

# National Question in Europe Today-1

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Quite clearly, the European Union (EU) – a supranational organisation – is currently facing a crisis and seems unable to move forward to its proclaimed goal of political unification and emergence on the world stage as a credible counterweight to US supremacy in order to thus ensure a multipolar world. The EU serves the interests of the dominant Western Euro-American capitals within it, which have subordinated Eastern Europe including East Germany as satellite peripheries. Ethnic conflicts and tensions in these countries have to be viewed in this context. Within the West European nation-states too there is a revival and upsurge of neo-nationalism and of sub-national movements for self-determination due to increase in region-based inequalities and lack of democratic rights.

The erosion of the welfare-state and assault on labour and on those minorities who are migrants from the ‘underdeveloped’ countries of North and Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, Turkey, Palestine and other Arab states are creating internal conflicts due to widespread resistance. Defence of ‘national’ interests vis-a-vis supranational interests on the part of the elites and working people continues and the role of US hegemony in Europe also continues unabated. The mass media continue to project national identities rather than supranational European identities. All these factors combined show up the as yet fragile base of the Union and the lack of political consensus that is undermining it. Within the current parameters the EU project cannot have any emancipatory content for the people. It can only be an expansionist and imperialist project.

According to this writer a way forward is possible only if the national and class questions are satisfactorily resolved within the framework of a socialist federation of European states having an internationalist perspective and taking historical experiences into account.

## **Genesis of the Union and Continuing US Hegemony**

*“I have always found the word Europe in the mouth of politicians who were demanding from other powers something that they did not dare demand in their own name.” (Otto von Bismarck)*

The post-Second World War scenario was one in which the nations and peoples of the world were dominated by the two superpowers - the US and the USSR. The US used its military and economic superiority to organise and initiate a process of restructuring of global capitalism in forms that reproduced and enlarged its sphere of imperial dominance. Its foreign direct investment in the countries of Western Europe, particularly in West Germany, through the

instrument of the Marshall Plan was designed and aimed at transforming these economies into regimes that were a bulwark against the Soviet bloc and facilitated and policed the free flow of capital around the globe in such a way as to maintain and further its own world-scale domination<sup>1</sup>. Its domination over the countries of West Europe was also attained by making their economies oil-dependent, while at the same time gaining control over the sources of oil and other strategic minerals. This economic domination was maintained by the security alliance of NATO, which overrode the political sovereignty of these nations and controlled aspects of their foreign policies.

Each of the West European NATO member-states was compelled to have its primary military-political relationship to the US. Peter Gowan has termed this a hub-and-spokes relationship.<sup>2</sup> Attempts by the West European members of NATO to construct West European caucuses within NATO have always been slapped down by the US. But the process of West European economic integration was not obstructed, as it was not perceived to be a hindrance to US domination.

Political and economic interests had brought the two historically rival and powerful nations of France and Germany together in the post-Second World War period. The Schuman Plan of 1950 placed the mining and industrial potential of West Germany under joint Franco-German control and so was formed the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). From the economic point of view the ECSC gave the French access to the rich coal deposits of the Ruhr and ended the dual pricing system whereby German coal bought for the steel mills of Lorraine had cost 46 percent more than the same coal burnt in West Germany. Interstate trading in coal and steel increased among the member states of the Community (which included the Benelux countries and Italy in addition to France and Germany) and halted for a time the decline in production of steel.<sup>3</sup> Joint control also arrested for a time the risk of West German rearmament.

For West Germany's political elites and some of its liberal humanist thinkers and writers the integration of Western Germany within Europe (a European Germany rather than a German Europe in face of the megalomania of German nationalism, as Thomas Mann had formulated it in his time) helped in rehabilitating the country in the public eye from its recent Nazi past and simultaneously ensured its security vis-a-vis the Soviet bloc. In fact, the German Social Democratic Party had embraced the idea of a United States of Europe in 1925 itself as an antidote to the Nazi ideology in its period of exile after Hitler's accession to power.<sup>4</sup>

The Treaty of Rome signed in 1957 offered outlets primarily to West German industry and to French agriculture and thus again served both their interests. Adenauer, the then CDU Chancellor, while seeking to strengthen European unity in tandem with US interests, also made sure that the eventual reunification with the GDR, as inscribed in the Basic Law of the FRG, would be accepted by France. The Customs Union, common external trade policy, the free trade zone and

