

This is a story of the past centuries – one may say. Still, absence of any self-reflection on the side of the EU towards its policy in the Middle East today, makes it worth to revisit some of the bleak chapters of European history, and the genesis of its pre-secular and secular thoughts

## Noah, Peter Pan and the Sleeping Beauty (Europe – Identity Imagined)

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Economic downturn; recession of plans and initiatives; €-crisis; Brexit and irredentism in the UK, Spain, Belgium, Denmark and Italy; lasting instability in the Euro-Med theatre (debt crisis of the Europe's south – countries scrutinized and ridiculed under the nickname PIGS, coupled with the failed states all over the MENA); terrorism; historic low with Russia; influx of predominantly Muslim refugees from Levant in unprecedented numbers and intensities since the WWII exodus; consequential growth of far-right parties that are exploiting fears from otherness which are now amplified with already urging labor and social justice concerns, generational unemployment and socio-cultural anxieties... The very fundamentals of Europe are shaking.

Strikingly, there is a very little enhanced public debate in Europe about it. What is even more worrying is the fact that any self-assessing questioning of Europe's involvement and past policies in the Middle East, and Europe's East is simply off-agenda. Immaculacy of Brussels and the Atlantic-Central Europe-led EU is unquestionable. Corresponding with realities or complying with a dogma?

One of the leading figures of European Renaissance that grossly inspired European renewal, Dante, puts Prophet Muhamed

to the 8<sup>th</sup> circle of his famous *Inferno*. The only individuals below Muhamed were Judas, Brutus, and Satan. “Islam was seen as the negation of Christianity, as anti-Europe...and Muhammed as an Antichrist in alliance with the Devil...” as Rana Kabbani noted in her luminary piece *Imperial Fictions*.

However, both religions trace their origins back to Abraham. They both lived in harmony (or at least they cohabitated for centuries within the MENA proper, notably in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq). Why was than there no harmonious relationship between Christian Europe and the Middle East? Was Europe opting to repress the Muslims in order to artificially generate a homogenous European self? No enemy at gate, no unity at home?

This is a story of the past centuries – one may say. Still, absence of any self-reflection on the side of the EU towards its policy in the Middle East today, makes it worth to revisit some of the bleak chapters of European history, and the genesis of its pre-secular and secular thoughts.

### *Civitas Dei* **Brussels**: *Extra Euro-Atlanticum, nulla salus*

Europe came to be known as ‘Christendom’ because its identity was imagined or invented as the Catholic in contradistinction to the Islamic Middle East and to the Eastern (*authentic, true* or Orthodox) Christianity. The Christianity, of course, originated in the Middle East not Europe. It was subsequently universalised (and, by spreading onto peripheral world, Europeanised) by the Balkan-born Roman Emperor, who spent much of his life on Bosphorus and hence, was buried in Asia Minor – Constantin the Great. Surely, it was by

legal design of, but by a full political unanimity to, this glorious Emperor that the city of Rome was (re)turned into an administrative periphery, politico-ideological outcast and geostrategic suburbia.

Therefore, the post Roman/Byzantine inauguration of ‘Christendom’ as a pure western culture necessitated a sustained intellectual acrobatics: Such an inversion (ideological and geopolitical periphery presenting itself as a centre) required both physical coercion and imposed narrative over the extensive space and time.<sup>1</sup>

This *a ’la card* creation of Catholic Christendom or to say; Western Ummah, served two vital objectives: domestic and external. Both helped solidification of the feudal socio-economic and politico-military system, and based on that of a precolonial European collective identity. Domestically, it served for a coherent sense of selfhood (us vs. them paradigm): unity, oppression and obedience (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus* – no salvation outside the church, following the old Roman rational ‘no world beyond *Limes* line’, or the modern one: ‘no prosperity outside the EU’). Externally, here was the justification for military voyages and other forms of organized plunders, all coupled with a coercive societal identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Transferring the official seat of the Roman Empire to Bosphorus marked far more than just an event of the peripheral maturity; periphery pressing onto the center. It meant that – at the peak times of the Milan’s Edict of Constantin the Great – the peripheral power successfully relocated itself closer to the centre; ideologically (metaphysically, religiously) but also geopolitically (physically, geographically). Not to insert itself, but to transcend. This will be the first and the last such a successful move from Europe, in human history. With this adjustment the Empire extended its life impressively – for over 1,000 years.

