

Chapter I

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN EUROPE

As we present a brief outline of the history of modern Europe's emergence, we will strive to answer the question: **Why is it that Europe determined the directions of the world's development and maintained a significant dominance of most of the world's regions for nearly a thousand years?**

An answer to this question can only be formulated as several hypotheses. Three of them will be examined in this chapter: Europe's emergence as a result of creativity, Europe's emergence through warfare, and contrarily, Europe's emergence through attempts at unification.

1. Europe's development through creativity

One hypothesis one that undoubtedly deserves special attention ascribes Europe's success to its diverse, and indeed often very expansive creativity. Such creativity has had, and will most probably continue to have, various manifestations, important in different spheres of human activity, starting from unconventional, alternative ways of thinking that call into question not only existing dogmatic assessments of specific phenomena and processes but also the forms and methods of resolving various problems. This is because social creativity in the broad sense means not only new and creative ways of thinking but also and above all the ability to translate new ideas into practical innovations.

If we employ this perspective to look at Europe in the period from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries all the way to the twentieth century, we will see that creativity in numerous spheres of human activity acted as a stimulus for the development of numerous new solutions that essentially transformed the world as a whole. Whether those solutions were always good for mankind as a whole, however, is another matter.

Of course, we may argue over what spheres, or perhaps what types of activity in the vast realm of creativity, played a decisive role in Europe's development. Efforts to create such classification are difficult and most probably never provide sufficiently satisfactory answers. Europe has never been politically, ethnically, or socially homogenous, which is why we can only identify various domains that

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played a decisive role in those processes. Importantly, the changes that occurred in Europe were never distributed evenly, nor did they bring the same benefits to all of its inhabitants.

In this context, it is likewise worth paying attention to a certain universal rule of development, namely the principle of non-uniform distribution. This holds true for the world as a whole, for individual continents and countries, and for the differences that exist within the population at all levels of existence. This principle has applied in the past, applies in the present, and will most likely also apply in the future. This is strongly linked to differences in the creativity of individuals, social groups, and partially also ethnic groups.

Let us look at the main areas in which such creativity has manifested itself. The order in which they are listed is not meant to denote their degree of importance or their place in any hierarchy, particularly because the importance of individual components has always varied over time and across space. There is a phenomenon of imitation involved here, which could be observed both between and within specific countries. Imitation, in turn, requires the presence of specific conditions related to the character of both individuals or groups capable of their dissemination and countries or governments that support such processes.

If we look at Europe from around the second half of the fifteenth century from this point of view, we will be able to identify the following seven components of creativity in various areas of activity (some of them are persistently long-lasting, whereas others have been gradually losing their importance).

The first component of creativity was related to the development of cities.

Cities were centers generating new forms of economic governance, in connection with the ever-expanding market economy. In terms of forms of governance, they simultaneously provided a basis for the gradual dissemination of local self-determination. Cities played an ever-growing role in development, and they continue to fulfill this function.

The second component, linked directly to the first one, was the emergence of a growing number of scientific centers.

These European scientific centers played a special role, especially at the times when the conditions for emerging modernity were first developing, because they provided a basis for the broadening of knowledge about the world and for the functioning of not only individuals but also major groups, thus building a certain awareness of existing and mutual relations. Other important factors included contact with closer and more distant neighbors, both those that pursued peaceful and mutually beneficial relations and those that could pose a threat. Scientific centers that were located in cities not only developed rapidly but also contributed effectively to the development of those cities. Above all, these were centers for

the dissemination of knowledge, technological advancements, and various forms of economic and political activity.

The third component, an outcome of the previous two components, involved geographic discoveries.

The consequences of Europe's geographic discoveries included not only a better knowledge of other communities and new territories but also the pursuit of wealth – unfortunately, usually through the plundering of the areas that had been discovered and as a rule conquered, the appearance of previously-unknown consumption goods, and the procurement of slaves.

Geographic discoveries also allowed expansive and relatively modern development in certain countries (for example England under Elizabeth I) as well as reinforced the traditional model of the state and led to growth in the consumption of luxury goods (for example during the reign of Isabella I of Castile in Spain). Both potential and actual opportunities to seize control of distant colonies emerged, a situation that had been previously known to a certain extent. Consequently, certain countries rose to the status of not just European but world powers, with all the consequences that this fact brought. Some of them took advantage of those opportunities in the long run, while others did not benefit too much, especially in the long term.