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that followed later again served the interests of West European capitals, while at the same time serving North American finance capital too. The strategy of export-led growth benefited from an expanding barrier-free West European market, which enabled Euro-American firms to achieve scale economies and successfully expand their markets.<sup>5</sup> The collapse in 1971 of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates also gave an impetus to the Common European market and monetary union by creating a zone of monetary stability.<sup>6</sup>

The fifties and sixties were also the period of decolonisation in Africa and Asia. Most of the countries joining the EEC - like France, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Italy, UK, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands - were seeking in this economic and eventually political union a substitute for the lost empires, while pursuing their interests in the lost territories by other means. Others like Greece, West Germany and the Irish Republic (the latter after the 1998 agreements) were giving up at least temporarily the idea of a larger territorial nation.<sup>7</sup>

The net outcome of the formation of the European Community has been that Western Europe, a zone of warring neighbouring countries and a source of two World Wars, became in the post-Second World War period a zone of peace. War between the core capitalist West European states has been avoided through initially the two-superpower parity and Cold War and subsequently through unipolarism since the late 1980s and the break-up of the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, in the period of the post Second World War economic boom, it was possible and politically necessary to retain the welfare state and make substantial concessions to labour.

Challenge to US military supremacy came from North Vietnam in the late sixties. The refusal of the US government to increase taxes to pay for the war and its consequent need to issue more dollars is seen as one important factor in the suspension of the convertibility of the dollar into gold in 1971.<sup>8</sup> By imposing a dollar system on the world and manipulating exchange rates the US managed to retain its economic and military supremacy vis-a-vis serious born-again competitors like Germany and Japan on the world markets. Simultaneously, it put restraints on the EC ambitions for greater political autonomy vis-a-vis the US.<sup>9</sup>

Subsequent Reaganite and Thatcherite economic policies in the US and Great Britain helped the revival of their respective capitalisms, but in ways that were simultaneously an assault on the rights and privileges of labour in their countries. The social-democratic welfare states and import substitution models in the Third World all came under concerted attack for restricting the free movement of Western capital and the 'freedom of markets' (this freedom being one-sidedly interpreted as freedom for only the western capitals) and were sought to be scrapped. Privatisation helped the capitalist classes to tremendously enrich themselves through pillage of public/state resources. The erosion of trade union power, the introduction of labour flexibility as against 'rigid' labour laws helped

in overexploiting the working people. The systems of capital controls were also to be scrapped, giving capital the power to exit or enter national jurisdictions at will, thus strengthening further their domestic social power over labour or enabling them to superexploit labour in lower wage economies in Asian/East Asian countries.

West European elites responded to the Reaganite drive by on the one hand also starting the process of privatisation of state assets and 'reforming' the welfare state by pushing through public sector cuts in order to remain competitive on the world market. Simultaneously, together with a shift against the social rights of labour, the monetary union and later the single currency were aimed at providing a shield ensuring monetary stability against the US dollar system of international monetary relations. The monetary union and single currency have eroded the national sovereign powers of EU member states to undertake fiscal interventions unilaterally in their respective economies. It precludes the options of devaluation and deficit funding (though there are countries like Germany breaking Stability and Growth Pact rules and going against the EU norms on this count) and leaves the disparate economies of the Euro zone with no other mechanisms for cyclical and other adjustments than to wring concessions from labour.<sup>10</sup> Italy, for example, is facing tremendous problems by remaining in the Euro zone. Under the single currency arrangements and the rules laid down by the Stability and Growth Pact Italy can no longer devalue against Germany and other European countries, that is, find remedies on a national level to regain competitiveness and boost output and employment. The fact that the stronger/dominant economies like Germany and France can break rules with impunity throws further light on the nature of the European Union and whose interests it is actually serving.

Germany, France and Italy, the largest economies in the Euro zone, are being forced to adjust to the Anglo-American share-holder oriented lower-wage, unprotected labour economy. Germany in particular is trying by all possible means to improve its status as an attractive industrial site and investment destination. Its large and medium-sized firms have massively shifted locations into neighbouring countries of Central and Eastern Europe to reduce costs because it has been a country with the highest wage rates, a short working week, a large number of annual vacation days, a heavy business taxation system and the most stringent environment standards. All these combined have led German big industry, particularly in the automotive, electronics and chemical sectors to export jobs and investment to lower wage economies with less stringent standards. Though the profit rates of big industry continue to ride high and increase, the growth rate within Germany is low, unemployment remains high and domestic demand low.

