

### Karl-R. TRAUNER: Between Self-fulfilment and...

have to follow our own ideas. Differentiation in addition to reconciliation seems to be a way out of this blind alley.

In policy black and white sometimes have the same bloody colour; and our world is—to stay with this picture—rather grey. We are in the times before the last (as Dietrich BONHOEFFER states); and the last only is in God.

“All life is problem solving,” says Karl R. POPPER<sup>18</sup>; and it is our lives that we are thinking about. If a person struggles for a maximum of independency, she or he will lose the world and her- or himself, too.

This cannot be an answer to the problems of our world. It is our task not to search for total *independence*, but to search for a positive way of *dependence*.<sup>19</sup> Even the churches: they need the independence of states, but in a totally independent society they will not reach their aims.

“The Lord asked Cain: ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ He answered: ‘I do not know. Am I supposed to take care of my brother?’ Then the Lord said: ‘Why have you done this terrible thing? Your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground. You are placed under a curse.’ And Cain said to the Lord: ‘This punishment is too hard for me to bear. You are driving me off the land and away from Your presence. I will be a homeless wanderer on the Earth, and anyone who finds me, will kill me.’ But the Lord answered: ‘No.’ And he put a mark on Cain to protect him” (Genesis 4,9–16).

#### Suggested Reading

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<sup>18</sup> SPENGLER Oswald, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. München, 1988.; TOYNBEE Arnold J., *Kultur am Scheideweg*. Wien–Zürich, 1949.

<sup>19</sup> REZAK David, *Militärische Intervention als Problem des Völkerrechts. Eine Untersuchung bewaffneter Eingreifens in innerstaatliche Konflikte anhand des Kosovo-Krieges*. Wien, 2002.; SCHMIDSEDER Karl, *Internationale Operationen und Crisis Response Operations. Charakteristica, Bedingungen und Konsequenzen für das Internationale und Nationale Krisenmanagement*. Frankfurt am Main, 2003.

Ivan VOJTAŠŠÁK

## Experience of Cooperation and Conflict

As Reflected in the Vision of Central European Identity in the EU

*There were times in the past when Central Europe was considered a region that could be a model for a peaceful cohabitation of a pluralistic society and for tolerance. Presently the nations settled in this region are tested with new tasks linked with the construction of the European Union (EU). They have to prove the vitality of their particularity and uniqueness by their contribution to the cultural scene of the increasingly globalized world.*

### Central Europe as a Region of Tolerance

Central Europe (CE) is the geographical region, which can be considered historically moulded by the ancient empire of the Habsburgs—i.e. the Austrian Empire. It is a European border region, in which the interests of numerous empires have come into play.

These empires are the mentioned dominant Austrian, in contact with the Ottoman in the south, the Russian in the east, and the Prussian in the north. It is the area of historically dominant Western Christianity; but on its Eastern frontier it is in touch with Eastern Christianity, and in the South it borders on a Muslim influence.

It could be said that Central Europe may be considered by connecting the imaginative line traced between the towns of Trieste in Italy, Chernivci and Lviv in Ukraine, Gdańsk in Poland and Cheb in the Czech Republic.

This area of Central Europe had in history the reputation of a region of variety, plurality and tolerance. And yet the first modern

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cataclysm on the global scale dates its initiation to a terrorist act in Bosnian Sarajevo.

The “Great War” had as consequences not only human victims, but new frontiers, ethnic cleansing, nostalgia and resentment. These sentiments are vivid even a hundred years later. Great empires fell into pieces and the first modern genocide took place.

The victorious conception of post-war Europe was co-formed by President Woodrow WILSON. His ideas became normative for the creation of new states. These were formed as nation states, though they were as a rule composed of a majority state nation and minorities. The state-forming nationalities were considered as privileged and their members have occupied exclusive posts in the public services.

### Totalitarian Ideology in the XX<sup>th</sup> Century

The collective memory of the nations of Central Europe is marked by the universal impact of the European streams of thought, mostly by the so-called “streams of distrust,” which we could personify in Friedrich NIETZSCHE, Sigmund FREUD, Karl MARX, social democrats, Marxists, Leninists, Stalinists, in the exponents of relativism and nihilism.

From among other ideological streams, we could mention liberalism and Christian ideology. We ought not to omit either utilitarianism or pragmatism, which have also marked the thinking of the European continent to some extent.

The basis of the Marxism–Leninism is dialectical materialism. According to the Marxist theory, human behaviour is determined by affiliation to a social class, so the basic factor that determines human life is work.

