

Europe as “Vanishing-Mediator” in the New World Order

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“For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” *Audre Lorde*¹

Etienne Balibar’s article, “Europe: Vanishing Mediator,”² is basically a response to the call by the people of America³ as to what Europe can do within the context of the changing power relations in the world, particularly after the 11th September Islamic terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Balibar argues that in the present global situation, where wars are waged between “cultures” and “civilizations,” and, where the “European community of nations” is facing the challenge of the forces of globalization, most European intellectuals have disengaged themselves from politics. They have surrendered to the notion that the “complexity of historical and social processes” of globalization preempts any collective dialogue or debate for conflict resolution.⁴ They are also convinced that “intellectual intervention is now mainly ‘expertise’ i.e. a specific and specialized one, which makes it difficult or impossible to address global or universal questions if one does not want to fall prey to the media type of sheer opinion.”⁵

Encouraging intellectuals to resist such passivity, Balibar advocates a new trajectory for their “transnational function.” This path necessitates a crossing over of borders and boundaries by the intellectuals, through travel, both physical and mental “beyond the official limits of the European Union.” He speaks of an “openness” that they

¹ Audre Lorde. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House: Comments at ‘The Personal and the Political’ Panel. (Second Sex Conference, October 29, 1979).

² http://fbc.binghamton.edu/balibar_1102.htm: accessed 3 April 2003. This article is an expanded version of the first George L Mosse Lecture at Humboldt-Universitat Berlin for the Academic Year 2002-2003, delivered November 21st, 2002. The article is included in *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* Princeton University Press (forthcoming).

³ These calls for help from America, Balibar states, have come from both the liberal intellectuals, and, from Bush and those who support him.

⁴ Balibar argues that it is the amorphous nature of cultural identity that has emerged today which does not give the intellectual any concrete tangible site to interact, speak, or write from. The internet is not an adequate substitute.

⁵ Balibar, 2.

should have to the dissident voices from other parts of the world, including America.⁶ Balibar sets the necessary conditions for this dialogue by recasting Europe not as a nation with borders mired in its own colonial, oppressive history, but as a “borderline”:

No European ‘identity’ can be *opposed* to others in the world because there exist no absolute *borderlines* between the historical and cultural territory of Europe and the surrounding spaces. There exist no absolute borderlines *because Europe as such is a “borderline”*....More precisely it is a superposition of borderlines, hence a superposition of heterogeneous relations to the other histories and cultures of the world (at least many of them), which are reproduced within its own history and culture.⁷

Such a reconstruction of Europe enables him to draw upon his “anti-strategic” policy which redefines and realigns habitual categories of “power,” “agency” and “subjectivity/identity,” to constitute a “*new type of power.*” This power relates itself differently to politics insofar as it breaks the ‘legitimacy’ of the link between the two, creating alternative nodes of resistance to the globalized hegemonic forces.⁸ Balibar then presents us with his model of “collective security,” in which Europe plays its ambivalent role as “Vanishing Mediator.”⁹

Intellectuals within globalization have been increasingly concerned with the need to create a more accountable world.¹⁰ But we need to critically interrogate the politics of this accountability particularly its transformative potential in relation to social action. For example, how do some of us, nonwestern academics, accept theories floated by western intellectuals based on ‘rational action,’ when we are acutely aware of the monopoly of

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁹ Balibar explains that he got the term “Vanishing Mediator” from Jameson’s essay “The Vanishing Mediator; or, Max Weber as Storyteller.” He says at the core of certain processes be they of modernization or revolutions there is the ‘figure of the vanishing mediator.’ This is the “figure (admittedly presented in speculative terms) of a transitory institution (or force, community, or spiritual formation) that creates the conditions for a new society and a new civilization pattern, albeit in the horizon and the vocabulary of the past, and by rearranging the elements inherited from the very institution that has to be overcome....It creates therefore the conditions for its own suppression and withering away. But without this ‘vanishing’ mediation no transition from the old to the new fabric of society would have been possible” (27). Europe, for Balibar, is the “Vanishing Mediator.”

¹⁰ See Masao Miyoshi, “Turn to the Planet: Literature Diversity and Totality.” *Comparative Literature*, Fall 2001. See also Edward Said, “The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals” Sept 17, 2001

rationality by the West?¹¹ It is in this context that I will inspect two of the significant coordinates of Balibar's model for global security: democratization of the Islamic world, and, the creation of the European-Mediterranean ensemble for "collective security", to demonstrate how these—to some of us located in the nonwestern world—seem implicitly to collapse into Eurocentrism with its own 'forms' of rationality which by its very definition positions cultural, racial and religious others in marginalized ways.