While thus trying to retain and enhance the economic status and competitiveness of their big industries the core countries of the European Community are also trying to carve out a durable margin of strategic political and military autonomy from the US without totally breaking away from this

transatlantic alliance. But the US remains determined to stamp out any such regionalist challenges, whether these come from the EU, from Japan, or from Japanese-Chinese or Chinese-Russian regionalist projects. Pax Americana must as far as possible continue to thrive. For the European Union countries, particularly for Germany and France political and military autonomy from the US remain important goals especially since the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

Expansion eastward by way of the initial swallowing of the German Democratic Republic has been West Germany's goal in the post-Second World War period. Its 'Ostpolitik,' the politics of detente towards the Soviet bloc and including the East German state were meant to serve this end. It is realising its expansionist aims within the European Union. The destruction of Yugoslavia, in which Germany played a key role, the compradorisation of Slovenia and Croatia have served towards the Latin Americanisation of Eastern Europe as Samir Amin terms it (1997, p.74). This and the weakening of Russia have not been contrary to US strategic objectives in the region. But its concerted bid, in unison with France, the revivifying Russian Federation and China for a multipolar world and a seat in the UN Security Council, which it has sought along with India, Brazil and Japan, was certainly cause for alarm to US hegemonists. The US is not prepared to tolerate even the least dent in its supremacy in the region and would like to keep Eurasia on leash. The war on the Yugoslav Serbs over Kosovo was a means of the US to assume leadership in Europe. The West European states and multilateral institutions were subordinated to NATO. The ensuing European Security and Defence Policy institutionalises Europe's subordinate position."

The political leadership of the European Union has so far not been able to completely break out militarily and economically from Washington's diktat and acceptance of American global leadership. This is clearly evident through the compromises made in the cases of Iraq and Iran, and its sedulous support of Israel in the Middle East conflict. Europe continues largely to remain subordinate to US economic and foreign political goals in the region, a "subcontractor for US interests."<sup>12</sup>

### **The European Constitution**

In order to forge out a much needed political and democratic dimension to the European Union a draft Constitutional Treaty was drawn up by the European Convention nominated by the European Council and was subsequently signed by all 25 EU member states in 2004. After having been accepted by the publics in 9 countries in referenda it was rejected in the referenda held in France and the Netherlands in 2005. Requiring unanimous approval the process of political integration of the European Union into a United States of Europe has been stalled for the time being. The firm repudiation that it has received from the public in these two key countries of the EU is a telling indication of grassroots discontent with the much-hyped European project that is widespread in most other European countries as well. Its myriad mythification on the part of politicians and their intellectual counterparts has seen massive holes blown into

it. A closer critical look at the proclaimed goals of the new Constitution for Europe and the myths invented around the idea of Europe and the addition of the dimension of European identity to the national identities will help expose better the ultra- imperialism and inhumanity underlying the European Project.

Any formation of the United States of Europe, of a federation, confederation or even of a simple political union presupposes within a democratic framework the participation and consensus of the public is involved. The majority of the citizens constituting the various nation-states must have the 'will' to come together in a political or even economic union giving up voluntarily some of the sovereign rights of nations. The integration of the European states has so far been the handiwork solely of its political class/es and the European Union level bureaucracy in the interests of West European and US finance capital and transnational corporations, often under the combined diktat of these and international financial institutions, and it is they who have benefited most from this Union. When the core European countries (Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries) felt the need for convergence on the political front, that is, in their foreign and defence policies, in order to further their own imperialist ambitions particularly in Eurasia, which at times cross those of the unipolar US hegemonism, they put together a draft Constitution. In the face of growing complaints about a 'democratic deficit' in the EU they also placed it before the publics of the constituent nation-states where it has so far failed to receive the necessary ratification.