A Catholic Renaissance Europe soon realized that, in order to effectively project itself – to physically and/or mentally colonise overseas territories – it needed either coercion (rarefying and assimilation), labour-camp detention (slavery) or final solution (physical extermination). These strategic dilemmas over the instruments to use influenced and dominated European debates of the time. It brought about the conception of the ‘noble savage’ – who could be assimilated, versus the ‘ignoble savage’ who was destined for either labour detention or final solution. That coerce-or-exterminate dilemma of ‘soul salvationists’ even culminated within the pre-Westphalian Christian Ummah. It was in the famous Valladolid controversy of 1550, by which Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda’s notion of the *ignoble savage* faced off against Bartolomé de Las Casa’s view of the *noble savage*.

In both cases – the claim was offered – the Amero/AfroAsian Natives deserve salvation as they have a ‘strong desire for it’, but the views differed on whether the Natives’ prone wishes exceeded their mental capacity to receive Christianity. Hence, the debates – which were the roots and origins of the later liberal theories as well as the early precursors of the subsequent *regime change*, *humanitarian intervention* and *preemption* doctrines – always presupposed the inferiority (and passivity) of the Natives. Frankly, this remains a constant behaviour in international relations: E.g. views on Libya differed, as they differ today on Syria. However, what is common to all views is; nobody consults the local population and considers what they would like for themselves.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For centuries, it follows the same matrix: doctriated/induced inferiority, denouncing, attack, marginalization, passivation, plunder, indirect rule,

## Legitimizing the imperialism of imagination

In a course of subsequent centuries, the notion of final solution underwent through sophistication, and was eventually replaced by the combination of *cultural conversions/ submissions* (induced submissiveness), politico-military obedience and socio-economic apartheid. A subtle apartheid (that is easy to deny, but hard to prove) is usually better than the brute genocide (which is traceable and easily quantifiable). At the peaks of imperialism a *noble-ignoble savage* dilemma was embodied in an implicit and explicit racism. Debate was focused on a question whether the civilizational inferiority can be remedied through the imperial ‘civilizing’ mission, with social Darwinists and ‘scientific’ racists being rather pessimistic, but more solutions’ instructive.<sup>3</sup>

The so-called central dilemma of liberalism (*Is it liberal to impose liberal values on illiberal societies*) was of course only an innocently looking tip of the large iceberg, of the tireless othering. This ‘epistemology’ was further soft-embedded in the so-called Peter Pan theory with a romanticised image of the Other as more childishly careless and helpless, than intentionally cruel and barbaric; being rather alluring, promiscuous and exotic. Essentially, the East

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remote control presence. Or, reduced to a binary code formula: victimisation-criminalisation. Namely: humanitarian intervention.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Cecil Rhodes, the 19th century British businessman and the architect of Apartheid, used to say that to be born an Englishman was to have ‘won first prize in the lottery of life’. He is also remembered of the following: “I contend that we are the first race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race.” Large part of colonial Africa was called after his name – Rhodesia, until rather recently, 1979.

as an innocently enveloped child who would never grow up. This, of course, gave rise to various binary categorisations, the *us-vs.-them/ either-or* listings, in order to facilitate a decisive and long-lasting differentiation between the constructed West and the East.<sup>4</sup>

The West as a constructed male vs. the East as a constructed female. A ‘mind-oriented’ west vs. a ‘body-oriented’ east. Phallusoid peninsulas and islands of (Atlantic-Scandinavian) Europe vs. womb-like continental landmass of Afro-Asia; Erective and explosive vs. reflective and implosive; an Omnipresent (ever seafaring and trading) extroverted male vs. humble, handcrafting, waiting female. Masculine, phallusoid, progressively erected temporal linearity vs. periodic menstruation leakages of femininity in regressive cycles of stagnation. Clearly, anything beyond that was deemed inconsequential.

