THE CULTURAL BASIS OF EUROPEAN SECURITY: ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINE

Nicolai N. PETRO, Professor Department of Political Science Washburn Hall, University of Rhode Island Kingston, RI (USA)

The Cultural Basis of European Security

The organizers of this first interdisciplinary symposium on security and development strategies for the 21st century have quite correctly identified a key source of the challenges facing European security and prosperity. They stem from the fact that the unique historical and cultural models of the Anglo-Saxon world have become the mainstream paradigms by which other nations measure their own success. As cultural traditions deemed inferior to the "mainstream" strive for recognition, it produces social tensions so deep, that it can result in civil war. The struggle to modernize the nation according to this Anglo-Saxon script (sometimes referred to as the "Washington Consensus"), often results in a mismatch between elite aspirations for modernity and popular aspirations for tradition.[1] When imposed from above, usually in the name of national unity and prosperity, this mismatch paradoxically proves to be a major source of social instability and global insecurity.

Many advocates of modernization recognize this, but nevertheless see it as the price that backwards nations must pay to join the global economic and political mainstream, and thereby achieve security.[2] Others, however, are not so sure. One alternative school of thought, known as the Copenhagen School, takes a radically different approach to security that focuses on issues of cultural identity.

Traditionally, says the Copenhagen School, Realist security theory has given absolute priority to the security of the state. Any challenge to state authority, and particularly those which might arise from minority concerns, must be quickly and thoroughly suppressed. In this view "identity politics" is nothing but an instrument that political elites use to achieve their "real" political goals. As a result, Realists define their task as seeing through the various false reasons thrown up to distract analyst, so that decision-makers can uncover the real political objectives of the elite. Only when the parties in conflict engage in a dialogue about those real objectives, without getting sidetracked by irrelevant issues like culture and identity, is a resolution possible. In effect, as Buzan and Waever, point out, the Realist position boils down to a demand that both sides learn to think "correctly" about security issues, correctness being measured in terms of objective, scientific criteria that transcend cultural differences.[3]

Cultural critics of this approach, however, argue that it is simply not possible to reduce security to such an abstract level of discourse. By treating identity as merely a resource to be used by the state, Realists confuse the nation-state with society. This, in turn, leads to serious errors in identifying potential threats, particularly since they see society now more threatened that the state. The security

---

[1] Nicolai N. Petro, *Crafting Democracy: How Novgorod Has Coped With Rapid Social Change* (New York & London: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 181-184.

[2] Lawrence E. Harrison and Peter Berger eds., *Developing Cultures: Case Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

[3] Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, "Slippery? Contradictory? Sociologically untenable? The Copenhagen school replies," *Review of International Studies* (1997), vol. 23, p. 247.

issue that Culturalists see threatened is not sovereignty, but identity—specifically, the identity of the cultural subgroups that make up a society, and whose cohesion and loyalty are essential for society's (and the state's) survival. As the threats to the survival of the state have receded with the end of the Cold War, they see cultural subgroups becoming more active in defending their own survival within the state.

The rise of such cultural subgroups points to new problems that classical security theory cannot deal with. Whereas traditionally the security of the state has been bought at the expense of minorities, and a strong state justified by the need for survival in the face of nuclear annihilation, today the state must find a way to respond to its minorities or face being undermined by them. A better security theory therefore must "leave room for a concept of politics detached from the state, and for circumstances in which identity politics [is] about maintaining difference rather than finding a collective image."[4] This, and not the survival of the state, Culturalists assert, is the main security dilemma currently facing the formerly communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The resolution of this security dilemma has both an immediate, defensive aspect, and a long term, revolutionary aspect. The defensive aspect can be summarized as "the capacity of a society to conserve its specific character in spite of changing conditions and real or virtual threats: more precisely, it involves the permanence of traditional schemas of language, culture, associations, identity and national or religious practices, allowing for changes that are judged to be acceptable."[5] This means "abandoning the Westphalian straitjacket" that makes the nation-state seem coextensive with cultural identity.[6] The Copenhagen school sees individuals as having overlapping identities, most of which do not coincide with the boundaries of their nation-state. These can be cultural, tribal, religious, linguistic, familial, and even political, as in the case of the European Union. The security concerns that result from these identities should be seen as just as powerful as those typically identified with the nation-state.

Identity becomes a security issue through what Culturalists call the "speech act;" i.e., the recognition that discourse does not merely point to or identify a security agenda, but is the agenda.[7] To make identity a security issue requires only that "it holds a social power that makes it efficient to invoke it, and that it has a form which makes security discourse possible"—i.e., an acceptable label. [8] "Security discourse," say Buzan and Waever, "always uses a symbol or a concept."[9]

Within the context of Europe, therefore, securitizing local cultural identity involves three steps. First, creating a new political image that resonates with the existing political order and national culture. Second, promoting this image, and the new national identities that fit it, at the critical juncture when the old, established identity is weakest. And, third, making sure that any new national identity allows for

---

[4] Buzan and Waever, "Slippery? Contradictory?" p. 248.

