

POSTEMOTIONAL POLITICS AND THE SIEGE OF VUKOVAR

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In his book, *The Ancient Regime*, Alexis de Tocqueville warned that all revolutionary leaps “forward” into what has been labeled as democracy and modernity are characterized by the danger of dragging past oppressions, and repeating them, in the present. The problem of repeating history is dismissed by most theories of modernity, with their incessant narratives of progress and eradication of tradition and the past. On the other extreme, the postmodernists — including writers such as Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, and Jean-Francois Lyotard — represent modernity as an oppressive “grand narrative” of the Enlightenment that has produced “rootless circulating fictions”, simulacra, “language games”, spin, and chaos. It seems that the only alternatives in the social sciences are to embrace a problematic modernity or a postmodernity that yields chaos.

In this context, what is the social meaning of Europe and the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s — including the battle for Vukovar? Suppose that one glances at the historical panorama of efforts to establish some sort of idea of Europe ranging from the ancient Greeks (who polarized the distinction between their civilization and barbarians), Roman Emperors through Charlemagne, feudalism, the many religious wars before, during and after Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, Mussolini and Hitler, up to and including the contemporary movement to establish a European Union. At first glance, it seems that such discussions are typically framed in modernist terms: What were the borders of these various, historical entities that approximated Europe? Anthony Giddens, among others, is adamant in seeking out the borders and their surveillance for various nation-states that are labeled as European (Giddens, 1987). Giddens uses the metaphor of the “juggernaut” meaning, a boulder that crushes traditionalism, to represent modernity. Modernity cannot be stopped, and will crush everything and everyone in its past. Modernists also seek out “facts” in various documents that are regarded as signposts of European civilization, including but not limited to writings by ancient Greeks and Romans, the Magna Carta, edicts

drafted by various Christian writers, and classics written by so-called Enlightenment thinkers (Toynbee, 1978). In these and related discussions pertaining to Europe, modernists focus upon finding order within chaos (for example, “borders” versus “frontiers”), searching for “facts” measuring and gauging opinion, faith in science and progress, isolating agendas, and other narratives derived from the Enlightenment (Toynbee, 1978). Modernists are frequently accused of taking a Eurocentric perspective and of assuming that modernity itself is a Western European “project”. Indeed, the Enlightenment and its attendant ideas (democracy, science, civilization, progress, technology, and so on) are regarded as one of the key traits for distinguishing European from “barbarian” culture. It is a circular argument based upon pre-established ideas concerning the Enlightenment and its attendant ideas: The Enlightenment with a capital “E” is used as the starting point for discussions which dismiss peoples who did not have a Renaissance and Enlightenment as non- or less-than-European. In discussions of this sort, and to achieve balance, hardly anybody cites Thorstein Veblen’s (Veblen, 1899/1965; Mestrovic, 2004) poignant observations that (1) the Enlightenment was limited geographically to the northwest corner of the European continent and limited in time to a specific century and (2) the Enlightenment was accompanied by civil and religious wars, witch hunts, and other tendencies that he labels as predatory and frankly barbaric.

But alongside this modernist public discussion, there exists another perspective that is difficult to categorize. One can characterize this other discussion as postmodern, post-auratic, post-honorific, carnivalesque, and deconstructionist, but its central features are these: Lyotard (1984) claims that the Enlightenment is really just a story or narrative. More precisely, he refers to the Grand Narratives of the Enlightenment, which he regards as totalizing and fundamentally oppressive despite the positive ways in which they are typically packaged. All of the postmodernists write in the Nietzschean, nihilist vein of deconstructing and decentering all narratives such that they implode in meaning, and such that there is no truth. Zygmunt Bauman (1989) has traced the origins of Nazism, Communism, and totalitarianism to tendencies within these narratives to establish extreme “order” at seemingly any cost. Bauman portrays Hitler as a modernist, European thinker who wanted to establish an “orderly garden” of Europe in which Jews and others were regarded as “weeds”. The gardening metaphor is apt: Croats were and continue to be seen as the “weeds” among other such “weeds” in the European “garden”. The contrast between modernist and postmodernist perspectives could not be more stark. The meanings of the siege of Vukovar implode in multiple meanings that are derived from modernist as well as postmodernist perspectives: Vukovar was the Alamo of the Croats, or it was

a humanitarian disaster (like Sarajevo was depicted by French President Mitterrand), or it was an instance of Serbian genocide against the Croats, or it was a cynical political ploy by the Tuđman government, or it was an example of anti-modernist Croat “secessionism”, or it was a modernist effort by Belgrade to defend modernist unity, and so on infinitely. Vukovar has multiple meanings, each of which can be deconstructed and decentered by the postmodernists, never yielding a final, satisfactory meaning.

