

Editorial—Developments in the field

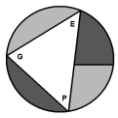
Upcoming and Ongoing Research Projects having Directly and Indirectly to do with Ethno-GeoPolitics: Announcements, Updates and Preliminary Observations

Caspar ten Dam & Zhang Shi

Current situation in the world and of our journal

We continue to face outbreaks of new variants of the Covid-19 corona virus across the world, particularly due to ineffective, even disastrous policies of denial and belated responses or simply lack of capacities to roll out massive vaccination campaigns. Naturally many of our (advisory) board-members, editors and regular contributors to our journal—who reside in many of the most seriously affected countries spread around the world—have had to prioritise their own safety and those of their loved ones. We wish them and their families and friends all the best, and like in our preceding Editorial offer them our deepest condolences for their suffering and loss (Ten Dam & Rezvani 2020: 9).

Given the “endemic health crises (especially the Covid-19 corona pandemic) and wars” (Ten Dam & Rezvani 2020: 9) that affect many of us, just a handful of editors and prospective contributors—including the authors of the current editorial—have been able to spare some time to keep our journal afloat during these trying times. Despite the best efforts of the latter however, we have as of yet been unable to overcome



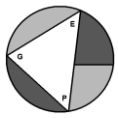
the structural half-year backlog i.e. delay in the production of issues of our journal. Thus above all the corona crisis accounts for the belated appearance of the current Winter 2020 issue—and of the preceding Autumn 2020 issue as well. Once more we thank the contributors and fellow-editors for their patience. We hope that the state of the world and our personal situation will improve—and thereby overcome the backlog of issues in the coming months and years.

Current research projects through (members of) our association

Despite the aforementioned situation(s), some members of our Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics (EGP) and our journal—including both co-authors of this current Editorial—have been able to set up and continue with multiple research-and-publication projects having directly or indirectly to do with the burgeoning field of ethnogeopolitics (EGP). As the following description of three of these projects concerns this field as a discipline or rather multidiscipline, this Editorial simultaneously serves as this issue's developments-in-the-field section.

Indeed EGP is relevant in helping to account for kinship bonds and other traditional identities and cultures, as analysed by Caspar ten Dam in his contribution 'Chechen Clans and Other Kin Groups in Times of War and Peace' in the current issue of our journal.

Such bonds, identities and cultures are the topics in varying degrees in the following three research projects through (members of our) EGP association, the first two conceived and led by Caspar ten Dam and the



third by Zhang Shi:

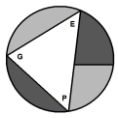
- a) Extended Families, Clans and other Kinship Groups in Present-day Societies (see esp. Ten Dam 2019);
- b) Ethnic and Kinship Bonds as Challenges of EU Enlargement in South-East Europe (Ibid); and
- c) European Cultures and Cultures in European Countries based on a book proposal by Zhang Shi (see Shi 2021).

Extended Families, Clans and other Kinship Groups in Present-day Societies

The overarching project initiated last year with the help of our EGP association in order to “further research on the oft-neglected role of ethnic and kinship bonds in present-day societies” (Ten Dam 2019: 156)—preliminarily titled “Survival and Saliency of Extended Families, Clans and other Kinship Groups in Present-day Societies: A Survey of Current Research and Urgently Needed Research” (Ibid)—has been gathering momentum.

In March 2020, the initiator, coordinator and main author of this project, Caspar ten Dam, signed a (preliminary) contractual agreement with Cambridge Scholars Publishing to oversee the envisaged edited volume on this very topic, titled ‘Extended Families, Clans and Other Kinship Groups in Present-day Societies: A Survey of Current Research’.

As Guest Editor I would provide the Foreword, Introduction and at least one book chapter to this edited book publication, and would help to find

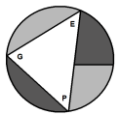


other contributors for book chapters as well. Indeed the current Editorial constitutes one avenue of approaching prospective contributors to this publication. The summary or abstract of the planned publication is as follows:

Despite industrialisation, urbanisation and (de)colonisation, many present-day societies, be they formerly tribal or still (partially) tribal, appear to retain many traditions having to do with extended families, (sub-)clans and other kinship groups more often than not adhering to customary laws. Even so, many once-tribal groups seem to be overtaken by 'modern' i.e. industrial and post-industrial trends. Be that as it may, research findings on the saliency of tribal societies in general and kinship groups in particular, appear to be dispersed and sketchy to date. This volume seeks to bring the newest research on this topic under a single roof, in order to offer new insights on the role of kinship groups continue to exert in different regions of the world—even in so-called 'modern' societies (partially based on the paragraph in Ten Dam 2019: 157).

