Pietro Rossi
Foreword

1

Like the other "regions" of the globe where the human species has settled, Europe, being occupied by what – with an equivocal but irreplaceable term – we call "civilisations", has its boundaries: boundaries in time and boundaries in space. With the difference that the boundaries in time are only boundaries *a quo*, since it is clearly impossible to know if and when the often proclaimed *finis Europae* will occur, whereas the boundaries in space are more definable, being determined by the limits of the expansion of European civilisation to the north and south, and to the east and west; and they include both terrestrial and maritime boundaries.

These two kinds of boundary, though theoretically distinct, are interconnected, and to some extent condition each other. This was particularly true of the beginnings of Europe as a historical and cultural construct. Greco-Roman antiquity knew the term "Europa", which it used both to designate the mythical maiden whom Zeus seized and carried through the air to Crete, and to denote one of the three parts of the earth, the other two being Asia and Libya (that is, what would later be called Africa). But that Europe was very different, in position and extent, from the geographical space that we indicate with the same term today; to the ancient Greeks it comprised Greece itself, together with the countries to the north – those that lie along the shores of the Pontus Euxinus, as far as the present-day Don, and later perhaps as far as the Volga. The fact is, at that time Europe simply did not exist. Antiquity's centre of gravity was the Mediterranean and the regions around it; its cities formed on the coasts of that sea (or on the banks of rivers near it), and the sea was also the principal vehicle of trade and cultural exchange, and the theatre of wars – those between the Greek colonies or between Athens and the Persian empire, and later the crucial showdown between Roman and Carthaginian power. It is true that its territorial extent later went beyond the Alps, as far as Britannia, and southwards towards the African deserts, and that its south-eastern boundary would always remain fluid; but the metropolises of antiquity – from Athens to Alexandria, from Rome to Carthage, and later Constantinople – stood either directly on *mare nostrum* or near to it. Cities like Trier and Cologne, however, were situated on the edge of the empire; they were points of contact with peoples extraneous to that world and that civilisation; and many other cities were essentially colonies created to guard the empire's *limes*.

As Marc Bloch wrote in 1935, "Europe arose when the Roman empire crumbled". But perhaps the relation of contemporaneity that this formula suggests is

misleading, for although the collapse of the empire was indeed a pre-condition for the birth of Europe, a *conditio sine qua non*, it was not its immediate antecedent. Late antiquity's centre of gravity long remained in the Mediterranean; after the barbarian invasions and the division of the empire between West and East, the Byzantine fleets guaranteed trade between the different provinces and the defence of their coasts. Another even more important condition was necessary for the birth of Europe: political and economic separation between the northern and southern coastal regions of the Mediterranean. This occurred several centuries later, at the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth, when Islamic armies from the Arabian peninsula invaded and permanently occupied the countries of North Africa, penetrating into the heart of the Iberian peninsula. A well-known book which has often been contested but never confuted in its central thesis, Henri Pirenne's *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (published posthumously in 1937), stressed the pluri-continental nature of the Roman empire, which "knows neither Asia, nor Africa, nor Europe", and which survived migratory waves of new peoples from the northern forests and the Steppes in the east for centuries. What made possible the formation of the first nucleus of Europe – a distinct Europe in competition with the Byzantine empire, namely the Holy Roman Empire – was the loss of the northern coasts of Africa, which eliminated the Mediterranean's traditional function as an area of intercommunication and trade. A new religion, different from the ancient cults, though, like them, founded on a monotheism of Jewish origin, now opposed Christianity, demanding and enforcing adherence to the new faith.

The fact that the Carolingian empire, in an ambiguous relationship with the papacy, was the nucleus of Europe, does not mean that Europe already existed. What existed – as Pirenne pointed out, and as Lucien Febvre and many others have since repeated – was a continental area, increasingly isolated from the eastern Mediterranean trade routes controlled by Constantinople; in this area the pre-Roman substratum had merged with colonies of Roman origin and invaders of German extraction, creating a mixture held together by common allegiance to the Christian religion. It was still part of "Romania", a region with unclear geographical boundaries, particularly to the east and south, which had formed politically at the expense of previous invaders – the Saxons to the east, and the Lombards in the Italian peninsula. Its basis was a dynasty which had developed in the shadow of the Merovingian dynasty; its consecration was an act of great symbolic value: the assumption of the imperial crown, blessed by the papacy. Most of what would in later centuries constitute Europe remained outside this nucleus; indeed, on Charlemagne's death the nucleus itself fragmented, and the imperial crown passed from one Germanic dynasty to another, without implying actual power; the alliance with the papacy would also have its fluctuations.

