

**THE FUTURES OF  
CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
EUROPE**

**Three Twentieth-century  
Perspectives**

*Inaugural Lecture  
delivered by*

**GEORGE SCHÖPFLIN**

**School of Slavonic and East European Studies  
University College London  
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TWENTIETH-CENTURY PERSPECTIVES

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## The Futures of Central and Eastern Europe: Three Twentieth-century Perspectives

On the 19 October 1915, T. G. Masaryk — later the first president of Czechoslovakia — gave the inaugural lecture of this School; in his audience was the prime minister of the day, Asquith. His theme was ‘The Problem of Small Nations in the European Crisis’. In the middle of the war, Masaryk was engaged in persuading the world that independence for the Czechs was a legitimate objective. He began by saying that the war was about nations and added that there was much work to be done on this topic. Indeed, the problem that he saw was that the emphasis was all on the state. The distinction between state and nation is vital, he believed, because there existed ‘an incongruity of political and ethnographic boundaries’.

Masaryk noted that there were 28 states and 62 nations or nationalities in Europe, meaning that the then existing states were nationally mixed; he singled out Austria-Hungary as one where the German minority ruled over a polyglot people in Austria and a Hungarian minority did the same in the Kingdom of Hungary. He identified Central Europe as a zone where the question of nationality and the language question were the central political issue and that ‘this zone supplies the most urgent and clamant cause for remodelling the political organisation of Europe. In this zone’, he continued, ‘the smaller nations are continually striving and fighting for independence and liberty’.

Masaryk took the definition of the nation as self-evident. Any group that had its language and was ethnographically the same was a nation; the nation was a natural organisation, whereas the state was more artificial. Furthermore, where nation and state were out of alignment, the state would be ‘autocratic, ruling and domineering’, even while ‘the nation is democratic, administering, social developing from within’. The numerical

size of nations was not really significant with respect to their right to independence. ‘History shows’, I quote again, ‘that national states develop in Europe. And History is in favour not only of big, but also of medium-sized and small national states’.

You can see, I think, where Masaryk’s argument was leading him — towards underpinning the case for the Czech nation and he took it for granted, by the way, that the Slovaks were a part of this nation. We know the outcome. Masaryk was successful in that the nations of Central Europe — quite a few of them anyway — did gain their independence, state and nation did coincide up to a point, but the problems of the region were not solved as a result.

There is an explanation for this. Masaryk’s definition of the nation, as being based on language and ethnography, is nothing like as satisfactory as he thought. And he seriously underestimated the role of the modern state as the central political organisation of our time and one without which freedom and democracy are inconceivable. It seems more than likely that Masaryk was not familiar with the work of Max Weber, who warned that national affiliation was not based necessarily only on descent, on language or religion, but also on other factors, like memories of a common political destiny.

The fate of independent Central and Eastern Europe is the focus of the second of my two perspectives linked to this School. In 1944, Hugh Seton-Watson, for many years professor of history here and who will be remembered by many of us, published his book *Eastern Europe between two Wars*. It is an incisive and cogent work that remains required reading to this day. What is less known is that in the first edition of the book, Seton-Watson included a final chapter, ‘Eastern Europe and the Great Powers’, in which he tried to look forward to the post-war years; this chapter was omitted from later editions, because he thought it outdated and dealt with a future that was made illusory by events, crucially by the imposition of communism. I would like to go back to this chapter, however, because it contains a number of perspectives that are highly instructive and illuminating about the Central and East European region.

The chapter obviously bears the marks of the time when it was written. Perspectives are distorted by war and just as Masaryk’s belief in the liberating power of national independence was confounded by events, so was the faith that Seton-Watson placed in communism and the Soviet Union, as he rather ruefully acknowledged in subsequent editions of the book.

That said, the chapter offers a number of insights that are impressive in their vision. So, Seton-Watson wrote, ‘Germany is the greatest State on the European Continent and the only wholly European Power in the world. The future of Germany can decide the future of Europe.’ This may seem



unremarkable today, but it was nothing like so clear-cut in 1944, when — as Seton-Watson says — there were those who demanded ‘that in addition to disarmament the whole German economy must be crippled and German industry must be destroyed’. The extrapolation of this dystopic fantasy, incidentally, is the subject of the Austrian writer Christoph Ransmayr’s fascinating recent novel, *The Dog King*.

