The Max Weber International Conference

*The Boundaries of Europe: Religious Identities, State-Church-Party Relations, and the European Project*

New York University, April 2 - 4, 2009

at the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies
285 Mercer St., 7th Floor, Conference Room
Conference Program

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

Arrival of participants

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm Welcome and Reception

Welcoming remarks by Larry Wolff, Director of the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies at NYU
Venue: Deutsches Haus at NYU, 42 Washington Mews (@ University Place)

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

9:15 am Introduction by Michael Minkenberg, New York University

9:30 am – 11:30 am Panel I: Europe and Religion – Trans-Continental Perspectives
Chair: Michael Minkenberg, New York University
Matthias Koenig, University of Goettingen “Religion and secularism in the judicial construction of Europe”
Bérengère Massignon, GSRL Paris: “European Identity and Religions: Alterity or Plurality?”
Discussant: Sylvia Maier, New York University

11:30 am – 1 pm Lunch Break
1 pm – 3:15 pm  Panel II: Denominational Perspectives
Chair: Nanette Funk, New York University
Christian Bailey, Yale University: "Christianity, the Abendland and the European Project"
Jeffrey Haynes, University of London: "Are there 'civilisational' constraints on Turkey joining the European Union?"
Daniela Kalkandjieva, University of Sofia: "The European Boundaries and the Challenge of Orthodoxy"
Parvati Nair, University of London "Islamigration or the other Within: Testing the Limits of European Democracy and Tolerance"
Discussant: Leah Haus, Vassar College

3:15 pm – 3:45 pm  Coffee Break

3:45 pm – 6:00 pm  Panel III: Actors' Perspectives
Chair: Mary Ann Newman, New York University
John Madeley, London School of Economics: "Mainstreams, Fringes, and from beyond the Fringe: Rivalrous Religious Representations of Europe and the EU"
Michael Minkenberg, NYU: "Christian Churches and the European Project – Cross-Country Comparisons"
Lucian Leustean, Aston Univ., Birmingham: "Religious Technocrats and the Boundaries of European Integration"
Sanna Lehtinen, University of Helsinki "Breaking Boundaries – Finnish Lutheran Parishes as Agents of the ESF Projects in the European Union"
Discussant: Glenda Rosenthal, New York University

8:00 pm  Dinner for Conference Participants
Venue: The Torch Club, 18 Waverly Pl. (@ Mercer St.)

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

11:00 am – 12:00 pm  Concluding Discussion and Wrap-up

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  Refreshments
Conference Outline

The European boundaries are discussed typically in broad civilizational and historical terms, or specifically in political terms such as EU membership. In the meantime, other issues and perspectives have enriched this debate, and multiple dimensions of European boundaries are identified, such as geographical, socio-economic, political, strategic or cultural ones. The cultural, or more precisely religious, dimension of Europe’s boundaries is a rather recent topic in the general public and social sciences alike.

Yet, it can be argued that cultural boundary drawing was always at the core of the European project. Some suggest that the entire project of European integration was inaugurated and pushed along primarily by religious, that is Christian Democratic, forces and inspirations, as the Catholic “founding fathers” Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi illustrate – one might add to this list more Catholic leaders such as Jean Monnet, Jacques Santer and Jacques Delors. With the ongoing processes of deepening and widening of the EU, however, a new pluralism has emerged which challenges some of the commonly held assumptions and inspirations of the founding generation and those in their footsteps. This is particularly relevant, since in the post-Cold War era the EU has reached unprecedented levels of cultural and religious pluralism, having to deal with a variety of new actors and interests within old and new member states. In this light, then, the issue of the religious boundaries of Europe returns to the agenda with a new force, and in a more multiple or ambiguous way than before.

The conference addresses the question of how cultural and religious identities have informed the shaping of European boundaries in the course of the process of European integration. Particular attention will be paid to the interaction and interrelations between players and ideas in this process: religious-confessional traditions as they inform the European idea and project, and contribute to the constant boundary drawing; key actors, such as the national governments, the major parties, and the churches; and the various nation states, old and new members of the EU, and their (cultural-religious) alliances and conflicts (such as in the drafting of the preamble for the European Constitution, or the issue of Turkish EU membership).

The conference brings together established and younger scholars from both sides of the Atlantic to present their research and to engage in a fresh dialogue about the relevance of cultural boundary drawing in the European project.

Conference organization: Michael Minkenberg, Max Weber Chair for German and European Studies at NYU

Center for European and Mediterranean Studies, 285 Mercer St., 7th Floor, New York, NY 10003

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