I propose another approach with the concept of postemotionalism that I introduced in *Postemotional Society*. Postemotional society harks back into the distant past in order to create emotional responses in the present, or more precisely: Postemotionalism is a “development in which synthetic, quasi-emotions become the basis for widespread manipulation by self, others, and the culture industry as a whole” (Mestrovic, 1997). Postemotionalism views the rhetorical link between Europe and the Enlightenment as fake. Postmodernism overlaps with modernist as well as postmodern approaches, but is distinct from both. A postemotional approach to culture makes widespread use of what David Riesman (1950) called “fake sincerity” and is itself the outgrowth of what he called other-directed social character. As such, postemotional rituals, politics, and culture in general must be distinguished from more sincere and genuinely emotional responses to European cultural traits in history. In other words, postemotionalism is not like the tradition-directed society’s revivification of customs and celebrations that is described by Emile Durkheim (1912/1965), and it is not like the inner-directed society’s internalization of ideas that were sincere enough to last for at least a lifetime that is described by Riesman.

Examples of political postemotionalism range from the Serbs invoking a grievance from the year 1389 in order to justify their violence in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Greece using the memory of Alexander the Great in order to block the existence of Macedonia in the 1990s, to France and England still nursing their wounds at losing their Empires by reminding the world that they were the founders of civilization and the Enlightenment (Mestrovic, 1995). Similarly, the USA used the moral code of the Puritans — who were expelled over five hundred years ago from Europe to the North American continent — as the “beacon of democracy set upon a hill” depicted in Volume 1 of Alexis de Tocqueville’s (1845/1985) *Democracy in America* to justify war against Iraq when the real enemy was Osama Bin Laden. But it seems that few people read Volume 2 of Tocqueville’s classic, which deals with slavery and extermination of Native Americans. Fewer still are concerned with the evil consequences imposed by the Puritans in Europe under the rule of Oliver Cromwell, who has finally come to be regarded by historians as a dictator who imposed genocide upon the Irish

and persecuted the Scots (Bennett, 2006). In these and other instances, contemporary Europeans (and to some extent, Americans) use ancient European ideas such as civilization and Enlightenment to rationalize seemingly irrational behaviors and attitudes in their present.

A more in-depth analysis of any of these examples reveals extraordinary connections to ideas surrounding Europe and its meanings. One could argue that Belgrade-sponsored genocide against Croats and Bosnian Muslims has little to do with the idea of Europe, because Europeans generally regard the Balkans with the racism captured by Mark Almond's (1994) phrase, "Europe's backyard." In other words, contemporary Croats and Bosnians in Europe became the metaphorical blacks and Indians from America's past. The postmodernist writer, Jean Baudrillard (1995), has argued that Serbia was doing Western Europe's "dirty work" on its behalf: Historians generally agree that Europe went out of its way not to intervene and not to prevent Belgrade-sponsored genocide against Croats and Bosnian Muslims, and thereby collaborated with Serbian intentions. But this collaboration was shrouded in the language of human rights and Enlightenment ideals. Were the Serbian or Western European governments who were caught up in this drama "sincere" in the narratives they presented for public discourse? There is no rational connection between the Ottoman Empire of the fourteenth century and the Bosnian Muslims in the twentieth century, and similarly there was no connection between Nazism and Croatian aspirations for independence, yet this irrational and fake connection was presented and largely accepted by European governments as well as media as justification for aggression and acquiescence to aggression. Genuine principles based upon the ideals of the Enlightenment — which are routinely touted by England and France — should have invoked moral principles as well as constructive action by Europe. It is far more believable that Greece sought a portion of Macedonian territory, divided with Serbia, than that the Greek government was sincerely interested in preserving the memory of Alexander the Great.¹