From the eighth to the tenth centuries it is possible to speak not of Europe, but of a *respublica Christiana* in which the papacy's emergence as a political power compensates, or attempts to compensate, for the fragmentation of power characteristic of feudal society. The relationships of dominion and subjection take on a personal character in the absence of institutions; they become relationships between lord and feoffee, between major and minor vassals, or between landowners and serfs. Only at the beginning of the second millennium did the re-emergence of cities and their calls for autonomy initiate a process of political reorganisation which would lead to the formation of an urban area stretching from central and northern Italy to Flanders and the cities of the Hanseatic League. The resumption of Mediterranean trade with the Byzantine and Islamic east was accompanied by the creation of another market ranging from the Baltic to Novgorod, and on to Moscow and Kiev, along the courses of the great Russian rivers. After centuries of gestation the young Europe enjoyed an economic development which proved to be long-lasting; and its powers, temporarily united under the standard of Christ, began a counter-offensive against Islam and the Arabian principates of the Near East and the Iberian peninsula.

2

The history of the nascent Europe is one of progressive expansion (though not without intervals of stagnation and regression), which increased its terrestrial and maritime boundaries. During an initial phrase it had to face first the major threat of the Normans and Ungars and then the offensive pressure of the Mongols. But by settling in Britannia in the mid-eleventh century, invading the northern part of Gaul and engaging in centuries-long war with the French sovereigns, and then creating a kingdom of their own in distant Sicily, the Normans gradually became integrated into European geopolitical space, and adopted social structures similar, though not always identical, to those of the inhabitants of the Carolingian area. As for the Ungars, their advance was blocked by the resistance of the German principates, until King Stephen's conversion to the Christian faith and the progressive Latinisation of their culture gave rise, in the first half of the eleventh century, to a monarchy on the model of those of the European West. The nascent Europe thus extended its territorial boundaries partly by conquering new territories and partly by exerting an ever greater attraction on neighbouring peoples to the east and north, on the Pannonian plain and in the British Isles and Scandinavia, integrating them progressively into a system of commercial, but also cultural, exchanges.

Thus in the first three centuries of the second millennium a complex of political units, most of which were reluctant to accept imperial authority, or even independent of it, had formed around the original Carolingian nucleus. These units had many things in common: their feudal structure, the particularism of power, the coexistence of rival kingdoms and principates, the juridicisation of political relationships with a renascence of Roman law, the revival of trade and artisanal activities, the rise of places of interregional trade such as the great fairs, and lastly a common religion with an organisation parallel to that of the temporal powers, overseen by bishops, and ultimately by the papacy in Rome. This complex had no more than a formal political unity and lacked any permanent centre of gravity. Indeed, within it a dichotomy began to form between the axis comprising the German centre and the Italian peninsula, where a multiplicity of principates and cities governed by the capitalist bourgeoisie tried to assert and maintain their independence from the empire, in the manner of feudal lords, and the more peripheral regions, where the process of unification was fomented by the rise of dynastically based pre- or proto-national seignories; during this period, too, the distinctive nature of the English development began to emerge. But the elements of affinity remained stronger than the differences. Europe now stretched from the Scandinavian peninsula to Sicily, from England to France and most of Germany (in the northern part of which the Teutonic Knights had conquered Pomerania and Prussia), and from Hungary to Poland. By now the terrestrial boundary of Europe had shifted from the Rhine-Danube line, which had marked the limit of Roman expansion, well beyond the Elbe, to the Vistula; and in the south, from Navarre to Catalonia, the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula had begun.