Marxism overly emphasizes the economic aspect of life. But human behaviour is determined by numerous factors, which we could divide into the following three groups: the economic, the territorial and the cultural.

Marxism brought a utopia of the realization of the ideal, universal, no-class society, in which everybody would have certainty of a full development of her or his own talents and personality.

In a similar way, the other totalitarian systems of the XX<sup>th</sup>



century made an attempt to realize utopias based on the myths of tradition, sacrifice, fatherland and race. But the inhabitants of Central Europe were influenced by Bolshevik ideals of a totalitarian nature already before World War II.

After World War II, in 1945, a totalitarian regime was imposed on the whole region of Central Europe. After a short time it became obvious that the Bolshevik “scientific” ideology, based on relativism, offers neither certainty nor satisfaction, not even in the short run.

The lack of liberty was perceived also by artists, actors or intellectuals, who accepted the Marxist dialectical paradigm, but soon had to aim to reform it by demanding the values of pluralism and tolerance.

They wanted to give communism a human face. When the Magyar revolution of 1956 was being suppressed, the participants talked about sacrificing their lives for the values of Europe.<sup>1</sup> In the heart of matter there was one universal value that was suppressed: freedom as premise for cultural identity and particularity.

<sup>1</sup> PIOTRKOWSKI Jerzy, *Postwar Central Europe, Art, History and Geography*. [www.pogranicze.sejny.pl/archiwum/krasnogrida/pismo/8/forum/piotr.htm](http://www.pogranicze.sejny.pl/archiwum/krasnogrida/pismo/8/forum/piotr.htm).



More recently there were demands for cultural liberty and guaranteed human rights, e.g. free religious life, which was a decisive element in the creation of the independent union *Solidarity* (Solidarność) in Poland and the Roman Catholic and civic dissent in Czechoslovakia.<sup>2</sup>

The nations of this region fell after World War II into the Kremlin sphere of interest, and thus under the surveillance and dirigisme of Stalinist and communist ideas. The political culture and the attitudes towards democracy and civic principles, even if similar in many aspects, varied quite a bit throughout the region.

The reactions of members of a certain society are the results of numerous factors. According to the French sociologist Emmanuel TODD, it is first of all the anthropological component, which is formed foremost by a family type that comes into play.

It is followed by the educational and formative component: alphabetisation, and then the factor of industrialization, which involves the control of birth rate. These series of factors as a whole determine the complex phenomenon of *modernity*.<sup>3</sup>

According to TODD, European thinking is marked by industrialization, by the decay of ideologies and by the appearance of new phenomena in its postmodern societies. Ideologically in Central Europe, it was the influence of Marxist–Leninist totalitarianism.

The brutality of the dictatorship of proletariat, however, varied in the individual societies that subsequently determined also the reaction of the resistance movements. The basic scheme of European ideologies, according to TODD, is the following.

**Table 1. Scheme of European Ideologies**

Family Type	Basic Values	Ideological Component	
Egalitarianism	Freedom and Parity	Socialist Anarcho-Socialisms	Nationalist Liberal Militantism Reactive Religious Christian Republicanism
Kinship	Authority and Parity	Social Disparity	Ethnocentrism Christian Democracy
Communitarian	Authority and Parity	Communism	Fascism
Absolute Core	Freedom	Labourism	Lib. Isolationism

<sup>2</sup> LUXMOORE Jonathan, *Babiuchová, Jolanta, Vatikán a rudý prapor*. Praha, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> TODD Emmanuel, *L'Invention de l'Europe*. Paris, 1990.

TODD in his work studies the decay of ideologies, the advancement of postmodern phenomena, and consequently the changes and the trends of social preferences and of values.

At a political level it is mainly the retreat of traditional values, the manifestation of the post-industrial advancement of new technologies and spreading of global capital. This is linked to the demands of participation in governance by various groups of society, the activation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the growth of self-consciousness of small or even marginal groups in society.

One of the shortcomings of TODD's book is that it studies the regions of Europe only from the perspective of the two main streams of Christian ideology: Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

In the case of Central Europe, we need to evaluate the influence of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, as well as the influence of Islam, which has been present in the region for a very long time.

Today it is linked to the urgent question about the "Europeanism" of Turkey and her place in the unified Europe. For us in Central Europe there is another interesting question—that of the social attitudes and reactions of Greek Catholics.

They were particularly cruelly affected by the suppression of Christian denominations after 1950, as well as by their struggle for revival. The aforementioned minorities are present in all countries of the region.

To evaluate the collective memory and thinking of the groups and nations in the Central European region, we could use the results of the systematic studies of the scientific team headed by professor Ronald F. INGLEHART: World Value Studies (WVS).