Physical, material, ideological, active, polarizing, determined vs. metaphysical, spiritual, esoteric, atmospheric, inclusive, holistic. No wonder that all operationalized ideologies originated solely in Europe. What else, since no one ever, but Asians revealed any significant religion to the world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Small surprise that the 43<sup>rd</sup> US President (un)famously claimed: ‘you are either with us or against us’... His father, the 41st US President, strategized the Cold War and summarised its epilogue effectively: ‘We win, they lose’.

<sup>5</sup> To this end: Inventive, proactive, scientific, rational, disciplined, sell-controlled/self-constraining, sane, sensible, practical, ‘mind-oriented’, independent, and most of all paternal West. The East, of course, was on the opposite side and inferior: imitative, passive, superstitious, lazy, irrational, spontaneous, insane, emotional, exotic, body-oriented, dependent, and above all, child-like. Tall, matured ‘masculinity’ vs. immature and physically underdeveloped ‘femininity’. The masculine phallus of military, industry, technolo-

Gradually, the imperial civilizing mission (*Expansion is a path to Security*) got a new form. It became a moral duty – R2P (*Responsibility to Protect*), as much as the parental duty is to raise their infant child. The handsome, masculine and strong Western *Prince Charming* has one duty – to emancipate his Eastern *Sleeping Beauty*. Giving a ‘kiss’ meant projecting the western physical military presence, Christianity and commerce.<sup>6</sup> Who was/is the Eastern *Sleeping Beauty*?

Rudyard Kipling’s famous 1899 poem, *The White’s Man Burden* offers some answers while describing the Eastern peoples as ‘half-devil and half-child’. “The blame of those ye better / The hate of those ye guard” – Kipling warns and instructs, he describes and invites. In his classic novel of 1847, *Tancred – The New Crusade*, much celebrated British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli claims “A Saxon race, protected by an insular position, has stamped its diligent and methodic character of the century. And when a superior race, with a superior idea to Work and Order, advances, its state will be progressive...All is race!”<sup>7</sup> Quite an intellectual

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gy, shipping and trade that is welcomed, if not heartedly invited, to tap and drill the womb-like dwell of resources, while at the same time seeding the ideological semen of ‘civilization’.

<sup>6</sup> Most of the so-called International/Cross-continental Trade Pacts are closer to the capitulation agreements than to any fair, balanced and mutually beneficial commercial accords. What a popular language of today calls barriers to trade are in fact the socio-economic sovereign rights and other checks-and-balances national well-being instruments.

<sup>7</sup> The novel itself is named after the Norman leader of the First European Crusades, that later became the Prince of Galilee, and regent of the satellite Europe’s state on the territory of today’s Syria and Turkey – Antioch.

acrobatics for Disraeli himself, who was neither Saxon nor Christian.

Over the period, western Catholic missionaries constituted one of the most powerful and influential lobbying voices for this civilizing mission. It was of course weaponisation of religion, a notorious misuse for ideological purposes. Same like today, fanatics then and there, were identified and further radicalised, to say 'inspired'. Eventually, they usually got hired as the AGITPROP/Ideological police by the predatory elites, hid behind the Feudal European states. Naturally, the justification was looked upon in any Biblical narrative. E.g. the re-invoking the Genesis story of Noah's three sons, and interpreting it as the 'duty' of Japheth (Europe) to absorb Shem (the Asians) and enslave and colonise Ham or Canaan (the Black Africa and Indians of America). Amazingly, according to Genesis ch.9, verse 27: "God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant".