The grounds for the lack of satisfaction with the proposed Constitution are many. Foremost among these is that it failed to satisfactorily incorporate in its provisions the usual parliamentary, multiparty, electoral mode of democratic functioning. The supranational European Commission retained its monopoly of legislative initiative and was still to be appointed by diplomatic bargaining among the member-state governments. The European electorates were denied any right to determine the composition of the Union's executive body, the European Council, which is comprised of the heads of governments. The proposed European Parliament would remain largely consultative, with no meaningful power to resist or initiate legislation, although it would now be able to propose amendments, which the Commission could take up or ignore as it saw fit.<sup>13</sup>

The draft Constitution was also not one that provided only a basic legal framework within which policies could be debated and decided. Instead it had laid down in fine detail what these policies were to be. And lastly, far from as yet laying the basis for an independent foreign and defence policy capable of opposing the US, due to intra-European contradictions and differences, which also exist within the nation-states concerned, it had subordinated all security questions to NATO's leadership and retained the single-country veto on foreign affairs. This would make it easy for any pro-US country within the Union, and there are many such, to oppose and veto any strategy directed against US interests.<sup>14</sup> There are political and economic forces, e.g., the corporations and banks in Germany and the UK, which have strong ties with the US corporate and

financial world, and would not as yet venture to forgo the transatlantic alliance even if their position within it is a junior one. They also need the vastly superior military might of the US to defend their imperialist interests on a world-wide scale.

The Constitution in its Preamble spoke in lofty terms about Europe as the continent that has brought forth civilisation, which has developed the values underlying humanism, namely equality, liberty and respect for reason. It asserted that reunited Europe would strive to continue promoting these values, while deepening democracy and striving for peace, justice and solidarity throughout the world.

Unfortunately it is very easy to pierce the hypocrisy of these claims and assertions. Among the EU members too -there are some who are more powerful than others and largely set the agendas. These are the so-called 'core' nations. To these belong France, Germany and the UK, while Italy, Spain, Poland and others are second-rung nations within it in terms of power, leverage and policy-making.

In the initial stages of the formation of the European Community member states had weighted voting rights: in this system the big four-France, Germany, Italy and UK had greater weightage than the other member-states.<sup>15</sup>

The new voting system proposed in the Draft Constitution treaty would have retained and strengthened the position of the four largest members while diminishing the influence of smaller members, particularly those that joined the Union in May 2004. Germany particularly tried to increase its power even more vis-a-vis other countries by trying to push for a system of voting rights according to population size of the member countries.<sup>16</sup> Germany's economic strength within the Union is such that it is the Bundesbank - the German Central Bank - that has a major say in the European Central Bank.

The enlargement of the European Union that took place in 2004 led to 10 countries from eastern and southeastern Europe becoming member states. But they were denied full membership and given second class status. For example, direct payments under the Common Agricultural Policy were applied to them at 25% of Western rates, labour mobility to Western Europe was limited and structural fund payments were set at less than half of those of Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland. There is full freedom of movement only for eight members of the European Union within the so-called Schengen Space. Restrictions are in place for all others at present with relation to the movement of persons: a cordon sanitaire is in place creating the so-called Fortress Europe.<sup>17</sup>

If one looks at the record of the European Union with regard to its declared number one objective of promotion of peace in Europe, in this case too there lies its hidden imperialist agenda. So far only war among the imperialist powers has been prevented, but not on the continent as a whole: witness the wanton

destruction of Yugoslavia through fomenting and aiding and abetting ethnic conflict there, or in other regions of the world like Afghanistan and Sudan, where NATO forces are playing a major role. Apart from its role in Afghanistan the role of Germany in Sudan through its Darfur policy is very revealing. It is indicative of the role played by imperialist governments in many devastating civil wars raging in many parts of Africa and causing death and untold misery to millions.

In line with its expansionist agenda Germany is making efforts to have access to oil and natural gas resources independent of the US. Its rapport with Russia and overtures to Middle Eastern countries is also related to its concern with energy security. It supports the South Sudan region in its autonomy bid against North Sudan controlled by Arab Muslims because this is a region having vast oil, gold and diamond deposits. A railroad contract awarded to a German firm will help open up the oilfields and connect South Sudan with Kenya and Uganda bypassing North Sudan. The aim is to create a western oriented free trade zone in East Africa spanning Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda. Numerous projects in Egypt - like in shipping and telecommunications - also involve a split between North and South Sudan.<sup>18</sup>

Germany's game plan of hegemony within a United Europe can be exemplified through its relationship with East Germany, the former German Democratic Republic.

