Focus: How to Write the History of Europe

Guest edited by Nikita Harwich Vallenilla

How to Write the History of Europe?

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In the midst of the peace-process negotiations with the Palestinians, the late Yitzhak Rabin – answering to a group radical national-religious Jews who were shouting that the West Bank was a Jewish land according to the *Book* and would be so forever – said that the *Bible*: 'is a book of fate, history and values. It is not the land registry of the Middle East'. He was, of course, right. Unfortunately, historians everywhere, and notably in Europe today, accept fuelling nationalistic fantasies by rooting purported identities in a faraway past, by forging new sets of invented traditions, and by giving credence to the notion of what is truly 'autochthonous'. Today, such an attitude is a robust obstacle against any writing of the history of Europe. The political tension that historians are subjected to can thus be summarized as: we must not forget the lessons of Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger and their team on the 'invention of traditions', but, at the same time, we must not lend a deaf ear to the demands of illusory identity expressed by the voters of populist movements.

Over several decades, researchers have addressed the humanities and social sciences, together with our political responsibilities as citizens, by mobilizing two series of intellectual resources. The first one was inherited from Marxism. It rooted the political shaping and the transformations of societies within the analysis of their socio-economic development. The second, inherited from Kant's critical philosophy, and later from the liberal thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, paid attention to the logical forms and legal procedures used to define the political regimes of the past, as well as to imagine and promote future ones. In neither case, the emancipation of mankind and the advent of democracy and its consolidation were to be tied to a specific culture or a particular identity. But what do we see today? Many voices from the far left declare that these two intellectual and political traditions have given birth to a colour-blind vision of current and

past societies, whereas many, from the far right, accuse these same intellectual streams of turning their backs on real people by weakening their patriotic pride. The universalistic point of view is designated, from the left, as an ethnocentric (if not racist) attitude, and from the right, as a technocratic conception of politics. The current success of populism lies at the junction of these two equally hostile feelings against any universalistic conception of democracy. The commitment to democracy has not been consolidated beyond a national framework, i.e. out of particular cultural identities. Whether or not one believes in the relevance of the concept of identity, the fact is that politicians, opinion leaders, journalists and citizens who respond to surveys claim the importance of identity, no matter how it is defined. Similarly, people who enjoy no symbolic benefits from the union do not join the European ideal. These are our fellow citizens who never had a passport, because they do not travel, who do not have the opportunity to spend their euros away from home, whose children do not benefit from Erasmus programmes, etc.

Twenty years ago, the writing of a history of Europe was supposed to take the risk of going beyond the history and historiography of the various Nation-States that had hitherto been the main (and often unique) framework in the shaping of our profession. The desire to write the history of Europe, in other words a narrative that would be out of the national (and perhaps even nationalistic) straightjacket, appeared to be and was a liberating choice. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then. What might have appeared, 20 years ago, as a show of intellectual audacity, today seems suspicious of being an ethnocentric programme. Nowadays, the history of Europe is considered the reservoir of all conservatisms. The collapse of interest in the history of Europe – except for British history – in American universities, is a striking symptom of such phenomenon. 'Imperial history', by which I mean the history of each particular empire, promotes intercontinental geographies and does not favour the aggregation of the histories of different empires, the home countries of which were European countries. Entangled histories, by observing social realities according to different scales, aim at highlighting connections and wide radius circulations, if possible where little is known about them. Such histories do not engage in the task of re-building a coherent narrative of the European past. Finally, the horizon of global history tends to minimize the importance of the history of Europe in the world. Too often, such reassessment of perspective seems to be a target in itself. Anyway, the data entry of 'Europe-in-the-world' is almost always done at the expense of Europe itself, in a movement that reportedly claims to correct the excess of attention hitherto given to the history of Europe.

To observe Europe in its position with regard to the rest of the world supposes two approaches. One is to compare Europe with other regions. The other is to incorporate within European history the entangled processes that link it to other parts of the world. There is no reason to choose between these two alternative approaches. To be sure, the most valuable scholarly work achieved in recent years partakes of both. From the available studies, we may conclude that Europe, with its colonies and dominions, shares a number of common features with other societies. Such is the case of the socio-political organization based upon a monotheistic religion, with a strong presence, in society, of theology and dogma. Such is the case of social group hierarchy

and the hereditary nature of the positions of individuals within each group. Such is also the case of forced labour: of course, there are considerable differences between different types of constraints, from the most radical servitude to the more or less negotiated forms of un-free labour. In the end, historians note that many essential phenomena that seem to characterize the evolution of European societies are also present in other parts of the world.

Although the writing of history should not be converted into a trial, if one were nevertheless to decide to judge Europe for its colonial action, it would first be necessary to identify what constitutes its specificity when compared with other imperial policies, and also compared with the internal policies within Europe itself. Neither territorial conquest nor the destruction of cities, nor the deportation of populations, nor the religious mission, nor the economics of plunder, nor large scale slavery, nor the institution of racial discrimination between descendants of the conquerors and descendants of the conquered seem specific to European colonial action. On the one hand, other empires, with no connection to European societies, have practised them all. Moreover, European societies have inflicted upon each other, throughout their history, most of these types of actions. Beyond such a general typology, it is important to identify what makes the historical singularity of European colonialism. In a long term period, which that would run from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, three phenomena seem not to find their exact equivalent in the experience of other societies. The first of these is the unparalleled dimension of the destruction of the Amerindian populations, due to the Iberian conquest, which extends far beyond other later genocides of a similar nature (in the United States and Argentina during the nineteenth century, or in Central America during the twentieth century). The second phenomenon is the transatlantic slave trade. Its intensity and brutality truly justify qualifying it retroactively as a crime against humanity. The third is the production of public law and an ideology-based national sovereignty, crystallized around the revolutions of 1848, reactivated through Wilsonian diplomacy at the end of the First World War, and the application of which was duly denied to colonized peoples.

Because we can no longer think of Europe without its colonial and imperial dimensions, a major problem arises. Indeed, one might be tempted to distinguish two kinds of regions: one that forged a land-based or maritime empire (Portugal, Spain, France, England, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Russia) and one that did not experience such a process, at least in early modern times. However, it does seem that common features are as important as significant differences. It is true that only the countries mentioned above experienced the management of populations very different from an ethnic homeland, the former being generally considered inferior in the moving scale of progress towards civilized behaviour. However, other European countries did experience what we could describe as 'internal colonialism', with processes of stigmatization, control, segregation or liquidation of populations, deemed to be as far from the dominant standard as the New World wilderness. The case of gypsies offers an eloquent example.

Moreover, the colonial conquest had no monopoly on the reorganization of the princely or supreme authority. A number of European regions that are nowadays sovereign Nation-States – Norway, Belgium, Bohemia and Moravia, for example – found themselves for lengthy periods of time deprived of all autonomy, their territory and population

being governed and embodied by monarchs who lived far away. Several of these regions had at one point been independent kingdoms (Bohemia and Moravia, Hungary, Scotland, Kingdom of Naples, etc.). It is then quite probably true that a colonial experience abroad had the effect of pushing judges, officers, clergymen and merchants to prioritize social groups according to racial distinction in Europe itself. However it would be wrong to believe that this phenomenon spared countries that did not manage distant colonies. The *Statutes of Kilkenny* in Ireland, in the fourteenth century, owe nothing to an English Atlantic expansion that only took place two centuries later. The separation between German speaking and Slavic or Baltic peoples in the cities of north-eastern Europe is another example. The confinement of Jews in ghettos had no relation to any colonial experience. Finally, returning to a point mentioned above, if it is true that only some European countries were active in the great slave trade, it is nonetheless certain that free labour was everywhere uncommon, if not exceptional.