It is as if the sinister side of American history, found in Volume 2 of Tocqueville's classic, emerged as the Jungian shadow of Puritan ideals in the form of postemotional racism, humiliation, and violence committed against Native Americans, African-Americans, and other minorities. Similarly, in Europe, Oliver Cromwell persecuted whole peoples in the so-called British Isles in the name of dichotomous Puritan ideals which amounted to black and white, "you're with us or against us" thinking that psychologists regard as one of the hallmarks of mental illness. Puritanism created havoc on both sides of the At-

¹ See *The Unholy Alliance*.

lantic, and is increasingly coming to be regarded by historians as a form of religious fundamentalism. To be sure, the postemotional repetition of Puritan severity had been covered up for many decades not only by historians but also by the Thanksgiving holiday in the USA. The happy, other-directed (from Riesman) image of the Puritans sitting down to a friendly meal with Native Americans served as a public relations ploy to cover up what latter-day historians regarded as genocidal intentions by the Puritans toward the American aborigines. The postemotional re-cycling of Puritan intentions continues to this day as in the US war against Iraq that began in 2003. A moral code that used to evoke genuine emotions among the Puritans was used at the beginning of the millennium in an attempt to depict US motives in the war against Iraq as a part of an overall plan to bring democracy and freedom to the Middle East. Regarding the cultural legacy of the Puritans, Tocqueville writes:

Nothing is more peculiar or more instructive than the legislation of this time; there, if anywhere, is the key to the social enigma presented to the world by the United States now... Blasphemy, sorcery, adultery, and rape are punished by death; a son who outrages his parents is subject to the same penalty. Thus the legislation of a rough, half-civilized people was transported into the midst of an educated society with gentle mores... I have already said enough to put Anglo-American civilization in its true light. It is the product (and one should continually bear in mind this point of departure) of two perfectly distinct elements which elsewhere have often been at war with one another but which in America it was somehow possible to incorporate into each other, forming a marvelous combination. I mean the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom. (41-47)

Tocqueville wrote these words in the year 1845, yet they are still applicable to the United States as of this writing, in the year 2007. The USA still demands the death penalty for a myriad of offenses, to the surprise of other industrial nations. Blue laws, and puritanical moral codes against drug use, prostitution, sexual matters, and nudity still exist and are enforced with a quasi-religious fervor in the USA. Baudrillard as well as Riesman, among other theorists, have noted the seemingly permanent influence of Puritan culture upon the USA. But no major sociological theorist has traced the influence of Puritanism and Calvinism upon the European continent. Even Max Weber concentrates his attention of Puritanism upon the USA, and focuses upon the economic sphere, while he treats Calvinist cultural influence in Europe as an apparent after-

thought. If Tocqueville is correct to depict Puritanism as a sort of collective, split personality, what were its effects on the European continent?

The incessant repetition of past collective traumas — the seemingly endless cycles of civil, religious, genocidal, wars and so-called “ancient tribal warfare” is reminiscent of the Freudian “compulsion to repeat”, albeit, applied to societies and not only to individuals. Freud frequently made analogies between the private obsessions and compulsions of the individual neurotic and societies, but this aspect of his overall thought remains underdeveloped (Mestrovic, 1993). Although he insisted that psychoanalysis was a tool for analyzing individuals as well as groups, societies, and cultures, Freud² and psychoanalysis have been absorbed primarily by psychology, which is focused mostly upon the individual. It is beyond the scope of this essay to work out the theoretical scaffolding for how one may comprehend collective compulsions to repeat historical traumas. I have developed such a scaffolding for a sociological reading of Freud on this particular point in my *Barbarian Temperament*, in which I emphasize the importance of Arthur Schopenhauer’s philosophy for laying the groundwork for a number of important works in nineteenth and twentieth century in sociology, psychology, literature, and art. There is no intention here to apply a Freudian reading onto history or postemotional theory. Rather, Freud’s ideas on the unconscious and the compulsion to repeat were already foreshadowed by Schopenhauer’s (1818/1965) elaboration of the ideas of the “will” and the eternal recurrence of the same (which was popularized by his disciple Nietzsche).

Numerous writers in diverse fields have used the theme that history repeats itself. The postemotional concept is a more specific version of this truism in that it focuses upon the synthetic manipulation of the emotional components of history, and upon the disintegrative, dysfunctional consequences of such compulsions. It is beyond the scope of this essay to do justice to the history of Europe, even from a sociological point of view, in the manner of Veblen, Marx, or Weber. The aim here is to apply the postemotional concept to the idea of Europe and European collaboration with the Belgrade regime in genocide against Croats and Bosnian Muslims for the sake of gaining a new perspective on existing facts and theories.