The maritime boundaries were more complicated. In the north another "closed" sea had formed, the domain of the Hanseatic cities and the new Scandinavian monarchies, mainly of Viking origin. The Mediterranean was now no longer Byzantine nor Arabian, and never became Norman; Venice, Genoa and Pisa had predominant control of trade with the Muslim world, and established depots in eastern ports. But the Mediterranean remained politically and culturally a watershed between different worlds, though economic relations between those worlds had intensified: the age of the Crusades had ended without victors or vanquished; the Byzantine empire suffered most, for it was supplanted for more than half a century by an ephemeral "Latin" empire, while the threat of the Ottoman Turks appeared on the horizon. Nor did the Mediterranean become a "meeting place" between the European and Islamic civilisations. This had occurred, rather, where the conflict had been more direct – in the Iberian peninsula, where the different Christian kingdoms had opposed the caliphate of Córdoba. It was from the peninsula, and from Morocco, that Arabic translations of Greek philosophical and scientific texts arrived in the nascent Europe, where, after being translated

a second time, they would form the basis of the scholastic culture taught in the universities of France and England.

3

In the following centuries, from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries onwards, there were some changes to the terrestrial boundaries of Europe, but less significant ones than in the preceding period. Eastward expansion continued, embracing the Slavic peoples which had progressively occupied the territories left vacant by the Germanic peoples with the decline of the Roman empire. National monarchies had emerged in these regions, though the sovereign's power was strongly conditioned by feudality: cities such as Buda, Prague and Kraków had permanently established themselves within the circuit of the European economy and culture. In the late fourteenth century, union between Poland and Lithuania, under the Jagiellonian dynasty, strengthened the defence of the eastern boundaries against pressure from other Slavic populations, as well as forming a barrier against the advance of the Teutonic Knights. Further south, on the eastern shores of the Adriatic, the influence of Venice had favoured the rise of local principates which protected her trade routes from Byzantine and Arab incursions. However, the process of expansion encountered some obstacles which were hard to surmount. In northern Europe the Viking (or to be more precise, Variangian) settlement of Novgorod, founded in the ninth century, had become the starting point of a trade route which ran south along the course of the Dnieper to the Black Sea, providing a link with the capital of the Byzantine empire. Between Kiev and Moscow the principate of Rus', the nucleus of the future Russian empire, was developing. In Crimea and the surrounding regions a Mongol population had settled, giving rise to four political units, the Khanates. While part of the Slavic world merged with the growing Europe, the cities of Viking origin and the principate of Rus' gravitated towards Constantinople; their conversion to Christianity under Vladimir the Great had been based on Byzantine Orthodoxy, not Roman Catholicism. From a religious point of view and on the political and commercial level the Slavic world looked towards the empire of the East rather than central and western Europe, and would long continue to do so.

This tendency was consolidated by the rise of a central power (in contrast to the predominance of a feudal nobility in neighbouring regions) in the principate of Rus', which towards the end of the fifteenth century subjugated Novgorod and put an end to the Khanate of the Golden Horde. This territorial expansion was accompanied by the emergence of an absolute regime, which would reach its

apogee in the next century under Ivan IV the Terrible. In the meantime, however, the advance of the Ottoman Turks had ended the long existence of the eastern empire, whose foundations had been irremediably weakened by half a century of "Latin" empire. Thus the axis between the Russian world and Constantinople lost one of its poles. The new Russian empire, bereft of its traditional point of reference, was able to present itself as the political and religious heir to the Byzantine empire, and look upon Moscow as the "third Rome".

The unification of Russia had come about during roughly the same period as the collapse of the Byzantine empire and the rise of Ottoman power. For centuries the Byzantine fleets had prevented the Mediterranean from becoming an exclusively Arab domain; later, from the beginning of the second millennium, this role had been taken over by the maritime cities, notably Genoa and Venice, and the Norman kingdom of Sicily. Increased European influence over the central and eastern Mediterranean was one of the factos that had made the Crusades possible. Although the Arab sovereigns had succeeded in defending the sacred sites of Christianity against repeated expeditions by European armies, and maintained possession of them to the end, the margins of their dominions were increasingly under threat from Ottoman forces, which, starting out from Anatolia, had conquered Macedonia, Thrace, Bulgaria and Kosovo, and surrounded Constantinople. In 1453, at the time of the fall of the ancient imperial capital, Ottoman power extended over most of the Balkans, as far as the boundaries of Hungary and Poland. A new empire was rising, which stood outside and in conflict with Christian Europe, despite intervals of peace and even temporary alliances with some European states; and its armies were regaining the expansionary momentum that the Arabs had possessed centuries earlier.