At this stage, we still need a number of prospective contributors for this edited volume. If one is interested, one could submit a chapter proposal and/or ready manuscript for a book chapter in this volume to me directly (tendam@ethnogeopolitics.org) or through the submission form at Cambridge Scholars (www.cambridgescholars.com/pages/guest-edited-collections).

If for some reason your submitted manuscript is rejected for the edited volume, you could always resubmit it for publication in our journal as a peer-reviewed Main Article—or as a book chapter in an edited volume on a similar overall topic by our own *EGxPress* publishing house.



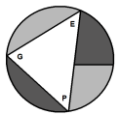
Ethnic and Kinship Bonds as Challenges of EU Enlargement in South-East Europe

One could consider this research project, earlier presented as a “particular project B” within the overarching research project on the “oft-neglected role of ethnic and kinship bonds in present-day societies” (Ten Dam 2019: 157 (quotes)), as a distinct project on its own.

Actually, this project also looks at the kinship identities—as part of broader ethnogeopolitical factors i.e. “cultural, social, religious, ethnic and (geo-)political characteristics, processes and developments” (Ten Dam 2019: 159) ¹—within both current EU member states and prospective candidate states beyond South-East Europe or the Western Balkans. Still, the focus during the first phase of the project will remain on such identities within countries in the latter region, “that is to say Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia” (Ibid: 159 (quote), 164, endnote 2). ²

The Editorial in the Winter 2019 issue of our journal already describes the “more developed parts” of the original research proposals regarding both this project and the overall project on kinship groups in present-day societies (see preceding section), so I need not to repeat these descriptions here (see Ten Dam 2019: 157-158; 159-161). Suffice to say here that the project has experienced delays due to the tribulations of the corona pandemic (see first section)—and the need to conduct a more extensive literature review than originally envisaged.

This extended literature review for this project is still underway, and I plan to present additional research findings based on this review in a

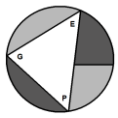


follow-up Editorial or article in e.g. the journal's 'Developments in the field' section in one of the upcoming issues of our journal.

This extended literature review is particularly needed to further buttress—or rather falsify i.e. stress-test and if necessary discount—my rather strong statement that “analysisists and policymakers within both the EU institutions and established EU member states have tended to neglect ethnogeopolitical factors such as ethno-patrimonialism and tribal, clannish and other sub-ethnic and sub-national identities and alliances” (Ten Dam 2019: 162)—both within their own societies and those of prospective member states.

My initial literature review (Ten Dam 2019: esp. 162 (source references)) has corroborated this statement, yet requires more corroboration still in order to make it a plausibly, convincingly valid one. If true, and if ethnogeopolitical factors like ethnic and kinship bonds are “ignored or misunderstood, any further EU enlargement” with western Balkan and any other states will be “even more challenging and troublesome or even more unlikely” (Ibid: 161). This dire prospect (for so far one supports EU enlargement) ought to underpin the practical policymaking relevance of looking at kinship identities in both actual and prospective EU member states.

If the apparent lack of knowledge and understanding within EU institutions and current member states of kinship bonds is corroborated, this may in fact affect the workings and enlargement of the EU. Thus I and any collaborators will investigate whether other international and regional bodies like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in



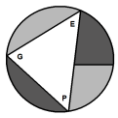
Europe (OSCE) and any of their member states are more knowledgeable about kinships and other ethnogeopolitical factors among their own member states and beyond. Such knowledge from these governmental organisations (GOs) may offer insights useful and perhaps crucial to the EU, if only because its actual and prospective memberships overlap with NATO, OSCE and other GOs.