For example, I have already touched upon Tocqueville’s powerful indictment of the Puritans for understanding American cultural compulsions, and pointed out that the Puritan impact on European cultural compulsions has been neglected. But the very idea of Europe as a sort of United States of Europe speaks a postemotional repetition of Tocqueville’s desire to teach the Europe-

² See Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*.

ans how to establish democracy. It also points to similar problems encountered by the Europeans in managing regional differences (the Mediterranean region is regarded by the United Kingdom, Germany, and France with much the same sense of superiority and contempt that the American North viewed and continues to view the American South). Croats and the Muslims of Europe are the rough equivalent of Native Americans and African-Americans in terms of chronic racism and ethnic tensions that boiled over into genocide in the Balkans in the 1990s. If Tocqueville is correct that the stain of slavery will never be washed out of the American cultural fabric, it seems that the stain of the Ottoman Empire's conquest of a portion of Europe will never be forgotten by Europe. Furthermore, it seems that the "contagion" of Islam is perceived as having contaminated Croats and other peoples in the Balkans except the Serbs, because the Serbs are consistently described as America's and Europe's "allies" in World Wars I and II as well as the war in the 1990s. The Puritans are not just the cultural descendants of Cromwell and Calvin, but all those who sought and continue to seek out the "weeds" in the orderly garden that is supposed to be Europe, including Napoleon and Hitler. And the "weeds" are not just the Muslims and the Jews, but all those who are deemed as threatening to the neat and tidy European garden, including Slavs, Sicilians, Albanians, Turks, and others. One of the most important postemotional connections is the one between the Puritans and their goal of establishing a "pure" and perfect society with the Serbs and their similar goal of ethnic purity or "ethnic cleansing." One could argue that the idea of ethnic cleansing is ancient, and distinctly European.

Which European writer and book may be regarded as the rough equivalent of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*? I believe a good reply to this question is Rebecca West's classic *Black Lamb and Gray Falcon*. It is tempting to dismiss Tocqueville, West and others, such as Baudrillard, as writing "travel journals." In fact, Rebecca West achieves something that no sociological writer on Europe has achieved: she writes of the Balkans in constant interplay with European history and European ideas, such as the Enlightenment, Nazism, Mussolini, the Manichean heresy, the Roman Empire, English civilization, and other matters pertaining to Europe.

From the outset, West displays her racist attitude by reminding the reader that the word "Balkan" is a "term of abuse, meaning a rastaquouere type of barbarian" (p. 21). But she attributes this barbarism to Turkish influence, not the Balkans per se. Thus her favorite Balkan people are the Serbs and the Dalmatians, who were, in her view, least influenced by the Turks. Her journey begins on a train to Zagreb, which is full of German tourists who are taking holidays that are approved by the Nazi regime. "The Germans have always hated the

Slavs,” she observes (p. 51), as if to find something good about the Germans. In her view, all the Serbian kings were “fighting against the Turks, the practitioners of pagan luxury” (p. 522). This fact, alone, made them noble in her eyes. Confronted by the fact that Serbian King Alexander was a failed dictator who could not preserve Yugoslavia, and who was eventually assassinated, she writes:

He could not secure unity among the Croats and Slovenes and Serbs, but he himself had never wished to include the Croats and Slovenes in his kingdom. He had hoped, at the beginning of the war, not for a Yugoslavia, not for a union of all South Slavs, but for a Greater Serbia that should add to the kingdom of Serbia all the Austro-Hungarian territories in which the majority of the inhabitants were Serbs. (p. 590)