This material gives us a complete image of the changes in perception of values on a global scale. The evaluation of Samuel HUNTINGTON's visions of the "clash of the civilizations" we find in a paper of Ronald F. INGLEHART and P. NORRIS.<sup>4</sup>

The authors here evaluate the building of democracy and the introduction of freedom into the Arab countries. The rate of the introduction goes by different speeds, as was supposed by American strategists.

The authors also analyse the statement of Samuel HUNTINGTON

<sup>4</sup> INGLEHART Ronald F. – NORRIS Pippa, *Le véritable choc des civilisations*. Le Débat, 2003/126. 76–84.

that “the line of the gap and of the cultural differentiation goes between ‘Western Christianity’ and between ‘Orthodox Christianity and Islam.’”

This border separates the two worlds, creates a separate space for these different political cultures that presuppose different participation of citizens in the decision-making processes of the society, different status of women and men, and different conceptions of gender freedom.

In other words, the values that separate these two worlds are linked to *eros*, rather than *demos*. For the evaluation of the possible economic, cultural and social development, it is necessary to see three things.

These are: in what measure democracy is accepted; what the requirements are for democratic institutions; and what qualities are demanded from the leaders of these institutions. The given regions could thus be rated on the basis of their measure of tolerance to the notion of gender equality and the achieved level of democracy.

### Cultural Differences

The level of democracy is rated by means of sociological tests, by the answers to the questions touching on political and social problems in society. The measured results are in percentages, and reflect the approval or disapproval, the agreement or disagreement to the following statements or questions.

1. *The Impact of Democracy*: Democratic regimes are powerless and require overmuch sophistry. Democracies do not lead to order.
2. *Democratic Ideals*: Democracy is not unproblematic, but it is the most proper form of public administration. Do you approve the idea of the creation of a democratic political system?
3. *Strong Leaders*: Do you approve the idea of a government of experts, who are not political and who decide upon their judgement of the best for their country? Do you agree with the idea of having a strong ruler, who does not take into account either election or parliament?
4. *Religious Leaders*: Politicians who do not believe in God are not suitable for holding public offices.
5. *Gender Equality*: Generally men are better political leaders than

women. In the case of a lack of job opportunities, men ought to have more chances to obtain work than women. University education is more important for young men than women. A woman should have children in order to get the feeling of self-realization. If a woman wishes to have a child without a permanent partner, do you approve or disapprove of such a stance?

6. *Divorce*: Divorce must be always well-grounded, it may not be grounded at all, or there are in-between cases?
7. *Abortion*: Abortion must be always well-grounded, it should never be advocated, or there are in-between cases?
8. *Homosexuality*: Homosexuality must always be well-grounded, it should never be advocated, or there are in-between cases?

The obtained results of the cultural differences between the Western and Islamic societies are as shown in the table in percentages.

Table 2.

	Western Societies	Islamic Societies
Impact of Democracy	68 %	68 %
Democratic Ideals	86 %	87 %
Strong Leaders 61 %	61 %	
Religious Leaders	62 %	39 %
Gender Equality 82 %	55 %	
Divorce	60 %	35 %
Abortion	48 %	25 %
Homosexuality 53 %	12 %	

These results give us an idea about, e.g., the fact that the support of democratic institutions is surprisingly equally strong in Western countries and in the Muslim world. A great majority considers democracy an effective form of public administration; 68 percent reject the idea of “democracy as a forceless regime.”

Muslim countries give more support to religious authorities, which play a more active role in society than in the Western world. In the evaluation of the status of women in society, there is evidently a big difference.

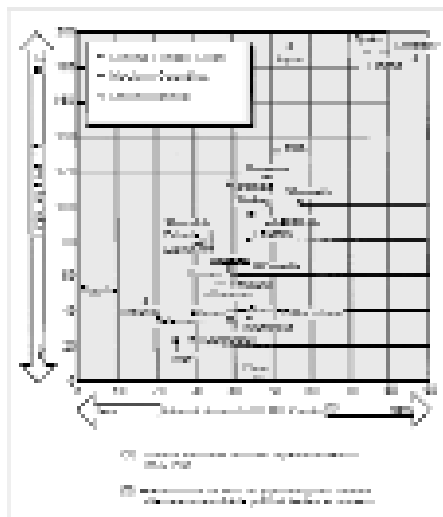


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We have to differentiate particular values of the data in individual countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the level of democracy and tolerance of difference in the Muslim countries. These results we may inspect in the picture below.