While talking about the European-Mediterranean ensemble as an instrument for creating "collective security" Balibar states,

If such an ensemble were to gain consistency, it would become at the same time an instrument to correct inequalities in the rates of development, an intermediary structure making *it easier for Europeans to effectively influence world affairs* [my emphasis], and a powerful force for democratizing Arab-Islamic regimes in the Middle-East.¹²

This is the idealistic face of European liberalism¹³ with its underpinnings of "Enlightenment modernity." Its underbelly is that there are certain economic and political compulsions in Europe,¹⁴ in the present global moment, that necessitate its reconstruction along these lines so that it can once again become a powerful player in world politics.¹⁵ I am not stating that Balibar is in conspiratorial agreement with the European governmental powers, in providing a philosophical fig leaf to naked European economic

(www.thenation.com) and Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time*. U.K. Polity Press, 1998.

¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time*. U.K. Polity Press, 1998.

¹² Balibar, 26.

¹³ I am talking about Liberalism in oversimplified terms as referring to political and economic rights of individuals within capitalist structures. It is not within the scope of this paper to trace the links of the Left to Liberalism under globalization (To pursue this line of inquiry see David Milliband, Ed. *Reinventing the Left* Cambridge, 1994; Anthony Giddens *The Third Way* U.K. Polity, 1998; see also Alex Callinicos *Against the Third Way: An Anti-Capitalist Critique* UK.: Polity, 2001).

¹⁴ Europe has major economic and political interests in the Middle East. It is a big consumer of Middle Eastern gas and petroleum. The Middle East also provides a lucrative market for its industrial products. Politically too, the Middle East is important, because economic and political instability in the region, and, in North Africa, could lead to mass migration to the southern European states (France, Spain, Italy and Portugal). Besides, Europe's geographical proximity to the Middle East makes regional security considerations important. See Gerald M. Steinberg. "The European Union and the Middle East Peace Process" in *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* No. 418 6 Kislev 5760/ 15Nov. 1999. <http://www.jcpa.org/j1/vp418.htm> accessed 10.6.2003.

¹⁵ The fact that Germany, France and Russia vetoed America's war against Iraq did not prevent America from going ahead with it.

and political interests. But *I am* stating that his model for “collective security” creates a neat fit between liberal philosophy from above and European economic and political interests from below. Such a model does not pursue the line of inquiry that the irrationality of terrorist violence is itself an offshoot of “the inert violence of the powers which invoke reason”¹⁶ but it transforms the issue of inequities triggered off by the American and the Western neo-imperialist agenda to one of Islamic terrorism and the need for democratizing Islamic nations¹⁷ for global “collective security.”

Like most Westerners, Balibar too, sees modernity as an exclusively European phenomenon.¹⁸ Although he gestures towards non-Western and non-metropolitan positions in terms of history, modernity, nationhood, and culture, it is Europe ultimately, that becomes the referent or the vantage point from which such terms can be fully understood or realized:

Europe certainly has no monopoly of pluralist representative democracy. But its own history of social movements (acute class struggles, if we want to be explicit) has produced a level of institutional recognition of basic social rights that is still unrivaled in today’s world. It has no monopoly of either religious tolerance or intolerance. But its own history of confessional divisions, heresies, and wars of religions has produced a form of “secularization” of politics and society that goes far beyond the classical idea of “tolerance,” allowing a recognition that religious memberships are an important aspect of the constitution of the “civil society,” but without either creating state religions or, conversely, accepting a “free”

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time* U.K. Polity press, 1998. P. 20.

¹⁷ In this shift violence is ethnicized and made into cultural difference from European norms and values. Interestingly, soon after the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the 1990s, the then NATO general secretary Willy Claes, talked about Islamic fundamentalism as the new threat that was emerging in Europe. As Zemni and Parker state “As the former enemy had disappeared, NATO had to look for a new scapegoat.” See Sami Zemni and Christopher Parker “European Union, Islam and the Challenges of Multiculturalism: Rethinking the Problematique” *Center for Third World Studies / Middle East Institute*. Ghent University, Belgium. http://www.flwi.ugent.be/cie/CIE/zemni_Parker_1.htm accessed 10.18.2003.

