

Introduction

Latinity at the Quest for Difference in Eurasia

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The Search for Long-Term Dialogue

The development of the Academy of Latinity has shown the levels of interlocution and research whereby the very notion of a cultural dialogue implies logical closures; the interplay of prejudices, as well as new breakthroughs over the contemporary horizon. The Academy began by a first response in the university milieu to the invitation made by President Khatami to the West, seized by the Khomeinian revolution, wars in Afghanistan and the permanence of the Palestinian issue. Our group went over to Teheran in 2002, in a very first breakthrough, opening the way for a deepening of the *vis-à-vis* with the Islamic world, allowing the successive dialogue with the Arab culture in Alexandria (2004) and the exchange with Turkish Islam in Ankara and Istanbul (2005).

It is difficult to think of a natural sequence in that trail, otherwise than, exactly by the one already suggested by the last meetings. Starting with the first interventions by Madina Tlostanova, the Academy saw itself required to this wider bearing, to the core of the Caucasus or Central Asia. Islam reasserts there its stock of historical gathering, beyond the result of Soviet modernization, through a vigorous prospective in the frame of globalization.

The issue would become even more thrilling, so much that the heritage of Western rationalization, coming from the apparatus and the socialist thrust found, at the same time, assets to avoid any fundamentalist return to the Islamic matrix. Stalin understood, by the way, the viability of this ascent, betting on the advance, itself, of a universal platform of changes, facing the Islamic borders of the Old Russian Empire, looking at the issue of Caucasian nationalities. The Azeri awakening nowadays becomes, furtherly, paradigmatic by the dual expressions of a cultural pluralism, of a delayed nation building process facing structurally different Empires.

Renan, the “Union and Progress” Committee, “Touranism”

The Caucasus, and specially Azerbaijan offer his unique opportunity in the Braudelian time length of a creative uprising collective identity after a rational involvement by the socialist endeavor, at an exposed rooting of the

Islamic culture, during the last half of the XX century. The region, hence, before the Soviet era an Islamic mediation through the Ottoman ruling and its late ideology, advanced by “pan-touranism.” At the same time, nevertheless the national experience benefited, on these grounds, of an unexpected backlash by the rendering of the former Empire, in Istanbul, into Kemal Atatürks Turkey. Such a threshold changed drastically the international reference of the region, as seen in first modernization of the Ottoman Empire by the “Young Turks.” It was at stake then a common sharing of Europe through the Balkans moving into the Caucasian latitudes. Renan left his imprint in the Committee “Union et Progrès,” through Hilal or Hyseyn Zaid, betting on a multicultural Europe, more than in his Empire’s confrontation and its worn out geopolitics, already at the time of Abdul-Hamid.

Indeed, at the end, the ideological evolutions of pan-touranism crumbled, through the last conversion of a Turkish collective identity into a late National State in a whole encompassing view of Western Modernity. The claims of the “Union et Progrès” movement of 1908 turned finally into three contradictory policies like “ottomanism” in internal policies, “pan-Islamism” in the relations with Arabs’ and non-turks foreigners abroad, and “pan-Turkism” *vis-à-vis* Russia.

Atatürk’s withdrawal, after the great opening toward Turkmenistan, in counterweighing to the loss of the Balkan world, left behind the ideology of “touranism.” It would

anyway rebound in the historical leap of the Socialist Revolution. At the last jolt of the great sight, the “Young Turks,” still thought of the gathering of Central Asia in the support to “Techkilat-I Mahsusa” organization, in frank subversive action among the *sheoussi* tribes.

The assets of Turkey-Europe

The debate of “Turkey in Europe” reprieves today, at full speed, with the force of decompression of a collective unconscious—and, beyond immediate geopolitical ’implication, in allegiance with the “old continent.” Its games point out to a submissive world, to the rules of hegemonies, supported by a “civilization of fear” and the simulacra of collective identities at stake.

The poor refusal of Turkey’s dialogue to the E.U. only calls to mind the Islamic classic rooting over the European map, and by the Arab presence in Andalusia, and by the Ottoman hold, stopped at the gates of Vienna, but without retreat until the early 20th century. It loons, in the post-September 11 world, and in the prospects of this literally reified future by the new 100-year wars, and permanent preemptive conflicts. We are only at the dawn of this change of horizons, such as seen before the twin tower catastrophe, in the frame of a “first world,” that bet on its overtaking tensions, at that time, just between the United States and Europe.

It is not a matter of seeing, only, in which manner progresses and last-minute stops of the “old Continent,” as an

independent player of globalization will currently find in the Turkish issue a differential to its advantage at the top of the hegemonic universe. A defense of the issue nowadays would be played at a full new scenario for the logics of the Oval Office.