Does this mean that everything looks the same? No. European countries have shared the same experience of the vanishing of the universalistic horizons carried forth by the Roman Church and the ghost of the Roman Empire. They also experienced the repatriation of political legitimacy around dynastic principalities. This happened long before the birth of Nation-States, based, in theory, on the will and sovereignty of the people.

The following pages will try to present the coherence of Europe in early modern times as a field for historical research, through the process of politicization that took place there. Politics in this case is not concerned about theory. It is concerned about the empirical exercise of government across large territories and populations. The question at stake is the efficiency of authority without which government stability would be permanently threatened. In doing this, I turn my back both on the history of formal institutions and on the history of political philosophy. Europe, in early modern times, refers to the period that begins when political systems – built upon both an aggregation of lordships and the persistence of a universalistic legitimacy (the Church, the Holy Roman Empire) – were in the twilight of their existence. And the period ends before the implementation of the liberal programmes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was the time of self-centred kingdoms and Republics, most of them seeking to become empires in their own right. But this was not yet the time of sovereign Nation-States. Nevertheless, important political processes did take place between the Middle-Ages and the period of Revolutions, and considering Europe as a territorial whole seems to be a better scale to describe them, far better at any rate than the usual national frameworks. The issues this article addresses will thus be the containment of barbarism and civil war; the management of populations; the judgement of society; the art of persuasion; and finally negotiation with dissenters.

The Containment of Barbarism and Civil War

In the first scene of the first part of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, the king claims that the end of the war with the Welsh lords opens the opportunity to resume the crusade against Islam. Civil war and far away expeditions seem to be the two faces of the same

royal duty. In the first part, King Henry proclaims the end of civil war. At the end of the second part, he dies in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey. These are the two symbols of a political authority above all others.

Civil war is very much present in the history of modern politics: it was pervasive in England and Spain during the fifteenth century, during the 'Time of Troubles' in Russia (1598–1613), the Wars of Religion in sixteenth-century France and German speaking territories, the revolts and revolutions throughout Europe in middle of the seventeenth century (France, Britain and Ireland, Portugal, Naples, the Netherlands, Denmark), the Glorious English Revolution of 1688, the War of the Spanish succession (1701–1714). All these episodes dramatically threatened the bases of each society concerned. During the eighteenth century, the stronger shocks came rather from revolts and revolutions taking place in colonies beyond the seas: Tupac Amaru in Peru (1780–1781), British Americans in the 13 colonies (1776–1783), African slaves in Saint-Domingue (1791). Civil war was not a theoretical hypothesis but a real and permanent danger, which erupted at fairly frequent intervals. So its memory remained vivid throughout the Europe of early modern times. The ability to contain civil war was thus the first and foremost foundation of the authority of royal princes (or their Republican equivalents).

Acting as warrior-king, the royal prince dealt a double blow. He showed his capacity to protect an inner territory against outside enemies, while also embodying the most precious values of the aristocratic *milieu* he belonged to: the warrior's valour and the knight's virtues. The ideological model of a war against external enemies was the Crusade. Indeed, the legitimacy of war between Christian princes was constantly at stake and questioned. Since the second half of the seventeenth century, the formalization of diplomatic congresses opened the path to the gradual implementation of Westphalian parameters. They made available a common ideology that might rationally justify war between Christian princes. The balance of power theory, far from turning Europe into a warless area, provided excuses to go to war, especially against powers that dreamed of universal monarchy: Spain, France or Russia. At the same time, the articulation of military action and diplomatic activity fuelled the feeling that external threats were a never-ending reality.

As a direct heritage from medieval Crusades, the expansion by sea or by land (Russia against the Tatars and in Siberia) of Europeans to Africa, America and Asia deeply transformed the foundations of the royal princes' political legitimacy. The colonial endeavour made plausible the ambition of each kingdom to be (or become) an empire that acknowledged no superior authority. Without the distant colonial enterprise, the imperial autonomy of each country was *de facto* contradicted by the powers that shared borders with it. The successes the colonizers met were territorial control, maritime communications and subjugation of conquered peoples (especially in the Americas). These actions, between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, changed the world, replaced the Crusade as a political and spiritual horizon, and diverted part of the military violence outside of Europe. Princes and colonization entrepreneurs mutually supported each other in order to stabilize and strengthen their authority and their ability to command.

The Management of Populations

Othello is described by its tragedy subtitle, as the *Moor of Venice* and not the *Moor in Venice*. This great captain is supposedly Venetian, but he is not really. Has he been a Muslim? Nothing suggests it. Is he black? It is likely, but not certain. His marriage with Desdemona was possible, and nevertheless shocking. Is he *in* or *out*? At any rate, what his personal tragedy shows is that a man responsible for large and widespread military expeditions loses his strength and confidence from the moment when, by the bond of marriage, he becomes a member of a Venetian family. What makes the plot possible is not Othello's difference but his nearly complete integration into Venetian society, while still being a Moor. In a London where Elizabeth I had authorized the expulsion of all '*Blackamoores*', the play thus reflects the importance of 'population definition', by means of their respective characteristics and inherent limitations.

To describe differentiation according to social qualities is the only way to understand differentiation of political functions within a given society. Neither the Gospel call to overthrow social hierarchies, nor the Pauline call for their abolition were implemented in medieval European societies. The end of social-condition differentiations being postponed until the Final Judgment Day, the exercise of the royal prince's authority relied upon the hierarchical composition of those social bodies that made up the community of his subjects, at a time when the very concept of society was still unthinkable. The sustainability of this arrangement was not only based on the exercise of power by the powerful over the dominated. The success of a king also depended on his ability to maintain and impose a certain hierarchy within the community as something natural or as divine design. By guaranteeing the permanence of this order, the king would then meet the main attribute of political power and hold the pillar for its constitution.

Since the fourth Lateran Council (1215) at least, the ability to classify the members of a given community was invested in a function stressing stigmatization. Heresy, dissent or 'accursed races' highlighted suspicious individuals and groups. The regulations adopted by dioceses, cities and other bodies within European kingdoms sought to separate the pure from the impure, or unclean. This had essential implications for the organization of social relations. It developed the simple idea that sins and stains, as well as virtues and valour, were transmitted through heritage and lineage. It perpetuated its consequences, in terms of de facto segregation, by making it difficult if not impossible for a marriage to take place between pure and impure to-be spouses. In the Iberian Peninsula such political process was initiated from the late fourteenth century onwards, especially around the Jewish question. It can be interpreted as the matrix for most of the racial policies later implemented in Europe and in its colonial territories. Everywhere in Europe, the royal prince felt compelled to act as guarantor of the respect for the rules of separation. Such a domestic framework was a major source for the rules later enacted to manage populations living under an overseas colonial system.

