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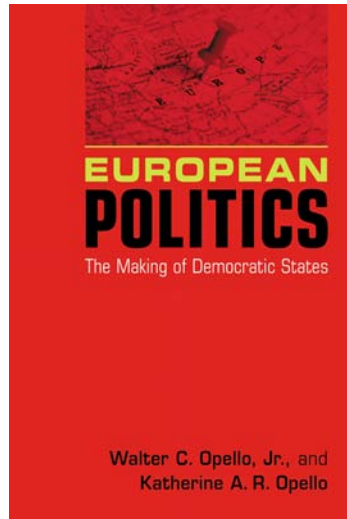
European Politics: The Making of Democratic States

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1

Introducing European Politics

Europe is said to be a third of the whole world, and has its name from Europa, daughter of Agenore, King of Libya. Jupiter ravished this Europa, and brought her to Crete, and called most of the land after her Europa.

—Pope Pius II, *Treatise on the State of Europe* (1458)

AT THE END of World War II (1939–1945), the United States (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), erstwhile allies during the struggle against Nazi Germany, became implacable foes and divided Europe into two spheres of influence: the USSR held sway in the eastern half of the continent, and the United States in the western half. In the years after the war, the division of Europe into “West” and “East” came to be regarded as a permanent feature of the European political landscape. However, much to the surprise of scholars specializing in European politics, the division of Europe into two ideologically opposed blocs began to break down during the 1980s. Under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, who became general secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR in 1985, the Soviet Union entered a period of political openness (*glasnost*) and economic restructuring (*perestroika*), which included the renunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine that ensured the maintenance of Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe, if necessary, by armed force.

By the end of the 1980s, nationalist elites devoted to the independence and sovereignty of their states emerged in the East. When it became clear that the USSR would not intervene, popular demonstrations against Soviet domination of the states of Eastern Europe occurred. In 1989 one of these uprisings breached the Berlin Wall, the concrete barrier constructed in 1961 that divided that city into eastern and western zones and symbolized the broader division of Europe. Thousands of jubilant Germans from East Berlin thronged through the breach. Shortly thereafter, West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany, or FRG) absorbed East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, or GDR) without Soviet interference. Two

years later, on December 31, 1991, the USSR itself was formally dissolved, its fifteen constituent republics becoming independent states. The seemingly permanent division of Europe into East and West had not been permanent after all.

The reunification of Germany, the dissolution of the USSR, the 1995 breakup of Yugoslavia into five new states, and the 1993 Czechoslovakian “Velvet Divorce,” which created the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia, have reconfigured the political landscape of Europe. For the first time in its history, there exists in Europe, from the “Atlantic to the Urals,” a common understanding of how politico-military power ought to be organized and exercised. However, even though a standard form of the state exists across Europe, there remain significant differences between the governing practices in the west and east. We discuss these differences in Chapter 12.

■ Understanding Contemporary European Politics

We believe that the best way to understand Europe’s post–Cold War situation is to put it in historical perspective and study it from the point of view of Europe’s “master institution,”¹ the nation-state. We see the nation-state as having been created by the unique, geographically specific rivalry among Europe’s “portfolio of competing and colluding polities whose spirit of competition was adapted to diffusing best practices”² of politico-military rule across Europe. Our basic argument is that incessant “war and preparing for war”³ among Europe’s contending polities over many centuries brought about the formation and spread across Europe of the territorial nation-state. Therefore, we believe that “bringing the state back in”⁴ and making it the central focus of a course on European politics will give students a solid understanding of the political reconfiguration of the continent in the last decade of the twentieth century.

We will show that there was a time in the past when the European nation-state did not exist; that is, a time when there was a variety of competing forms of politico-military rule across the continent, with no form being dominant over any other. We will show how one of these forms, monarchy, was “consolidated by the attractions of the king’s justice and by the centralizing power of the king’s cannon,”⁵ which allowed it to overawe others. Further, we will show how the monarchical state was gradually overcome by an even more militarily potent form, the nation-state, which eventually became the dominant and only acceptable form of politico-military rule in Europe. Examining the *very* long-term formation of the European nation-state as a type of rule will allow us to reach conclusions about the recent reconfiguration of the European states system that would

not be possible if we focused on the politics of individual nation-states, as if each had “escaped being brought into being by historical processes and remains set apart, timeless and beyond analysis.”⁶

■ Defining the Nation-State

The concept of the “nation-state” is complex and imbued with multiple meanings and associations, some of them negative. In contemporary usage and political discourse, the words *country* and *nation* are used interchangeably to refer to what we mean in this text by the term *nation-state*. The contemporary nation-state has the following characteristics. First, it is a type of politico-military rule that has a distinct, geographically defined territory over which it exercises jurisdiction. Second, it has sovereignty over a territory that is theoretically exclusive of outside interference by other nation-states. Third, it has a government composed of public institutions, offices, and roles that administers the territory and makes decisions for the people within its jurisdiction. Fourth, it has fixed boundaries marked by entry and exit points and in some cases by fences patrolled by border police and armies. Fifth, its government claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical coercion over its territory and people. Sixth, its people share, to a greater or lesser degree, a sense of nationhood (i.e., national identity). And seventh, its government enjoys, to a greater or lesser degree, the undivided obedience and loyalty of its people (i.e., patriotism).⁷

How this form of politico-military rule developed in western Europe, how it spread from there to central and eastern Europe, how it governs the territory and people within its jurisdiction, how it manages to survive and even flourish within the context of the European Union (EU), and how many more such units of politico-military rule will appear in Europe in the future are the stuff of European politics and the subjects of this text. It should be noted that we do not idealize the nation-state, but only seek to explain how it arose and spread across Europe.