The later Protestant revival infused the next wave of Christian missionaries to force this narrative into the matrix of colonisation as 'wilful' implants onto the minds and bodies of overseas peoples. Therefore, James Lorimer and other architects of that-time political and international legal order divided the world in three segments: civilized White, barbarous Yellow and savage Black. *Yellows* were 'fallen people', a *terra infantilis* to civilize (what will later evolve into indirect rule, with a social apartheid in place), the area occupied by the *Blacks*, *Redbones* and *Aborigine* was a 'borderless space', *terra nullius* just to conquer and settle, since the indigenous have no 'birthright' to it (meaning: physical colonisation and direct rule, final solution and genocide).

Unfinished business of ‘salvation’ came back to Europe of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hitler’s interpretation of it was: civilized *White* (Arian) – Central Europe; *Yellows* (to be put under indirect rule, with ‘only’ social apartheid in place) Atlantic and Scandinavian Europe; *Blacks* (predestined for a physical colonisation by the superior race upon a decisive final solution and genocide) all Slavic states of Eastern and Russophonous Europe.

Indeed, ever since the 18<sup>th</sup> century on, European notion that ‘civilization’ was the monopoly of the West, clearly implied that there is no civilization – and therefore, salvation – outside the western model. Famous historian Toynbee calls it “a secularized version of the primitive Western Christian proposition *Nemini salus ...nisi in Ecclesia.*” See for yourself how much current debates, sparked by the ongoing refugee crisis, follow the above patterns.

### Triangular economy of othering

There is a consensus within the academic community that the critical factor in redefining Europe as the advanced West was the expansion of its strategic depth westward to the America upon 1492. This enabled the so-called triangular transcontinental trade, brutally imposed by Europeans: Enslaved Africans shipped to America in exchange for gold and silver from there to Europe, in order to cover European deficits in importing the cutting-edge technologies, manufactured products, other goods and spices from a that-time superior Asia and the Middle East.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In order to illustrate a magnitude, let’s note a following data: Starting from an early 16th century for consecutive 300 years, 85% of the world’s silver production and 70% of the world’s gold output came from

The Afro-America yields were so colossal for Atlantic Europe that many scholars assume the so-called Industrial revolution rather as an evolutionary anomaly than a natural process of development, which was primarily pivoting in Asia. Such a rapid shift from a peripheral status to an ‘advanced civilization’ of course necessitated a complete reconstruction of western identity. This acrobatics – in return – also enhanced the split between Eastern/Russophone, closer to and therefore more objective towards the Afroasian realities, and Western (Atlantic/Scandinavian/ Central) Europe, more exclusive, self-centred and ignorant sphere.

While the Atlantic flank progressively developed its commercial and naval power as to economically and demographically project itself beyond the continent, the landlocked Eastern Europe was lagging behind. It stuck in feudalism, and involuntarily constituted a *cordon sanitaire* to Islam and the Russo-oriental East. Gradually, past the 15<sup>th</sup> century the idea of ‘Western Europe’ begun to crystallise as the Ottoman Turks and the Eastern Europeans were imagined and described as barbarians. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, Atlantic Europe portrayed itself as the prosperous West that borders ‘pagan/barbarian’ neighbours to its near east, and the ‘savage’ neighbours to its south and west, and Far East. Consequently, we cannot deny a role that the fabricated history as well as the

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the Americas. Further on, during the 17th, 18th and 19th century the role of Black slavery, slave trading, American Black slave-driven production centres and Negro markets, all significantly contributed to Atlantic Europe’s agricultural and industrial ‘breakthrough’ – as we are celebrating it today. Even the US Founding Fathers were slaveholders (5 of the 7 principal ones: Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and George Washington).

‘scientific’ racism and its theories played in a formation and preservation of European identity.