The ability to report on the composition of populations, to produce the best possible territorial description, and to know the nature as well as the volume of trade is paramount to evaluating the competence of financial magistrates, the military as

well as the police. Geographical descriptions, the development of population censuses, the collecting of land record information: by observing the progress of these methods, historians can provide the most interesting narrative for the political history of the West. These techniques were designed to improve the knowledge of the royal prince about such topics. The production of these large databases must be understood, first, as an instrument to foresee the effects of taxation decisions. But it also fed the sense of power attributed to the prince by his subjects, because it actually demonstrated his power to rule both his lands and his peoples. The ability to know about citizen-subjects and territories reached a new dimension when, in the eighteenth century, it was backed by the new – and intrusive – design of police administration.

The Judgement of Society

In *The Merchant of Venice*, the Doge of Venice is under obligation to apply the law, or, more precisely, the private agreement contract clauses designed by Shylock. Antonio declares:

> 'The Duke cannot deny the course of law.' (Act III, sc.3)

Also, in the *Comedy of Errors*, the Duke of Ephesus has no choice but to sentence to death the Syracusan merchant Egeon, because he arrived in this town, which is forbidden in principle to all Syracusans. In both cases, the law seems to prevail over the power and will of the prince. In both cases, it is not the absolute authority of the prince that bypasses the law. Only extraordinary circumstances, and the effectiveness of legal quibbling, open, in both plays, the possibility for a happy ending. The authority of the prince, the law and circumstances are thus the three main components of the political heart of a given society: that is to say the exercise of jurisdiction.

Jurisdictio: This is the conceptual and legal matrix on which all regulations ensuring the stability for the exercise of power were built since the late Middle-Ages. An administration was authoritative in so far as it possessed and preserved the ability to arbitrate disputes between parts by tapping into the huge reservoir of legal techniques, in particular the modern commentary on both Roman law and Canon law, and an in-depth experience of jurisprudence. Under the *Ancien Régime*, European communities of citizens were primarily societies of litigants. The ordinary way to make decisions concerning family or social body interests was that of controversial debate, litigation, leading at the end of the process to the final sentence issued by the custodian of the *iurisdictio*. The formalization of conflict was a major instrument used both to drive and reduce it. In this sense, its contribution was essential when it came to keep away the danger of civil war. Magistrates, well trained in the science of cases and regulations, acted as a third court body in dual conflicts. They could deliver sentences on behalf of the royal prince. Nevertheless, they also embodied a dimension of legitimacy that purported to be prior to (and therefore better than) any particular political regime, including monarchy itself.

The 'warrior king' was also the supreme judge of the citizens on whose community he exerted his authority and his power of command. In most European countries, the advice that helped the royal prince to reach his decisions included information and requests that magistrates, cities and lords, holders of local authority, presented to his majesty. It was the counsellors who made the legal classification of cases and defined opinions that might guide the decision, or rather the sentence, of the king about any matter submitted to his judgement. This was actually a two-way operation, because the advice provided gave legal shape to the decisions (already) taken by the king. In every kingdom, magistrates served justice by delegation of the king's own authority. However, rulers did not have control on the training process of the judges to-be. The universities, where law schools operated, escaped their authority almost completely. Moreover, kings could not make or break careers as they pleased. The more-or-less open and legal systems of selling positions of office reinforced the patrimonial nature of judicial offices as a private heritage among and within individual families. In addition, the judicial courts pyramid-like regulation was largely self-managed.

The royal prince, as 'king of justice', would then have to negotiate with the dynasties of magistrates, within a system of mutual support and assistance. The authority of the supreme command holder was not so great that it could enjoy a complete monopoly for the production of legal rules. In almost all European countries in early modern times, such a feature was shared with judges and legal specialists, but also with theologians. On the one hand, this sharing might appear to present-day eyes as a show of weakness. On the other hand, the slow consolidation of a mechanism to formalize the rules of political action helped to distinguish a given order, even if it was an unfair one, from disorder. Because laws formally governed them, institutional actions eventually became cumulative. Occasional jolts could at times seem to cancel, for a while, the establishment of political stability, particularly during episodes of political turmoil. However, in the long run, the formalization of political decisions and the science of situation qualifications that arose within the communities themselves proved to be key factors that ensured the permanence of government systems and consolidated the rulers' authority. The 'empire of papers' that Philip II of Spain managed from his study, spreading his royal will throughout his gigantic monarchy, provided the example to be followed in early modern times by kings all over Europe.

The Art of Persuasion

To denounce the false pretence of power, the court deceit and the comedy of princely virtue, young Hamlet uses a troupe of actors who perform before the king and queen a play that purportedly will tell the truth in an environment full of lies. The truth is on stage, whereas lies pervade the whole royal palace. The play within the play acts as a magnifier for the reality of the big royal theatre. It suggests that the legitimacy and authority of the king entirely depend on the show of royal Majesty. The crown and regalia, the ceremonies, the court etiquette, the wedding of Claudius and Gertrude, and so on: all these objects, exhibitions and performances strengthen the actual power

of 'rotten Denmark's' king. Authority requires not only obedience, but also the acceptance and recognition that the power involved is legitimate. Vassals must share the same spiritual horizon, they must be touched by the staging of power.

From the start, the community of the king's subjects, considered as a whole, or as the aggregation of different groups of people interacting in everyday life, was referred to as a 'community of believers'. The fact that communities of believers pertaining to other faiths were resident in European kingdoms, notably Jews and Muslims, did not change the fact that the constitution of the political community was of an ecclesiastical nature. The capacity to frame the people and the power of conviction, which churches proved capable of achieving in early modern times, clearly show that this dimension of social life, essential during the medieval times, was not abolished after the Renaissance. Many astrologers had noted that Martin Luther and Hernán Cortés were born the same year, in 1483. They concluded that the former announced the ageing of Christianity in Europe, while the latter made possible its regeneration in the Americas. This type of image played a major part throughout the early modern era in legitimizing and delegitimizing political authorities. Depending on the circumstances, it also happened many times that the altar did defy the throne, in Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox societies. But overall, the clerical ideology proved to be a very efficient companion to the propaganda that legitimized the royal princes' authority. The sacral presence (unction, thaumaturgies, clerical entourages) played an important role in the staging of kings as providential men, or divine beings. However, during major religious crises (Lutheran and Calvinist reforms, the Russian Old Believers schism) churches could also play a part in delegitimizing and destabilizing royal authority.

Great prose, epic poetry, treatises on princely virtues, sacred oratory, religious ceremonies, triumphal entries, live performances and ephemeral architecture, painting, sculptures, medals, music, ballet, architecture, artistic gardens: there were so many resources available to royal princes in order to persuade their subjects about the irrevocable evidence of their majestic authority. Thus, most modes of artistic expression have actually been political tools. In early modern times, the social type of the individual and autonomous creator, footloose to any patronage and control systems, is an exception. This is why, in spite of the reverence that major works of thought and of great aesthetic achievements deserve, we should not hesitate to include a large part of this production under the category of propaganda. At the same time, there is an open question: what are the treatises on political authority sources of? Do they help historians understand the origins of government institutions and practices, or do they merely show ideological and rhetorical programmes to legitimize power?