### **German Reunification**

Within united Germany East Germany seems in some ways to many to have the status of an internal colony. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc the people of the German Democratic Republic could have replaced the one-party oppressive regime through a "democratic and reformed socialism", as many of its dissident intellectuals and writers supported by some West German intellectuals and writers campaigned for. But the majority of the GDR citizens, weary of the earlier lack of freedom and who in any case had not en masse by their own choice and efforts opted for socialism in the post-Second World War period in the first place, were overwhelmed by the propaganda emanating through Western media channels now accessible in their country. They seemingly preferred the consumerist paradise enticingly held before them and the model of a welfare state democratic capitalism vis-a-vis that of a 'reformed socialism' and elected to go in for unification on West German terms, that is, they allowed the accession of the GDR to the West German state and economy and accepted its Basic Law as their own Constitution.

It took only a few years after reunification for most former GDR citizens to realise that they had been taken for a ride by the West German political elite and industrial class. The costs of the unification that fell on West German citizens through a special reunification tax and through cuts in welfare schemes and public sector wage freezes did not really better the situation of the East German 'poor' cousins, now called the 'Ossis' as against their more 'advanced' cousins the



'Wessis'. Rather, it worsened with a 13.3 % decline in GDP in the new states and an unemployment rate that rose to 33 % in 1990 and till today remains more than double that in West Germany.

In 1997, the percentage of East Germans expressing a favourable opinion of the Federal Republic's economic system stood at 22 %, down from a high of 69% in 1990. Between 1992 to 1997 the percentage of East Germans who believed that the country's problems could be solved by democracy dropped from 52% to 30%.<sup>19</sup> The state of economic affairs in East Germany have led to a rising percentage of voters voting for right extremist and left wing parties.

The anticipated improvement in the East German economy did not happen after reunification and integration into West Germany because of the privatisation of East German industry that was carried out in great haste by the West German state. East German industrial units were sold off to West European and US multinationals. With such a policy creating an industrial set-up in East Germany along the lines of that in West Germany was certainly not possible. Some observers have therefore termed the reunification of Germany as a process of colonisation, the transformation of East Germany into a dependent colony of the western part of Germany.

This process actually began during the years of 'Ostpolitik' and the deepening of German-German economic ties. During this period, when other East European economies were becoming mortgaged to international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF, the East German economy was shackling itself to that of West Germany, which became its main source of technology imports. The GDR managed to get into debt in the same way as Poland, Hungary or Romania did because of their inability to compete on the world market with the cheaper goods producing countries of East Asia and due to the lack of sufficient and rapid technological innovation in their industries. As a result, they could not pay for credit-financed imports for the modernisation of their industrial capital stock. In the 1970s the GDR then had to go in for import restrictions and export of its goods to the FRG at dumping prices.

In 1983, the FRG organised and guaranteed loans by the West German banks to the East German regime. In return 'Kompensations-geschafte' (compensatory business transactions) were allowed by the East German government. West German firms were allowed to establish factories in East Germany. They were attracted by the cheaper labour there. Investments were paid back with the goods of these enterprises. By organising the market access of goods from East Germany West German firms got the right to intervene in the management of some of the East German factories, particularly in their marketing departments. However, 'joint ventures' were on the whole not encouraged in the GDR due to the pressure of SED hardliners who wanted to continue the line of autarky embarked upon in the early stages of building the GDR economy and free themselves as far as possible from ties to the West German economy.<sup>20</sup>

The annexation of the GDR in 1990 ended in deindustrialisation on a massive scale through the process of privatisation of the public state-owned enterprises. By the time the last industrialised unit in the East went into private hands the most industrialised states of the East (Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt) were transformed from industrial heartlands into industrial wastelands. Saxony's share of industry in GNP descended to a level lower than that of the least industrialised state in the West (Schleswig-Holstein). On average, the industrial level in East Germany in 1995 reached only 60% that of West Germany, the capital intensity 56%. 95% of East German industry was privatised by selling it to West German firms making them into their subsidiaries and benefiting from lower wages there due to the lower cost of living.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the tendency for West German and other European and US companies having production units in Germany to relocate and outsource operations abroad, particularly in other East European countries like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, which provides even greater cost reduction benefits, has contributed to the deindustrialisation of the East German states.

