

Carl Schmitt's Europe

Cultural, Imperial and Spatial Proposals for European Integration, 1923-1955*

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Fascism is generally understood as a fundamentally nationalist phenomenon. And rightly so: there are vast literatures confirming this point.¹ For all the idiosyncrasies that make Carl Schmitt an unconventional--that is, substantively interesting--fascist, he certainly qualifies as a German nationalist.² However, common to fascism, generally, and Schmitt, in particular, is a much less discussed vision of regions.³ In Schmitt's case, I will treat this as an, if you will, evolving vision of European integration. Originally, this symposium was organized to pursue the following question: Does the post-war development of the EC and EU share, or even owe,

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1. As just one recent example of this tradition of scholarship, see Richard Thurlow, Fascism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

2. Helmut Quaritsch perhaps most extensively treats Schmitt's nationalism in Positionen und Begriffe Carl Schmitts (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1989).

3. Notable exceptions in this regard pertaining to Schmitt are: Mathias Schmoeckel, Die Großraumtheorie: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Völkerrechtswissenschaft im Dritten Reich, insbesondere der Kriegszeit (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1994), and Felix Blindow, Carl Schmitts Reichsordnung: Strategie fuer einen europaeischen Grossraum (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999).

anything to this darker legacy of regional integration? In this paper, I approach this question by sketching out Schmitt's vision of Europe from the early twenties through the mid-fifties.

On the one hand, Schmitt should be of only limited interest: his unmitigated antipathy to Russia, his brooding, often paranoid, Catholicism, and his highly abstract conceptual categorizations set him apart from most theorists of a more unified Europe this century. On the other hand, the remarkable extent of Schmitt's intellectual influence in postwar policy circles, as emphasized most immediately in Christian Joerges's contribution to this forum,⁴ renders his thought unavoidable. Then there is, of course, the issue of the alluring and tantalizing quality of his thought, idiosyncratic or not; politically palatable or not.

In the early twenties Schmitt adhered to a conception of Europe as neo-Christendom in Roman Catholicism and Political Form. As his thought becomes more secular, this gives way to a preoccupation with Europe as specifically Central Europe [Mitteleuropa] in the 1929 essay, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations." During his National Socialist career Schmitt formulated a Großraum theory of Central Europe dominated by the German Reich. And finally, in post war writings such as The Nomos of The Earth, Schmitt identifies Europe as the source of a rational, juridical international order-- an order disrupted by the emergence of the intercontinental empires of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Europe as Christendom, 1923

Political Form expresses the young Schmitt's clerico-conservative vision of Europe.⁵ At this time, Schmitt, still a confessing Catholic, promotes the Church as a tent under which

4. Christian Joerges, "Conceptualising Governance for the European 'Großraum.'"

5. Schmitt, Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984); Roman Catholicism and Political Form, trans. G. L. Ulmen (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996).

Europeans might unite against the common enemy of Soviet Russia. What could possibly give the Catholic Church such authority in an apparently post-Catholic, even post-Christian era?

Schmitt contends that since liberalism, Protestantism and romanticism have sacralized privacy in Europe, these movements have inhibited the public display of what is important. The European public sphere was once an arena for the representation of substantive principles like: authority, community, justice, even democracy, but, especially "humanity." In response to the passive retreat from the social world engendered by developments such as liberalism, Schmitt offers a Catholicism whose public and objective, not private and subjective, disposition manifests itself in politics rather than a domestic or economic realm. According to Schmitt, Catholicism is faithful to the essence of European civilization, that is, the public assertion and representation of substantive values.

This separates Europe, to Schmitt's mind, from the odd amalgam that resides beyond Europe's Eastern frontier: Byzantine Christianity, communism and anarchism. Schmitt supposes that the Catholic capacity for representation of values inspires a full-scale revolt by Russian radicals, whether of Eastern Orthodox, anarchist or communist stripe. They revolt against the very notion of the "Idea." For Catholicism, "humanity" is the notion that human beings exist as more than biology; they are capable of good, but need guidance intellectually. Humanity for the Russians, according to Schmitt, is mere material to be manipulated technologically. Catholicism, is the juridical heir to Roman jurisprudence, and the institutional reminder that human beings possess a divine component.