The previous question is central since most of the early modern European regimes were unable to open the path to the modern freedoms of opinion, reunion and publishing. The printing and engraving techniques, which actually accompanied the formation of modern politics, aroused fears and questions. Very early on, the magistrates were anxious about the possibility of mechanically reproducing pages considered dangerous for the stability of political order, or simply inept, faulty or poor in quality. The *Indexes* elaborated by the Holy See and the Inquisition courts offer full-scale

examples of how authorities in charge of the supervision of people's minds and beliefs scrutinized the production of printing companies. This censorship regime was not able, however, to scrutinize the entire traffic of written pieces in societies where printed materials had never entirely removed the manuscript form and in areas where counterfeiting and smuggling books were massive activities. In countries where censorship was locking the exchange of ideas too harshly, its bypassing reduced the legitimacy of the kings' authority, all the more considering that the *Indexes* could ban works that were neither about politics nor about religious dogma.

To Negotiate with Dependents, Dissenters and Rebels

In Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, the eponymous character refuses the social contract upon which the Roman republic is based. That is to say, he rejects a sort of compromise with the people, a compromise that truly represents a fall into demagogy, at least for this knight who defends aristocratic values. Coherently, he refuses the leadership that the people are ready to give him, on condition that he must first require it from them. By rejecting the common rules, he achieves his own misfortune. But another Shakespearean tragic figure goes even further. King Lear decides to be king no longer. His refusal causes a general disruption of the entire society. The ingratitude of two of his daughters and the terrible avalanche of murder and desolation that follows show that we cannot undo legitimate command with impunity. Both Lear and Coriolanus clearly show that, for the Globe theatre audiences, the resignation of characters who must exercise power was a source of great anxiety.

Royal princes never wished to undo the aristocratic matrix from which they sprang, even though they occasionally had to face rivals within that environment during periods of royal authority weakness (minorities, regency periods, civil revolts). The circles of the first nobility (direct relatives of the prince, legitimized bastards, dukes and peers, grandees, boyars, etc.) would have to acknowledge the legitimacy of the royal prince otherwise the conditions of civil peace would not be met. Clients and sub-clients could then be directed toward this first circle of obedience. The acceptance of the existing political order was based on a set of dependency relations and contractual relationships, backed in turn by trade flows of material and symbolic goods. The community of subjects was not made up of a society of individual citizens, holders of political rights. The inclusion of individuals in society was achieved through family ties and alliances, positions of dependency and patronage capabilities, as well as by forms of cross allegiances. This organic web was also a global communications system. It opened the path to the in-depth embracing and credibility of royal ideology into the entire social body.

Classical economics postulates that every individual wishes to maximize his/her gains. Political history exclusively observes the future of ambitious individuals. Some get their way, others fail, but all are deemed to have sought to increase their ability to command. However, in early modern times, the holders of bits of authority and persons trained to hold offices, sometimes refused to take the plunge. Jansenist lawyers in Richelieu's time offer a good example. The resignation of Queen Christina of

Sweden is another fascinating example. Many people who were expected to seek important positions in the chain of political command didn't do so. The reasons for their withdrawal could be spiritual, financial, medical, psychological, and also political. A history of early modern politics must take into account this blind spot in the way we look at the past. This dimension of the issue can draw a prehistory of pluralism that is not limited to the contrasting couple: obedience/disobedience. Dissent and denial are two positions that defy the authority of the royal prince, but without necessarily engaging in battle against him. They were amongst the most important sources of political tensions throughout Europe in the early modern age. These kinds of phenomena proved to be of particular concern for royal princes in their distant overseas dominions and colonies, where new Euro-creole societies developed, albeit at a very slow pace, their specific local foundations.

Dissent can take many forms. For example, the English Puritans of the first half of the seventeenth century, and later the Quakers, whose rejection of monarchical order resulted in prominent colonial activity and in the preparation for rebuilding a Christian society on improved moral grounds. The conditional nature of obedience, despite the royal propaganda trying to deny it, could be reactivated in times and circumstances of tensions or crises. This duty of obedience could then collapse among entire communities. The impulse towards dissent was not one-way, or exclusively top-down or bottom-up. One cannot, in fact, reduce the temptation of rebellion either to the narrow circle of quarrel protagonists in the palace, or to the expectations of a miserable population to improve its condition. The causes for the denial of obedience could also be fairly strong among oligarchic municipalities, corporations, or jurisdictions, such as high courts and parliaments. The decision to burst into revolt faced the prohibition of treason against the king and reactivated the fear of civil war. Therefore, the threat of uprising could carry even more weight than its actual achievement, either in local politics or even in the entire community of the royal prince's subjects. In this sense, if it is true that the containment of civil war could be viewed as the entry threshold into modern politics, the memory of the risk of falling back into troubled times continued to act in the background, as the reminiscence of a danger that was never fully exorcised.

The containment of barbarism and civil war; the management of populations; the judgement of society; the art of persuasion; and finally negotiation with dissenters: all these processes were launched in European countries between the late Middle-Ages and the explosion of liberal Revolutions, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. These processes managed to frame between countries, with strong shades of difference but also with strong similarities, a general mechanism of political authority stabilization in the absence of the new public law that these Revolutions created. These five pillars did support, to a greater or lesser extent, the political organization of all European countries. These experiences proved to be highly familiar, or at least recognizable, from area to area, in Europe. The question now, therefore, is *not* whether one can write a history of Europe, that is to say, a historical narrative that reflects the mutual intelligibility of the political process between European societies. The actual question would be: are these processes, described in order to understand the European socio-political systems, exclusively European?

Are they specifically European? To answer these questions, we must first ensure that other societies have produced, and especially preserved, the archives of their own past, in proportions that may enable a comparison between Europe and these other areas. When these archives exist, it is of course possible to make comparisons. The result, one imagines, may be ambivalent: some phenomena have been present in Europe and elsewhere; other phenomena have been present only in Europe. Therefore, the formula for Europe, in a mathematical sense, probably has no exact equivalent elsewhere. This can be explained calmly, without the risk of indulging in ethnocentrism. The heads of European political systems in the early modern era were always aware of the relative fragility of their power, and even of their authority, including when they imagined that God had granted it to them. Such mixture of pride and worry also characterized the attitude of Europeans away from home. Those conquerors, missionaries, settlers, merchants from Europe, established all around the world, carried abroad this mixture of pride and concern. During the last five centuries, a permanent and pervasive ambivalence about strength and weakness, dogma and doubts, spirit of conquest and fear of degeneracy, has truly contributed to shaping Europe as an area with a specific political and cultural system.

About the Author

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How to Write the History of Europe?
A Response (I)

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Jean-Frédéric Schaub argued some 20 years ago that the History of Europe, as it was then understood, was excessively Eurocentric and he wished to place the achievements of Europe and Europeans in a global context in the hope of isolating both what was unique and what was repugnant about the role of Europeans in

shaping the world. Today, he is convinced that a new History of Europe is even more urgently required both on intellectual grounds and because he considers that historians have political obligations, as citizens of Europe, to compose a narrative that will identify quintessentially European contributions to the improvement of the human condition from which all citizens of Europe will derive some satisfaction.

Schaub's own research on the early modern centuries leads to the conclusion that the four principal contributions then made by Europeans to the promotion of more civilized living were: (1) 'the containment of barbarism and civil war', by which he means the formulation of agreed procedures to contain destructive behaviour and civil conflict; (2) 'the management of populations', by which he means the recognition that one essential role of government should be to educate and manage populations more efficiently and equitably; (3) 'the judgement of society', by which he means the formalization of legal procedures to guide political decisions; (4) 'the art of persuasion', by which he means the adoption of the idea that the decisions of rulers should be subject to public scrutiny and criticism; and (5) 'negotiation with dissenters', by which he means acceptance of procedures by which dissidents and even former rebels might become absorbed into the political mainstream.