Large-scale agriculture also collapsed in the GDR with the stores being flooded with West German and EC agricultural products leading to high rural unemployment as well, and exodus of the young from the countryside and deindustrialised towns and cities in search of jobs. Such jobs are found not only in West German towns and cities, where sometimes the migrants from the East conceal their East German identity and try to 'pass' as West Germans, but also in other West European countries, like Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway and Great Britain. Austria has a large number of guest workers from East Germany particularly in the tourism industry where they work as waiters, bar staff or even as cleaners. Some of them are able to find opportunities to study further as apprentices in the hotel and tourism industry.

The education system in East Germany was also restructured and harmonised with that in the West with a dominating role played in this by the West German government and its experts. Many subjects offered in higher educational institutions were changed and school level history textbooks were of course rewritten to correspond with the official anti-communist West German point of view. For all these reasons the term colonisation has been used to describe the relationship between the two Germanies. The different post-Second World War histories, the present differences in economy, culture and mental make-up have provoked the following remark by the East German maverick playwright, Heiner Mullen

"It is a privilege for a writer to have experienced the end of three states: the Weimar Republic, the fascist state and the GDR. I don't suppose I'll live long enough to see the end of the Federal Republic."<sup>22</sup>

## **Contradictions**

The pro-corporate (US and West European) profile of the European Union has alienated not just large sections of the working people and middle classes but also a good section of the farmers. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with its price guarantees and other subsidies was a means to boost production in the face of severe food shortages in the post-War period. It was also a means of neutralising the rural-urban contradiction by not allowing market forces full sway in agriculture and hence avoiding a situation where farmers, borrowing heavily from banks to support the high costs of mechanised agriculture, did not finally run the risk of penury and possible suicide if they were unable to realise sufficient returns on the market from sales due to competition, or crop failure because of adverse weather conditions, or any other reasons.

However, the regime of high subsidies and tariffs to prevent the market from being inundated with cheaper agricultural products from low wage countries is under attack within the WTO. The underdeveloped neocolonial low wage countries want higher tariffs to be scrapped and export subsidies to be dismantled so as to open the European market for their products and to avoid their own countries from being flooded with agricultural produce at below cost price due to high surpluses and export subsidies in the EU. The proposed complete liberalisation of agriculture in Europe is also in the interest of corporates that want market access for industrial products and services in the neocolonial world and would like this to be paid for through the export of agricultural products. Moreover, the scrapping of the regime of agricultural subsidies is also in the interest of the global food industry dominated by TNCs. Domestic price supports, by raising prices of agro-industrial inputs, are a disadvantage to food processors and grain traders in the world market.<sup>23</sup> This and the WTO ruling against the de facto ban on GM food in the EU as being against 'free trade' are raising ire among the consumers and farmers of the EU. As a result of the resistance of European farmers subsidies by and large continue to be in place, whereas subsidies are being lowered in the dependent countries to the detriment of the farmers there.<sup>24</sup>

The assaults on the welfare state and increasing unemployment as a result of globalisation policies have set free a wave of neo-nationalism, xenophobia and racism in all the countries of Europe, worsening the status of immigrant minorities. There is not only growing friction and lack of unity between East and West Germans in Germany, there is a rising tide of feelings against asylum seekers and immigrant workers, although the demographic profiles of the most advanced industrialised countries require these extra hands in order to keep their economies flourishing. Chauvinistic nationalism has come up in a strong way all over Europe including Russia. Right extreme, anti-immigrant parties have established themselves as serious contenders for votes and political offices in countries like Italy, Austria, Switzerland (not an EU member), Denmark, Portugal, France and the Netherlands.<sup>25</sup>

Right-wing extremist parties across Europe share some common ideological features: Mainly they hold a restrictive notion of citizenship which would confine this to only long-standing citizens sharing a common culture and values. [In Germany this is called the *Leitkultur* (leading or dominant culture)]. Under their influence or kowtowing to their pressure restrictions on immigration, longer waiting periods or even the passing of citizenship tests before one can become a citizen are some of the measures already taken or planned. Unemployment, job insecurity, education and health problems are explained in terms of the numbers of foreigners, and in the context of rising unemployment and underemployment 'national preference' is advocated.