Seton-Watson saw very well that Europe needed Germany and that without a successful reintegration of Germany into Europe, the entire continent would suffer instability — nowhere more so than in Central and Eastern Europe. The restoration of order in these states, however, was a formidable task. The economic side, reconstruction, was one problem, but without a hard look at the question of political frontiers, there would be no stability in the region. He called for even-handed treatment of all the nations of the area, regardless of which side they were on in the war, above all because the post-1918 settlement, based as it was on the ‘victor-versus-vanquished’ system, was deeply flawed. There was an urgent need for a new type of settlement, that based on a federation. ‘The importance of Federation’, he wrote, ‘is that it seems to provide a line of treatment that will at least reduce the emphasis formerly put on questions of national minorities, frontiers and Empires’. And this, we might say, is where we come to 1998.

Masaryk and Seton-Watson were writing in the midst of war and, as I have been suggesting, war is uniquely constricting intellectually — all perspectives are influenced and narrowed by it. Our perspectives today are, it goes without saying, very different. The present and future of Central and Eastern Europe now, at the end of the 20th century, at the Millennium (even if you think that the Millennium begins in 2001), are conditioned by very different considerations.

What has changed since my predecessors surveyed the scene? In brief, and I shall look at some of these processes in greater detail presently, I can see five great shifts.

[1] The first of these is growth. There is simply far more of everything. Our physical-material world has changed vastly and irrevocably. Continuous growth creates problems for institutions, ideas, more potential for conflict, new forms of knowledge and power.

[2] The second is globalisation. I know that ‘globalisation’ is a fashionable buzzword; nevertheless, it is also a real phenomenon with real implications.

[3] The third is the end of communism, an epoch-making event, the deeper implications of which — for the West as much as the East — we are barely beginning to understand.

[4] The fourth is the transformation of Europe through European integration, which has a wide range of consequences, some intended, some not.

[5] And my fifth and final scene-setting point is that we need new cognitive instruments to understand the world in which we are living. This has been one of the tasks of the social sciences, one it may not have discharged with complete satisfaction maybe. But here too, it is possible to offer new syntheses which might yield new insights and I'll try to do so. In particular, I shall make a plea for joined-up thinking.

1. The first of my major shifts is growth. As I have suggested, there is simply far more of everything and this phenomenon, despite one or two very short run slow-downs from time to time, shows no signs of ending. We should assume that it will persist.

Some of the implications of continuous growth have to be teased out, however, because they are not automatically evident and our political thinking is still influenced by a world in which growth was restricted. The most striking such shift is the end of poverty in Europe. Not, let me hasten to add, the total end of poverty, but when at least four-fifths of the population lives significantly above the poverty line as it does in Europe, then the assumption that poverty is a major political factor has to be revised. Much of the classical Marxist thinking revolves around poverty and worsening immiseration. Liberalism echoes this. It has not happened, on the contrary. But bits of the old thinking remain. We continue to be fascinated by the one-fifth or less of the population that is genuinely impoverished and try to construct strategies for the whole of society on this basis. Such strategies are, inevitably, flawed. A political movement that talks about redistribution will not resonate very much under these conditions. I don't want to be misunderstood here. There is real poverty, even in Europe, but it is the exception and not the rule.

The problematic of the four-fifths tends to be sidelined, therefore, in our concern with the remaining one-fifth, but I would like to reverse these priorities, because looking at the developed world through the prism of the majority reveals something significant about it.

In effect, with the great majority of the population enjoying a surplus in terms of consumption, having access to cheap sources of energy and clean water, shelter and heat, food and clothing means that the project of modernity has been completed. In this sense, we truly are in a post-modern age. Levels of literacy have improved and — this may be more controversial for some — the potential for cognitive growth is likewise very real.