¹⁸ See Enrique Dussel, “Beyond Eurocentrism: The World-System and the Limits of Modernity” in *The Cultures of Globalization*. Eds. Fredric Jameson and Masao Myoshi (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 3-31. See also Bruce Mazlish, “Civilization in a Historical and Global Perspective” in *International Sociology* September 2001 Vol. 16 (3): 293-300, and, Aziz Al-Axmeh, “Civilization, Culture and the New Barbarians” in *International Sociology* March 2001 Vol. 16 (1): 75-93.

development of religious sects in the form of what Max Weber called the “market of salvation goods.”¹⁹

Two vital questions are raised here one, how effectively does the “level of institutional recognition of basic social rights [in Europe] that is still unrivaled in today’s world” produce the conditions on which it rests? The question gains significance within the context of globalization and the weakening of the nation-states, which makes mediation of social conflicts very limited “leaving without solution” as Balibar himself admits, “the urgent problem of the constitution of a new ‘citizenship’ in Europe.”²⁰ Two, does secularization equal an ethics of tolerance? France, for example, although a secular state is imbued by a Judaic-Christian culture yet it uses the yardstick of secularism to view other religions as undermining its secular foundation.²¹

The notion of “other histories” feeding into the metanarrative of the “history of Europe” is precisely what Dipesh Chakrabarty critiques in his essay “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History.” He says—and pertinently so—that “Europe works as a silent referent in historical knowledge” which axiomatically makes representation in history by subalterns inherently problematic.²² Theories of humanity have been produced in the West in “relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of non-Western histories.”²³ But if we (non-westerners) had to reciprocate the gesture we would be labeled as ignorant. The equation is ‘asymmetrical.’ When Balibar talks of a “critical” listening by the European intellectuals and a dialogue with “others” as important conduits for “collective security” he is therefore addressing an “imagined community,” that cannot exist on equal terms for dialogue given the current structural arrangements in the world.²⁴

But for now, take for example, Balibar’s point about democratizing Islamic

¹⁹ Balibar, 18-19.

²⁰ Balibar, 18.

²¹ See A. Moustapha Diop “Negotiating Religious Difference: The Opinions and Attitudes of Islamic Associations in France.” *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community*. Ed Tariq Modood & Pnina Werbner. (London & New York: Zed Books, 1997), pp. 111-125.

²² It is interesting to see the premium that Balibar places on Europe’s “specific history.” From a subaltern perspective it seems like legitimizing colonial history. The subtext that emerges is that Europe’s colonial mastery has taught it to manage colonial subjects better than relative new comers like the United States.

²³ See Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. (OUP, 2000), 28.

²⁴ Unlike for European intellectuals, even travel is a problem for ‘others’ and non-Western intellectuals. Visa restrictions and related problems make it altogether a disempowering experience for this group. The multilateralism that Balibar envisages rapidly reduces into a unilateralism.

nations to combat terrorism. It is important to note that acts of terrorism are not axiomatically related to Islamic fundamentalism and to non-democratic regimes as it is presented in the Western press. Terrorism cuts across religions. Extremist Catholics of the IRA in Ireland, the Hindu dominated LTTE in Sri Lanka, and the Hamas in Palestine are other examples in point. Of course, the best example is of America itself (a democratized nation), in its re-born Christian crusade against evil—that is, selected pagans viz. Muslims—with God on its side.

Why then are Islamic nations zeroed in upon for democratization? Why aren't the global hegemony going after North Korea, or, China for that matter? This is a game that the British had played in colonial India where they arbitrarily divided the country for administrative convenience into provinces to suit their colonial agenda of economic exploitation under the guise of developing the country.

Clearly, it is do to with West Asian oil politics.²⁵ Ironically, despite the mass popular protests in the west against the American invasion of Iraq,²⁶ the governments of most European nations lent their support to the war.²⁷ One of the reasons within democracies for the gap between democratic leaders with their “elite pacts,” and the people, is the fact that even in its most minimalist and procedural form, democracy involves continuous consolidation. That is, democratic transitions alone are not enough, its consolidation is as important. As Omar G. Encarnacion says "While the transition to democracy is concerned with the installation of democratic institutions, the consolidation of democracy is concerned with making democratic institutions both enduring and functional and connecting them to civil society

²⁵ See Tariq Ali, “Re-colonizing Iraq” in *New Left Review* 21 May / June 2003: 5.