[5] Scott Forrest, "Indigenous Identity as a Strategy for Cultural Security," paper presented at the Northern Research Forum, Plenary on Security, Yellowknife, NWT (September 18, 2004), available online at: < http://old.nrf.is/Publications/The%20Resilient%20North/Plenary%204/3rd%20NRF_plenary%204_Forrest_YR_paper.pdf> (accessed 11/1/2008).

[6] Claire Wilkinon, "The Copenhagen School on Tour in Kygyzstan: Is Securitization Theory Useable Outside Europe?" *Security Dialogue* (2007), vol. 38, No. 5, p. 5.

[7] Ayse Ceyhan, "Analyser la sécurité: Dillon, Waever, Williams et les autres," *Cultures & Conflits* (1998), no.31-32.

[8] Buzan and Waever, "Slippery? Contradictory?" p. 243.

[9] Buzan and Waever, "Slippery? Contradictory?" p. 244.

unity in diversity, so that European identity becomes not an alternative to, but an additional layer of national identity.[10]

An even more revolutionary agenda, however, is implicit in the Copenhagen School's attempt to create a "positive sense" of security, one in which there is "an expectation to actively ensure and promote the pre-conditions in which a culture can safely grow and develop of its own accord."[11] For some, the task, ultimately, is to create a permanent place within the international system where societies and cultures cannot be reduced to either distinct nation-states or to discrete markets—"a regime" in other words, that is "adapted to the specific conditions of cultural exchanges".[12] This may require the creation of new types of political for a that are open to actors whose primary concern is cultural dialogue.[13]

True security is thus a function of cultural pluralism, both within nation-states and among nation-states. Just as biological diversity is necessary for the survival of the planet, some analysts of the Copenhagen School have suggested that cultural diversity is essential for the survival of humanity; this requires "defending the basic conditions for dialogue among cultures that accept each other as equal in dignity."[14]

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The notion that security is a speech act has domestic political consequences—it means that the ability to define security is a key measure of power. Most analysts assume that this power of definition resides exclusively with the state, but this is really only the first part of the equation. To be completed, it is equally important that the target audience accept the proposed definition as valid. Whether or not a target audience accepts a security description as valid will depend on the social position and authority of the securitizing actor, and this is ultimately determined by the elite media.[15]

Elite media serve as the primary gatekeeper of information about the world in which we live. The people we consider "informed" are those whose opinions match the categories established by the media, and no matter how enlightened we may be as individuals, we rely on media stereotypes to make sense of the world, and to communicate with others about it.[16] This means that while the state proposes the threat, the mainstream media confirms it and sets up the parameters of the security discourse about

---

[10] ESLaPorte, "The Building of European Serbia: How the European Union is winning in the Balkans," *Yellow-stars.com* (July 14, 2006), available online at: <http://www.yellow-stars.com/Europe/EU.Serbia.htm> (accessed 11/1/2008).

[11] Forrest, "Indigenous Identity ," p. 2.

[12] Jean Tardif, "Intercultural Dialogues and Cultural Security," *Globalpolicy.org* (September 2002), available online at: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/cultural/2002/09intercultural.htm> (accessed 11/1/2008), p. 9.

[13] Tardif, "Intercultural Dialogues," p. 9. One such proposal is the Russian-Indian-Greek draft project for a forum known as "The Dialogue of Civilizations." "Russia ready to contribute to Alliance of Civilizations potential." *ITAR-Tass* (January 16, 2008), cited in Johnson's Russia List 2008-#11. Available online at: <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/> (accessed 1/16/2008). Similar initiatives, inspired by his contacts with French philosopher Edgar Morin, have been supported by French president Nicholas Sarkozy. Sylvain Besson, "La boulimie du vouloir." *Le Temps* (France) (January 9, 2008). Available online at: <http://letemps.ch/template/print.asp?article=222890> (accessed 1/9/2008).

[14] Tardif, "Intercultural Dialogues," p. 8.

[15] Rens van Munster, "Logics of Security: The Copenhagen School, Risk Management and the War on Terror," *Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Southern Denmark* (10/2005), available online at: (accessed 11/1/2008).

[16] Bennett, "Constructing Publics," p. 116.

it. An issue that is thus "securitized" by the media is surrounded by taboos on the type of rhetoric that can be applied to the issue, along with a range of practices, strategies and assumptions that are designed to neutralize the threat in the public's mind. Elite journalists and publishers have been quite open about their responsibility to inform and guide the public toward making the "correct" judgments.