A majority of the population with access to more than the basics for physical survival and reproduction will necessarily be concerned with



issues of cognition and ideas. The nature and direction of technological change accelerates this trend. It is a commonplace that manual labour has largely declined (down to maybe a quarter of the workforce) and work has become non-manual; yet the romance of manual work lives and is somehow seen as 'real' work.

The transformation of our views of the world has not kept pace with the decline of the significance of the concrete. We continue to regard the material world as somehow more real than the cognitive and semantic factors by which they are to be interpreted. The context has become more important than the fact and to persist with ignoring the cognitive and semantic aspects of the world in which we live itself adds up to a kind of impoverishment.

Note here that Central and Eastern Europe is included in the world where poverty has mostly disappeared — modernity has been reached, though admittedly the collapse of Russian economy may expose large sections of the population to poverty again. This was done by communism, it was done with enormous cruelty and unbelievable inefficiency, with all sorts of negative consequences for the present, but the pre-modern world assessed by Seton-Watson has been replaced by one that has many, though not all, of the qualities of modernity.

2. The second scene-setting shift is globalisation. This phenomenon has attracted an enormous literature and I don't propose to go over it. I would like to note some of its features, however, because Central and Eastern Europe was insulated from most of globalisation by communism and has as a result been forced to adapt rapidly and with inadequate means. By globalisation I mean not only the loss of control of money by the state, but equally the transformation of information through television, the Internet and cheap telephony. The rise and rise of English as a second language may make communication easier, but it also contributes to making it more superficial. The quantity of available information has expanded vastly, though whether we have the means to process it is another matter. Events can readily become global — the death of Princess Diana and the private life of President Clinton are two obvious examples. Styles have become global — in leisure, lifestyles, design, dress codes, entertainment. In all these fields, instant responses, snap judgements, superficiality inevitably impact on politics and political reactions. Then, there are less self-evident aspects of global processes, like the growth of travel and the spread of disease. Overall, we seem to have found ourselves in a world in which we have more choice and paradoxically far less control over our lives, hence political power has become more diffuse and meanings are lost. The loss of meanings is always unsettling and communities will seek to recreate them however and whenever they can. The outcome may be more

unpredictability as systems of moral regulation are exposed to the impact of external forces which seem to be irresistible and opaque. The consequence may be greater instability, which will place a new burden on the state and other political structures to recreate the coherence that communities need.

3-A. (a) Let me look now at the far-reaching consequences of the end of communism in the context of the West first of all. It seems to me from the vantage point of not quite a decade after the disappearance of communism that the world we now live in has changed in a whole variety of ways that we are only gradually able to identify. A wide range of assumptions that were 'normal and natural' while communism was the 'other' by which we defined ourselves has now vanished and we are in the process of finding new ones. Every society, every culture creates these assumptions, which are debated, discussed, contested and then gradually become the norm.

Before 1989, the way in which the West defined itself was — or so it seems to today — fairly straightforward. The West defined itself as the 'free world' and contrasted itself with 'unfree' communism, though there were also currents of opinion that regarded such comparisons as too ideological. In reality, even these currents, sympathetic towards communism or at least neutral, continued to accept the basic assumptions of the West as normal.

Then, in 1989, all these definitions began to be questioned. It gradually dawned on people that it was no longer possible to persist with these self-definitions, because the criterion of that definition — communism — had disappeared. The significance of this change is still with us. The West is still engaged in redefining itself and, without the easy criterion of communism, this is proving far more difficult than expected. In a sense, the end of communism has put paid to a whole range of accumulated experience in the West and the acquisition of new experience, appropriate to the new situation, is as always, troublesome and contradictory.

We can look back to 1989 and see it as a brief moment of euphoria — hooray, communism is dead, the epic struggle is over, we've won — then to be followed by the realisation that things are much more difficult than ever. Reality set in. The world, it dawned, was far more complex than it had seemed and we have to find ways of dealing with that complexity. Indeed, the very contest between West and East, between democracy and communism, had hidden that complexity by making our self-definitions easier. In this sense, in 1998, we are indeed in a post-war situation, coping with the problems of peace, which are nothing like as easy as some might have expected. In these circumstances, it is forgivable if some people — and I'm not one of them — secretly long for the simple days of that far-



away time before 1989. The past is not only a foreign country, but also a simpler place to live in.