Other historians may wish to add to these European contributions and may point to occasions when some Europeans acted in flagrant breach of such agreed principles and procedures. Such interventions would obviously give rise to animated academic debate concerning the place of Europe in the world today. Should this occur, Schaub and his respondents will be well on their way to constructing a history of Europe to meet their needs. In this way he, together with both his critics and collaborators, may even ease 'the political tensions' to which, he believes, 'historians are subjected', by providing a counter narrative to the 'nationalist fantasies' and fabricated traditions encouraged by the promoters of populist movements in many European countries today.

While lauding Professor Schaub's ambition to promote truth and to discredit fantasies, I do not share his optimism that he will easily succeed in displacing one narrative with another, because his adversaries are not only the propagandists of populist movements but also the governments of several European countries and the managers of several of Europe's television networks. This becomes apparent when one considers that most historical enterprises being funded, written about and taught throughout Europe are nationally rather than continentally conceived. This seems particularly true of political history, but the problem extends to economic and social history where authors continue to write of the Italian Renaissance or French Absolutism of the English Industrial Revolution as if these were self-contained subjects. Then, when it comes to the endeavours of Europeans overseas, authors still refer to such entities as the French Atlantic, or the Dutch sea-borne Empire or the second British Empire, again as if each was an autonomous unit. Moreover when historians of particular European countries invoke such apparently universal concepts as 'Feudalism', or 'The Reformation' or 'The Enlightenment' they frequently limit their assessments to the configuration that such movements assumed in

particular countries. The governments of the several countries of the European Union seem happy with this and they sometimes intervene to shape a historical agenda by subsidizing the commemoration of anniversaries with a bearing on national histories.

If this critique holds true of academic history it is more valid for much of the history being presented on our television screens, which is altogether more influential than anything that takes place in the classroom or in the pages of learned journals. In the Anglophone world, we find that when even sophisticated historians, such as Simon Schama and David Starkey, are offered access to television screens, they refrain from challenging their audiences with the fresh perspectives on closely-studied subjects that they, as professionals, are certainly familiar, in favour of offering re-packaged versions of national grand narratives. This suggests that their priority, or that of their producers, is to secure and retain popular audiences by confirming rather than challenging that with which they became familiar at school, regardless of how limited such knowledge of the past might be.

I would suggest that these realities make it apparent that if Schaub wishes to have his 'History of Europe' displace the many national grand narratives that continue to be encouraged throughout Europe today, and not only by populists, he will require funding to promote what he favours in the lecture halls, classrooms and television screens of Europe. Should this support come from a European Commission as part of its endeavour to counter the populist ideas that threaten its very existence, he runs the risk of being accused of authoring an 'official' History of Europe that is no less teleological than the many national grand narratives it is seeking to displace.

These points combine to sustain my argument that it is national histories, rather than a European history of any kind, which are most firmly entrenched in the educational system of European countries today, as well as in the popular imagination of most Europeans. However, the most potent philosophical objection to national history that has been raised – that nation states are arbitrary creations and that their histories are necessarily teleological – is more likely to be sustained most readily by the slow tortuous endeavour of historians to explain how people – including people from Europe – have created, confronted and even resolved problems that are of global consequence, than by any effort to have a new orthodoxy displace the one being challenged.

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How to Write the History of Europe?
A Response (II)

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Jean-Frédéric Schaub's text is an excellent proposal to make the general public aware of the dangers of anachronism when writing the history of Europe. By stressing Early Modern Europe's political, juridical and social fabric, his proposal differs from the nation state narrative. In so doing, he relativizes the present, as well as some of the ideas that abort a new history of Europe, in particular narratives based on the nation state. This is most welcome.

I wonder, however, if we historians are not too worried about fashions, schools and desires for academic originality. More important, however, is a 'coherent narrative of the European past' what we really need? Is it a priority to look for what makes us – or, for example, 'the political process between European societies' – 'exclusively European'? All this could be interesting but may take us back to the dramas to which we contributed when we built national narratives. Furthermore, some of the comparisons can be tautological: one takes aprioristic definitions of Europe (its supposed borders or main features) to make comparisons. But do we explain Europe or rather our aprioristic construction? In other words, is Europe the right unit of comparison? I am afraid we are obliged to use that unit of comparison if we want to understand 'exclusiveness'. But is it the right choice?

We historians should perhaps be more modest than we usually are. We can speak about the people who have populated for millennia the area that we today call Europe and whose borders are movable (or simply non-existent) and fluctuate even today. We can research cross-border commonalities, shared experiences, transfer of knowledge and social practices or even conflicts in that space (whatever type of border one wants to take), which are crucial for the understanding of the present. We can deconstruct many myths and prejudices – comparisons are a good tool – always rooted in wrong views of the past and that impede solidarity and reciprocity among European peoples and between them and non-Europeans. We can speak of wars – the most entangled phenomenon, by the way – not as victories of the nations and European metropolis, but as suffering for many people. We need to speak of processes of economic integration by also stressing their role in the making up of identities. We can remind the public about the advances that we have received from other civilizations and the fruitful exchanges among them. We can also make global comparisons – not necessarily taking 'Europe' as a unit for comparison – to understand not what

makes us Europeans different, but what make us a part of a community call Humanity.

We do not need to tell citizens what Europe is or should be. But we can give them insights into the past to help make decisions for the future. Maybe this is what many historians do. That would be good news. But is it what we are transmitting to the public?

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How to Write the History of Europe? A response (III): Europe and the Experience of Totalitarianisms

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I would like to propose six reflections in response to the question of 'how to write Europe's history?'

(1) First and foremost, Europe's history should be seen from the perspective of the European centre as well as its peripheries. In the words of a Polish historian, Jerzy Jedlicki, peripheries are those territories which, from a civilizational point of view, take more from the centre than they offer. Yet Europe's history must be seen integrally, and thus cannot afford to disregard the fate of those smaller nations at the periphery of European civilisation. They have the right to their proper place in all narratives of Europe's community, even if this very fact is at times forgotten when her history is written (to mention only Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's synthesis of Europe's history, which in essence treats only that part of the continent stretched between the Atlantic and the Elbe).

(2)   The twentieth century is a period of a complicated modernization process. Yet its narrative should not be construed with disregard for the historic identity of individual nations. Their uniqueness, be it in culture or religion, must be properly taken into account.

(3)   Undeniably, the experience and remembrance of totalitarianisms is central to twentieth-century Europe. That remembrance must reflect both totalitarianisms – Soviet and Nazi – equally. As evidenced by the considerations that arose in the context of European Parliament's initiative of the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism observed on 23 August – regrettably it is with much difficulties that this view, so clear for the nations of Central-Eastern Europe, is being widely recognized. For those nations, the year of 1945 did not usher freedom, but 'defeat in victory' – a term coined by the Polish Ambassador to Washington during the Second World War, Jan Ciechanowski. Hitlerite and Soviet totalitarianisms were '*les jumeaux "malins" du deuxième millénaire*', to use the phrase from the title of an article by a renowned French historian, Pierre Chaunu. The call for a single approach to different forms of totalitarianism is very much needed in historiography. In 1939, that *annus terribilis*, Hitler found in Stalin a true partner in waging a war of total destruction – 'a partner equally willing to dispose of foreign territories' – as a German historian, Martin Broszat, observed. It led to the 'Hitlerite way of thinking in terms of distinguished spheres of interests over vast territories, which Hitler tried to offer to the English to no avail – was met with reciprocity'. This in turn 'undeniably was a strong stimulus and incentive to undertake the implementation of the national-socialist concept of a new territorial and population-related order on a grand scale.'