Among the global media elite, American media conglomerates play a dominant role. Thanks to their reach, funding, and sophistication, they are the key instrument in manufacturing the present security discourse that identifies security with the triumph of Western values (most simplistically seen in the slogan that "democracies do not fight each other"). As Tardif points out, one culture's ability to so dominate the global discourse that it is able to crowd out all competing definitions of security actually reduces cultural pluralism, and limits the scope of political discourse.[17]

For Culturalists, however, the value of openness and global communications is premised on the ability of cultures to establish an _equal_ dialogue.[18] The Copenhagen School considers equal dialogue the *summum bonum* because societies can only recognize and address their hidden, subnational security concerns if they accept the need for cultural pluralism. If the opportunities for cultural interpenetration are not equal, but heavily weighed in favor of one culture, then, some have argued, cultural openness merely threatens the survival of the weaker culture.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINE

Recognizing that security is a speech act also has important implications for international politics. If true, then security dilemmas can only be fully resolved through dialogue, and for that dialogue to be possible, cultures must accept each other as "equal in dignity."[19] Second, it suggests that security is inextricably linked to the type of discourse we use. Securitizing an issue, describing it as a threat, removes it from political discourse and thus limits the options for political resolution. This means that for an issue to cease being a security issue and become a political issue again, one must first stop talking about it as a security threat. Some Culturalists have even argued that, in the long run democracy is only possible in a "desecuritized" environment, because it is the only environment compatible with politics.[20] As sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt has put it, true cultural pluralism means abandoning the model of convergence toward the West, and replacing it with a vision of "multiple modernities" that accepts alternative values as equally valid.[21]

The ultimate promise of a cultural security as a system that transcends national security, however, seems very remote today. What practical strategies do Culturalists offer to get us from now to and their idyllic future? Since the concept of cultural security arose, in large measure, in response to the challenges posed by new identities arising in Eastern Europe, that is where useful strategies ought to be sought and applied. They should fit the requirements of gradually adapting national subcultures to the broader European framework, without forcing them to commit suicide, bearing in mind the three components to Europeanization mentioned previously:

(1) Creating a new political image that resonates with the current culture;
(2) Promoting this image during a time of transition;
(3) Making sure that it can identify with both the original culture and with European identity.

---

[17] Tardif, "Intercultural Dialogues," p. 8
[18] Tardif, "Intercultural Dialogues," p. 8.
[19] Tardif, "Intercultural Dialogues," p. 8.
[20] van Munster, "Logics of Security," p. 18.
[21] Tardif, "Intercultural Dialogues," p. 6.

As the discussion to date shows, however, Culturalists place the burden of changing discourse on local and national cultures. They make few demands on the definition of European cultural identity. I believe, however, that a truly pan-European cultural security cannot be achieved unless the cultural relationship between Eastern and Western Europe is also recast in a way that underscores their acceptance of each other as equal in dignity. The long established pattern of thinking of Western and Eastern European identities as distinct and antagonistic must be replaced with patterns that stress the common cultural inheritance of all Europeans, or we will never overcome the divisions of the Cold War.

Many Western Europeans implicitly recognize that the cultural model inherited from the Cold War, that rests exclusively on the Old Europe centered around NATO, is static and out of date. The next logical step is to expand it by imagining the possibility of a Slavic West—treating the predominantly Slavic and Orthodox countries not as threatening or overwhelming, but as essential components to a complete European identity. This is where Ukraine has much to offer.

There are several patterns that might serve to promote the idea of a Slavic West in Europe, but one that hold particular promise for Ukraine is Kievan Rus', which might also be described as a return to "the Europe within Ukraine."[22] Emphasizing the European context of Kievan Rus recasts Ukrainian identity from a border region (Russia's border with Europe; Europe's border with Russia) into a European cultural center, binding its Eastern and Western halves. It offers Western Europeans a manageable bridge for integrating Orthodoxy into their political and cultural horizons, while at the same time serving as an opening for Russia, which can hardly disavow this part of its heritage, into Europe.

If Culturalists are right, then a political identity built around the notion that minority identities are a threat to the state has no future. Even if it can succeed temporarily in small, homogeneous countries (of which there are few), it will quickly run into difficulties when local cultural identities become part of the broader European cultural matrix. The recasting of Ukrainian and European identity could thus enhance the overall security of Ukraine, by reassuring cultural minorities within the Ukrainian nation-state that their cultural identity is not threatened.

Today, it is more important than ever that Eastern Europeans seize the initiative in promoting a new, post-Cold War vision of European security that is based on mutually advantageous solutions and respect for shared values.[23] Tensions throughout the continent are unlikely to abate until a new paradigm replaces the notion of the triumph of Western values with an alternative paradigm that places the cultural identities of Eastern and Western Europe on an equal footing, since only within this context can the security of cultures can be preserved.