(b) One of the problems that were masked by the East–West conflict was the role of culture, cultural identities and the political implications of cultural identities. Let me explain. If we see the East–West contest as one organised around the positive pole of Liberalism and the negative pole of Marxism, then it follows that as a result of this contest, Liberalism and Marxism came to share certain underlying assumptions about what the contest was about. Opponents generally come to resemble one another in some ways, otherwise there is nothing to fight about.

Both Liberalism and Marxism are legatees of Enlightenment rationality, hence at least a part of the contest was about which of them was the superior legatee. Both place primary emphasis on the role of economic identities as the central source of interests — we tend to dismiss as ‘irrational’ behaviour that does not conform to this assumption. The consequence of this assumption is that it persistently undervalued and underestimated the impact of cultural identities, ethnicity being the most prominent of these. The direct outcome of the collapse of communism, therefore, is that the saliency of economic identities has receded and cultural identities have come into foreground, the political foreground included. The problem that we have with this is that the long dominance of the Marxist–Liberal contest has left our skills for dealing with cultural identities rather rusty. We are in the process currently of reclaiming those skills and refurbishing them.

(c) Furthermore, the 45 year Cold War operated as a kind of cognitive closure in the West against extending diversity and against political power being attached to different forms of diversity. In a general sense, the evolution of democracy — access to power, ways of dealing with power, continuously redistributing power — tended to slow down. Pressures from below for more power could always be fended off by reference to the threat of communism. That threat has gone, of course, so that Western democracy is being redefined *perforce*. We are accumulating new cultural capital, but that has never been an easy pastime.

(d) It follows that the end of communism also places a question-mark over European integration, given that no political process has been left unaffected. Europe can now be reunited and the concept of ‘West’ has to be reformulated. The West is now tied to Central and Eastern Europe and its identity is being changed by that engagement.

It is against this background that we have to assess the eastward enlargement of the European Union. I shall say something presently about enlargement from the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe, but when viewed from the Western perspective — well, ok, in some ways a British perspective — I rather suspect that the integration of the 10 states that are



on the list will pose problems, difficulties and pitfalls that we have not even begun to recognise. I have a shrewd suspicion that this will be the most difficult enlargement yet. But that is not a reason, it goes without saying, for not attempting it. Crucially, the post-communist states come with a package of aspirations and assumptions, with forms of knowledge and cultural capital, that are in many ways at variance with what the West has attained over the last five decades. If nothing else, the negotiations will be difficult and the West will have to exercise patience. I say this, because, for my part, I have already encountered moments of prejudice, irritation, impatience among some, who see the demands of the Central and East Europeans as tiresome and excessive.

3-B. Let me move on now and look at how the collapse of communism has changed the East.

(a) The first point is one that I stress strongly, because, I would like to suggest, it contains the answer to many of the puzzles of the post-communist transformation. It is about the nature of the post-communist state.

We think of 1989 as the collapse of communism, the decay and disappearance of an ideology. This is right, but it does not go far enough. It was not just communism as an ideology that collapsed, but so too did the communist state. The post-communist states, therefore, are engaged in a quite extraordinary enterprise — that of rebuilding a discredited state, regaining prestige for the state as a central instrument of creating coherence. One of the most complex and most urgent roles that the state anywhere has to play is to establish a degree of coherence. Every society, every political community, every human collectivity is involved in the creation of coherence, what Mircea Eliade called ‘making cosmos out of chaos’. In politics, the state has the central role in creating and maintaining coherence.

This poses particular difficulties for the post-communist state, which is charged with a wide range of tasks that would tax even the best ordered, best run Western state. Indeed, one of these is the supervision of its own partial dismantling, the redistribution of the assets that the communist state owned to private owners. The criteria for redistribution, which includes certain moral criteria, are not agreed — should property go to those who are best capable of managing it or equally to all? How far should the state continue to support collective consumption and thus encourage vertical dependency? When should the state subsidise economic activity, knowing that a withdrawal of the subsidy could mean unemployment? There are no easy answers.