Thus in the fifteenth century two political entities extraneous to Europe had formed on its boundaries, each covering a large territory and endowed with strong military power. This extraneousness had deep cultural, and especially religious, roots. In the early centuries of the Christian era the new faith had spread in differing forms, both as a doctrine and as an organisation. The divergence hinged on the interpretation of the nature of Christ – human, divine, or dual – and in the debate on the relationship between the three "persons" of the Trinity. The Council of Nicea of 325 had ruled on the question, attributing to Jesus both a divine nature (as one person of the Trinity) and a human one, and condemning as heresy the doctrine of Arius, who denied him the former; most of the eastern churches had favoured Arianism, and the barbarian peoples had embraced the Christian faith in this version, only later converting to the interpretation approved in Nicea. Several centuries later the debate on iconoclasm deepened the split, and the church of Rome increasingly distanced itself from Byzantine Caesaropapism. Thereafter Greek Christianity and Roman Christianity moved along differ-

ent routes. Even more marked was opposition to Islam, which did not distinguish between religion and politics, and regarded the figure of the caliph as both a temporal and a spiritual leader. The Turkish empire inherited this principle, adopting the Islamic religion's policy of coercive diffusion in an even more radical form.

Thus in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Europe had no possibility of eastward expansion; the most the eastern monarchies and the Venetian republic could do was contain the expansionist tendency of the Ottoman empire. The victory of the Christian fleet at Lepanto in 1571 had only a temporary effect, and could not compensate for the territorial conquests that empire had made in the first half of the sixteenth century under Suleiman, who had advanced right up to the gates of Vienna. The southern frontier, too, had stabilised: the importance of Italy's maritime cities diminished, and the peninsula became increasingly a land of conquest for monarchies north of the Alps, or at least a marginal area of European geopolitics. At the beginning of the same century, however, a new frontier opened up – this time not a terrestrial but a maritime one. What antiquity had known as the "pillars of Hercules" became the gateway to a new world, which over the next two centuries would be taken permanently into the European orbit. Now that the Arab presence in the Iberian peninsula had been eliminated, the Portuguese and Spanish fleets opened up new routes towards the east, and established settlements in a previously unknown continent, importing its treasures and causing a revolution in the price of goods. The decline of the coastal cities of the Mediterranean was matched by the rise of other cities in other countries that looked towards the ocean: first Portugal and Spain, then the Low Countries, Britain, France. The Atlantic, rather than antiquity's "middle sea", was now Europe's *mare nostrum*, and would remain so for half a millennium.

4

Thus other Europes formed, in the period from the sixteenth and to the twentieth centuries, outside what is geographically defined as the European continent (or subcontinent) – Europes which partly replicated the political and cultural characteristics of the countries that had presided over their foundation: the Latin Europe of the *conquistadores*, who had plundered the riches of South America, exterminating or enslaving the indigenous populations; the Europe of Dutch, French and English colonists, often a refuge for persecuted religious minorities; and later Austral Europe, born from the descendants of transported Britons. While Alexander VI's bull had favoured the partition of the South American continent between the Portuguese and the Spanish, North America was for two centuries a

theatre of struggle between France and Britain, whose conflicts were exported on to American soil. The revolution of the British colonies did not, however, constitute a break with the mother country: although North American writers vied with another in proclaiming the moral superiority of the United States over old Europe, providing an ideological platform for isolationist politics, Anglo-Saxon solidarity proved crucial in the two world wars of the twentieth century, and again during the "Cold War".

The relationship between Europe and the two empires which arose on its eastern boundaries in the middle of the last millennium took a very different course. In the seventeenth century, with the reforms introduced by Peter the Great, Russia began a process of modernisation, inspired by European models. But this process was far from linear, nor did it leave a lasting mark on the social structure of the country, where landed property, the dominance of court aristocracy, and serfdom survived until the end of the nineteenth century. Although the Russian empire joined in the game of the great European powers, participating in the eighteenth-century wars of succession and making significant territorial gains as a result, setting itself up as the guarantor of the Holy Alliance, and acting in defence of the Balkan states against Turkish dominion, it had an ambivalent relationship – part imitation and part competition – with Europe. The Caesaropapist tradition was an obstacle to attempts at separating political and religious power, and at the same time represented the mainstay of Tsarist autocracy. The ideas of the Enlightenment, though welcomed and encouraged by Catherine II in particular, did not lead to the state being secularised, much less to society being reformed in a secular sense. There remained a clear distinction between the liberalising development of political regimes in the west and Tsarist autocracy; and the Soviet revolution developed, under Stalin, into a modernised form of despotically exercised absolute power.