We would take notice in what manner the former “Europe of the six,” becoming the uncertain Federation, sees itself, today, surrounded by American hegemony when classical satellizations spin from the East of the Old Continent. The Constitution blockades, and recent clashes of the WTO in Hong Kong underscore a final resettlement of the great international decision balance. It will come in Eurasia to the potentialities of these new protagonisms, as the post-soviet era brings new mobilization between national reawakening of primary cultural backgrounds and emerging realignments on the global political map. The region benefits from these advantages of a reentry into the postponed scene of sovereignty may cause, on the balance of powers, too quickly frozen on the “Bushian” hegemonic frame.

A Turkey that goes back today to the Mediterranean and to a history retaken from the West carries, with it, this push from Eurasia, where it reassumes the flight of the late 19th century, of an Islam embedded in an Ottoman matrix. Thus, although, in terms of a modernity mediation exposed to the Soviet utopia and awakening of the national State, in the threshold of in the post-socialist reshaping of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan or Georgia.

Hegemonic logics nowadays quite different from the Leninist endeavor, moves to the preemptive conflict to face terrorism, in this vicious circle between topical violence and anonymous merciless war. At the same time, democracy is branded as a stop to any difference, seem abhorrent to the incoming world system.

The Mediterranean and a Pluralist Identity in the Caucasus

In fact, the Turkish European accreditation gave a full chance to this new large continental balances and a full entrance of multiculturalism in the long-range game of differences. It may be tested by a *media res* exercise, or an interlocution or a new *vis-à-vis*, speeded up post-September 11. A multiple view of the West, in its supple side, may be worked in Eurasia, starting with this Latinity that has responded to the Iranian dialogue, and that breaks in its polarity the “axis of evil” and trespasses western fundamentalism, in his hard side of preemptive wars and the Oval Room missionarism.

Turkey’s final acceptance in the European ensemble will enable chances for an eventual new world power balance, through *dramatis personae* capable of getting ahead of the limit-situation of the new “hundred-year war.” Even the advance of American satellization of Eastern Europe will suppose a Turkish deployment, as a critical supporting example, so that the last awakening of a nation building process may expand to a retrieval of Islamic matrixes in an his-

toric freshness—as shown nowadays in the Balkans. The bringing in of a new imprint of difference becomes staggering relevant at a play, when the emergent rules of hegemony press for an identity subtraction, by the universe of simulacra and flat and irreversible alignment.

Islamic Return in Post-Utopia

One has not yet sufficiently distinguished the manner whereby the hegemonic world does not condescend with the old technological pastorals of progress. Born out of a situation of fear, the ruling system eliminates every chance of *vis-à-vis* with the peripheries. It is then a multi expropriation procedures that faces, contrary to the very primary awakening, the identitarian post Soviet quest. The resumption of an arcane experience is joined by the prospective assertion of a collectivity, whose historical “golden rule,” is the nation, such as thought by the West. But it will not be able to advance, at the last moment of identity awakenings, threaten by hegemonic logic, if not by the reciprocity mirrors of outlooks, where Latinity keeps an interlocutive privilege, of pluralism and alert. The supple West is there, to obviate this demand, and witness the blunt imperative of difference, before the renewed weightiness of polarizations creates “readymade games” for this root of contemporaneity awakening, upstream of the fate of Eastern Europe, or of the national enactments of post-independence Africa.

Perhaps we are not aware in the West, and mostly in our Mediterranean basin, of the huge complexity, in the collec-

tivities of the Caspian bridge, of the resumption of their identity background, before the horizon open by the great socialist design. Nor, as far as that goes, when speaking of this backbone of the over-continent, this rationality *aegis* on the Caucasus where Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan not, only, come out of a historical density in the deepest swirls of cultures, but shared the greatest regional tension in their historic territorial reapportion.

Breaking up of Empires, Awakening of Nations

This great emerging protagonism concerns not only the cumulation of the various Christian, Islamic, Safavide or Ottoman holds, but about a shoving game, from Lenin to Stalin over a real territory reallocation between Azerbaijan and Armenia, leading already for example, after “Glasnost,” to the Nagorno-Karabagh war. Massive Armenian immigrant displacements in Azerbaijan and vice-versa surpass the classical embattlement on territorial reapportionments and bloody severance. The cultural conflict in the Caucasus, at the turn of the new century, shows even the presence of cracking territorial logics and their continuity, with the abundance of acknowledged, chopped cultures, in Dagestan, of the Azeri founding soil, and this new national player after the Soviet collapse.