Then, the post-communist state must somehow arrive at a redefinition of the just society and do so in the aftermath of a system that discredited

the notion of equality without providing alternative models of individual and collective endeavour. Crucially, a society that lacks a more or less universally accepted set of criteria for success and failure will be deeply divided and the state order that it runs will be inconsistent and thus find it difficult to reestablish its status. Citizens will not have much of a sense of the public good, but will prefer to regard the state as an exploitable resource. I hardly need add that this produces the wrong kind of cultural capital.

It is this central weakness of the post-communist state that accounts for the phenomena so often noted at both the journalistic and academic level, like the propensity of conflict to polarise immediately, corruption, lack of trust. There are few internalised models of seeing conflict resolution as anything other than a zero-sum game and the state is too impotent to impose its own will to achieve positive-sum games. Similarly, the state is too weak to pursue good governance — transparency, accountability, predictability in the exercise of power. And as long as power is opaque, the population will live with fear and fear is no basis for democracy.

Further, the weak post-communist state cannot readily advance the semantic empowerment of the population. Marxism-Leninism was a deeply reductionist system, in which by the end of its days, there was no meaningful language of public discourse. The disappearance of Marxism-Leninism left a void, a void in how to communicate in the public sphere, how to express ideas, articulate interests, make demands and so on, in ways that would command consent. The only public language that could perform this task was that of nationhood and, given that communism had eradicated the patterns of civil society and citizenship, nationhood inevitably acquired an ethnicised colouring. But ethnicity does little or nothing to generate civic understanding, to advance codes of communication that reflect social aspirations on the basis of citizenship and, crucially, because ethnicity has nothing to say about the consistent and predictable exercise of power, it tends to strengthen rather than diminish fear. Only with the semantic reempowerment of the population will it be possible to marginalise those who play upon this fear, the populists and ethnic entrepreneurs who disfigure the political scene in Central and Eastern Europe. Anyone who spends time in the region will know how frequently public figures are charged with manipulation. These charges will only vanish when semantic empowerment has gained in strength.

Then, the weakness of the state is exacerbated by a challenge from an rather unexpected quarter — civil society. The West has evolved a remarkably powerful discourse of civil society against the high capacity state of the West and this Western set of ideas encountered the assumptions and arguments of the democratic opposition from the



communist period, which had created its own parallel discourse. The two are alike and have influenced one another. What is shared between them is their rejection of the state. For the West, this rejection derives partly from libertarian ideas that believe that the very existence of the state is an infringement of individual liberty and equally from Marxist arguments that the state is no more than the articulation of the interests of ruling capitalism.

The views of the democratic opposition were formulated against the all-encompassing totalising ideology of the communist system and were known by the name 'anti-politics'. The positive side of this anti-state, anti-statist discourse is the active role that civil society has in the building and running of democracy, and in creating the space for individual initiative and creativity. What both Western and Central and East European arguments are inclined to overlook is that the discourse of civil society now has different context after 1989. Under post-communism, the state ought to be regarded as a positive or neutral actor and civil society cannot function very effectively without it. Civil society is intimately linked to citizenship and citizenship is closely dependent on state regulation. The legacy of the past is no longer appropriate to a changed present and in some ways is harmful. There are well-attested cases of groups legitimating their rather uncivil initiatives by reference to acting in the name of civil society. The privatisation of coercion, as in Russia, is the extreme case; the Russian state barely exists.

(b) I have referred here more than once to communism having created the wrong kind of cultural capital. I was asked recently at a conference near Prague about what is the right kind of cultural capital and how one goes about creating it. Briefly, the right kind of cultural capital in the political realm is one where there are accepted second order rules, informal as much as formal, that political actors can follow without risk of suffering loss of power. Thus if there is a tacit convention that a new government will not undo everything that its predecessor did and it will not move to indict politicians from the previous regime, one can say that there is some second order regulation to safeguard the system and then those in power will have an incentive to treat their opponents as something other than sworn enemies.

