

means breaking out of the gatekeeping concepts which have structured so much of our research. Of course the Cold War structured many aspects of life in East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, and in the United States and many other countries as well. But we as researchers are able to write about other places outside the Eastern Bloc without always having the political and economic structures of the Cold War there overwhelm our thinking about those places. A perspective which takes into account the consequences of the Cold War but is not in itself determined by the hegemonic construction of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain will radically change the construction of theory in anthropology and in many other social science disciplines.

Of course, there are many kinds of changes presently occurring in Eastern Europe, and 1989 was a watershed year for those "transitions." However, this does not mean that every research project needs to be structured by the notion of the Transition, a unidirectional, evolutionary concept in which the end point is a capitalist industrial democracy. For example, there are similar processes underlying the sweeping changes in the concepts of the nation in the Western European experience with setting up the European Union, and in East-Central Europe casting off ties to the former Soviet Union. The merging of political and economic boundaries in Western Europe, such as currencies and passports, has produced anxiety over patrolling political, ethnic and linguistic borderlands. Ideals of linguistic purity have become prominent as populations attempt to delineate their national identities in opposition to the integrating tendencies of the European Union. Eastern Europeans must reconstruct national identities (some of which were maintained in opposition to socialism) into forms which resonate with current national ideals. Some common themes which can be traced worldwide are changing collective memories and national identities, counter-hegemonic discourses attempting to manipulate mass historical consciousness, and the effects of changing attitudes towards authority and freedom under different historical circumstances.

My concern is that bringing considerations of the Eastern Bloc back into good graces in the discourse of the social sciences not mean merely that these countries are "tamed" into fitting into extant theories. This would strip them theoretically of their experiences under socialism, and the particulars of how the Cold War was experienced by those who were (or were perceived to be, in the case of Yugoslavia), on the other side of the Iron Curtain. This would impoverish both an understanding of Eastern European countries, and of First and Third world countries. Rather, I would suggest that the "end of the Cold War" gives us the opportunity to remove a conceptual paradigm which silenced discussion of East-Central Europe and the Soviet Union in mainstream academia, and enables us to see more deeply. It allows us to penetrate the silence about the Eastern Bloc, which has existed in discussion in and about the West, and to reformulate broad conceptualizations of "how the world works."

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What's In A Name?

The Persistence of East Europe as Conceptual Category

David A. Kideckel

Europe between Germany, Russia, the Baltic, and Aegean has long been a source of wonder. The origins of the east as East, that is as "other," was first evident in the "long sixteenth century" when portions of the European landmass seemed to diverge in fundamentally different ways. As the story goes, developing Western capitalism produced an East of "second serfdom," persistent underdevelopment, differentiated class structures, and undemocratic political regimes. However, it also created a Western science that concretized these conditions in the Western mind (and some would say in dependent Eastern mentalities as well). Such distancing was further elaborated through two world wars, a host of military conflicts, and the Cold War, where the dichotomous nature of the now-halves of the European continent were formalized by political economic, diplomatic, and even academic structures (Sampson and Kideckel 1988).

Still, categorization of east as East was never total or certain. Even during the twentieth century's wars, hot and cold, it was and remains a set of overlapping regional categories. Depending on the criteria employed – geographic, political, cultural or linguistic – the region between Germany and Russia, the Baltic and Aegean, was also variously conceived. The concept of Central Europe was ascendant between the two World Wars, while south of the Danube the fragmentary states with nationalist intrigues were defined pejoratively as the "Balkans." The control of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania by the then-Soviet Union hived these states off from the "East" and moved them further east, conceptually at least, into Russia. The failed Communist insurgency in Greece, meanwhile, ultimately made this nation, more eastern and Eastern than most, a Western state as well.

All this movement, however, more firmly entrenched the "Bloc" states as the conceptual East for Western political authority. Even then-Yugoslavia was so relegated, though as much due to its history of ethnic conflict as to its Titoist political economy. Further, following the lead of political forces, though the states and peoples of post-World War Two Europe between Germany and Russia still varied extensively, in Western minds they were readily conflated into an invariant East. A knowledgeable few sought to retain a concept of Central or East-Central Europe (Seton-Watson 1972) emphasizing a common

INTRODUCTION: THE ORIGINS OF EAST EUROPE

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European identity. However, in world political economy, the category East was ascendant and a gloss for Russophile.