Rebecca West is honest in her assessment of Alexander’s aims, but does not condemn them. Interestingly, the quest for a Greater Serbia reappeared post-emotionally in the 1990s under the dictatorship of Milosevic. This collective quest is justified by Serbian culture as well by West on the basis of Kosovo: Serbia somehow earned the right to territorial self-aggrandizement, and eventually to ethnic cleansing, because of its martyr-like suffering at the hands of the Turks on behalf of the rest of Europe. What is more interesting is that a similar argument was used by the Milosevic argument, and was accepted, for the most part, by Western Europe in the 1990s, and especially by Great Britain. As Gregory Kent (2006) demonstrates in his recent assessment of the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, Great Britain was Belgrade’s most important defender during Serbia’s aggression against its neighbors. This postemotional affinity between “Great” Britain and “Greater” Serbia bespeaks a sociological “mirroring” of collective intentions, akin to how mentally disordered individuals often find partners who “mirror” them psychologically. One ought to ask the same question concerning London’s motives vis-a-vis other peoples in the British Isles that West asks regarding Belgrade’s motives vis-a-vis the South Slavs, namely: Whose interests were most served by the various establishments of Great Britain followed by United Kingdom, and at whose expense? It is certain that the Scots, Irish, and Welsh have expressed discontent over the course of many years at these arrangements that are similar in some ways to the disgruntled Yugoslav peoples (Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians). What is the postemotional energy that drove English expansionism? After all, Alexander sought to be Emperor of all the Russians in addition to being King of the Serbs, and England at one time “ruled the world.”

Connections to contemporary issues

The postemotional energy of the tensions that Rebecca West uncovered continue to animate contemporary Europe, especially its relations with Turkey, the Muslim minorities living in Europe, its relationship to Croatia and Croatia's agonizing process of entering the EU, and Europe's alliance with the USA in the conflict that goes by the vague title of "War Against Terror." I agree with Rebecca West that the "original" template of ideas that is being compulsively reproduced is the Manichean splitting between pure and dirty, light and darkness, good and evil. The idea of Europe relies upon the nucleus of this radical splitting, either-or thinking, black or white categorization. Ultimately, when people call themselves European, they seem to mean that they are "civilized" in opposition to the "barbarians" at their gate or in their midst. Postemotionalism dictates that Europeans compulsively repeat various programs to impose "light" through violent means and ethnic cleansing against the "dark" peoples. It is possible to read the history of Europe from this postemotional perspective, from Diocletian through the various heresies, Crusades, Puritanical regimes, Inquisitions, fascisms, and ethnic cleansings. The cultural refractions of this heresy include the rise and continued dominance of Puritan thinking in the USA as well as Europe in constant opposition to "dark" people, from African-Americans to Gypsies, Jews, Muslims, and others.

Contrast Max Weber and Alexis de Tocqueville on the broad issues being discussed in this essay. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber does not scrutinize the European origins of Puritanism or its affinities with earlier heresies; he assumes the dominance, uniqueness, and special nature of Puritan culture without defending these assumptions; and he neglects completely the consequences of Puritan culture on Europe in an analysis that is mostly America-centric. His reference to the "Iron Cage" takes up one page of his analysis, even though it has been overemphasized by sociologists. It is little wonder that in *The McDonaldization of Society*, George Ritzer could and did popularize the "nice" version of Puritanism, distilled from Weber, that it promotes efficiency, control, rationality, and production. This is precisely the reading of Weber that appeals to and supports the ruling elites who continue to make use of the collective representations derived from Puritanism on both sides of the Atlantic. Weber and Ritzer never bother to question or deconstruct the typical traits that are attributed to the idea of Europe, and by extension, the United States: Enlightenment, rationality, progress, and so on.

On the other hand, Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* notes that the Spanish preceded the Puritans in settling the United States, but that Spanish cul-

tural influence was eclipsed by the Puritans. Tocqueville noted that a shrine was erected to Plymouth Rock — and the shrine stands at Plymouth to this day — but that most Americans did not think of the Spanish when thinking of the origins of America. Similarly, and to this day, the territorial war against Mexico that created the state of Texas and other Western states is not part of the routine cultural history taught in the US. It is found in works such as *Lies My History Teacher Told Me* and books by Howard Zinn (2005). Similar approaches to the history of Europe would be helpful. Tocqueville also treats the many wars American fought internally, against Native Americans, the French, and even the American South in cultural terms, as refractions of Puritan beliefs that it set the standard for the New Jerusalem, against all others as heretics of sorts. Despite the historical accuracy and complexity of Tocqueville's account, his stature in the social sciences does not compare with the iconic status of Weber.