Another illustration is where political actors accept that conflict will be resolved through adjudication, that procedures will be followed invariably and that decisions will be enforced with consistency; equally, decisions can be appealed. Or, that all political actors have visible and equal access to power, that all will rely on the same rules and not use the rules to gain undue advantage. Self-limitation is crucial — actors can then have confidence that others will exercise power by the same rules. The state should as far as possible be neutral as between different political forces.

How one goes about creating the right kind of cultural capital is much more of a problem, because the questionable practices of post-communism have become entrenched and are perfectly rational within their context. External support for the neutrality of the state is one way forward, but this is unpopular both in the states concerned and the likely external supporters.

(c) The collapse of communism had another dimension with consequences for the present — it was the collapse of a moral order, a negative moral order, to be sure, but one that was authentic in that people defined their aspirations, life strategies, codes of morality against it. The collapse has, therefore, left many people adrift, without the devil they knew and they are finding it difficult to identify with a positive moral order or are deeply divided about the kind of moral order that should exist. There are more practical issues that derive from this aspect of the collapse. What are the attainments reached under communism now worth? How should one deal with the obligations and loyalties that were formed then? Are any of the codes of solidarity still valid? There are no ready answers to these dilemmas and there cannot be until a new, generally agreed set of moral values has established roots. And as long as the quest for a moral order continues, much of the political discourse will be moralising and moralised, and, it can be taken for granted, these are much more difficult to compromise — pragmatism has no role to play in such circumstances.

(d) Another baneful legacy of communism is that it has created a confusion between ideology and democracy. Each collective interest group takes the view that democracy is ideologically determined, that democracy is the ideology and that the content and direction of this ideology is established by the group in question. There is not much conception of ideological pluralism, that in a democracy different ideologies can coexist, that their goals can be harmonised and a compromise can be achieved. The legacy can be observed most strikingly in the behaviour of political parties. At first sight, post-communism has successfully taken over the institutions and practices of multi-party pluralism and, if nothing else, electoral behaviour seems to confirm this. However, a closer look at the political contest at the inter-party level shows something else. Political parties treat one another as ideological enemies and not fellow players on the political stage. Cross-party compromise is very difficult, if not impossible to attain and coalition-building is made more complex because deals are seen as betrayal. Each political party treats the world as hostile and trusts only its own members. This can be observed in the behaviour of the communist successor parties, for example, which at the end of the day will always look after the survivors of the old *nomenklatura*.



4. (a) My next broad theme is the problem of European integration a decade after the end of communism. There are very basic questions at issue, the central one being, what is European integration for today? The Jean Monnet paradigm has been one of the greatest successes of modern politics. It definitively ended the 1914–1945 Great European Civil War and it also accepted that the very hard differentiation between states that existed before 1939, the strict interpretation of state sovereignty, must be diluted. Seton-Watson's analysis was spot on in this respect, as it was on the question of the absolute necessity of bringing Germany back into the comity of states.

That said, the Jean Monnet paradigm was, in part, predicated on the existence of a communist threat and the disappearance of that threat has forced Europe to rethink its intellectual assumptions about how and with what aim integration should proceed. There are those, of course, who say that there has been quite enough integration already, thank you, but that — I would suggest — misreads the dynamic nature and quality of Europe. Politics cannot be told to stay in the same place. There will be change, not least because of globalisation and technological advances, and Europe has to be prepared for these changes. The current argument is over what the most appropriate forms of preparation might be, what the shape and content of the new paradigm should be.

(b) What makes the European Union different from any other international organisation is that the Commission has wide powers of regulation without further reference to the member states. This body of regulation is the *acquis communautaire*. The *acquis* is already very extensive, at least 40,000 pages (in the most concise language, Swedish) and is growing. A rough and ready calculation suggests that Brussels currently controls something like 15 percent of what had been traditionally regulated by the state; and this percentage is increasing, meaning that Brussels is steadily acquiring more power.

I don't regard regulation by the European Union as in any way inherently undesirable, but whatever the case, power demands legitimation and the extension of power demands a corresponding expansion of legitimation. At the centre of democratic government is the proposition that the most effective form of rule is rule by consent and the more power that an institution acquires, the greater is the input of consent that it needs.