Perhaps, as Tardif suggests, in the long run new institutions will be created to focus specifically on the promotion of cultural dialogue as a means of redefining security. In that case, however, it is vital that they be transnational institutions that build contacts across nations at the level of local associations, not supranational institutions that act on behalf of governments. In any case, such groups would currently have to operate parallel to existing security organizations, very slowly moving the pan-European discourse toward a view of security as a common cultural responsibility.

For now, sadly, Western European elites remain locked into the mindset of the Cold War—that there is a fundamental conflict of values between East and West. One direct consequence of this is the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have been relegated to serving in one of three capacities: (1) a buffer zone against possible Russian attack; (2) a resource for cheap labor, or a market for military and consumer products; (3) or, ultimately, a battleground. In the long run, this limited choice of options cannot satisfy the aspirations of Eastern Europeans to participate in defining European identity.

---

[22] Lupatsii, Vladimir. "Европеизация Украины." *Russkiy zhurnal* (September 23, 2008). Available online at: <http://www.russ.ru/layout/set/print//reakcii/evropeizaciya_ukrainy> (accessed 10/20/2008).
[23] Tardif, "Intercultural Dialogues," p. 3.

A vision of the Slavic West as a core component of European identity and civilization could break this sterile pattern, and play a decisive role in shaping Europe's future. It would tackle head-on the problem of cultural exclusivity that prevents Europeans from establishing a solid basis for security, by promoting a new vision of European security that is culturally inclusive. By utilizing Ukraine's own cultural and religious diversity, it could become a bridge between Western Europe and Russia that unites, rather than divides Europe.

Поступила в редколлегию 12.01.2009 г.

Николай Николаевич Петро,
профессор политологии Род Айлендского университета
(Род Айленд, США)

Культурная основа европейской безопасности: анализ и значение для Украины
(краткое резюме)

Под словом «безопасность» мы обычно подразумеваем безопасность государства или государственной власти, но существует иное толкование концепции безопасности. Считают, что более значимыми являются угрозы не в адрес государства, а угрозы в адрес общества. И эта альтернативная концепция называется «безопасность культур», потому что в ней акцент ставится на сохранение меньшинствами собственных культурных ценностей. Лишь создавая условия для сохранения разнообразности культурных ценностей, государство сможет гарантировать себе лояльность этих групп. Такой подход, который связан с так называемой *Копенгагенской школой безопасности*, сравнивает роль плюрализма в природе с ее ролью в обществе. Под плюрализмом поздразумевается способность воспринимать другую культуру как равную в достоинстве. Для аналитиков *Копенгагенской школы* ценность диалога культур состоит как раз в том, что она основана на равенстве, взаимном уважении.

В современной Европе идет процесс приспособления местных культур к общеевропейскому «знаменателю». Я бы хотел обратить внимание еще на то, что с расширением Евросоюза и НАТО следует думать и том, что содержание таких терминов как Европа и Запад тоже надо менять. Они не могут оставаться незатронутыми включением в себя новых культур, новых ценностей. Иными словами, расширение этих организаций на Восточную Европу, тем более во имя безопасности, предполагает бережное отношение к культурным традициям этих стран и включение их в диалоги на равных началах. К сожалению, этого пока не происходит. Для этого нужно сначала расширить устаревшее содержание термина «Запад» и «Европа», добавить в них славянскую культуру и православие.

Украина могла бы сыграть в этом процессе исключительно важную роль. Для этого можно было бы взять на вооружение идею, миф, образ, как хотите, Киевской Руси, что способствовало бы преодолению образа Украины как окраины, то есть границы России с Европой, Европы с Россией, и заменить образ Украины на связующий центр Западной и Восточной частей единой европейской культуры.

Именно Украина с ее разнообразностью культур и религий могла бы помочь восприятию православной славянской культуры среди западных европейцев, с одной стороны, а с другой – приоткрыть путь в Европу для России.

Пока сохраняется в умах устаревшее понимание терминов «Европа» и «Запад», любые попытки полностью интегрировать восточнославянские страны в европейские структуры обречены на неудачу. Именно потому, что не созданы необходимые условия для взаимного уважения культур. Путь к такому взаимному уважению лежит, на мой взгляд, в восприятии славянских православных миров как составляющей европейской культуры, с которыми необходимо вместе определить тот набор ценностей, которые будут лежать в основе европейских политических, экономических и военных структур.

Уверен, что у Украины есть все данные для того, чтобы способствовать этому процессу.

Подготовил Коврига А.В., кандидат экономических наук