(4)   The memory of the twentieth century holds in focus the two world wars and the two totalitarianisms, all of which turned, in particular, Poland's territories into what Timothy Snyder referred to as 'bloodlands'. Yet it should not be forgotten that the century also brought the collapse of empires and the creation of nation states in the aftermath of the Great War (1914–1918). The twentieth century also gave birth to the phenomenon of the European community and the centrality of human rights.

(5)   As argued by Polish historian Oskar Halecki in *The Limits and Divisions in European History* (1950), in the course of the twentieth century, 'the European age' was succeeded by 'the Atlantic age'. This created a very particular bond, founded on the respect of human rights, between North America and Europe free from communist totalitarianism. This particular novelty brought unprecedented prosperity to Western Europe in the latter half of the twentieth century. It gave a new dimension to the argument that 'the idea of freedom lies as the very fundament of Europe', to use Halecki's words.

(6)   And last but not least, no narrative of Europe's past can disregard the recollection of the creative significance of Christianity. This does not

mean accepting a faith-oriented perspective on history. Christianity was, after all, 'the first and most important teacher for those living in Europe' (as Krzysztof Pomian argues). Thus, 'regardless of whether a believer or a non-believer, or what faith one practices, in that respect in which one is a European, one is necessarily an heir to Christian legacy.' The twentieth century brought an unprecedented decline of Christianity. And both totalitarianisms appeared as a sign of its erosion.

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European History Written from the Perspective of Ancient Empires

Can We Write a History of Europe from the Perspective of Classical Antiquity?

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Can we write a history of Europe from the perspective of classical antiquity? The short answer is no.

Europe is not an eternal or trans-historical entity, nor is it in any sense natural. It is a human creation with a history that had barely begun in the classical period. The tri-continental schema of Greek geographers, in which Europe was opposed to Africa and Asia, was just one of many ways of dividing up the world. Roman

conquerors adopted the titles *Africanus* and *Asiaticus* (but not *Europeanus*) to cele-brate exaggerated victories. No sense is ever conveyed of a European identity that united Celts, Germans, Iberians and Thracians with the inhabitants of Italy and Greece and distinguished them from the inhabitants of the Mediterranean's southern or eastern hinterlands.

The Mediterranean is the second obstacle to giving Europe a classical antiquity of its own. Henri Pirenne argued for an epochal shift from a united classical Mediterranean to one sundered by the Arab Conquests. This tells us something of how some Europeans imagined their unity in the first part of the twentieth century (*Mahomet et Charlemagne* appeared in 1937) but historians and archaeologists are now well aware of how much still connected the Mediterranean throughout the Middle Ages. Byzantium, the Frankish West and the Caliphate have been described by Judith Herrin as 'the three heirs of Rome'. Horden and Purcell in *The Corrupting Sea* remind us there have been few places in the Mediterranean World that have not at one time of another been pagan, Christian and Islamic.

This common history poses huge problems for any project of creating a history of classical Europe. Not only it impossible to write a history of the Middle Sea's northern shores without reference to the south. It is equally hard to frame narratives or research questions equally applicable to the complex literate societies of the south and to those of northern Europe that are known only from their material culture.

Pre-classical Europe is another matter. The long western extrusion of Eurasia had a common prehistory in which periods of glaciation alternating with milder periods have reduced and expanded the range of living species, our own among them. Europe has a prehistory that may be written in the arrival and disappearance of successive early humans, and more recently in the spread of, first, agriculture, then metallurgies and other innovations from their various central Eurasian points of invention. This history could be told in parallel to those histories of other peripheries of the Old World, such as the Indian Subcontinent and the Far East. Cunliffe's *Between the Oceans* is a vivid experiment in writing at that scale. This prehistory is geological and climatological, ecological and technological but not cultural or political. It will offer no comfort to those today seeking to limit movement from north to south, or to fix an eastern boundary to liberal democracy. Looking this far back is a salutary reminder of the modernity and contingency of Europe.

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European History Written from the Perspective of Ancient Empires

A History of Religion Perspective on Europe

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Religion is one of the topics that feature prominently in the reflections on a history of Europe that is, on the one hand, comparative with regard to other regions and, on the other, inclusive with regard to the entanglements with the world around Europe (Jean-Frédéric Schaub). This is not fortuitous. Historically, the geographical concept of 'Europe' as defining one of the sides of the Aegean triangle and the political concept of 'religions' stem from the same (European) intellectual space.

But there is more to the combination. 'Religions', as they have come to be understood in the course of two millennia, have and are seen to have a very intimate relationship with the political building blocks that have formed Europe in the same discourse; that is, cities and nations. The fluidity of openly acknowledged and venerated polytheistic gods have accompanied and stabilized the distributed hierarchies of many urban formations around the Mediterranean in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Developing that pattern, the shared and obligatory belief in one god had secured monocratic hierarchies as well as enforced consensus in medieval cities. Modelled on and combining these alternative patterns, confessionalization and nation-building reinforced each other at least conceptually: on the ground, the sharpening of the concepts promoted conflict as least as frequently as unity. The religiously (and not tyrannically) united city and the religion conforming to a nation state became models for political export and the reconstruction of the past as well as lenses for anthropological analysis. As a consequence, 'Europe' has been equated with a growing (Late Antiquity), shrinking (Arabic expansion), growing again (*Reconquista*) and confessionally divided (Reformation, Latin versus Orthodox Christianity) space within the continent.

But there is more to the combination. If the history of the concept of a religion (that is visible and a factor only in its manifestation as 'religions') and its historiographical use call for deconstruction as much as the diagnosis of exceptionalism, another take on religion can offer much for the research programme as outlined here. Religious practices shared across European regions and confessional divides and

classified as folk belief, divination, magic, self-enhancement and rituals, but also sounds and images, which taken together shape people's attitudes and habits to self, other and world (and hence are a constant concern of politics and religious organizations), are a valuable dimension of any historiography of Europe. Likewise, religious ideas have travelled across Eurasia for millennia. The extra-European origins of most of the motifs dominant today remind us of entanglement and of the historical variability of the very circumscription of 'Europe', a term used not to describe, but to constitute differences within a larger empire.