In this dimension therefore of the Eurasian West, as underscored by Madina Tlostanova one could not speak about unity, or transparency of this rerouting to Islam, even in Atatürk’s Republic, and new political majorities of facing

the maintenance of the secular State. Or, even thereabouts, in the entire huge retrospective of great Europe, ensuring, by meeting deep democracy demands by the European Union, their Mediterranean buttresses extending over the great outflow, besides Anatolia.

Moreover, Azerbaijan show us exactly the contrary of inertias in its Islamic reception, by being the anthological case of almost instant passage or overcoming of “sunnism” or “shiiism,” by making a “golden age” of this culture that springs out from its identity background. It is hard to find today in this late blaze of State-nations, coming out of the Soviet Union, at the same time such threats in the return to their cultural territory.

Indeed, post-soviet mediation was done almost at the level of reestablishing players of a personality, like Heidar Alyaiev, precisely the only Caucasian representative at the former Soviet power center. It was preceded by the martyrdom, in 1923, of Nazarimov asserting together with their communist orthodoxy the defense of his national expression, after the independence effort, in 1919, of Mahmad Razuzalde. Moving further in view of Moscow centralism difficulties, the Azeri resumption prevailed over the strict planning of the Soviet State implementation.

Azeri Culture and the New Diasporas

Nowadays, Azerbaijan’s identity acquires the power of a feat, at the same time, canonical and prospective, with a view to these successive breakups and recovery to its will of

difference, put in relief by the specificity of its culture. The country, had been, since 1919, exposed to the move forward by the “Committee of 26” in the radically of the full utopian conscription. Their summary execution, all undertows, all coming and going of western and White Russia invasions, showed how far the fall of czarism implied a revolutionary view of the idea of change and its inexorability. It is therefore in the same orthodoxy that Nazarimov struggled for Azeri identity, sharpened by a fight against territorial sectioning by Armenia, resumed at the 1989 “Glasnost” Diaspora, by a delayed awareness, at the cost of the nation building endeavor, in its Caucasian specificity. It also faces today the emergent logics of the hegemonic play, nevertheless still bounded to a geopolitical determination. This perspective is stressed by the new landscape of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, linking the Caspian to the Mediterranean. It not only forward the old “touranist” perspective, in the reverse way but brings in an almost “tectonic” new unbalance in the region to the advantage of Eurasia.

Beyond Pan-Turkism. Islam and Blown up Peripheries

The entire issue of “European Turkey,” at the pace taken during the past months, outstrips Brussels horizons and their new federative perplexities. With this landscape the Caucasus benefits from a new ground to stand against

hegemonics, adding to their geopolitical set a reinforced multicultural approach, though the possible Mediterranean embrace, in the opposite way of Enver Pacha, and the “Young Turks” look to the historical vocation of the Anatolian platform.

Such a move unifies an effective cultural embedding attentive to a common historic alignment regardless of a continental individualities, that the new Eurasian feature turned obsolete. These new protagonists breed on the historic large span to face the machinery of hegemonics and its impeding virtualization of the collective subjectivities—national or regional—nowadays.

A large Mediterranean in its macro historic role comes out of a narrow sighted view of an Europe-Turkey. This gathering reconciles the pushes of modernity at the brink of Westernization—and at a moment of an impeding take over by its hegemony. Indeed the Ottoman world made the taking of Constantinople an effective “Roman” conquest and his stop at the Vienna gates came after a multiseular encroaching in the Balkans, succeeding the Byzantine Empire.

Latinity Watching over a Plural World

In such a context of a return to the Braudelian idea of a time of cultures Latinity has an overwhelming role in shaping a Western pluralism as required by the large Mediterranean scenario. Time has come also, in a context of utter acceleration of an impeding “end of history” to stress for an

Islamic World seen, usually from the West as just a prey to assimilationism, according to the gospel of progress. It is also in the National State articulations of the Middle East as in Turkey and Egypt then in such an strategic, area can take peace a counterweighing effect to an impeding satellization of Eastern Europe. In fact, the “Europe of the Twenty Five” shows an increasing lack of initiative—an “etherealization” in Toynbean terms—*vis-à-vis* the former strength of the “Europe of the Six.”

The voice of the pre-September 11 “old continent” must play an agonistic role in the political balance, by relying further on historical loyalties, born in the Mediterranean basin, in view of the larger game, of the Eurasian border, starting with Slavic shoves. We cannot fail to remark to which extent the adoption of Turkey, in Brussels, shows to itself, a divide between a converted world to the Oval Office rules of the game or the openings, where, effectively, history wills may prevail over the prospect of an overwhelmed one-sided world, already running on its subliminal “fait accompli.”

In such a context the Caucasus becomes a fundamental leverage. Starting with the present role of Azerbaijan, an Eurasian awakening brings the definitive results of a political option over the pseudo fatalities of history as a game done. The Azeri endeavor, past and present, can respond to that breakthrough.