These considerations tie in with the “possible expansions of the research topic”, including comparing the “recent history of EU enlargement with NATO enlargement, regarding mainly post-communist countries from the former Easter Bloc who have become new EU members, NATO members, both, or none of those yet. For instance, have identified ethnogeopolitical factors been equally salient and operational in both EU and NATO enlargements—or not?” (Ten Dam 2020: 7). Naturally any (preliminary) findings of such follow-up research will eventually be published in our journal as well.

European Cultures and Cultures in European Countries

Ms. Zhang Shi, our new assistant editor and Chinese studies editor (Chinese-language section) of our journal, has embarked—with advisory support from our executive editor Caspar ten Dam—upon a research project on European cultures and cultures in European countries which should result in a book publication by *EGxPress* or another publisher.

This publication will be geared towards a wider audience beyond academia, particularly those residing in Asia and other parts of the



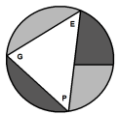
world who wish to visit and stay in Europe for vacation, study and/or work—but who are not yet familiar with European culture in general and the cultures in European countries in particular.

Consequently, prospective contributors are asked to provide book chapters on particular European countries which are “not strictly academic articles and teaching materials replete with scientific jargon; they need to be written in accessible language so as to attract a wide group of readers” (Shi 2020: 3). Parts of Shi’s book proposal co-authored with Caspar ten Dam (available upon request) are reproduced here, with some slight modifications.

One major objective of the planned book is to enhance our understanding of European cultures. For this to happen fruitfully and lucidly (in order to avoid obfuscation and misunderstanding), we need to participate in the continuing debate on the political, cultural and geographical boundaries of Europe—which may be contested and different if overlapping due to contrasting vantage points.

For instance, does or should ‘Europe’ include the European part of Russia up to the Ural mountains—or even the entire Eurasian continent all the way to Vladivostok? For now, we focus on the identifiable cultures of 44 European countries—the total number of countries i.e. internationally recognised nation-states in Europe according to the United Nations.³

Significantly, this list of 44 countries includes Russia—a country which many of its inhabitants (and its current regime) does consider to be ‘uniquely Russian’ or ‘Eurasian’ rather than ‘European’ as understood by



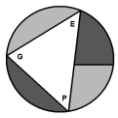
many or most countries in Central and Western Europe. Indeed many of the latter countries and their inhabitants do not consider Russia a European country for these very cultural—and geopolitical—reasons.

A further complication of this list is the fact that a country like Kosovo is not on it, for the very geopolitical reason that many states in and beyond Europe recognise this former province of Serbia as an independent state since its independence declaration in 2008—currently by 98 out of 193 member-states of the UN, so not by nearly half of them, including e.g. Serbia and Russia. ⁴

If one would include countries like Kosovo on a larger list of European countries, one would come up with a number of at least 50 or 51 European countries according to different estimates. ⁵

Be that as it may, European countries—i.e. whichever countries could or should be considered and labelled Europe—have significant differences in language, religion and religious festivals, diet, politics, clothing and other aspects.

The analysis and research of these cultural differences may be helpful in bridging any remaining cultural gaps in Europe and promoting integration of cultures across the world. Its significance lies in the given that this analysis can not only help to better and deeply understand the cultural differences of European countries, cross cultural communication barriers, but also cultivate people's adaptability in cross-cultural communication, and effectively avoid misunderstanding caused by cultural differences.

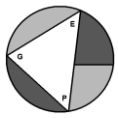


Misunderstandings often occur when people from different cultural backgrounds and languages talk to each other. With the deepening of international exchanges, we have more frequent and close contacts with people all over the world. It is particularly important to understand the culture(s) of Western countries, especially in the context of European integration, as the cultures of European countries are also quite diverse.

It is not easy to understand each other, and exchanges between different cultures often encounter difficulties. Therefore comparison of cultural differences among European countries is of great significance—particularly for those living in other parts of the world who may be not as familiar with these differences as those living in Europe. Indeed, the book on European culture(s) is particularly intended for a non-European audience, in order to increase their understanding of European culture(s).

European culture is a collection of cultures of all European countries, within and beyond the current EU with its current member states. We need to first analyse and publish the culture of each country, until we have ideally finished publishing the culture chapters of at least the 44 European countries according to the United Nations. ⁶

We certainly will publish a collection of analyses of at least some of these 44 European countries exhibiting variants of European culture. Our cultural book chapters are not strictly academic articles and teaching materials replete with scientific jargon; they need to be written in accessible language so as to attract a wide group of readers to read, so there will be a lot of beautiful pictures in them, but we must mark the link source of the beautiful pictures. If other sources are used in the text,



they need to be marked with references just like in published articles.

