway or Switzerland should not be ruled out. More to the point, as Böröcz and Sarkar (2005: 158-9) emphasise, full membership has been and is to be preceded by a long transitional period of dependency on EU regulations. ‘For the entrants during the 2004 round of accessions (who will enjoy equal rights within the EU by 2011), this quasi-dependency status will have lasted for 18 years. For next-round members Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey – optimistically assuming only a five-year delay – it can be expected to be circa 23 years’. On further impending accessions, see also, for example, Bechev and Andreev, 2005.

As Étienne Balibar described the situation in 1991 (Balibar, 2004: 90), ‘Following the disappearance of one of the two blocs, the struggle itself is vanishing, which in fact constitutes a great trial of truth: now or never is the moment for the dream to materialize, for Europe to rise up, renewed or revitalized. This is also the moment when the dream risks being smashed into pieces.

Sobrina Edwards has shown the two ways in which the 2004 Enlargement was presented: first, as simply the next in a series of enlargements and, second, as a historic moment of the reunification of a Europe divided since WW2. See also Spohn 200?; Triandafylliadou 2005.

Ruth Wodak’s research suggests however a rather more pessimistic assessment of the Convention.

These terms are of course drawn from the nineteenth century discussion around German unification, which in many ways can be seen as a microcosm of European integration a century later (see, for example, Garton-Ash 200?; 2004: 223; Balibar, 2004: 253 n.23).
Melinda Kovács (2001) neatly describes this as ‘putting down and putting off’.

Cf. Baldwin et al (1997: 168, quoted in Ingham and Ingham 2002: 15): ‘Imagine how eager western Europe would have been in 1980 to pay ECU 18 billion a year in order to free central Europe from communism and remove Soviet troops from the region.’ This figure was a current estimate of the likely cost of enlargement; the European Currency Unit (ECU) is of course the forerunner of the euro.

For a very different and more critical approach to this issue, see Böröcz and Sarkar (2005), who see the EU as in some ways a continuation of West European colonialism in another context.

Rudolf Bahro’s now forgotten Alternative (Bahro 1977) is an interesting example among others.

Including the trans-European Russian empire; see Richard Sakwa’s contribution to this volume.

On Habermas’ account of cosmopolitanism, see Fine and Smith (2003). On the cosmopolitanism of European functionaries, see Shore (2007) and various studies on the Europeanisation of national administrations. On the need for (Habermas, 2004:69-70) and the existence of elements of deliberative democracy in the EU, see Eriksen and Fossum 2000.

See the collective volume by Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994)

See, in particular, chapter 2, section 3, pp.57-60. Among the divisions transcended or at least relativised is that between domestic social policy and European regional policy: ‘regional policy becomes European social policy’ (p.271). More speculatively, Balibar identified in 1991 something similar in our understanding of Europe as a whole: ‘…in “exporting” communism to the world, after the Bible and cannons, Europe has been placed outside of itself in such a way that it is no longer able to exist as a closed entity. It is as much our representation of European civilization as of European political unification that is affected by the “end of communism”’ (Balibar, 2004: 87).

Beck and Grande (2004: 259) rightly point to a certain ‘western European racism’.

See, for example, Nederveen Pieterse, 2002; Böröcz and Sarkar, 2005, esp. pp. 167-8; Srubar, 2007. Nederveen Pieterse (2002: 128) puts the voluntarism issue very neatly: ‘If Europeanization is part of the momentum of accelerated globalization, to what extent is the EU in the driver’s seat, and to what extent is it driven?’