The current War Against Terror is confusing and seemingly irrational in the explanations that are offered by the government as well as the information media. If it began by the United States attacking Afghanistan because of the terrorist attack that has come to be known as 9/11, it must be noted that as of this writing, the ongoing war in Afghanistan does not hold any meaning — nobody is able to justify the reasons why it is still being fought. The US waged war on Iraq even though Saddam Hussein had no connection of any sort to either 9/11 or Al-Qaeda. These discrepancies were swept away with the Puritanical and postemotional rhetoric that the US was waging wars against specific Islamic nations in order to promote democracy, spread the “cause of freedom,” and to advance the cause of the Enlightenment. As of this writing, the net effect has been very similar to that of the real Enlightenment, and is far from the stated goals: civil war in Iraq, abuse and killing of Iraqi civilians, the heightening of cultural schisms in Iraq and the exacerbation of religious fanaticism. The real Enlightenment in Europe was marked by similar ethnic, civil, and religious wars and persecution, alongside the rhetoric of science and progress.

Europe joined the United States in this Global War on Terror as the “Coalition of the Willing”. Even though this coalition has dwindled over the years, and even though the population in much of Europe opposed the war, most European governments supported the war. Despite a rhetoric of European democracy and standards for human rights, European governments knew of and aided the United States in the controversial program known as “rendition,” in which terrorist suspects were flown via European airports and into some European nations to be tortured. In many ways, Baudrillard's indictment of the Europeans as being happy to let the Serbs do their dirty work for them in the Balkan Wars of the 1990s still applies to the European Union vis-a-vis the War on

Terror. It is important to note that Great Britain played a prominent role in both wars against Croats and Bosnians: the Major government was the most responsible for allowing the Milosevic regime to persecute Croats and Bosnian Muslims, and the Blair government is most responsible in Europe for perpetuating America's war against Iraq. There also exist British parallels to the abuse of Iraqis at Abu Ghraib, at the British-run Camp Breadbasket and elsewhere in Iraq.

In many ways, Baudrillard's (1995) indictment of the Europeans as being happy to let the Serbs do their dirty work for them in the Balkan Wars of the 1990s still applies to Europe vis-a-vis the War on Terror, only this time they are happy to let the United States do their dirty work for them:

The fine point of the story is the following: in carrying out ethnic cleansing, the Serbs are Europe's cutting edge. The "real" Europe in the making is a white Europe, a bleached Europe that is morally, economically, and ethnically integrated and cleansed. In Sarajevo, this Europe is victoriously in the making... The scenario is the same as with Saddam Hussein: in our battle against him, we deployed a great deal of media and technology. In the final analysis, however, he was, and is, our objective ally. Reviled, denounced, and discredited in the name of human rights, he remains our objective ally against Iran, against the Kurds, and against the Shiites. This is why the Gulf War never really took place: Saddam was never our true enemy. This is also the case with the Serbs. By banishing them from the human community, we are actually protecting them and continuing to let them carry out their work. (Baudrillard 1995, pp. 82-85)

Baudrillard's (1994) claim that the Gulf War never really took place remains controversial. Analysts who are locked into the straitjacket of postmodernism as an analysis of cognitive simulacra try to explain that he meant that the Gulf War was apprehended mainly as imagery on television, and therefore was not real. I am not concerned with resolving this debate on these overly-rational terms. Note that when his comments on the Gulf War are read in the context of the passage above, in which he conjoins issues of racism, the idea of Europe, the Gulf War, the Balkan War of the 1990s, Iran, the Kurds, and Shiites — a new and postemotional interpretation is possible. With uncanny prophecy, Baudrillard managed to suggest that the first and second Gulf Wars, the Balkan War, and the looming wars against Iran, the Kurds, and Shiites are all conjoined. Since 1990 to the present, Europe and the USA have been waging one long, protracted war against various Muslim societies for reasons that do not seem to make sense, and in that sense, are "unreal". If Saddam Hussein was the prob-

lem, why was the problem not resolved with the defeat of Iraq in 2003 and his execution? Why was the Balkan War not resolved with the Dayton Peace Accords that established a dismembered Bosnia-Herzegovina? The obvious answer seems to be that the real problem lies elsewhere — in the compulsive repetition of the “Curse of Cromwell”, which encompasses Tocqueville’s depiction of the Puritan extermination of Native Americans and of slavery.

