

Beyond Sovereignty: From Status Law to Transnational Citizenship? Ed. Osamu Ieda. Slavic Eurasian Studies, no. 9. Sapporo, Japan: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2006. xiii, 412 pp. Notes. Index. Paper.

The 2004 eastern enlargement of the European Union (EU) has given rise to a burgeoning academic literature. From farm subsidies to regional alliances, neoliberal economic models to the minutiae of administrative practice, the enlargement literature is now a variegated one. This volume, although ostensibly a study of one new member state—Hungary—and one defined policy area—minority rights—encompasses wide-ranging analysis of an important array of political issues and academic debates associated with eastern enlargement. At the core of its concerns lies the question of how the European integration model, so successful in reconstituting interstate relations in the relatively homogenous Europe of 1945–1989, can cope with the problems posed by the addition of the ethnic mosaic that is eastern Europe (not forgetting the Balkans and Turkey).

After all, as Judit Tóth points out in her contribution, eastern enlargement added 71 minority communities with 7.2 million persons to the 30 million people in 58 minority groups that existed within the pre-2004 European Union of fifteen member states. Thus Tóth argues that the “problems of 8.2 per cent of the total population of the enlarged EU have become an integral part of internal policy and regional affairs” (77). This observation is striking, not least because the European Union has patently failed to develop a substantive common policy on minority groups and cross-border kin relationships.

From an early stage in the eastern enlargement process the European Union has been conscious of the potential myriad ways in which cross-border, intercommunal disputes held the potential to fracture the new interstate security constellation. Against the backdrop of fratricidal nationalism that provoked a murderous civil war in Yugoslavia, the European Union was especially determined to guard against importing into an enlarged union any lingering revanchist claims or territorial disputes. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that the new geopolitics of the early 1990s would re-open old wounds emanating from the territorial settlements of World War I in particular. In the Trianon settlement of 1920, Hungary had suffered especially significant losses of population and territory (roughly two-thirds of both). Thus with sizeable minorities in neighboring states such as Romania and Slovakia it seems hardly surprising that the postcommunist Hungarian state should have sought to strengthen its relationships with those groups, even if the new dispensation placed concrete limits on what measures it could introduce to adequately reconnect those groups with the state.

On 19 June 2001 the Hungarian Parliament overwhelmingly adopted the so-called Status Law, which was designed as a framework for granting wide-ranging cultural, social, and economic rights in Hungary to the Hungarian diaspora. Other clauses directed the Hungarian state to provide financial support for the establishment, maintenance, and development of Hungarian cultural and educational institutions in neighboring states. But these rather benign provisions were accompanied by others that were viewed as far more sinister by outside observers and certainly by neighboring states. Perhaps the most controversial, as Nigel Swain points out, was Article 18, Paragraph 2, Subsection e, which suggested that Hungary could intervene in the rural development policy of neighboring countries on behalf of its kin community. This implied a seamless movement from entirely sensible provisions relating to education and culture to (potentially) direct intervention in the economic affairs of neighboring states.

Applied to the wider European Union, the Hungarian Status Law raised a number of other important issues. These included the extraterritorial applicability of kinship laws and general socioeconomic measures, the scope and nature of instruments related to the transnational protection of minority groups, and the identification of minority groups with both their host communities and their kin states. In a broader philosophical context the kin community issue poses the question of whether the enlarged (and still enlarging) European Union constitutes a cosmopolitan Europe of civic-territorial entities or an ethno-chauvinist Europe where statehood derives directly from nationhood and citizenship is defined in exclusivist cultural and nationalist terms?

In response to criticism by the European Union and by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, substantial amendments to the 2001 law were enacted. The Venice Commission's argument was that the Status Law was disproportionate in that the rights claimed unilaterally by Hungary went (potentially) far beyond the existing body of norms related to minority protection in Europe. Concern that the Status Law would have a negative impact on Hungary's efforts to join the European Union resulted in bilateral agreements with Romania and Slovakia aimed at removing the provisions for unilateral action.

The volume's undoubted strength lies in its extrapolation of universal truths from the controversy surrounding the Status Law. Hungary's difficulties in constructing appropriate economic, political, and legal frameworks for enhancing its connections to its diaspora communities in a context of deepening European integration reflect the much wider salience of issues related to minorities and identity in the new Europe. This is as applicable to the position of religious and ethnic minorities in London, Dublin, Hamburg, or Rome as it is to the "east." Simultaneously it seems we see the emergence of a new culture of cooperation and problem solving among member states of the EU, which facilitates the peaceful resolution of issues such as that of the Hungarian minorities, while within individual member states, issues of assimilation and integration continue to pose enormous problems. The volume's comprehensive treatment of the issues raised by the Status Law should thus be welcomed by both the academic and the diplomatic communities as an important contribution to debates on European borders, identity, and statehood.

One negative point that must be raised is the poor quality English that characterizes some of the contributions. Given the important issues the book raises and the impressive scholarship that underpins much of it, it is disappointing to observe that a very inadequate level of proofreading has resulted in a somewhat patchy text. Notwithstanding these concerns, the volume constitutes an important contribution to scholarship on minority rights and interstate relations within the European Union and its borderlands. It should be read by all serious students interested in different dimensions of the politics of the enlarged Europe.

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On the East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Central and Eastern Europe. By Attila Melegh. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006. xi, 220 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. \$41.95, hard bound.

Of all the fundamental changes that have swept across east central Europe, perhaps the greatest change has been in the area of identity. In this book, Attila Melegh makes a very compelling argument regarding the process of identity transformation in east central Europe, which is on what he calls the "East-West Slope." This slope involves the slide from the "high" civilization of the west, where all is good, normal, and modern, through gradual diminishment as one moves eastward, toward violence, "tribal collectivism," and murderous nationalism. East central Europe is on that slope.

The book argues against the commonly held notion that modernity and Europeanization have "unleashed" primordial forces in east central Europe, forces that have led to violent nationalism and racism. Rather Melegh contends that the spread of the liberal idea itself has created the racism and intolerance that permeates politics in the post-communist era.

One of the major changes in identity occurred gradually, beginning in the 1980s. Prior to 1980 the concepts of east and west were rooted in an ideological divide, a competition between rival modernities, between capitalism and communism. In the 1980s, however, a qualitative regional divide emerged between modern and traditional. This was rather a "rediscovery" of the precommunist divide between western and eastern Europe. Yet, paradoxically, as Europeanization and westernization progressed, racism and