Thus, via the Cold War the East became defined as outside the pale of European themes and qualities and considered mainly in terms of political threat, social problem, ethnographic exotica, and contrastive difference. While Western anthropologists puzzle about how Western European peoples and their cultures are indicative of "otherness," the East's otherness is taken as a given and not even problematized. It is, as termed in an earlier article, an "utter other" (Kideckel 1996). The events of 1989 and 1990 brought some hope that the political economic subdivision of the continent was ending and with it the conceptual one as well. The destruction of the Berlin Wall and the breaching of other boundaries signalled to some the reemergence of Central Europe. In an important article noting this process Timothy Garton Ash (1986), citing Havel, Michnik, and Konrád, laid out the qualities of a Central (as opposed to an Eastern) Europe: skeptical, sober, anti-utopian minds and rational, humanistic, democratic, and tolerant societies.

However, some six years after the Wall the rebirth of Central Europe remains a work in progress. To much Western historical, social scientific, and political authority, East and West remain fundamentally separate categories of thought with gradations unrecognized. Taking this as a given, the remainder of this essay first considers the factors behind the use and persistence of categories of East and West in current social science discourse about Europe. It next concerns the implications of this conceptual division for social scientific practice. Finally it suggests a brief alternative to this current state of affairs.

In the main, my essay adopts a position somewhat contradictory to the purposes of this edition of *Replika* and even contradictory to my jaundiced view of the East-West bifurcation above. To an extent it even offers an apologia for the East/West conceptual split. As I suggest, there are still valid scientific, cultural, and even psychological reasons for the division of the continent. The thrust of the current volume implies that Orientalist assumptions shaping a Manichaean East/West concept derive mainly from the Western portion of the duo. However, this seems far from the truth. The discourse of the East so permeates discussion of Europe, that though many rail against the division, they still fall back on it when it comes in handy. For example, the other day while checking my e-mail I found a posting from Budapest's Central European University. The message informed subscribers to the Society for the Anthropology of Europe's discussion list, H-SAE, about a conference they were sponsoring incredibly titled "Cities in Eastern and Western Europe." Central Europe was nary a thought to the folks at the Central European University. If not there, then, where?

CATEGORICAL REPRODUCTION OF THE EAST

As one can tell from this brief example, the institutional forces at work reproducing the category "East" are widespread and tenacious. However, it also suggests that not all the practices and structures reproducing this discourse are malevolent. To be sure, there appear to be forces that purposefully perpetuate the division of Europe for narrow and generally divisive ends. However, other factors operate either unconsciously, out of the general inertia of bureaucratic decision making structures, or purposefully qualify the distinction and use it carefully where it is thought to retain a certain degree of scientific validity. In

other words, the conceptual division of East and West and the definition of the East must itself be problematized and seen as illustrative of diverse social processes and actors. It is really too facile to consider the definition of East as some kind of conspiracy.

In academia there are examples of both sorts of forces – the benign and the provocative. In the former, the inertia of university curricular bodies and the preoccupation of faculty with the here-and-now, has enabled East European Studies programs to persist despite their usefulness. Area studies in American universities have a fairly long and accepted pedigree. Often representatives of each area program sit on the same international-oriented committees. Having long divided the world among themselves and benefited from this division they are ill prepared to rethink their categories, let alone provide their colleagues with the intellectual and academic resources of the regions which they've long farmed. Thus, East European specialists seeking to fold their programs into a generalized European one would be committing academic suicide, even though Western specialists might find an expanded program to their benefit.