Schmitt's avers that European liberals and Western socialists are complicitous in the promotion of the economic rationality radicalized in Russia, and are embarrassed of the substantive rationality claimed for Europe by Catholicism. But they are nonetheless, in the last

instance, friends of Catholicism and enemies of the Soviets. European liberals and socialists are inclined to fight for substantive, universal conceptions of humanity, but they need Catholicism to remind them of how to wage these battles properly. The Catholic Church, as a "complex of opposites," has embodied all political forms, knows when to ally with some, and when to confront others. Schmitt notes that contemporary Catholics are unsure about who constitutes the immediate enemy: French Catholics like Tocqueville, Montalembert and Lacordaire took liberal stands "at a time when many of their fellow Catholics still saw in liberalism the Antichrist." One of the main thrusts of the book is to clarify exactly who the common enemy is for Catholic intellectual elites, and their erstwhile liberal adversaries. Who in 1923 really represents an opponent with the stature of the Antichrist? Here, Schmitt finds the mythic enemy of Catholicism, not in liberalism or Western socialism, but, rather, in Russia.

However different, Dostoyevsky, Lenin and Bakunin--that is, Orthodox, Communist and Anarchist--all manifest a particularly Russian antipathy to idea, to form and to authority: Schmitt claims that the fable of the Grand Inquisitor demonstrates how Dostoyevsky understands as evil anyone holding an office or exercising intellectual leadership. Schmitt predicts that the rebellion against order, against form per se, can only lead to the greatest abuses of order, as it already had in Soviet Russia. For Schmitt, the Bolshevik Russia is the seat of both a technical rationality in communism, as well as an anarchic irrational counter-force to order of any kind that is the logical outgrowth of radical Eastern Christianity. The Russian anarchist Bakunin, that "naive beserker," waged battles against metaphysics, religion, politics, jurisprudence and the "the idea," as such. Schmitt claims that, in this regard, the spirit of the Soviet Union moves in distinct opposition to that of its ideological fathers, Marx and Engels. They were fundamentally Europeans and

intellectuals who had faith in moral authority. They detested the likes of Bakunin, and were, vice versa, despised by him.

Schmitt claims that the antagonism between Marx and Engels, on the one hand, and Bakunin, on the other, "sets the stage whereon ... Catholicism stands as a political force." Because of this antipathy, Catholicism and Europeans can make their political choice. According to Schmitt, despite Catholicism's past and present difficulties with liberalism or Western Socialism, the two must ally together against the Soviets. He concludes this 1923 work with the imperative that Catholicism stands "on the side of the idea and West European civilization" and against "the atheistic socialism of the Russian anarchist." Catholicism stands as the reminder that Europe is the home of the Idea, of values, and of the institutional forms that embody them. From the Roman imperium through Christendom to liberalism and Western Socialism, Europe champions substantive human content. Soviet Russia is the greatest historical threat to such content, and its physical host, Europe.

Central Europe as Anti-Russia, 1929

Four years later, Schmitt has fully developed his thesis concerning "the political"; he stops speaking in terms of political Catholicism; and his vision of Europe no longer includes France. Thus, in the "Age of Neutralizations" essay,⁶ Schmitt describes Europe less theologically, and also in less pan-continental terms--that is, in more Germanic terms. Ideas or values are no longer the main difference between Europe and Soviet Russia. Instead, the difference seems to rest with the relationship of elites to masses, in general, and elites and masses to technology, particularly, in both Europe and Russia. Now, Schmitt's Europe seems to have little substantive content apart from being simply an existential other to Soviet Russia.

The "political" intent of the "Neutralizations" piece is expressed in its very first sentence: "We in Central Europe live under the eyes of the Russians." The point of the essay is to convince its European audience that the Soviet Union is the enemy and must be recognized as such. The grounds for this "political" position vis-à-vis the Russians reside with technology, specifically weapons. Why does the Soviet Union and its orientation toward technology pose a threat to Central Europe? Because while Europe is predisposed toward the status quo in the wake of the "Great War" of 1914, Russia recognizes the changes underlying historical circumstances and seeks to appropriate the moment. Just as the Soviets stunned Europe with the Revolution of 1917, Schmitt intimates that they are again poised to shatter the veneer of neutrality in League of Nations Europe a decade later.

According to Schmitt, the dynamic of modern European history is driven by the search for a neutral sphere--a sphere completely free from violent conflict and intellectual contestation.

6. Schmitt, "Das Zeitalter der Neutralisierungen und Entpolitisierungen," reprinted in Schmitt, Der Begriff des Politischen: Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963); Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and

In response to the strife of the religious civil wars, Europe since the 16th century has sought in each successive century a different fundamental organizing principle--a central sphere, which might serve as the source of peace and agreement. Schmitt contends that neutrality could not be maintained due to the inevitable return of the repressed human inclination toward conflict. In the 20th century, technology is the sought-after neutral area, but Schmitt claims that it actually becomes a new and definitive source of conflict: "Every strong politics will make use of it."