The fourth component of creativity, which pertained chiefly to state authority, involved external expansion.

The expansion of European countries beyond their original boundaries offered them an important opportunity not only to expand their authority beyond their existing territories but also to accumulate greater wealth, through plunder and by increasing their numbers of subjects. Prior to the industrial revolution, this was essentially the most important form of bolstering not only the power of specific countries, but also and equally importantly the prestige of their rulers – emperors, kings, or princes. In Europe, such phenomena were almost commonplace – periods of peace were short, and armed conflicts were an important form of the emergence of powers in the period of late feudalism. Full-scale wars, or merely armed conflicts that varied in length, were yet another important form of the accumulation of fortunes and prestige first for the knighthood, the warrior caste, who later gradually became the landowning nobility.

The fifth component of creativity was internal expansion.

The nature of this component was more complicated, because those involved in internal expansion were not only rulers, who seized control of resources (land, subjects, or cities), but also the nobility and, more importantly, representatives of the emerging class of burghers, who not only used the development of trade and the construction or expansion of cities to increase their resources and

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wealth but also actively contributed to general economic and educational development. New professions appeared, schools and universities were established, and demand for knowledge and scientific innovations grew markedly. An important stimulus for this development came from the ever-stronger external expansion and gradual growth in the wealth of more and more groups moving up in financial status, which in turn created demand for various goods, including luxury goods.

The sixth important component involved the fight against the dominance of the papacy, which brought religious wars in its wake, especially in the west of Europe.

One of the most important contradictions characterizing the era that preceded the industrial revolution, or more broadly the arrival of the industrial stage of civilization, was the sharp conflict between the authority of the pope and that of kings. The pope not only acted as the head of the Catholic Church but also usurped power over individual rulers, not to mention the collection of taxes (“Peter’s Pence”), especially as Rome’s demand for proceeds showed an upward trend. Simultaneously, numerous debates were held on the reform of the Catholic Church, and numerous reformists appeared, for example Jan Hus, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, and Martin Luther, who played the most important role in the Reformation.

The conflict became increasingly dramatic and evolved into numerous clashes, ultimately leading to the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War, which caused fundamental changes in Europe’s religious as well as (and more importantly) political and economic landscape. Without going into great detail, we can identify three far-reaching consequences for the whole of Europe.

The first of these consequences was purely religious in its nature. The Catholic part of Europe became divided. If we analyze this division from the perspective of long-term economic indicators, we will see that the countries that converted to Protestantism were characterized by stronger economic expansion in the long run, as compared with most of the Catholic countries. Secondly, religious conflicts and the subsequent division of Christianity into different denominations led to the flourishing of science, often as a side effect of the conflicts that was nonetheless important for its further development. Finally, the third consequence, perhaps the most important one in terms of long-term development, was the emergence of sovereign states, which subsequently became sovereign nation-states, dominated by specific ethnic groups. This was a result of peace accords, first in Augsburg then in Münster and Utrecht, and the adoption of the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*.

Finally, the seventh component of this creativity involved technological and scientific advancement.

The most important and initiating factor behind this type of development was the invention of the steam engine by the Scottish inventor James Watt. It acted as a stimulus for the development of the market economy. Combined with the revolution brought by the Age of Enlightenment, which was initiated by Erasmus of Rotterdam and continued until the period of the *Encyclopédistes*, this invention led to the arrival of the industrial stage of civilization. Consequently, modern development was influenced by: first of all, the Reformation; secondly, the emergence of sovereign states; thirdly, the industrial revolution; fourthly, the emergence of several powers that ruled the world for the following century; and, fifthly, the rise of most of those powers to the status of colonial powers, especially in the nineteenth century, which facilitated the partial transfer of the experiences of European development into other regions of the world. Those events sometimes unfolded peacefully, but armed conflicts were a frequent – not to say persistent – element of development and played an enormous role not just in the initial period, or after the arrival of the industrial revolution and the evolutionary and selective dissemination of the industrial stage of civilization. That rule applied in both earlier and later periods.