²⁶ On February 15, 2003 one of the largest protest marches in British history took place. This was organized by stop the war coalition and there were other such marches in 600 cities all over the world. Over 800 million people marched on the streets across five continents. Tariq Ali, “Re-colonizing Iraq” in *New Left Review* 21 May June 2003: 5.

²⁷ Blair in Britain, the right-wing governments of Berlusconi in Italy and Aznar in Spain, Poland, Hungary, Albania, the list is too long. Even France, Germany, and Russia that were instrumental in vetoing the final resolution in the UN Security Council sanctioning America’s invasion of Iraq—and thereby creating a rift in the Atlantic Alliance—also succumbed. President Jacques Chirac offered French air space to American military. President Vladimir Putin of Russia, like the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, rooted for the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime for “economic and political reasons.” In the Far East too Japan and South Korea supported the Anglo-American aggression. As Tariq Ali states, “the reality of the ‘international community, read: American global hegemony, has never been so clearly displayed as in this dismal panorama.” See Tariq Ali, “Re-Colonizing Iraq” in *New Left Review* 21 May June 2003: 12.

and citizenship.”²⁸

Balibar takes note of this hiatus in his expanded definition of conflictual democracy (in which he includes formal, social and expansive democracies as well)²⁹ with its contradictions and limitations, particularly, for the marginalized “poor and colored people” of Europe.³⁰ He links it—as he should—with an economic bargaining characterized by global capitalism. Yet in spite of this understanding he still speaks in terms of viewing these contradictions as

part of a dynamic whose consequences should and could be to continue and broaden the European experience of politics by mobilizing all our forces, be they economic, cultural, intellectual, social, or legal, but also “external” forces, to transform international relations. Such a project is not an exercise of power politics; it does not aim at constituting a new (great) power, but rather at constituting a *new type of power*, one that nobody can appropriate (not even the forces that could more effectively push in that direction).³¹

There is a problem here. The forces—“economic, cultural, intellectual, social or legal”—that Balibar speaks of mobilizing, to create a new type of power, are already implicated in the very structures that has created a world with skewed international relations. Therefore, to mobilize these very forces—no matter in what avatar—to “transform international relations” is highly suspect, as Europe’s involvement with the war in Iraq has recently shown. I am not talking about an alternative power base developing in non-Western countries (the West versus the Rest argument), which is not a liberatory project because that would be falling into competing power bases again.³² If this is the case the new role and position of China along with North Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia, as nodal points in Asia for leadership cannot be ignored. These last were some of the countries that openly protested against the Anglo-American aggression of Iraq. But I am talking about resistance to the global hegemonic powers from within individual

²⁸ See Omar G. Encarnacion, “Beyond Transitions: The Politics of Democratic Consolidation” in *Comparative Politics* Volume 32 Number 4 July 2000: 485.

²⁹ Balibar, 19.

³⁰ Balibar, 19.

³¹ Balibar, 20.

³² Besides the very instrumental logic which has underwritten capitalism and beyond in the West is the same logic which has underwritten patriarchy, caste, and other hierarchical logic of domination which persists in the so called rest of the world.

countries themselves. The idea is not to reject notions of “democracy, development, or justice” but to think of “forms and philosophies of history that will contribute to struggles that aim to make the very process of achieving these outcomes as democratic as possible.”³³ In recent years there has been a move beyond “deliberative democracy” towards its “proceduralist” and “minimalist” forms, which are open—in Bauman’s terms—to “interpretative reason.”³⁴ This allows for flexibility in interpreting democracy differently in different cultures and de-links democracy from the West.³⁵

In fact Balibar conceives of such a shift in the power base when he speaks of an “effective counter-terrorist policy,”³⁶ but he is unable to resist giving the European conglomerate a pivotal role:

Only the ensemble of societies and states where Islam is the essential cultural reference, with the assistance of *the international community*, [my emphasis] will prove able to “uproot” Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.³⁷

The “assistance of the international community” in the above quotation should be read: Europe³⁸ because as compared to non-western countries it has the military paraphernalia to make these interventions. In the name of democracy, then, deals are struck³⁹ and compromises are made in the form of interim governments and military interventions. Balibar’s model of “collective security” feeds right into this. He is not averse to a

³³ See Dipesh Chakravarty. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), 33. For example, instead of pitting Islam against modernity, one could try and see how Islamic ways of thinking makes us understand modernity. See RONALD Threat to Islamic humanity.