The Enlightenment was a definite moment in the reinvention of European identity. The quest came along with the fundamental question *who are we*, and what is our place in the world? Answering that led on to the systematisation, classification of *anthropogeographic inversion* and – frankly – to reinvention of the world. From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, a kind of an intellectual apartheid regime was forming.<sup>9</sup> The rise of the West was portrayed as a pure virgin birth as John M. Hobson fairly concluded. Europeans delineated themselves as the (only or the most) progressive subject of the world history in past, presence and future, while the Eastern peoples (e.g. Asian as ‘the people without history’) were seen as inert, passive and corrosive. While the Solar system ‘became’ heliocentric, the sake and fate of our planet turned plain – Europo-centric. The *world is flat* mantra set the stage, turning all beyond Europe into a *no-fly-zone*.

“The idea of Europe found its most enduring expression in the confrontation with the Orient in the age of imperialism. It was

9 This historical anomaly I describe as antropogeographic inversion in which the periphery asserted itself into the center by periferising that center and managing to present itself as a center. Thus, our current geopolitical center resides on geographic peripheries of our planet (in the hands of late developmental arrivals, such as the UK, Scandinavia, Russia, Canada, the US, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Singapore). To achieve and maintain this colossal inversion was impossible without coercion over the space and time. Consequently, it necessitated a combination of physical and metaphysical (hard/coercion and soft/attraction) instruments: Physical military presence of the periphery in the center, combined with a tightly guarded narrative.

in the encounter with other civilizations that the identity of Europe was shaped. Europe did not derive its identity from itself but from the formation of a set of global contrasts. In the discourse that sustained this dichotomy of Self and Other, Europe and the Orient became opposite poles in a system of civilizational values which were defined by Europe.” – notes Delantry.

Even the English word to determine, position, adapt, adjust, align, identify, conform, direct, steer, navigate or command has an oriental connotation. To find and locate itself opposite to Orient, means to orient oneself.

Feudal Europe had identified itself negatively against Levant and Islam. Clearly, it was an identity heavily resting on insecurity. Proof? An external manifestation of inner insecurity is always aggressive assertiveness.

Is this still alive or even operative? How it correlates today?

Europe repeatedly missed to answer to the East and Middle East through a dialogue (instruments) and consensus (institutions) although having both (CoE, OSCE, EU’s ENP, Barcelona Process, etc.). For the last 25 years, it primarily responded to the MENA militarily (or/and with sanctions, which is a socio-economic warfare) – via ‘Coalitions of the Willing’. However, for a rapidly economically and demographically contracting Europe, the confrontation does not pay off anymore. While practically still yesterday (by the end of WWII), four of the five largest economies were situated in Europe, today only one is not in Asia. None is in Europe.<sup>10</sup> (Likewise, while the US

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<sup>10</sup> The moment of ‘liberal truth’ always comes from Atlantic. Thus, Ana Palacio who served both sides of Atlantic (as the former Spanish Foreign

economy contributed with 54% of the world output in 1945, today it hardly has 1/3 of that share.)

Simply, the Old Continent is not a wealthy club anymore. It is a place with a memory of its wealthy past. The EU has to learn how to deescalate and compromise. This is in its best interest, for the sake of its only viable future. Therefore, it is a high time for the Brussels-headquartered Europe to evolve in its views and actings.

Let us start by answering the question: Is the so-called Russian expansionism or MENA 'Islamofascism' spontaneous or provoked, is that nascent or only a mirror image of something striking in front of it? And after all, why the indigenous Europe's Muslims (those of the Balkans) and their twins, indigenous Christians of MENA (those of Levant) are now two identically slim shadows on a wall.

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Minister and the former Senior Vice President of the Washington-based WB) – among many others – recently warned the Western Ummah: “After years of handwringing over Obama’s strategic “pivot” to Asia, even as Russia was stirring up trouble in Ukraine, Europe is once again a strategic focus for the US. But the deeper message is far less encouraging. The US is acting because its European partners have not. This divergence is troubling. American engagement is necessary to provide momentum, but it is Europe’s weight that has served as the critical mass required to move the world’s liberal order in a positive direction. From the perspective of the European Union, the latest US security bailout raises the possibility that after more than two decades of growing prominence, Europe will lose its agenda-setting power.” (text underlined, by A.B.)

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