2. Europe's development through warfare

It would be hard to analyze which continent was characterized by more warfare, Europe or Asia, and what consequences this entailed for both continents. Indeed, such a comparative analysis, potentially interesting as it might be, has no major significance for the considerations presented here. We only mention it for a specific reason: Europe was in the past a target of invasions (wars), but they came from the East, not from the West.

Europe's development through warfare been raised here for yet another reason. Europe, though not all of it, was continuously embroiled in conflicts. The reasons behind these conflicts varied, and we will revisit them later, but they could be generally defined as the divergent or strictly speaking contradictory interests of specific countries, including both temporary and long-term interests.

It is no coincidence that the argument that Europe developed through warfare is quite popular among historians, at least in reference to the past. It nevertheless requires a certain general interpretation, because if it is presented in this form, it might suggest that Europe as a whole was permanently at war. What is true, however, is a somewhat different statement, namely that specific parts of

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Europe were embroiled in conflicts of various degrees of significance. Throughout the past millennium, Europe did not experience a long period of peace until after World War II, and that period was interrupted after the breakup of Yugoslavia, leading to the emergence of countries that differ not only ethnically but above all religiously.

The persistent armed conflicts on the continent alone, however, fail to answer the question of why Europe developed through warfare. The answer is a lot more complex than the existence of divergent or contradictory interests, and what matters is the answer to another question, namely: why were wars conducive to development?

It appears possible to identify several factors that – when taken together – exert a significant yet diverse impact on development. Again, the order in which they are listed is not meant to reflect their hierarchy of importance.

The first factor is the opportunity for the accumulation of resources by the state.

This is an extremely important factor, one that often justifies tax hikes, reallocation of budgetary funds, for example from welfare projects to armaments, the development of the necessary infrastructure, and so on. Both preparations for a war and the mere threat of warfare give the state a great deal of freedom to administer its own resources and the funds collected from citizens. In the past, the accumulation of resources differed from modern-day measures, but the nature of such measures and their goals were similar, or even nearly identical. However, in the conditions of the persistent warfare that erupted in more distant periods or even centuries, this accumulation of resources was continuous in its nature – Europe was either constantly at war or arming itself for another war. What changed were, at most, the directions of acts of aggression at most. However, wars, despite all of their destructive force, also entailed certain positive consequences, because they were related to the development of two closely linked domains. The first of these, which is more general in its nature, is the development of science and technology. It was necessary to find out more about adversaries, which involved getting to know their customs, standards of behavior, systems of values, infrastructure, cities, and forms of combat as well as the economic potential of hostile countries and their neighbors as potential allies or enemies. Efforts were made to draw conclusions from each war as to what could and should be changed to defeat enemies or minimize damage. In turn, this resulted in innovation in the realm of armaments, which in many cases translated into innovative progress in different spheres of economic or – more broadly – public activity.

The second factor, which results directly from the first one, is long-term policy in search of solutions that guarantee a political and economic advantage.

This, in turn, necessitated greater interest in three important spheres of activity: first of all, the development of the sphere of education, which facilitated gradual access to knowledge for ever-broader social classes; secondly, the development of areas that in the long run increased the defense potential in both the hard and the soft form; and, thirdly and finally, efforts to enable a growing number of social groups to influence the functioning of the state. This process was difficult and evolutionary, because the dominant groups that wielded power were very reluctant to share it, and characterized not only by progress but also by regression. Progress was never linear anywhere, and will probably never be so. We will return to this issue later in a somewhat different context.

In the case of European countries, this rule was never commonly applied, and this diversity was influenced by various factors. If we generalize these processes in the context of Europe and evaluate the past, we may reach the conclusion that the course of these processes was a lot better and faster in Western Europe than in Central and Eastern Europe. However, this does not mean that no considerable differences existed also within this division.

The third factor that various wars of different scales entailed was increasing cohesion, especially among dominant ethnic groups.