Acknowledgements

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Jörg Rüpke is professor of comparative religions at the University of Erfurt. His latest publications include: *On Roman Religion: Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2016); *Pantheon: Geschichte der antiken Religionen* (München: Beck, 2016); and *Religious Deviance in the Roman World: Superstition or Individuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

European History Written from the Perspective of the Holy Roman Empire/Habsburg Monarchy

Writing the History of Europe from the Perspective of the Holy Roman Empire/Habsburg Monarchy

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To write a history of the Habsburg Monarchy (1526–1918) and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867–1918) respectively, in my opinion, is only possible within a European perspective, because the main features and main elements of the history of these political entities are European ones. To mention some of them:

- Between 1556 and the breakup of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, the common monarch of the kingdoms and countries of the composite monarchy of the Austrian or German branch of the House of Austria, i.e. of the Habsburg dynasty, in Central Europe was, with a short interruption (1742–1745), always at the same time Holy Roman Emperor (to be precise: from 1745 until 1780, the successive Holy Roman Emperors Francis I and Joseph II in the Habsburg hereditary lands were only co-regents, respectively, of their wife and mother 'Empress' Maria Theresa).
- Between 1815 and 1866, large parts of the Austrian Empire, proclaimed in 1804 by Emperor Francis II, belonged to the German Confederation.
- Between 1526 and 1700 the composite monarchies of the Austrian Branch and the Spanish Branch of the House of Austria formed, as Arno Strohmeyer aptly put it, a common 'dynastic agglomeration', encompassing substantial parts of Central, Western, Southern, Northern and East Central Europe as well as the overseas territories of the Spanish Monarchy.
- With regard to foreign affairs and international relations, in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, up to the famous *renversement des alliances* of 1756, as well as in the era of the French Revolution and the

Napoleonic Era and in the second half of nineteenth century and during the early decades of the twentieth century, France served as a 'hereditary enemy' of the Habsburg Monarchy.

- From the fifteenth century onwards, especially since the battle of Mohács in 1526 and the first siege of Vienna in 1529, at least until the Peace Treaty of Belgrade in 1739 and again during the Russian-Austrian Ottoman War from 1787 until 1791/92, the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire were in a more or less permanent state of (hot or cold) war. Large parts of the later Habsburg Monarchy were former Ottoman territory or a former Ottoman vassal state. Surprisingly enough, from this point of view, during the First World War, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were military allies.
- Starting with the Crimean War and especially from the Congress of Berlin in 1878 until 1914, an increasing rivalry between Russia and the Habsburg Monarchy at the Balkans was developing.
- The Habsburg Monarchy played a crucial role in the history of the Italian Unification or the Risorgimento between 1815 and 1866/1871/1919 as well as in the history of the (temporary) unification of the south-Slavic people.
- After 1868, the Austrian province of Galicia was gradually transformed into a Polish Piedmont – and it became a Ukrainian Piedmont, too.

In some respect, to also write a history of the successor states of Austria-Hungary in the decades following the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, including the Republic of Austria and the Kingdom or Regency of Hungary, is only possible or at least reasonable within a European perspective and having in mind the common Habsburg legacy of Central Europe and large parts of East Central Europe – as Swiss historian Carlo Moos recently reminded us in his book, *Habsburg post mortem. Betrachtungen zum Weiterleben der Habsburgermonarchie*. Distinctive of the Habsburg Monarchy was a striking cultural and ethnic heterogeneity. This diversity was ended in the twentieth century by the 'extermination of Jews, expulsion of Germans and many other exercises in ethnic cleansing' (Alexei Miller).

Finally, I would like to call attention to the concept of historical regions, developed by Oscar Halecki, Jenő Szűcs, Hugh Seton-Watson, Piotr S. Wandycz and others not least with regard to the territory covered by the (former) Habsburg Monarchy. I am confident that the concept of historical regions, such as Central Europe and East Central Europe 'with borderlands, transitional zones instead of clearly cut state borders' (Alexei Miller), can still serve as an efficient – not exclusive but additional – instrument for analysing and narrating the history of the States, countries, peoples and cultures in different parts of Europe and in a comparative perspective.

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Quellen zur Verwaltung und Bewirtschaftung eines Herrschaftskomplexes und zur Reglementierung des Lebens der Untertanen durch einen adeligen Grundherrn sowie zur Organisation des Hofstaats und der Kanzlei eines 'Neufürsten' in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Fontes rerum Austriacarum, 3. Abt.: Fontes Iuris, Bd. 19, 2008) and *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht. Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, vol. 2 of *Österreichische Geschichte 1522-1699* (Wien 2003).

European History Written from the Perspective of the Holy Roman Empire/Habsburg Monarchy

Resilience – A New Paradigm in the Historical Sciences

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Reflecting nowadays on new methodical approaches in the German historical sciences, one will inevitably come across *resilience* as a novel concept or research paradigm. However, it has only been in the last three years that historians have started to discuss the new concept of resilience more intensively; before then, it had scarcely found expression in historical research. Nevertheless, it is a concept that has been part of scientific discussions for about 40 years: the American ecologist C.S. Holling described the phenomenon for the first time in 1973 and established a fundamental concept of environmental research, which since then has become part of the standard repertoire of all relevant areas of sciences. Resilience is understood, in principle, as the systemic resistance to disturbances and changes, comprising its result as well as the processes of adjusting, learning, innovating and transforming leading to this goal. Since the latest financial crisis of 2007, the concept of resilience has been of particular interest to economists. After all, it offers both macro and micro economies an approach for better pulling through crises situations or disruptive events or even for coming out of them stronger.

Now, what is so interesting for historians about it? Above all, the concept of resilience has entered German historical sciences via sociology. Not only economic

historians, but historians in general often analyse complex adaptive systems – cities and regions, enterprises, political institutions, etc. – which, because of their constitutive characteristics, seem ideally suited for the analysis of processes of resilience and anything related to it. Such systems are not deterministic, not foreseeable, not mechanistic, not systematic, but systemic. We do not know how such systems react to crises situations, and this attracts the interest of researchers. That is why the terms and conditions for the interplay of stabilizing and destabilizing variables, which influence such a system, can and should be examined. Such variables provide for persistence, meaning, in other words, that such a system maintains a certain constellation of elements and structures despite the variation of elements and the system's environment. Although the maintenance of an existing, or the achievement of a new, condition of equilibrium of the analysed system plays an important role, the examination of resilience is not only concerned with stability. In fact, it is concerned most importantly with change and emergence as its normal state, with periods of slower, faster and sudden change in space and time. The focus lies on the dynamics, risks and chances that arise from disturbances of the system for its re-orientation. In the end, to understand systemic resilience means to dive ethnographically into a culture and appropriate it from within as one's specific habitat – after all, this is a genuine interest of the historian. So I am convinced that the paradigm of resilience has much to offer to the historical sciences and that it represents a concept we can use, through methodical reflection, to participate intensively in contemporary social policy discussions.

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European History Written from Outside: Iberian and Other Empires

Writing the History of Europe from an Iberian Imperial Perspective

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It has often been stated that, in many respects, America – particularly in its Caribbean reality – represents a microcosm of Europe, with several improvements that result from the connections between both sides of the Atlantic, developed since the end of the fifteenth century and underlined by the population movements between the Old Worlds and the New.

One of these 'improvements' is that of a permanent ground for spiritual and political utopia, from the millennium-based theories of a new Kingdom of Heaven in the Tropics, present since the arrival of Christopher Columbus at the shores of the present-day Bahamas archipelago, to the achievement of a generalized independent republican system of government from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards – with the exceptions of the remaining colonial territories and, until 1889, of Brazil.

Another one of these 'improvements' has been the actual creation, through crossbreeding, of a genuine 'cosmic race', truly representing the blending of all – or practically all – the components of the human species: America becomes, therefore, the true crucible of an 'integrated' world-to-be.

Together with the achievement of utopia and the realization of a human melting pot, the American model is also that of an intended renewed urban model: cities with a notion of rational space organization and availability of public facilities, within a dwelling structure that duly reproduces the actual hierarchical structure of society. The American world can be conceived, above all, as re-dimensioned urban world.