From this perspective, the European Union still shows its origins in its technocratic and functionalist assumptions. The proposition that effectiveness confers legitimacy is not working well and one does not have to be a Eurosceptic to say so. Specifically, as the EU claims to exercise growing power over areas traditionally reserved to the state, it will require the kind of consent that the state has created for itself. This must include not only institutional means, like a parliament with greater powers, but



also a stronger symbolic and mythic legitimation than at present. This suggestion flies in the face of the EU's founding assumptions, as well as the power of the member states, which are prepared to see an expansion of the *acquis* precisely because consent to it is partial and can be disavowed.

(c) The demand for greater access to power will, then, necessarily affect the nature of Europe. By the criterion of democracy, this evolution is positive, because it means that the European Union — the European project — would be acquiring a political reality, a reality in terms of political power, in the context of which technocratic solutions are no longer satisfactory. In other words, European integration is beginning to be the object of mass politics, not merely elite politics.

(d) This shift — if and when it happens — will have its consequences. The particular kind of order, the kind of coherence that the European Union has established hitherto has been heavily marked by its origins — insistence on the *acquis* in its existing form is a good indicator, as is the particular methods used to resolve conflict (usually without much popular input). Underlying the EU method is the assumption that underlies a part of the legitimacy of the modern state — that it is the repository of ultimate rationality.

However, if the EU is to enhance its legitimacy — and I have been arguing that without such enhancement further integration will run into mounting opposition — it will have to take on board the very different ways of doing things that have been developed throughout Europe and become genuinely open to the diversity that Europe is, that Europe reflects. Diversity is the essence of Europe — the readiness to apply different solutions that differ in time and place. This is bound to give rise to greater incoherence. But if the European project turns into an attempt to establish ever greater homogeneity or creates the impression that it is about establishing greater homogeneity, then it will run into the sand. It will generate far greater opposition than it has encountered so far.

(e) This brings me to eastward enlargement. This process has begun. It is impossible to visit the early accession states and not be made aware of the increasing impact of the EU, both through direct presence, by means of various inputs of human and monetary capital and similarly indirectly, through the conditionalities of accession and the expectations that have been created.

Nevertheless, I believe that eastward enlargement is the most difficult enlargement that the EU has ever attempted. Some of reasons are set out in what I have been arguing about the nature of post-communism. But others are to do with the particular cognitive baggage that post-communist societies and elites bring with them. Broadly speaking, they are not primarily seeking to join Europe-as-EU but Europe as 'Europe', as a symbolic reintegration into a cultural universe from which they feel they

were unjustly and illegitimately excluded by communism and which they need to sustain their moral and cultural self-esteem. In this sense, the Central and East Europeans are looking to Europe to play an analogue of the role that it played with respect to France and Germany in the early 1950s. Europe is there to resolve their status as communities of value. The other arguments, to do with security and prosperity are, I would like to suggest, downstream of the quest for status and worth. I am not persuaded that enlargement is invariably viewed in these terms in Brussels or in the capitals of the member states.

There are further difficulties. It is very questionable if even the early accession countries can absorb and implement the *acquis*; and note here that the *acquis* does not stand still. If accession takes place in, say, 2003 (as the optimists say), then it will no longer be 40,000 pages (in the most concise language) but what? 50,000?

Once inside the EU, the post-communist states and societies will face an entirely new set of challenges, many of them positive by the criterion of democracy. Diversity will grow and choice will expand with it; so will conflict and the procedures for resolving conflict. There will be new hierarchies of power, new forms of knowledge and new cultural capital. Clearly, the older generation will find this much harder to assimilate than those who had less exposure to communism.

There is in further problem that I would like to mention in the context of eastward enlargement. For the post-communists, the European Union will be expected to perform some of the functions that their own state machinery is too weak to carry out, for the reasons that I sketched earlier. This is usually argued in terms of strengthening democracy by way of integration into Western structures. In this sense, the EU will have to act as a surrogate state. Surrogates are both welcome and unwelcome and the EU will have to accept this role as a part of the enlargement process.