European societies almost never formed the kind of homogenous ethnic groups that are often described as “national”. In general, it could be said that they were always multiethnic, and the dominant ethnic group likewise became divided, also in the religious sense, following the Reformation. In most cases, however, these differences did not matter much in the conditions of wars or armed conflicts. Social cohesion of specific states was reinforced not only by victorious battles but also by defeats. A victory strengthened national pride, a defeat boosted a willingness to retaliate.

The fourth factor why wars were waged involved material and territorial benefits.

Irrespective of the reasons why countries engaged in armed conflicts in the first place, the ultimate result was that the defeated side was not only humiliated but also often forced to adopt a foreign ideology and above all expected to provide material benefits, both territorial ones and those related to the resources available in a specific territory (including land, people, resources, and new technologies). Without presenting detailed reasons for armed conflicts or other measures, we can list several types of such resources.

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First of all, these might be territories that previously belonged to the winning side yet were seized in different ways by foreign and hostile countries – indeed, not necessarily as a result of an armed conflict, but also in peaceful ways, for example as dowry for a princess marrying a prince from another kingdom, and later under international treaties or in the form of referendums in the modern period as well as a result of the breakup of powers, as was the case after World War II and in the modern era, after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the fall of socialism. In this context, we could cite as an example the recent annexation of Crimea by Russia.

Secondly, wars guaranteed permanent or temporary control of foreign territories, which became part of other countries, as demonstrated by numerous examples both from World War II and from later periods. Consequences of those events included not only territorial changes or the loss or acquisition of such permanent resources as cities, factories, and various reparations, but also, and equally importantly, population movements. This changed the nature of both the countries that won and those that lost in the context of their economy, population structure, and many different spheres of activity. This made it easier for the winners to govern and worsened the situation of the losing side, often for the duration of entire generations.

Finally, the fifth factor that came into play after the end of armed conflicts involved the anchoring of some of these changes in the existing cultural systems.

Both in the societies that won and in those that lost, such changes pertained to such components as tradition and history, which held true for events from distant, modern, and recent history. Such events could be arranged chronologically starting from religious wars, through the Napoleonic wars, nineteenth-century wars, and the breakup of European powers, both colonial powers and those with established positions only in Europe. In some cases, this sequence of historic events could be extended to include much earlier periods.

Awareness, or strictly speaking social mentality, continuously changed to a smaller or greater extent as a result of wars. This allowed, and still allows, the use of such mentality in the pursuit of a specific policy by social groups or the ruling elite. In this sense, the past impacts on the implementation of specific, ongoing political goals.

3. Attempts to unify Europe

Although Europe largely developed through warfare, at the same time the opposite trend is also visible: the emergence of today's Europe is also undoubt-

edly the result of continually efforts to unify the continent. However, these unification attempts have followed various models.

Before presenting these models of unification, we should first briefly clarify a few issues. We should start by stressing that Europe was mostly a collection of highly divided states that functioned and developed independently based on the principle of lesser or greater sovereignty. For this reason, when we talk about Europe's unification, we must remember that this process occurred at various levels. It comprised on the one hand the unification efforts made by societies within countries and, on the other one, the uniting of Europe, if not as a whole then at least a significant part of it. The nature of that process was usually not peaceful, especially when attempts to unify were made by more countries.

When lands or regions that were ethnically relatively homogenous united, this was sometimes done peacefully and sometimes took on the form of armed clashes or major conflicts. The emergence of sovereign states, especially in the Middle Ages, was a long process that in many cases proved ineffective. One telling example was the unification of Italy, which took place as late as 1860-1870, although the beginning of this process can be traced back to the Late Middle Ages. Both unification processes and the fragmentation of states as well as disruptions in their continuity were a persistent phenomenon in Europe. Today, it is hard to say whether this process has already come to an end, because various claims continue to be made, although they are not always clearly or expressly articulated. The unification of sovereign nation-states in Europe did not end until the twentieth century, and it would be hard to say whether it was dominated by peaceful processes or resulted to various extents from armed conflicts.

What is particularly important in this context, however, are the forms or models of the pursuit of unity in Europe, if not as a whole than at least significant parts of it. It is important that we look at this process from a long-term historical perspective, because, as we have already said, the past impacts not only on the present but also on the future.