Finally, from the start, America has been seen as the mythical continent of boundless wealth, both in terms of its territorial extension and of the riches its soil and subsoil may harbour. Its strategic position between two Oceans will confer the New World a privileged participation in the international trade routes of the 'First Globalization', from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century: precious metals, commodities, labour, knowledge and techniques. As Serge Gruzinski fascinatingly described it: the building of Mexico City's metropolitan cathedral, particularly in its initial stage (1571–1667), was a major multinational endeavour.

But America, far from being just a mere reflection of a European image, has also dynamically shaped the evolution of the Old World and, consequently, the way in which its history may readily be approached. Apart from the obvious economic upheavals derived from the arrival of the 'American treasure' to its shores, Europe was also deeply modified in its agricultural landscape as well as in its eating and social habits by the acclimation and adoption of new products: tobacco, sugar, Indian corn; or, later on, potatoes and tomatoes, among many others. The extensive use of one of the varieties American originated chili pepper has even become, as in the case of Hungarian paprika (*Capsicum annuum*), a true component of the country's present-day national identity.

If Europe has truly lived an age of unquestioned imperialism, not only directed towards the 'extreme Western hemisphere', it might be useful to remember that such an age was not merely a process of centrifugal expansion. The American reality, in this case, was also a proper experimental ground for new political theories, or for the mere problems of national State formation, which became pressing issues for the Old Worlds in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The reversing population trends which, within the past few decades, have turned Europe into a continent of immigrants from abroad, inevitably bring forth the issue of major cross-breeding. Europe, in a few years, will undoubtedly produce its own new 'cosmic race'.

It is therefore essential, if a renewed European history is to be written outside the narrow bounds of past provincialisms, that a global perspective be achieved, a perspective that would not reduce colonial expansion – in this case towards the Americas – to the mere imposition of a foreign rule on defeated and passive peoples. A colonial process is, more often than not, a dynamic and interactive phenomenon which, in the long run, may fundamentally alter the identity of both the colonizer and the colonized.

About the Author

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The Dutch Empire in European History

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Formally, the Dutch empire did not exist before 1791 and 1795, the years when the Dutch government inherited the possessions of the bankrupt Dutch West and East India Companies. Before those years, the Dutch overseas empire was conquered and administered by these and other private companies. In addition, in none of the other empires was there such a high percentage of foreign nationals, and the same applied to the Dutch merchant marine, agriculture and urban industries at home. In Asia, the Dutch might have been the most important European trading nation, but the Dutch formal influence was limited to a set of trading establishments. In Africa, the same situation applied, albeit that in the only Dutch settlement colony at the Cape the number of settlers (half of them non-Dutch) was growing against the wishes of the Directors of the Dutch East India Company. In the New World, the Dutch West India Company started out as a privateering company and attempts to settle part of the North American East coast were short-lived, particularly since after 60 years the Dutch settlement was conquered by the English. An attempt to obtain part of Portuguese Brazil also had to be aborted. In the end, the Dutch were only able to hold on to a number of small Caribbean islands and a string of plantation colonies on the South American mainland.

Not only overseas but also in Europe did the history of the Dutch deviate from the general European historical pattern between 1500 and 1800. The Low Countries were not a monarchy, but a republic, governed by representatives of the seven constituent states. The internal democracy of each of these states differed widely but, in the most important one, Holland, the city elites were in charge. No warrior-king, but well-to-do burghers decided the fate of the country. As there was no king and almost no nobility who might feel adverse to the religious divisions among the population, the Dutch republic became a haven for persecuted European minorities, despite the fact that only those who were members of the Dutch Reformed Church could hold public office. As long as they paid an extra tax and did not give offence, religious minorities such as the Roman Catholics, Lutherans or Jews would not be persecuted. If one city or state became too strict, it was always possible to move to another with a more lenient regime. Such informal arrangements precluded civil war. The only authority that bore some resemblance to a king was the '*stadhouder*', the commander-in-chief of the army and the head of the daily government. For his appointment, he depended on the Estates-General (i.e. the representatives of the seven states) and it so happened there were several decades without such a functionary.

Last, but not least, the Dutch economy deviated from that of its neighbours because of the relatively important share in the National Income generated by inter-

European and inter-continental trade, and because of the commercial nature of its agriculture and the large number of foreign labour migrants. Some of these features seemed to make the Dutch economy and society more akin to that of nineteenth-century Europe, while its links to the overseas world in fact resembled the trading networks of present-day Europe.

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New Perspectives to the History of Europe

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This brief article presents some notes on how 'other' discourses and historiographies, outside Europe, contribute new perspectives to the history of Europe. It follows the assumption that 'we can no longer think of Europe without its colonial and imperial dimensions' – a topic aptly dealt with in Jean-Frédéric Schaub's article.

It argues that, to some extent, the vision proposed by non-European historiography reinforced the construction of a vision of 'Europe'. 'Other' historiographies, based on other sources and perspectives, created the idea of the European colonizers and European colonialism as a common space of analysis. As contentious as it could be, this might have contributed to counteracting the escalation of a national or a nation state history and historiography of empires – a main sin the 'European' historiography is accused of, together with a predominant Eurocentric vision.

In this set-up, a non-European approach, by non-European historians, will certainly be welcome as contributing to the writing of the history of Europe and the

Europeans. The differentiation is required as the history of an abstract entity, such as a State, a political and administrative set-up (Europe), does not always coincide with the concrete actions of individual agents (the European). The latter, operating as builders of empires, might also act (and frequently did) as challengers or defectors of the very powers they were expected to serve.[1]

Speaking about the Europeans and the others usually also implies referring to centres and peripheries, in a world that is nowadays understood as polycentric by nature. The great advantage of the 'other' writings on European colonialism is precisely that they give evidence of the existence of a polycentric world and allow multifocal perspectives on the same phenomenon. Locality and globalization, polycentric and connected worlds are concepts used nowadays by a growing number of historians, such as Sanjay Subramanyan or Kapil Raj.[2]

The insertion of local realities into global processes is yet another priority in colonial and global studies. It perceives the autochthone and indigenous actors as active participants in European colonial set-ups. All of this requires contributions from historiographies based in the former colonized territories and cultures, in Africa, America and Asia.

Spontaneous or imposed cooperation between colonizers and colonized, negotiation, resistance, all are dimensions involved in the analysis of colonial dynamics.[3] The rationale of such historiographical approaches and concepts has to include other cultures, other civilizations (in the plural use of the concept), and the plurality of the pre-colonial set-ups. They are not only required, but essential to the intended inquiry into European empires and European history.

By accepting the interactions between 'colonized' and 'colonizers' as essential to the empire building process, the broker, the intermediary, acting as a go-between, as translator or mediator, emerges as essential.[4] This applies to the past as much as to the present day. Since pre-colonial realities were often simplified along colonial categorizations according to imperial interests, or just because imperial interlocutors did not understand the complex cultural patterns the European encountered, one needs the contributions of non-European historians to accurately understand the different rationalities at stake.[5]

Comparative studies (among European projects of colonization), trans-national, trans-imperial and trans-cultural studies are some of the mainstreams in colonial historiography calling for crossed perspectives, which necessarily depend on the inclusion of other ways of looking at European history…

References and Notes

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