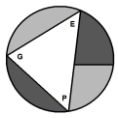
Naturally, one should recognise that not all 44 distinguished countries necessarily have sharply distinct cultures from each other. Rather there appear to be groups of countries with similar cultures in history, language, religion and the like—like the Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden etc.), the Germanic countries (Germany, Austria etc.) and Anglo-Saxon-Welsh countries (U.K., Ireland etc.).

And there are countries with clear hybrid cultures, like the Netherlands, which is generally considered part Germanic (esp. linguistic origins and social-welfare thinking) and part Anglo-Saxon (esp. in free-market thinking, art, entertainment and large-scale adoption of English language).

Furthermore, there should be an argument in an overarching Introduction and/or Conclusion about to what extent there really is a distinctly common European culture overarching all these particular differences.

For each book chapter the culture of each country and region in Europe can be divided into six parts: introduction of the whole country and region, geographical location, history, population, climate, political economy, food, clothing, famous scenic spots or buildings, religious festivals, and politics. Each part requires at least one picture and corresponding explanatory text (except for the introduction part).

Of course, if the contributor of each chapter thinks it is necessary to add other parts one can consult Ms. Zhang Shi, the overall editor and head



of this research and publishing project within our association—and if necessary with Caspar ten Dam, the advisor of this project and executive editor of *Forum of EGP*, the journal of our association.

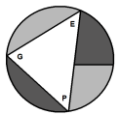
One can consult either or both if a prospective contributor thinks that a country not on the UN-list of 44 European countries—like semi-recognised ‘breakaway’ states Kosovo and Transnistria, or even ‘faraway’ countries like Turkey, Armenia and Georgia which or many or most of their inhabitants (like to) consider themselves European ⁷—should deserve a distinct chapter.

Concluding remarks

The three projects described above should directly and indirectly aid in the continued “conceptual and methodological development” of EGP as announced and foreseen by our Editor-in-Chief Babak Rezvani in the maiden Editorial of our journal (Rezvani 2013: 5).

Arguably the phenomena studied, described and (to be) published in these projects—kinships, national identities and (other) cultures in countries and (sub)regions in different parts of the world—are crucial factors impacting the (post) Covid-19 age of globalisation, and are thereby just as relevant to the field of EGP. From a reverse perspective, EGP as a field of studies is “still relevant in the age of globalisation” however controversial and contested the concept of globalisation itself may be (Rezvani & Ten Dam 2020: 13).

Hopefully the descriptions of the three research projects undertaken by



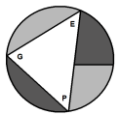
Caspar ten Dam and Zhang Shi, with the help and collaboration of other (advisory) board members and editors of EGP, will generate further interest and feedback—and additional collaboration and (crowd)funding for these projects—among the readers.

Caspar ten Dam (MA political science at Leiden University) is Executive Editor of this journal. He is an experienced conflict analyst with his own research company based in Leiden, the Netherlands (www.ctdamconsultancy.com).

He is specialised in (regional) conflict, terrorism and security studies, and has published multiple academic articles on topics within these fields, including in this journal. info@ctdamconsultancy.com

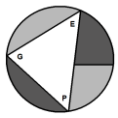
Zhang Shi (MA engineering at Shenyang Agricultural University; MA economic law at China University of political science and law) is Assistant Editor & Chinese studies editor (Chinese-language section) of this journal. She is currently part-time professor at IGI-GLOBAL (www.igi-global.com) based in China.