Finally in this connection, integration is a two-way process or, to be precise, series of processes. Integration involves quite high levels of intervention in the affairs of member states by other member states, making EU members no longer quite as foreign as before. The Central Europeans are some way from recognising that entry into Europe means integration with one another. Shock, horror. The communist legacy here is one of far-reaching isolation and this shift will be particularly hard, because of the tendency to see the other Central European states as competitors in a zero-sum game rather than as partners. Indeed, the very idea of partnership is more than somewhat alien to these states, whether this degree of involvement is with states they do not know at all or with states that they know all too well. Integration, then, will give rise to a host of new problems. Yet, the federation that Seton-Watson spoke of is very



much on the threshold; and, at the same time, all this is a very long way from Masaryk's eulogy for small nations.

In Western Europe, despite the pleas of the Eurosceptics, the nation-state as traditionally understood is no longer as sovereign as it was and the internal affairs of one member state are increasingly the internal affairs of all the others (the British press might find this proposition rather daunting). This idea of growing involvement with other member states will be difficult for the post-communists to absorb. 'Just as we have regained our sovereignty', a Hungarian friend remarked recently, 'we find that it is useless'.

5. My final point is a plea for joined-up thinking. I think it clear enough that the thrust of my argument has been about the mounting complexity of the world that we now inhabit and for the correspondingly growing need for the intellectual instruments to cope with this new world, brave or otherwise. We can, of course, carry on with trying to understand it by going on as we have always done — gathering facts, putting them in some kind of order and hoping that some kind of rationality will emerge. But I'm not persuaded that this will do much to help us acquire a better grasp of the manifold processes that surround us. We do need new ways of thinking and conceptual thought provides better answers than the piecemeal responses that were appropriate to a materially dominated era.

Here are some pointers towards joined-up thinking. First, we should start from the assumption that the world is more diverse, more complex and more abstract than we think. Hence analysis should be suspicious of the simple solution, however elegant and however tempting. There really are patterns of interconnectedness in the world and our assessment of it is more likely to be accurate if the big picture is there.

The obvious answer isn't always the correct answer. It happens regularly that one gets closer to a satisfactory analysis of a problem by probing it in depth. Common sense is not necessarily a virtue and the best is not invariably the enemy of the good. Indeed, reductionism can be wholly distorting.

Then, we need ways of coping with the unintended consequences of our actions. This demands better insights into both individual and collective motivations, crucially including impulses of which we are not conscious, but which influence our reactions. Communities are like individuals in this respect, in that there are implicit values that govern collective action. We should accept that these exist and not seek to reduce motivation to one single factor.

One way of offsetting reductionism is to recognise that if social processes are to be energising and thus meaningful, they have to have both a positive and a negative pole. Thus ideas can move within a field of

proposition and counter-proposition. When one of the poles is eliminated, the field erodes and the argument will decline in significance. In this sense, complete agreement makes an argument inert and unproductive. The importance of this method is that it allows us to avoid reductionism and predetermined judgements. It also means that winning an argument might amount to losing it, should the losing party disengage and leave us intellectually isolated.

The concrete, material world is less important than it was and we should look at the cognitive, symbolic, intellectual contexts of the facts, the data, the statistics on which we rely. We cannot do without such data, but we should begin from the presumption that data on their own tell us very little. If we don't follow this line of analysis we are unlikely to suffer humiliation and failure, but our reasoning will be more circumscribed and thus less effective.

An afterthought: the English language is not altogether helpful in this respect, in that it does not really like abstraction. It prefers a thoroughly concrete, palpable world. An illustration. I spent some of the summer reading Peter Nadas's novel *A Book of Memories*, looking at both the Hungarian original and the English translation. The English version (by Ivan Sanders) is excellent, as faithful to the Hungarian as it can be, but it cannot avoid making Nadas's veiled, allusive, tangential language more concrete and less ambiguous than it should be. We have to live with this.

If we really are living in a post-material age then we need post-material thinking. This is what I believe joined-up thinking to be. It affects all of us; and it will not get any easier.