Eastern Europe is also a persistent, if implicit, category in the politics and administration of the "Western" states. The revival or the persistence of left-wing governments in Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, rump-Yugoslavia, to say nothing of the Zyuganov insurgency in Russia, has again concretized the East to Western minds. That the characteristics of these diverse leftist governments vary extensively is irrelevant to the West. What matters is the left distinction which serves as a ready common denominator. From "left" to "east" is thus an easy step. This is furthered, of course, by the fact that NATO has yet to move east in formal recognition of Russia's abiding security concern in the former Warsaw Pact zone. Even the Clinton "Partnership for Peace" initiative implicitly recognizes a zone of continued Russian interest which, by extension, demands conflation and conceptual boundaries.

Related to Western political processes, one of the single-most important factors maintaining the continental division is the foreign assistance delivered from West to East. By its very nature and structure, assistance transmitted from the states and institutions of the capitalist West defines all in receipt as "other." The nations of the formerly socialist world are thus conflated by their "need for help" with privatization, democratization, technological transfer, and government reform. While donors recognize variation among them, and specify different programmatic goals, these differ more in emphasis than in kind. Thus, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) separates Eastern European aid-takers into northern and southern tiers, though maintaining the basic Eastern category in its aid programs (Creed 1994, Wedel 1994). Furthermore, the transmission of aid from West to East by definition defines Eastern states as problematic and "not like us."

Finally, for some academics, there is also a certain discomfort about separating the various states of formerly socialist Europe into Central and Eastern (or Southeastern, or what have you) that grows from a certain political sensitivity. If the Central European identity, as discussed above, is defined as rational, democratic, civilized, urbane, and the like, than that which is not Central is not these things either. Thus, to separate out Central Europe from its former socialist partners implies a pejorative evaluation of the states and peoples to the south and east and potentially opens one up to charges of racism and cultural elitism. These are avoided, of course, by continued use of the common East Europe category.

CATEGORICAL ORIENTALISM: IMPLICATIONS OF THE REPRODUCTION OF THE EAST

More important than the particular forces working to retain a concept of East Europe is the significance of doing so for scholarship and politics. Certainly the conflation of these many states into a unified category has some definite effects on intellectual practice. Most significantly, the reproduction of the category "East Europe" also produces a tendency for those working both in and outside the region to see that subject as something different and a thing apart from the socio-economic processes characterizing Europe as a whole. While this Eastern exceptionalism is necessary at one level, at another it shapes an outlook that colors what one looks at in a scholarly sense, how one defines it, analytical processes, and the like. These views are often caricatured and centered around social problems, familiaristic social relations, Byzantine politics, mystical ethnic and national identities and other similar questions. Consequently, defining and rigidly maintaining a conflated East produces a mentality and scholarly outlook I define, after Edward Said (1978), as "Categorical Orientalism," based on the previously-mentioned "utter otherness" of Eastern as opposed to Western Europe in social scientific thought (Kideckel 1996).

Categorical Orientalism is somewhat less pernicious than Said's variety. In Said's estimation authors writing in an Orientalist mode thoroughly devalued their subjects relative to the West while denying them their voice and the validity of their perceptions. This is not totally the case, however, as it applies to Eastern Europe. In Categorical Orientalism subjects retain their voice, though those voices that devalue their own lives, or at least those aspects of them organized by the state, have the greatest credence. Furthermore, the devaluation of Eastern life is not because "they" are totally different, but rather because "they" have fallen into difference over time. The Orientalist assumes the enduring difference between West and Orient. The Categorical Orientalist holds out the possibility of redemption for the fallen through capitalism, democracy, civil society, privatization, and the like.

Though somewhat more benign than views of the Islamic world, Categorical Orientalism still has a large and persistent effect on research about the subject so defined. It determines the agencies one applies to for funding and sets the kinds of questions and topics that are funded. It shapes the networks of colleagues one consults, the professional groups to which one belongs, and even the relations between individuals within professional groups. Deborah Cahalen in a recent posting to the Internet discussion list H-SAE doubted whether anything about "East Europe" can get funded if it doesn't deal with "the transition." Certainly, while the problem is not that extreme, there is more than a kernel of truth in her complaint about restrictions on what can be thought about diverse states crunched into a categorical strait-jacket like those of East Europe.