Within the context of globalisation and the hegemony of American culture and a feared swamping by foreigners the radical right has increasingly focused attention on questions of a homogeneous national and cultural identity; their politics is an identity politics, a politics of *Heimat* (homeland) rather than a politics of class. In its more extreme variants a hysteria is being created about the possibility of extinction due to being overwhelmed by Islamic hordes as a result of European Union expansion to include Turkey or increasing migration from North Africa. The spectre of an *Eurabia* populated by a large Muslim minority is also being raised. There is a strong aversion to integration, multiculturalism and cosmopolitan projects aimed at giving space to 'other' peoples and cultures to co-exist with the dominant national culture. Racist and exclusionary attitudes are reinforced. The immigrants, particularly the Muslim migrants, have become the new Jews for the neo-fascist parties and organisations. Muslims, particularly after 9/11, are increasingly serving as 'the other' even as anti-semitism is certainly very much alive in those European countries where there is a sizeable Jewish population. The rightist Danish Progress Party even raised the slogan of making Denmark a "Muslim free zone" to preserve Denmark as a Christian country with Christian values.

The Italian extremist organisation *Lepa Nord* is both anti-American and anti-Islam. It perceives immigration as a form of demographic imperialism designed to turn European nations into appendages of countries not belonging to the European continent. It hence calls for stopping the Islamic invasion and for new crusades to defend European culture and identity. *Le Pen*, leader of the French rightist party, *National Front* also draws a parallel between American hegemonic designs and the Islamic invasion of Europe as undermining European identity. In some European countries social democratic parties too have submitted to the rightist rhetoric about migrants. In others, they continue to vigorously uphold multiculturalism as a solution to immigration, which is continued to be perceived as economically necessary for the corporates.

Multiculturalism was and is the preferred liberal solution to the problem of the *Thirdworldisation* of the *First World*. Following decolonisation the growth and expansion of West Europe required a larger labour force than available within and efforts were made to recruit this labour from the periphery, where imperialism having thwarted and destroyed indigenous agriculture and industry

through its penetration, had a reserve labour force it could draw upon. This reserve labour force was not admitted as full citizens with equal rights, but as temporary guest workers who were expected to leave when they were no longer required. The governments, the corporates and the corporatised central trade unions in these countries pursued discriminatory and racist policies against these workers, which resulted in their ghettoisation and political and economic marginalisation because they were paid lower wages than the 'native' workers, which was possible to an even greater extent in the case of illegal workers.

Not being integrated into their host societies, often not wishing to be integrated into societies perceived as having alien cultural values, often leading illegal or semi-legal lives these workers formed their own support organisations on ethnic and kin terms. This was the response of most of the migrants in West European countries and of the Negroes and currently of the Hispanics in the US, who were/are under no pressure or requirement to 'assimilate'. Rather, they were expected to keep to themselves, which has resulted in the segregated residence of various ethnic populations in the cities of Europe. Because they are not expected or allowed to integrate and because they want their separate ethnic identities to be recognised and affirmed, there is a demand for the recognition of minority institutions, particularly educational ones, where they are taught their own languages and about their own religion and history and can follow their own customs and traditions. These ethnic minorities would wish to interact with others in the public domain on the basis of this separate identity.<sup>26</sup>

Integration in this manner, allowing for diversity and difference is considered to be in line with Western liberal principles and based on a creed of humanism and tolerance, although there are differences of opinion among the liberals as to whether this diversity should be on the basis of group (minority) or individual rights.<sup>27</sup> But such approaches based on Western liberalism and enlightenment values camouflage the fact that non-Western cultures and societies - the economic bases of which are colonialism/neocolonialism - are regarded as inferior.<sup>28</sup> From this perspective multiculturalism is then no longer seen as a policy functional to the integration of society but as an ideology constructed in order to legitimise the socio-economic inequalities between different ethnic groups, and is indeed looked upon as a device by which the majority rationalises its hold over the minorities as well as its control over social resources.... Structural hierarchical differences are suppressed in the theory of the existence of a cultural mosaic.<sup>29</sup> The realities of neocolonialism and consequent underdevelopment now very much visible within the centres of world capitalism are sought to be whitewashed. ~~///~~

*(To be concluded)*