She has published multiple papers related to intellectual property, and is planning book publications on e.g. ethnic groups in China and cultures in Europe. She is specialised in intellectual property law, international law, ethnicities and cultures in East (esp. China) and West (esp. Europe). jessee_zhang@163.com



Endnotes

1. Original citation from www.ethnogeopolitics.org (main page).
2. My Editorial in the Winter 2019 issue of our journal erroneously refers to “proposed project A” in endnote 2 (Ten Dam 2019: 164); this endnote actually refers to the “more particular project B” (Ibid: 156).
3. Apparently there are “44 countries in Europe today, according to the United Nations based on the United Nations official statistics”: www.worldometers.info/geography/how-many-countries-in-europe (with full list of countries, with “current population and subregion”). Not included in this “total of “countries” and listed separately” are “Dependencies (or dependent territories, dependent areas) or Areas of Special Sovereignty (autonomous territories)” i.e. Channel Islands (U.K), Isle of Man (U.K.), Faeroe Islands (Denmark) and Gibraltar (U.K.) (see same source). Yet such mentioned dependencies should also include for instance the overseas territories of the Netherlands, like the Caribbean islands of Curaçao and Sint Maarten (autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands), and the island of Aruba (constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands).
4. See further note 7.
5. See e.g. www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/europe.htm; and www.isolatedtraveller.com/world-encyclopedia/list-of-all-countries-in-europe.
6. See note 3.
7. In this regard it seems strange that the UN (see note 3) does consider former Soviet republics like Russia and Ukraine to be European countries, but not former Soviet republics like Armenia and Georgia. Are the latter situated in a region—the Caucasus—so different geographically and/or culturally as not to be considered part of Europe? If so, this would be a weak argument and distinction on its



own—if only because a large part of the Caucasus falls under the internationally recognised territory and sovereignty of Russia. The proposed book should discuss in at least a foreword or introduction (and preferably in a number of book chapters as well) these complicated issues—and investigate the background and particular reasons of how and why the UN has come up with the number and list of ‘44 European countries’.

References—Bibliography

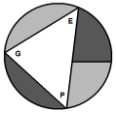
Rezvani, Babak, ‘EthnoGeoPolitics and its Forum’ *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* Vol.1 No.1, Spring 2013, pp.4-6.

_____ & Caspar ten Dam, ‘Geography, State and Ethnogeopolitics in the (post)Covid-19 Age of Globalisation’ *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* Vol.8 No.1, Autumn 2020, pp.13-35.

Shi, Zhang, *European Cultures and Cultures in European Countries* Book Proposal, July 2021 edition. Unpublished manuscript (as of yet); available upon request.

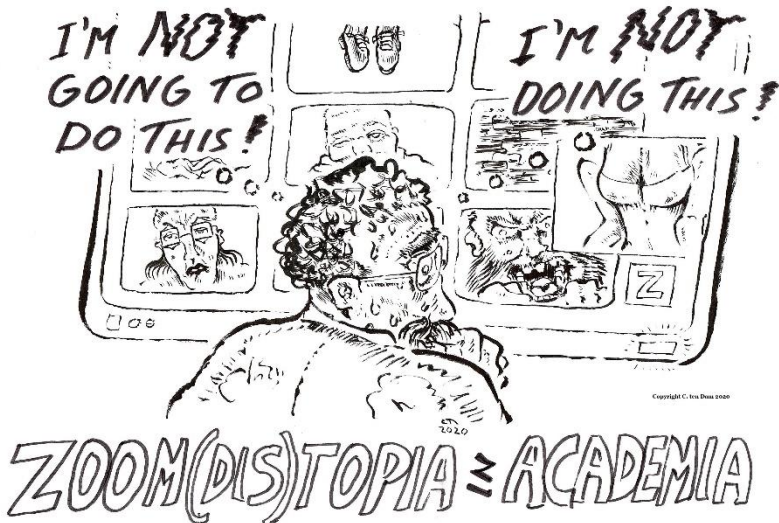
Ten Dam, Caspar & Babak Rezvani, ‘2020: A Time of Health Crises and Ethno-National Wars’ *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* Vol.8 No.1, Autumn 2020, pp.9-11.

Ten Dam, Caspar, ‘Tribal Kinship Identities in Present-day Societies: Proposals for Ethnogeopolitical Research’ *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* Vol.7 No.2, Winter 2019, pp.156-167.

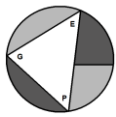


_____, *Can Kin Groups Flourish in an Ever Larger Union? EU Enlargement in South-East Europe and Beyond—and the Vital if Controversial Role of Ethnic and Kinship Bonds* Research Plan, November 2020 edition. Unpublished manuscript (as of yet); available upon request.

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