But let us get back to the topic at hand, namely how Europe strove to become united. Attempts to unify were made not only on numerous occasions in the distant past but also on several occasions even in the most recent history. Without describing these models in detail, we should first of all point out Europe's repeated attempts to unify. It appears possible to list several models of this process. Here, we will omit the history of ancient Rome's attempts to conquer tribal states and lands, but we should nonetheless point out that numerous references, both direct and indirect ones, were made to those experiences. As Simms (2013: 5) argues: "The Empire, and its successor states, has also been the principal source of political legitimacy for anybody who wants to speak for Europe."

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The first model, related to the Christianization of Europe, could be described as spiritual.

This model of unification raised the pope not only to the position of the spiritual leader of the countries that adopted Christianity as their fundamental or sole religion but also the person who anointed kings and legitimized their rule. It was no coincidence that the history of Europe, especially Western and Central Europe, was characterized by quite long periods of what could be referred as dual power. In Eastern Europe and in the Balkans, in turn, the dominant influence was wielded by the Eastern Orthodox Church (after the Great Schism of 1054).

However, those periods of dual power in Central and Western Europe were sufficiently long, and revolutionary changes were in practice introduced in the period of the Reformation. The countries dominated by Protestantism, regardless of the differences between its individual denominations, rejected papal supremacy. However, this did not mean that the Holy See lost its influence completely, though this influence varied depending on the strength and characteristics of specific countries, and this situation has continued until the present day. This model of Europe's unification practically disappeared, but a different model emerged that covered to a large or perhaps even dominant extent the world of Islam.

The second model was focused around the might of a specific state and its conquests.

This model was initiated by Charlemagne (742-814), king of the Franks and emperor of the Romans (from 800), who united a certain part of Europe through numerous conquests. Many leaders later followed in his footsteps, not only in the Middle Ages but also in more modern periods, one notable example being Napoleon Bonaparte. However, unification attempts were made in Europe in both earlier and later periods. Some of them even went beyond Europe's borders, for example the conquest of North America and the colonial conquests in Africa and Asia. This model also comprises World War I, which to a certain extent brought an end to this method of unifying Europe and partially also the world.

The third model has been characterized by attempts to unify Europe not only through warfare, but also through the imposition of a specific ideology on individual countries.

This model is linked to the end of World War I, but what could be seen as an early prelude to this form of unification was the Paris Commune. It attempted to change the world of that period by giving equal rights to those who were at the bottom of the wealth-creation scale, whereas other groups were expected to benefit from their activity. However, those ideas did not win social approval, and the world returned to the old rules. The end of World War I touched off a revolution in Russia, which witnessed the introduction of a new social system described as communism. The principles upon which it was based were the opposite of the

old order, not only in the economic sphere. Above all, the system imposed a new, completely different ideology and new, extremely drastic forms of governance. The communist ideology started to spread, but it did not resonate too much outside Russia.

A decade later, another extremist ideology started to win popularity – fascism. It infected several countries, from Italy through Spain all the way to Germany, where it became particularly popular. The nature of fascism manifested itself not so much in the economy and its rules as in the ideology itself, which was based on racism and extremism on the part of certain social group and ethnic groups.

Both these ideologies, different though they were, had the ambition to unify Europe, though chiefly based on their own separate philosophies and systemic solutions. They brought in their wake World War II, the bloodiest war in the history of Europe. It ended with a defeat of Germany and its allies and the demise of fascism as an ideology that underlay a specific system of government. Meanwhile, communism, which functioned as a socialist system, was given a chance to expand into Central and Eastern Europe. This system, short-lived as it was, wrought a great deal of devastation in the countries that professed its ideals.

The 1990s witnessed the end of the reign of socialism in Europe – as yet another model of Europe’s unification that fell short of expectations.

Short commentary on the history of European unification

Clearly, none of the models presented above fulfilled its goals, which does not mean that the issue of efforts to unify Europe ceased to be a problem or a goal. The issue reappeared in the 1950s with the emergence of the concept of a Western European Union, which later transformed into today’s European Union. We will return to the analysis of this issue later in a broader context.

Overall, in this chapter we have discussed a set of three hypotheses concerning the main factors leading to today’s Europe: its emergence as a result of creativity, through warfare, and through attempts at unification.