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Leibniz and Eastern Europe

(project description)

As an observer of his own times the German philosopher G. W. Leibniz (1648-1716) was among the first thinkers who already saw clearly that the region later called Eastern Europe or East-Central Europe possessed a set of characteristics that rendered the task of defining its singularity from Western respective perplexingly difficult. In Leibniz's view Poland and Hungary, the state formations then occupying large parts of the region, belonged to those peripheral parts of Europe (*"reliqua Europae"*) that needed the protection of the Western centre and were, as a corollary of this protection, the main object of civilizing and economic expansion. He recognized that the two countries, in their *"entre l'enclume et le marteau"* situation between Germany on the one side and Russia and the Ottoman Empire on the other, revealed religious similarities with the West thus making cultural and scientific dialogue possible. Nevertheless huge differences concerning civilisation, social manners, economy and political principles made their (re-)incorporation into the Westphalia international order impossible. Therefore, after the successful *reconquista* he suggested a complex strategy of regional stabilisation to his employer Emperor Leopold I consisting of an economic colonisation project useful for the centre and of a civilizing mission beneficiary, as he was convinced of it, to the periphery. This was Leibniz's contribution to the surfacing of Eastern Europe in the historical moment when the universalism of the *respublica Christiana* was substituted with the balance of particular nation states.