From this graph we may evaluate different degrees of tolerance in particular countries of Central Europe, as well as the position of Turkey in the tolerance scale, and the obtained democracy level. In the same way, we may consider the difference between the typically Islamic countries of Egypt (Sunni) and Iran (Shia).

Table 3.



These questions are manifested in a broader vision there, where the values of tolerance, trust, political activism and the acknowledgment of individual autonomy form the *values of self-expression*.

In all the studied countries which were examined by WVS, acceptance of gender parity—of the key indicator for evaluation of the tolerance grade and individual freedom—is in close relation to the level of democracy in the society.

### Subtlety of Self

At times the whole world recognizes democratic values, but there are not yet global agreements about self-expression values, about the liberty of conscience and about interpersonal trust. Yet these values are decisive for democracy.

Economic development causes changes of attitudes in all studied societies. Modernization brings systematic and foreseen changes in the role of gender: industrialization attracts women into the world of employment and drastically decreases the birth rate.

Women enter schools and universities; they hold management positions. The post-industrial phase marks even more the advancement of gender parity. Strategic management of society must engage all societal resources in favour of human development all over the world.

Culture permanently forms the way of societal development. It is obvious today that the events of 1989 have brought ideological paradigm changes, the shift from a directive model to a subjective model.

But the way of thinking remains on the dialectical materialistic basis, or it is marked by relativism and nihilism, mainly in the thinking of young people. Culture is commercialized and becomes goods of trade. The dominant mass culture obtains global character; global elements grow, while the regional and local decrease.

### Peace Process and Globalization

The twentieth century was marked by many new factors, strengthening on a global level. These are, e.g., globalization, terrorism or the creation of supranational relations between nation states.

The actual situation has an imperative for the economic liberalization and territorial compromises that should lead to a peace that would satisfy all parties. A pragmatic attitude towards economy, rationality and openness is required.

The increasing development of the European Union (EU), the international arbitration of the peace process, and the attractiveness of international capital all help to overcome economic stagnation. These processes lead from the “zero-sum game” towards cooperation and partnership, in which there is no winner and no loser.

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If the conflict of the twentieth century subsisted in the antagonism *labour vs. capital*, then at the end of the century the victory was on the side of capital. Labour lost in each of its ideological manifestations.

It lost those of the Orthodox Marxism (as in European social democracy), in the national Bolshevik soviet version, or in the form of the misty European attempts of the so-called "Third Way."

Nowadays our societies are unified in their attempt to work on new European structures. After years of hope, we have come to the first shocks. By refusing the Constitutional Proposal of the European Constitution, the inhabitants of France and the Netherlands have expressed their disapproval of the proposed text of the Constitutional Agreement.

How has this text been accepted by the Central European members of the European Union? From this material we can understand that in the Central and Eastern European region there is an evident shift of sensitivity to values from the traditional towards rational-secular values.

Another strong fact is that there is a presence of the sentiment of deception and loss of certainty. These factors are manifested in the higher indexes of suicide, which are most seen in Hungary and Slovenia.

From these facts one may deduce an urgent need for finding solutions to personal crises present in society, linked mostly to the employment of young people and their effective formation for the future needs of the society, as well as the degree of satisfaction of the middle-aged and elderly generation.

In this realm it is urgent to acknowledge the lack of authentic cultural satisfaction, the anti-cultural offer of the mass media, the shallow show vogue and the wide spread of pornography and other one-sided approaches to life in both print and electronic media.

It is urgent to analyse the world of the values of individuals: to enhance anthropological understanding, to foster group and national identity, and to create solid relations in the international and global system.

It is necessary to use effective instruments of analysis and problem-solving to the aforementioned burning issues of

European, as well as Central European societies. It is important to realize the reality of the processes spreading all over the world, to be aware of trends and to find effective measures of reacting.

The main problem seems to be in the realm of education and formation of young people. It is important to prepare the young generation for the tasks of tomorrow, to make it capable of solving problems in a creative way in order to be strong in cultural, competitive and creative aspects of their activities. Only in such a way will they be prepared to solve the problems that they will encounter on their way.

Ivan VOJTAŠŠÁK, born in 1943, received his education at the Slovak Technical University. After graduation and post-graduate studies he participated in a two-year study programme of technical creativity and legal patents. For a number of years he worked as an advisor in the office of the Mayor of Bratislava. He was the secretary of the *Justice and Peace Council* of the (Roman Catholic) Slovak Bishops' Conference and has been interested in Christian Social Doctrine for a number of years. He is married and has two daughters. His email address is: [ivan\\_vojtasak@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ivan_vojtasak@yahoo.co.uk).