■ Defining Europe

The definition of Europe as a geographical and cultural unity began in the early Middle Ages, the thousand-year period following the collapse of the western Roman Empire. The landmass known at the time of this writing as Europe was known as *Respublica Christiana* or *Christendom* during the Middle Ages because it was the portion of the world where Christianity was the prevailing religion. Christendom was then considered to be a single community of Christian believers, despite the ecclesiastical rivalry between

Rome, the center of western Christianity, and Constantinople, the center of eastern Christianity, about which we will have more to say in the next chapter. For Pope Pius II (1458–1468), “Christendom [was] seen as radiating out from a European base.”⁸

Gradually, *Europe* replaced *Christendom* as the word used to describe this portion of the world. According to one historian, this usage began during the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) when warring Catholic and Protestant kings, not wishing to be reminded of the Catholic Church’s prohibition against Christians killing Christians, began to refer to their common geographical home as Europe rather than Christendom. The last public reference to *Respublica Christiana* appeared in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), after which the awareness of “Europe” as a geographical expression replaced the earlier awareness of Europe as a community of Christian believers.⁹ This religious understanding of Europe has not been forgotten and is brought up in the twenty-first century by certain European leaders as a way of distinguishing Europe from the rest of Eurasia.¹⁰

Defining Europe geographically is difficult because it is a “scrawny little gut of earth jutting out from the great Eurasian land mass,”¹¹ not a self-contained continent with obvious geographical boundaries, such as Africa or Australia. It is a peninsula (a portion of land surrounded by water on three sides and connected to a large expanse of land) with several subpeninsulas (Scandinavian, Iberian, Balkan, Crimean, and Italian) jutting into the surrounding seas. In the west the boundaries of the European peninsula and subpeninsulas are clearly marked by their extensive coastlines. In the east the dividing line between the European peninsula and the much larger Eurasian landmass is indistinct, there being no obvious natural feature that clearly marks the separation. The line between Europe and Asia is therefore arbitrary and has changed over time.

In the Middle Ages the eastern boundary of Christendom was considered to be the Don River (about 40 degrees east longitude). This boundary remained until the eighteenth century, when, in 1730, a Swedish army officer in the service of the tsar of Russia suggested that the boundary of Europe should be pushed eastward from the Don to the Ural Mountains and the Ural River (about 60 degrees east longitude), which flows into the Caspian Sea. Subsequently, in the late eighteenth century, the tsar had a marker erected in the Urals on the road between Yekaterinburg and Tyumen’ to officially designate the geographical boundary between Europe and Asia. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the idea of the continent of Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Urals had become generally accepted.¹²

Within Europe there are geographical regions defined by certain natural features. The first is the great northern plain, which extends without interruption for over 2,400 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains.



Natural Features of Europe

This plain is cut at fairly regular intervals by a series of south-to-north flowing rivers, such as the Seine, Rhine, Elbe, Oder, and Vistula. The second is the mountainous region that traverses the continent from west to east, composed of the Pyrenees, Alps, Carpathians, and Balkans and separating the great northern plain from the Mediterranean Sea. The third is the northern littoral of the basin of the Mediterranean, the cradle of Greco-Roman civilization. The fourth region is the Scandinavian, Iberian, Italian, Balkan, Crimean, and Greek subpeninsulas, all of which protrude into the surround-

ing seas and give Europe its extensive coastline. Comprising the fifth are the many hundreds of islands off the coasts of these subpeninsulas, the largest of which are the British Isles, Iceland, Ireland, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, and Crete.¹³

It should be noted that the climate of geographical Europe is unusually temperate for a continent of its latitude (roughly between 35 degrees and 70 degrees north) because of the warming effects of the Gulf Stream. Therefore, northern Europe is relatively mild and wet and southern Europe generally dry and sunny. Central and eastern Europe have a true continental climate of clear, cold winters and hot, dry summers. Europe's temperate climate is responsible for the variations in the skin color of the continent's peoples: the moderate levels of sunshine (i.e., low ultraviolet radiation) meant moderate amounts of melanin (pigment) in the skin of European people in general. Europeans tend to be blue eyed, fair skinned, and blonde haired in northern Europe, especially on the Scandinavian peninsula, and brown eyed, darker skinned, and black haired in the south, especially on the Iberian, Italian, and Greek peninsulas.¹⁴