AGAINST REIFYING THE "EAST," OR LET POLAND BE POLAND

Now, despite the less-than-salutary qualities of the conflated "East" and Categorical Orientalism, the East concept does have occasional utility when used as background to certain kinds of questions. However, the current debate about the category causes those who

would void it to be suspicious of those who use it. Further, there is an unmistakable polarization in the debate about the relevance of East Europe. Either people advocate that the category should be eliminated in totality or they continue to retain it for every intellectual purpose, no matter how inappropriate. Given the tenor of this debate, the usefulness of the East concept is lost in the politics of the question and intellectual understanding suffers accordingly. Consequently my purpose below is not so much to explode the category "East" but to take to task the extremism surrounding both its rejection and use.

To reject the East concept out of hand is perhaps the most logical response in this age of transition. To do so, after all, implies that real change is taking place from the centralized command political economies of recent years. Replacing it with other allegedly less loaded categories is thus like a theoretical breath of fresh air as it negates a major reification of the twentieth century. However, if one stops and thinks of it, not only is Eastern Europe a reification of a complex variegated reality, but so too is Central Europe, or South-central Europe, or for that matter Western Europe.

The unity of Western Europe as a category is generally expressed when people speak of the institutions or clear-cut cultural qualities that bind these diverse states. The European Union, NATO, and welfare capitalism are things shared across the West. However, use of "West" breaks down rightfully when issues are more specifically framed. Thus, while ethnicity and center-periphery political control issues affect virtually every West European state, analyses of Northern Ireland are and should be discussed differently than the circumstances joined by the Northern League in Italy or the demands for Sami (Lapp) autonomy in northern Finland and Norway. Each of these, after all, is a unique product of particular histories, ethnicities, government practices, and the like. We know that to understand such situations we need consider their particularities. Consequently, if we can afford the luxury of separating out specific national conditions for the Western states, so too must we be so attentive in dealing with the successors of post-war socialist political economy. But conversely, if it makes sense to speak of the category West for other issues (e.g. the European Union), so too there ought to be a place for the discourse of the East.

There are, after all, substantial commonalities confronted by Czechs and Albanians, Poles and Croats, Romanians and Hungarians. A few common issues would include still-active left wing political movements, the legacies of centralized planning and hyper-bureaucratization or what Katherine Verdery (1991) calls the "phantom limb effect," a troubled history with Russia, and the like. To be sure, there are many more places and issues that need be framed using national or even micro-regional boundaries. In other words, let the category fit the problem! Let, for example, Poland be Poland for analyses of agricultural underemployment or activist religion. Consider her part of Central Europe for discussions of pollution and trade union activism. Conceptualize her as East in a focus on lustration or revived socialism. Lastly, place her in Europe when inter-state migration and internationalization of manufacturing are at issue.

Furthermore, meanings change and changed meaning can be used effectively to promote other change. Thus, one of the critical problems facing the former socialist countries is a loss of their primary market in the former Soviet Union. Currently these states are casting about and competing for dwindling market share in the globalized economies of the developed capitalist states, or in the impoverished markets of the LDCs. However, under the banner of an East (or Central or whatever) European trading group, I can envision a healthy cooperation and use of comparative advantage to further the interests of

each. An initial attempt at this is, of course, the Visegrad agreement that prefigures economic cooperation between Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia as part of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). It would be a small step, indeed, to extend this to recreate a contemporary version of the CMEA, minus its dominant player.

In closing, perhaps my argument will be dismissed out-of-hand as hopelessly muddled and eclectic. So be it. However, it is clear that the issues that confront contemporary social science are so vast and important that we ought get on with the business of, if not resolving them, then at least addressing them squarely. It does little good to argue over the naming of something, especially when that name can be and is manipulated and used in so many different ways. The attempt by this special issue of *Replika* to address this issue is, however, laudatory. I look even more forward to others devoted to critical problems like economic cooperation, the nature of large-scale social change accompanying the market, or a vigorous debate on the changing social safety net throughout Europe – north, south, east, west, and even central.

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PARADIGMS