³⁴ Bauman, Z. *Intimations of Postmodernity* London: Routledge, 1992.

³⁵ See Michael Saward, “Enacting Democracy” in *Political Studies*. Volume 51, 2003: 161-179. Democracy in the Middle East has always been viewed with suspicion because of the numerous coups, interferences, and exploitation of the region by the Western hegemons particularly during the cold war period ostensibly to contain communism. This explains to a large extent the resistance in the Middle East to Western forms of democracy. That is, the Arab States “reject the democratic option ‘because of where it comes from rather than what it contains.’” See Heather Deegan, *The Middle East and Problems of Democracy* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 135.

³⁶ This move is particularly significant as compared to America’s counter-terrorist actions: “The U.S. Bombing of Libya, the Israeli bombing of Tunis killing 75 civilians without serious pretext, and Israel’s invasion of Lebanon, killing close to 20,000.” See Chomsky, 49.

³⁷ Balibar, 21

³⁸ The multilateralism that he speaks of in relation to disarmament in reality means at one level decreasing America’s hegemonic arms control so that Europe—with its lesser arms—can be a player too.

³⁹ See “Carving Up The New Iraq” by Neil Mackay *The Sunday Herald* Tuesday 15, April 2003. Interestingly oil politics has always played a big role in shaping US foreign policies since the end of the nineteenth century. In 1914 the Marines landed at Mexico’s Tampico Bay to look after US oil interests. In

deployment of the repressive state apparatuses (intelligence, military and police) in combating terrorism and establishing democracy if, as he says, “the conditions exist for their introduction.” Who decides on these conditions? Clearly, as stated earlier, it is the European conglomerate that has the military paraphernalia to make these interventions to suit their vested interests. The subalterns from the third world and the other non-western countries are too wary to be part of this Western constructed agenda for democracy in the Middle East, an “Imperial Democracy (bring to a boil, add oil, then bomb).”⁴⁰

This brings me to Balibar’s second important co-ordinate of his model for “collective security,”—the European-Mediterranean ensemble, the progressive construction [of which] through negotiations, common projects, and simultaneous mediations in the common interest, is itself a way to affirm the originality of Europe’s position in international relations, where the assertion of a specific identity goes hand in hand with its (seeming) opposite: the inclusion of the Other within itself.⁴¹

Such a coalition is not something new. For example, at the Barcelona conference of 1995, a new partnership was forged between 15 member states of the European Union and 11 non-member Mediterranean states and the Palestinian authority. This declaration sought to bring about economic, political, social, and cultural ties in the region (there are other agreements and partnerships with former adversaries as well). What is the mark of its constitution and difference is that Balibar’s European-Mediterranean ensemble pushes it from the regional to the global level, and, becomes an instrument for creating “collective security” in the world as a whole.

In his construction of the European-Mediterranean ensemble, Balibar refutes the central theory of Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations* in which Huntington argues that the geo-political fault line of the cold war era has now been replaced by a “global borderline.” It is around this fault line that new kinds of wars will be waged

1953 the Mosadegh government was overthrown in Iran by the CIA. See “Is it Oil?” by Arthur Macewan in *Dollars & Sense: The Magazine of Economic Justice* Number 247 May/June 2003: 20-26.

⁴⁰ See Arundhati Roy “Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy (Buy one, Get One Free).” Presented in New York City at The Riverside Church May 13, 2003. Ostensibly, America waged war with Iraq in order to destroy its weapon of mass destruction. Ironically, no such weapons discovered. In reality it was the seventh oil war. After Saudi Arabia, Iraq has the largest oil reserves and it is in the interest of the West to fight this war so that it can have an alternative back up to Saudi Arabia. See Majid Tehranian, “The seventh oil war” in *The Iranian* September 18, 2002.

⁴¹ Balibar, 25.

between the West and the Islamic nations, or, the West and Asia. Huntington states that one cannot reduce the fault lines but one can “freeze” them by organizing the world around a “fragile equilibrium” of competing and ultimately incompatible civilizations.⁴² With the European-Mediterranean ensemble, Balibar argues, it will be different: “It does not say there are no ‘fault lines,’ no vested hostilities around them, but it does say that political institutions (the ‘polity’ and the ‘civility’) precisely arise when hostility becomes a focal point for the elaboration of common interests and heroic compromises.”