A reading of these events and alliances using the concept of postemotionalism does not focus on the rationalizations that European governments offer for their support. Most of these rationalizations turn out to be baseless: there were no WMDs in Iraq, it is doubtful that the 7/7 attacks in London had any links to Iraq. Rather, postemotionalism shifts the focus onto the compulsive rhetoric used in Europe that is eerily similar to the rhetoric that was used in history to justify its wars against the “dark” people. Europe, as the “civilized” and “Enlightened” entity in the world, will bring democracy, freedom, and progress to the “barbarians” — meaning, Croats, Bosnians, and all others in the Balkans except the Serbs — who live in “darkness”.

Postemotional manipulation in contemporary Europe

The Balkan Wars of the 1990s were a severe embarrassment to the European Community, which was eventually replaced with the European Union. After all, genocide was occurring on the European continent and Europe seemed impotent or unwilling to stop it, despite its usual rhetoric of human rights, freedom, and so on derived from Enlightenment narratives. The Balkan Wars were a reminder to Europe that it has not overcome its postemotional compulsions from history. Similarly, the ongoing War Against Terror is likely to have severe consequences not only for the European Union but for the idea of Europe. If and when this particular War on Terror comes to an end, critics will wonder out loud why and how Europe, with all its lofty ideals, stood idly by and allowed Iraq to be dismembered — literally Balkanized, complete with ethnic cleansing — and for Muslims to be tortured and imprisoned without due process — and on European soil. Will this latest war and Europe’s collusion in it go down in history as yet another refraction of the Inquisition, the Crusades, or other Puritanical episodes from Europe’s history?

To keep this stark reality at bay, in postemotional society, public relations have become an absolutely essential ingredient of all social life. Hence, European governments hire veritable armies of public relations experts whose job is to filter raw reality into something palatable for the masses, who are socialized into believing in the sincerity of Enlightenment narratives. This reality must ex-

hibit what Herbert Marcuse called the “happy consciousness”. Talking points become essential. Thus, European governments respond to reports of torture by parroting the American line that the civilized West does not engage in torture. Opposition is thereby neutralized because it seems anti-European to suspect that Europe could condone torture in the new millennium (even though it condoned genocide at the end of the previous millennium on its own soil). The EU reports that found that European governments participated in rendition and torture of terrorist suspects is neutralized with a plethora of hair-splitting rationalizations: that some of the European countries that allowed their prisons to be used for torture were not “real” members of the EU at the time, that Europe simply allowed the flights and transfers, but not the torture, and so on. The post-emotional type cannot tolerate the cognitive dissonance that a European, as an exemplar of idealized values supposedly derived from the Enlightenment, could engage in torture or abuse. The public is quickly distracted by the governments and media to fear the Muslims in their midst as potential terrorists, and the whole postemotional cycle repeats itself anew.

Spokespersons for European governments stress that the idea of Europe stands for and seeks democracy, human rights, and peace in general, and in Iraq in particular. Nevertheless, alongside the USA, Europe engages in or tacitly supports behavior that some human rights groups have labeled as torture. Increasingly, postemotional governments send carefully crafted “messages” to various target groups at the same time that the import of actions (the hidden messages) is denied or ignored. The message of democracy is not perceived to be out of sync with undemocratic behaviors that violate the Geneva Conventions and other, more recent European codes of human rights. The situation is analogous to Rebecca West’s inability to see her own racism even though she brilliantly analyzes racism and hatred throughout European history. I argue that the penultimate reason for this hypocrisy is the belief in the back of the European mind — or elsewhere beneath the surface — that Muslims are truly children of darkness, and deserve to suffer. This is the ancient compulsion that Europe must overcome.

The contemporary situation is this: Croatia was admitted to the European Union at a time when the EU is in serious danger of collapsing. France and especially Germany object to the economic drag caused by Spain, Italy, and Greece upon the EU, while these and other Mediterranean nations entertain ideas of quitting the EU. Croatia was admitted to the EU at the same time that it is being pressured to revive new-old alliances that would resemble the ancient regime of Yugoslavia. Much like Tocqueville predicted in *The Ancient Regime*, political leaders in all the Balkan nations tend to be recruited from the

families and political parties of the Communist era, even though they use the vocabularies of democracy and human rights in order to be elected. Yugo-nostalgia has settled in with a vengeance. The situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina has not changed appreciably since the Dayton Peace Accords. For a genuine, forward movement to occur, the postemotional, compulsion to repeat the past must be overcome.

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