The definition of Europe's regions also has been influenced by culture, politics, and religion. As Christendom fragmented into Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant variants of Christianity, about which we will have more to say in subsequent chapters, each became a factor in the definition of regions: Roman Catholic south, Protestant north, and Greek Orthodox east. After the unification of Germany in 1871, German scholars and statesmen defined a region called "Mitteleuropa" to promote the idea of a special role for Germany in the affairs of central Europe.¹⁵ The breakup of the Austrian Empire following World War I occasioned the notion of "East-Central Europe," to coincide with the empire's successor states of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. After World War II, Europe was divided into "Western Europe"—the states of which were organized into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Economic Community (EEC), the precursor of the EU—and "Eastern Europe"—the states of which were dominated by the Soviet Union and were organized into the Warsaw Pact. The end of the Cold War division of Europe has allowed older regional designations, such as "Mitteleuropa," to reemerge.¹⁶

The central institution through which Europe's diversity and unity are simultaneously manifested is the nation-state, having been since 1989–1991 successfully extended from the Atlantic to the Urals. Now Europe's reconfiguration into a states system in which a common form of politico-military rule prevailed was completed. Despite the fact that each of Europe's nation-states claims a specific and unique politics, history, and national identity, which create the appearance of wide differences among them, the reality is that they share a common European culture such that, as Edmund Burke wrote in the eighteenth century, "no European can feel him- or herself a

complete exile in any country of the continent.”¹⁷ This unity and diversity justifies our looking at the nation-state and the European states system simultaneously.

The incessant, violent competition for primacy among different forms of politico-military rule that produced the current uniform European order of similarly organized nation-states resulted in the loss of millions of European lives in wars, revolutions, and genocides. Does the recent triumph of one of these forms of rule, the democratic nation-state, mean that the *Machtpolitik* of Europe’s “warring states” phase of development as a civilization¹⁸ is finished and a new “cooperating states” phase of peace and harmony has finally begun? Does the increasing inclusion of Europe’s nation-states into the EU at the moment of its triumph as the dominant form of rule mean that the states system is disappearing at the same time as Europe’s master institution is gaining strength? In other words, is the EU reconfiguring Europe’s states system into a megastate of continental proportions? Is the dream of a politically unified “United States of Europe” finally being realized?

■ The Plan of the Book

This text is divided into four parts. Part 1 contains four chapters devoted to the historical formation of the European nation-state and states system. The first chapter of Part 1 shows how the collapse of the Roman Empire produced two very different forms of politico-military rule in Europe, feudalism in the west and imperialism in the east. The second chapter focuses on how politico-military rule was monopolized, consolidated, and centralized by monarchs in western Europe, which allowed them to subordinate internal rivals and disconnect their kingdoms from the overarching authority of the Catholic Church. How monarchical states were undermined and replaced by nation-states is the concern of the third chapter. And the fourth chapter discusses the conflict between the nation-states of the west and the imperial states of the east that occupied the greater part of the twentieth century and resulted in the recent triumph of the western form of the nation-state as the only legitimate and acceptable type of politico-military rule permitted on the continent.

Part 2 of the book presents the distinctive institutional characteristics of the European nation-state. The first chapter in this part discusses the governing institutions and roles that control and administer the territory and population of the state. The second shows how the gradual democratization of the European nation-state resulted in the development of political parties and electoral systems to connect the people to the governing institutions of the state. In the third chapter we explore how the rise of the nation-state led

to the development of the idea that the state existed for the betterment of the social and economic conditions of its people; this chapter discusses the rise of the European “welfare state” and the recent transformation of this variant of the nation-state into what can be called market states.

Part 3 focuses on the recent attempt by Europeans to realize the long-held dream of a united Europe. In the first chapter of this part, we show how the EU, the current manifestation of this dream, developed from the post–World War II economic and political cooperation among the states of the west. The second chapter discusses the institutions and procedures that have evolved to govern the EU. Examined in the third chapter is how the EU has spread across Europe, first to the south and then to the east.

Finally, Part 4 considers the future of the European nation-state and states system. Here we address the challenges the European nation-states face as Europe’s master institution, from the EU outside of them, and from regional and successionist movements inside of them. We also consider the extent to which governing practices in the east diverge from the western model of democratic governance, despite the presence of similar democratic structures.

■ Notes

1. Barbara Ward, *Five Ideas That Changed the World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), 14.
2. Eric Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies, and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 115.
3. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 32.
4. Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
5. Jones, *The European Miracle*, xxxvi.
6. *Ibid.*, xi.
7. Andrew Vincent, *Theories of the State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 19–21.
8. Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 84.
9. *Ibid.*, 118.
10. For example, the new pope, Benedict XVI, adheres to the idea of Europe as Christendom, having said in an interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro* in August 2004 that Turkey is not a European state because the vast majority of its population is Muslim.
11. Howard K. Smith, *The State of Europe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 3.
12. Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.
13. *Ibid.*, 52–62.

14. Ibid., 50.
15. J. M. Roberts, *A History of Europe* (New York: Allen Lane, 1997), 570.
16. Davies, *Europe: A History*, 28.
17. Quoted in Jones, *The European Miracle*, 111.
18. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 53.

■ Suggested Reading

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