Balibar is quick to point out the repeated collapse of such an ensemble in the past—over religious and colonial conflicts—in European history. But, he states, its reconstruction along the lines in which the “other” is included “within itself,” provides an “open non-exclusive framework.” He gives the example of the debates surrounding the inclusion of Turkey into the European Union as indicative of this new possibility.⁴³ He states that there will be other such examples where

the whole southern shore of the Mediterranean will become progressively involved in the construction of a common space of interdependence, a laboratory for new relationships between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries, and between cultures that have their religious roots in antithetical versions of the same monotheistic theology.⁴⁴

The “fault lines” that Balibar claims to address through the enlargement of Europe by constructing the southern shore of the Mediterranean as a “common space of interdependence... between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries,” (which presumably includes by implication the Middle East and Asia as well), loses much of its potency when one grasps its Eurocentric, political underbelly. That is, at the present global conjuncture (a point I have touched upon earlier), it is in the economic and political interest of Europe to take advantage of its geographical location, and, broaden its

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Although the debate about Turkey’s inclusion is clothed in terms of Turkey’s human rights violation, the underlying tone of these discussions is that the “turks are not culturally up to it.” See Zemni and Parker.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 25-26. Balibar’s argument suggesting the compatibility of Christianity with Islam on the basis of their monotheism seems particularly problematic because it views both Christianity and Islam as homogenized religions. This is the discourse of the Western media which projects Islam as a homogenized religion hostile to an equally homogenized Christianity. The reality is different. There are different strands in both these religions that resist such undifferentiated totalizations. See Sami Zubaida, “Islam in Europe” in *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 45, Nos. 1-2:88-98. See also “Impossible Histories: Why the Many Islams Cannot be Simplified” in *Harper’s Magazine*, 305: 1826 (July 2002): 69-74.

base by reaching out to “cultures that have their religious roots in antithetical versions of the same monotheistic theology” (Islamic nations), in its struggle with America for global hegemony. For example, the conflict in Iraq is not only between private oil companies and the government of Iraq. The U.S. based firms are also competing with European firms for access to Iraqi oil.⁴⁵ Again, “events in the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli peace process are central factors in the international arena, and a major role in this activity would symbolize or reflect the ‘arrival’ of Europe as a major power broker.”⁴⁶ Moreover, because of Europe’s proximity to the Middle East it is more vulnerable than America to missile attacks.

It is interesting that Balibar does not re-conceptualize more effectively already existing multi-lateral institutions like the U.N. There is just a passing reference to it. If “collective security” is the way forward why does Balibar do it through the European-Mediterranean Ensemble and not through a democratically restructured UN system? Instead, he talks in a very cavalier way about the European-Mediterranean ensemble working in conjunction with other such alliances towards contributing to “collective security.”⁴⁷ Given the regional power imbalance, in reality, this would be a Euro-defined “collective security” and a re-enactment of the “big five” in the Security Council of the U.N.

This is not to say that the European-Mediterranean ensemble can never work as an instrument in contributing towards “collective security.” What is problematic about it is the underlying Eurocentrism that emerges between its perceived ideal and the reality that it seeks to change. That is, besides the political and economic compulsions in Europe that makes its role in contributing to “collective security” suspect, for the ensemble to function as an “open non-exclusive framework” in including other cultures and religions, the notion of historicity which privileges Europe as the main referent and agent in history

⁴⁵ The scramble for Iraqi oil, the attacks from Islamic radicals and America’s disastrous alliance with Israel are complex issues involved in the region. For instance, America’s war against Iraq has other implications. It could be seen as an attempt to prevent Israel from using its nuclear weapons in the near future against anyone of several neighbours, and by cutting off Iraqi funding to *Hamas* (Iraq allegedly being one of its funders) making the imposition of an Israeli ‘peace’ on the Palestinians more likely. Clearly, it made things worse.

⁴⁶ See Gerald M. Steinberg. “The European Union and the Middle East Process” *Jerusalem Letter / Viewpoints* No. 418 6 Kislev 5760/ 15 Nov. 1999. P. 2. Accessed on 10.16.2003.