Soviet Russia is possessed, bewitched, by the spirit of technicity, the compulsion toward mastery for mastery's sake. Schmitt starkly contrasts this technicity [Technizität] with the neutrality and passivity of European elites who are overwhelmed by mere technology [Technik]. A whole generation of German intellectuals feels supplanted by engineers and technicians who know nothing of culture, politics and, most importantly, nothing of myth. Reminiscent of the earlier Political Form book, Schmitt claims that Soviet Russia (he never refers to it in either work as the Soviet Union) as the embodiment of seemingly contradictory characteristics: (1) socialistic economic rationality; (2) anarchism, or the irrational revolt against all form and order; and (3) Slavism, an ecstatic nationalism. Despite what European elites might think, Russia is not just a formal, mechanical, lifeless technological state. Schmitt emphasizes the expressly life-like, spiritual, willful, even satanic quality of the Soviets. The Soviet elite commands technology rather than vice versa and is capable of motivating the masses in unprecedented ways.

Thus, Europe "lives under the gaze of the more radical brother who compels one to drive practical conclusions to the end." The Russians are the new "ascetics," willing to forego the "comfort" of the present for control of the future. They will dominate their own nature for the sake of dominating external nature and the nature in others. If European intellectuals continue to

indulge their passively aesthetic enrapture with the status quo, they abdicate their duty and privilege to lead, and they invite domination by their more radical brother. A decade later, in the service of a movement that would energetically and murderously mobilize Central Europe against the Soviets, Schmitt formulates a plan to control the space between Europe and Russia.

The German Großraum, 1939

Schmitt unveiled his infamous Großraum theory in a April 1939 lecture.⁷ He had been a member of the Nazi party since 1933, although his prominent status had been under sharp challenge since 1936. The lecture continues certain trends in Schmitt's conception of Europe that we can trace from the previous works discussed. For one, Schmitt continues to move eastward: Political Form envisioned a Europe that included France and, perhaps, even Britain. The "Neutralizations" essay is preoccupied with Central Europe, but one defined in opposition to the Soviets, exclusively. The Soviets are still of grave concern in the Großraum lecture, but so too is a Western order dominated by Britain and the US.

Schmitt insists that Western Europe has been absorbed into the US Großraum through the reconstructed Monroe cum Wilson doctrine. He brilliantly exposes the hypocrisies of the League of Nations and the Monroe doctrine. But this does not prevent him from developing a specifically German "Monroe doctrine." In this sense, substantive content has returned to the European order that Schmitt promotes: German ethnicity now serves as a content that was absent in the "Neutralizations" essay of a decade before. But even this ethnicity is described rather vaguely; it is never consistently described in cultural, linguistic, or racial terms. Schmitt leaves undefined how ethnic distinctions will be made let alone specifically enforced.

The actual governance of the Großraum is also elucidated in only the sketchiest terms: Germany's Monroe doctrine will share with its US counterpart the prohibition on external intervention into its space. As in the US doctrine, foreign entities within this geographical sphere will not be directly subsumed under, or annexed to, the dominant state or Reich, which Schmitt

7. Schmitt, "Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde Mächte: Ein Beitrag zum Reichsbegriff im Völkerrecht," published in 1941 and reprinted in Carl Schmitt, Staat, Großraum, Nomos: Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916-1969, ed. Günter Maschke

describes as the intermediary regime between a state and the greater Großraum. However, the defining internal principle of the German Großraum differs from US policy in Central and South America: self-determination and civil liberties will not prevail for entities within this sphere of influence as they do at least theoretically in the US paradigm. Rather, so-called respect of ethnic nationalities will be observed. This is a qualified "respect" to be sure since, for one, Jews are exempt from it, and, second, German nationality is prioritized over other nationalities.

Thus, Schmitt's German Großraum is explicitly not universalist in the way claimed by the US doctrine, even if hypocritically. According to Schmitt the Reich will intervene explicitly on behalf of German ethnicities within its Großraum against other ethnicities that might threaten them. Again, what that means specifically is left unstated by Schmitt. Here, I leave aside the controversial question of the relationship of Schmitt's Großraum theory to Hitler's policy of Lebensraum. It might be more interesting to explore whether Schmitt's post-war conception of Europe retains anything from his National Socialist Großraum theory, or whether, on the contrary, it harkens back to Schmitt's earlier Weimar vision of Europe.

Europe as Origin of International Law & Spatial Order, 1950

In his book, The Nomos of the Earth,⁸ written in the largely self-imposed, internal exile of the post-war years, Schmitt still privileges Europe vis-à-vis the rest of the world: however, this privileging is no longer based on notions of humanity, or on Europe as the opposite number to Russia, or of it being the seat of Germanic culture. Rather, Europe is the ground, the territory, the space in which the geo-political arrangement most conducive to world peace developed.

(Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995).

