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Tomasz Zarycki

Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe, London, Routledge, 2014, 294 p.

What Tomasz Zarycki brings to the fore in *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* is the endeavor of ex-communist countries, with an emphasis on Poland, to get rid of orientalist discourses in an attempt to include Western attributes in their identities. But in order to be successful, such an intellectual effort should have surmounted the local *dependence* and intelligentsia *doxa* forged by the orientalizing process that the Western core has been disseminating throughout Central and Eastern Europe from the very beginning of modernity. For the dependence doxa and the intelligentsia doxa have been so deeply embedded in the political imaginary of the intellectual elite of ex-communist countries, that local identity discourses have transformed old cultural hierarchies into new ones, with the result of preserving *Eastness* instead of acquiring *Westness* or coming up with authentic identities. In other words, Eastern and Central Europe's uniqueness will not be possible as long as identity discourses produced in this area refer to its dependent status in relation to the metropolitan core. The *dependence doxa* refers to the banalization/naturalization of the structural dependence on the West. The best example of the dependence doxa is offered by liberal discourses which address the economic backwardness of Central and Eastern Europe mainly in terms of political and cultural underdevelopment. Instead of exploring the hierarchies of power concealed by the "political and cultural underdevelopment" tenet, liberal discourses blame ethnic tensions, atavistic hatreds and irrational conflicts and thus reproduce the orthodox image of Central and Eastern Europe forged in the Western core. As a consequence, the dependence doxa constantly reinforces the symbolic violence constantly wielded by the Western core on ex-communist countries. The *intelligentsia doxa* refers to the central role played by the intelligentsia in the legitimization of the local economic and political elite and also to its role in the legitimization of the dependence position of a certain country in the hierarchies of the world system. The trouble with the intelligentsia is that it displays two different attitudes. On the one hand, the intelligentsia represents the Western civilization and its civilization mission in the peripheries, but on the other hand, it is also a patriotic harbinger and defender of its political community. Intelligentsia in Central and Eastern Europe is almost immune to academic contestation. Considering that the key of "Europeanness" is in the hands of intelligentsia, it has an immense influence on any identity discourses depending on its political and economic interest.

Zaricky relies massively on classic Western theory such as Wallerstein's world system theory, Bourdieu's relational analysis and Rokkan's analysis of geographical patterns. These theories are combined with Said's orientalism and Todorova's liminality of Central and Eastern Europe, a region that is depicted as an interface between civilizations. Viewed from this perspective, Central and Eastern Europe is rather a civilizational border instead of a military one, which displays different degrees of Eastness, depending on its ability to orientalize its past or other political organizations.

The methodology used by Tomasz Zaricky in order to carry out his research is an innovative one. He employs discourse analysis in his research but at the same time he carefully avoids the trap of discursive *reductionism*. He argues that whoever relies only on the discourse analysis approach has a good chance of missing certain power hierarchies made invisible by discursive reductionism. Therefore, Tomasz Zaricky combines discursive analysis with "insights from economic and political geography, sociology of knowledge, sociology of elites, economic analysis and, last but not least, critical geopolitics" (14).

Zaricky points out that three zones have emerged after the demise of communism and the EU enlargement. The first zone, called Central Europe, includes ex-communist countries that have joined NATO and the EU. One particular trait of zone one is that the rift between anti – and post-communists has been replaced by a cleavage between Euro-enthusiasts and Euro-skeptics. According to Zaricky, Euro-skeptics don't engage directly the European Union and its politics. Instead of describing the European Union as an exploitative hegemon, the Euro-skeptic camp savages its liberal counterpart for the mismanagement of the country. The reason why the Euro-skeptics criticize the liberals is that the latter ones have negotiated bad conditions of a one state accession to the European Union. Given that, certain power asymmetries inside the EU club have been constantly reproduced since accession. Regarding the liberals or the Euro-enthusiasts, they tend to believe that cultural and political complications are to be blamed for the persistent backward status of some ex-communists countries. Tomasz Zaricky stresses why the cultural factor still plays an important role in Central and Eastern Europe. Strong capacity states of the Western core have legitimized themselves mainly in economic and political terms in the 20th century. Such an advantage in terms of legitimization is due to the fact that most Western states had been national states before they turned into nation-states in the 18th and 19th century. Under such circumstances, cultural aspects have been already banalized and that is why "national cultures" have become immune to the deconstruction process developed in the academic field. Ex-communist countries, as low capacity states that have been hardly able to cope with social complexity, have encountered problems in the process of reinventing themselves as liberal states that display a thin societal culture as the new source of their political legitimization. Therefore, conservatives in zone one are particularly inclined to consider the deconstruction of national myths as a direct attack against the local "soul", the only guarantor of uniqueness and identity. Getting back to the symbolic geography that has emerged after the enlargement of the EU, Zaricky considers that zone one is an internal alterity, with different degrees of Eastness, of the core area, namely the Western states. The second zone represents an external intermediary alterity of the core area, where Eastness is quite prominent. The states from the second zone are ex-soviet republics that are now members of the Eastern Partnership. Ukraine is by far the most important state of this external intermediary alterity. Zaricky indicates that Belarus straddle the border between the second area and the third zone. Dominated by the Russian Federation, this third zone represents an absolute alterity for the European Union. Consequently, given that the Western core has a weak influence both economically and intellectually in the third area, this is where the only alternative narrative to the ideological hegemony wielded by the Western core occurs. The anti-liberal discourse forged in the third area depicts the Western core as anti-Russian-oriented. It draws on conspiracy theories and exerts a huge appeal on the Russian public.

Tomasz Zaricky comes up with interesting conclusions. The most important one contends that ideologies of Eastness, "understood as contextualized forms of orientalism", approach the identity of Central and Eastern European countries in terms of post dependencies and their negative aftermath. The trouble with such an approach is that it tends to cover up present dependencies and hierarchies of power. Moreover, because the ideologies of Eastness have already gained a prominent position in the academic field, the effort devoted by some Central and East European intellectuals to reconceptualise the identity of their countries in terms of uniqueness and authenticity will be hardly effective and simultaneously deemed as anti-Western. Therefore, a certain degree of orientalism will always be included in any identity formula of Central and Eastern Europe. According to Zaricky, the only way the countries from the first zone can get rid of their Eastness and thus be able to reduce the orientalist intake in their identity formula is to produce and disseminate orientalist discourses toward other political organizations. And yet, Zaricky concludes his book in an optimistic fashion. Now, that intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe know the pitfalls produced by the ideologies of Eastness, they should be more aware of them.

One particular trait that makes Tomasz Zarycki's book stand out is the impressive amount of social theory that the author has been able to include in his endeavor to capture the development of *Ideologies of Eastness*. I have laid emphasis on this particular aspect because one important tenet of this book is the knowledge asymmetry between the Western core, a natural producer of social theory, and Central and Eastern Europe, where social theory is either underdeveloped or, if it has developed, gets hardly any recognition from intellectuals based in the Western core. To put it briefly,

the metropolitan area develops social theory whilst semi-peripheral and peripheral regions produce empirical data that validate the core's perspective. Tomasz Zarycki's book shows that the theoretical gap between the core and its alterity has decreased lately. And that Western theoretical perspectives that have been concealing new power hierarchies are easily unpacked by scholars from semi-peripheral areas. Moreover, the latter's theoretical perspectives get published by important academic journals and prominent publishing houses of the core area. And yet, in terms of producing and, more important, imposing social theory, the academic field of Central and Eastern Europe is just a follower.

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