⁴⁷ “It seems to me obvious that, in conjunction with other, similar processes, it could play a very effective role in promoting collective security and activating the working of international institutions” (Balibar, 25).

will have to be seriously challenged.⁴⁸ Its “spatial homogenization” and “temporal teleology” will also have to be questioned.⁴⁹ Only then can cultural, religious, and racial “cringes” be avoided and a more interactive paradigm emerge. This will open up possibilities for ‘others’ to come into the field for dialogue.⁵⁰ “For a dialogue can be genuinely open only under one condition: that no party puts itself in a position where it can unilaterally decide the final outcomes of the conversation.”⁵¹ Otherwise, the southern Mediterranean countries that Balibar sees as a crucial “space of interdependence between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries,” will not operate in the way he hopes they will.⁵²

The case of Cyprus, a former British colony, offers an example in point. This island—the third largest in the Mediterranean with an area of 9,257 kilometres—is located strategically at the crossroads of three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. This makes it an ideal location for an intercontinental, global dialogue. In fact, at the micro level, this southern and eastern Mediterranean island offers interesting insights into the functioning, at the macro level, of Balibar’s European-Mediterranean ensemble.

The Cyprus problem relates directly to the inclusion of the ‘other’ within itself. (If the problem is resolved, the Turkish Cypriots will be the first political community from the Muslim world to join the European Union). The fault line dividing the island since 1974⁵³ separates the Northern Turkish Cypriot population, which is predominantly Muslim,⁵⁴ from the Southern Greek Cypriot population, which is predominantly Greek Orthodox

⁴⁸ See “International Migration in Europe: Social Projects and Political Cultures” by Umberto Melotti. *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, pp. 73-92.

⁴⁹ Arif Dirlik, “The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism” in *Critical Inquiry* Winter 1994: 332.

⁵⁰ Let’s not forget that “in pedagogical histories it is the subaltern’s relation to the world that ultimately asks for improvement.” See Dipesh Chakravarty, “Subaltern Histories and Post-Enlightenment Rationalism” in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), 34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵² See “International Migration in Europe: Social Projects and Political Cultures” by Umberto Melotti. *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, pp. 73-92.

⁵³ The Island was divided after the Greek military coup organized by the Junta in power in Athens, with the aim of toppling the government of the democratic elected President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios the III. Turkey retaliated by invading the island and occupying 37% of it in the northern parts. In 1983 Rauf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader declared North Cyprus an independent state. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is only recognized by Turkey.

⁵⁴ The presence of the Turkish minority in Cyprus goes back to the Ottoman occupation of the island in 1570 A.D.

Christian.⁵⁵ Although the borders dividing the two parts of Cyprus have recently been opened and people from both parts of the Island are meeting each other in emotionally charged ways, the political solution to the island of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation (forwarded as the Peace Plan of Kofi Annan) is yet to be ratified.

Admittedly any analysis of the Cyprus problem will be incomplete given the fact that the negotiations for a peaceful solution to the problem are still continuing. Besides, recent studies on partition histories, particularly in relation to India,⁵⁶ have alerted us to the fact that narratives at the personal level, of loss and gain, can suture or sever the jagged edges of the fault line dividing nations. But surely one can analyze the Cyprus problem with an understanding of the dominant political, social, and cultural systems that inform it?

Tassos Papadopoulos, the fifth elected President of the Republic of Cyprus, in his speech of April 2003, concerning the signing of the accession treaty to the European Union, expressed relief and gratitude to EU institutions and member states “for offering Cyprus the possibility to accede where it belongs historically, geographically, politically and culturally.”⁵⁷ Costas Constantinou states

Blunt in its oversimplifying identification, this unequivocal pronouncement of Cyprus’ continental ‘location,’ brushes over in flair historical, geographical, political and cultural factors that tie the island as much to its two closest continents, Asia and Africa. Not to mention here etymological factors, *irs* or *Alasia*, the ancient name of Cyprus in Akkadian and Hittite transcriptions, the originary word which according to some gave the Asian continent its (Greek) name.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ The origins of the present day Greek Cypriots can be traced to the 13th century B.C. with the coming of the Myceneans from Greece who came as merchants and immigrants.

⁵⁶ See Urvashi Butalia, “Community, State, and Gender: Some Reflections on the Partition of India” in *Women and the Politics of Violence*. Ed. Taisha Abraham (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2002), 125-159. See also Ritu Menon, and Kamla Bhasin. Eds. *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition*. (New Delhi: Kali, 1998).