8. Schmitt, Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1974).

Only Europe developed the concept and practice of independent, sovereign, and explicitly Christian nation states who balanced each other's lethal military power through international law. This law evolved out of Roman law, was nurtured by the medieval church, and definitively articulated by early-modern natural law thinkers. This law was "Eurocentric" because it developed in Europe, but was universally rational because it could be applied to the rest of the globe.

In the history of this development, Britain plays an ambivalent part: It was by adopting the viewpoint of Britain--that is, as both part of, and apart from, Europe--that Europe could conceive of itself in terms of the whole globe. Europe could sufficiently abstract away from itself to see its place in the globe, in a way that other cultures, regions and regimes hitherto could not. Thus did Europe develop a doctrine and practice of world-historical significance, rather than one of merely local, parochial or regional importance. But this existence apart from continental Europe--a difference linked to her seafaring nature--is the source of the dissolution of European public law and order.

Britain's control of the sea, her ability to hold the world as a sphere in her hand, initiates the contest for overseas colonies. This retards the development of a world of sovereign nation states, accelerates the emergence of hemispheric empires, and encourages extraterrestrial means of travel and conquest. The latter, in particular--sea travel, air travel and, Schmitt gestures, even space travel--rule out an order of independent states governed by international law. When travel and the threat of military force is no longer bound to the land, sovereign integrity is no secured by geographical space. Rather, it evaporates in the limitlessness of, literally, unearthly interaction, surveillance and conquest. Consequently, Europe's significance and power shrink between the weight and reach of the intercontinental, inter-hemispheric, even intergalactic,

Soviet and American empires. Schmitt, himself, of course, was complicitous in this decline of state sovereignty: his attempt to formulate a Central European hemispheric empire for Germany under the Nazi's results in the arrested development of potential independent states within that sphere of influence.

Despite the pessimistic tone of the volume, the book and related essays⁹ leave open the question of whether a European Großraum might rectify the excesses of a world dominated by American and Soviet empires. Could Europe once again produce the specifically European, yet universally world-historical, grounds for a peaceful global order? After the collapse of the Soviet empire this is a question worth confronting, if we are not to capitulate to one of the other alternatives that Schmitt invokes: US global hegemony. I will conclude with a few remarks along these lines.

Preliminary Conclusions

Do any of Schmitt's visions of Europe survive in the EU's self-understanding today? Do any of them help us think about a contemporary or future European Großraum? Certainly the view of Europe as reconstructed Christendom had resonance in Adenauer's and Monnet's vision of what animated the post-war Community.¹⁰ On the other hand, the technocratic understanding of the EU certainly replays many of the themes found in the "Neutralizations" essay: specifically, the sense that Europe must use its technology--albeit economic and not military technology--to

9. Especially, Schmitt, "Der Neue Nomos der Erde," Gemeinschaft und Politik: Zeitschrift für soziale und politische Gestalt 3, no. 1 (1955).

10. On the cultural disposition of the EC's framers, see Alan S. Milward, George Brennan, Federico Romero, The European Rescue of the Nation State (London: Routledge, 2000).

distinguish and strengthen itself vis-à-vis the US, the Soviet Union and, eventually, Asia.¹¹ Fortunately, Germany's post-war cultural and political self-understanding entails its membership in a European, not Central European Großraum.¹² In this regard, the EU is thankfully not a Schmittian Großraum in several hopefully obvious senses: It is a Großraum without a center, a Großraum with affection toward the West, and without ambitions in the East, and a Großraum that embraces equanimity among European peoples.

But Schmitt still prompts us to question what specifically characterizes Europe's internal commonality and its distinction from the outside world today. He compels us to ponder what the means by which such a supranational union might be administered. In a resoundingly un-Schmittian move, Jürgen Habermas, for instance, has suggested that the common experience of having happily--albeit with great difficulty--overcome nationalism provides a unifying principle and a cautionary lesson against future excesses in Europe.¹³ He promotes a system of governance by which deliberating publics constituting a European civil society that sustains a continental party and parliamentary system generates law that is rational and responsive to the popular will. But Habermas has not answered what might justify the very demarcation of a European Großraum from the rest of the world; and his plan for legal-democratic governance in

11. On the centrality of economic issues in the evolution of the EU, see Andrew Moravcsik, The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

12. See the recent collections: Tamed Power: Germany in Europe (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), ed. Peter J. Katzenstein; and The German Predicament: Memory and Power in the New Europe (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), eds. Andrei S. Markovits and Simon Reich.

13. See several of the essays contained in Habermas, The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory, eds. Ciaran Cronin and Pablo de Grieff (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1998).

the EU is hardly operational at the present time. Until these questions and problems are addressed, Schmitt's work and career haunts the study of European integration like a specter.