⁵⁷ Cited in Costas M. Constantinou, “Europa Mythica” in *States of Political Discourse: Words, Regimes, Seditions* (forthcoming, Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

The President's comments—even as the political solution to the island in relation to its religious 'other' is being worked out—point to a Eurocentric orientation (with its admixture of Enlightenment modernity and Christian values).⁵⁹

Constantinou points out two significant details to demonstrate this Eurocentrism of the Island. He gives the example of the launching of the fifty-cent coin in 1991, which coincided with the application of Cyprus to join the EU, and, which has on it the legend of how a metamorphosized Zeus abducted Europa from Sidon. He states that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also used this logo for its “multidimensional symbolism” under the rationale:

First of all, it symbolizes the rich culture and civilization of the island that dates back to antiquity. Moreover, it reflects the crucial role that Cyprus is destined to play as a future member of the European Union: as Europa was carried via Cyprus to the Continent that was to assume her name, in the same way Cyprus has to face the challenge of becoming the bridge that will link the European Union with the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.⁶⁰

Whether Europa was indeed carried through Cyprus, Constantinou says, is debatable, because there is no classical reference to validate it. But what is important, he says, is to note the identification of the Island geographically with Europe over its neighbours: Africa and Asia.

If the myth of Europa is appropriated for political expediency by this southern Mediterranean country in its reconstruction of its identity, then, “European supremacy” and “continental essentialism” are, in turn, fostered by such appropriations.⁶¹ In this context, even if the political solution to the island materializes and the fault line is removed, complex issues of self-determination, notions of identity, religious and cultural

⁵⁹ The fact that Tassos Papadopoulos has had a murky past in his association with the *Akritas* plan of the sixties is significant. This plan based itself on a proactive response as to what could be done in case the Turkish Cypriots (TCs) nationalists made an attempt at secession. The plan could also be read as one for overrunning the TCs in order to get *Enosis* (union with Greece). Either way the plan aimed at dominating the Turkish Cypriots.

⁶⁰ Cited in Costas M. Constantinou, *States of Political Discourse*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

differences between the minority Turkish Muslim and the majority Greek Orthodox Christian Cypriots, could create new fault lines.⁶² This also applies to the other minorities living in the Island: the Armenians, Latins, Maronites and the gypsies. How will they be positioned? In the past under the 1960 constitutional agreement these minorities had to classify under Greek or Turkish Cypriots. And, what about the approximately 35,000 foreigners who have made Cyprus their home? If the reception and construction of South Asians (Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Srilanka) in Cyprus are any indicators of what the future holds in terms of the ‘inclusion of the other within itself’ the picture is not very encouraging. The notion of “clean mistress” (Cypriots) and “dirty servant” (cultural others) is played upon within carelessly rehearsed discourses of patriarchy and colonialism, re-articulating their foundational binaries of conquest and defeat and superior and inferior in its representation of the other.⁶³ This produces a very disturbing interpretation of “interdependence” between “developed” and “developing” nations in the southern Mediterranean space that Balibar’s European-Mediterranean ensemble seeks to foster.

This is not to say that the call for democracy and dialogue across differences are hopelessly ensnared in the Anglo-American logic of empire and the legacy of colonialism for that would unwittingly subordinate traditions of democracy and dialogue that have emerged outside that cultural domain like the Native American traditions of democracy.⁶⁴ The central question is how does one retain democratic and dialogic principles that cut across cultures as a way of opposing the instrumental logic of domination and oppression without being implicated in colonial or missionary ways of thinking? I am re-iterating that one way of doing this is by challenging Europe’s foundational history and its culture of entitlement that feeds into colonial binaries and official forms of European nationalism with its concomitant politics of selection and exclusion. The European-Mediterranean ensemble will have to be re-imagined and re-theorized in a way whereby its underlying Eurocentric notion of history is seriously questioned. Otherwise, cultural, racial, and religious others

⁶² Transnational interests—for example, the vested interests of both Turkey and Greece in the Island—can create flash points of conflict. In the past ethnic differences between the two communities have developed national feelings along Turkish and Greek lines.

⁶³ See Taisha Abraham, “I Am So Sari’: The Construction of South Asians in Cyprus” in *Cyprus Review* Volume 14, Fall 2002. No. 2.

⁶⁴ See Donald A. Grinde, Jr. In *Akwe:Kon Journal* (now *Native Americas*) 1993.014.

will be pushed into subordinate positions and seen as people without histories. Such an approach will only tiresomely replay the jaded colonial encounters with antagonistic positions and disjunctions connoting “rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition.”⁶⁵

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⁶⁵ Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question” in *Screen* 24.6 (1983): 18.