Even more alien to the European world, and particularly to its culture, was the Ottoman Empire, which reached its widest extent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, completing the conquest of the Balkan peninsula, subjugating most of Hungary, advancing in the Near East as far as Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, and asserting its dominion over the African coasts of the Mediterranean as far as Algeria. Only Vienna and the Habsburgs held out against Suleiman's attacks and the later siege of 1683; and the failure of this attempt played a significant part in strengthening the Habsburgs and the role they would have, until after the time of Napoleon, on the European political scene. After that, the offensive impetus of the Ottoman Empire diminished, partly because of the inferiority of its military technology, and eighteenth-century attempts at modernisation came to nothing. The conflict between the Sublime Porte and the claims to autonomy of the Balkan peoples, who had been granted religious and, to some extent,

administrative autonomy, compelled the Ottoman Empire to take a defensive attitude, particularly in the face of the interventionist policies of the more powerful Russian Empire.

Both empires extended far beyond Europe in geographical terms. The Asiatic territory of the Russian empire was larger in extent than that of Europe – and this would be true of the Soviet Union too. Far from being the boundary between two worlds, the chain of the Urals constituted only an internal line of separation between one part of the empire that had already been colonised and another part that was still being colonised. As for the Ottoman empire, the sum of its Asian and African territories was significantly larger, even after the conquest of the Balkans, than that of the European countries it had subjugated. Both empires, it is true, joined in the game of the European powers, deriving advantages from it in terms of alliances and an increase in the extent of their dominions. But their culture was in the one case that of "Holy Russia", linked to the Byzantine heritage and the exaltation of the "third Rome", in the other that of a religion extraneous and hostile to the Christian tradition which revived the policy of conversion and subjection adopted by the Arab invaders a millennium earlier. The modernisation of the Russian empire was linked to the assertion of an autochthonous culture distinct from that of Europe and inspired rather by the heritage of Byzantium, while the reform of the Ottoman empire came up against the insurmountable resistance of traditional religious elites.

Nor can the situation be said to have changed significantly in the twentieth century. After 1917 the new Soviet state was increasingly hostile to "capitalist" European regimes, even more than to the expansion of Nazi Germany, drawing territorial advantage from it – for example in Poland – as the Russian empire had done before it, and surrounding itself with a circle of satellite countries after 1945. The dream of a worldwide revolution of the proletariat gave way to the concept of socialism "in one country", reminiscent of the nationalism of Tsarist Russia. The Orthodox religious tradition was suffocated, but also, during the war, revived as ideological support to resistance against the German invader. More effective were the attempts at European-style modernisation in Kemalist Turkey, which created a secular state, rejecting the Islamic tradition; but almost a century later the traditional base has re-emerged, and with it the aspiration to found state legislation on holy law. Like Russian despotism, religious integralism is a legacy of Byzantine Caesaropapism, and it is still a mark of the deep divide between Europeanised Turkey and traditional Turkey, and between Turkey and the European world.

5

Thus far we have considered Europe's external boundaries and the changes they have undergone through the centuries; but there are also other boundaries within Europe. These, of course, are the more or less permanent boundaries between kingdoms, principates and states, which have changed over time, leading to the creation or disappearance of political entities, and changes in their territories and populations. These, however, are not the boundaries that concern us here. Nor do the ethnic and religious boundaries, partly resulting from successive waves of migration from the east and north, which gave rise to what have been called the Romano-barbarian kingdoms, seem particularly important. But there are others which do seem more significant.

The first boundary, which already presupposes the expansion of the original Carolingian nucleus and the formation of national (or at least multiregional) kingdoms in the European west, is the one that derives from the distinction between the area where urban development took place at the beginning of the second millennium and the surrounding areas, where urbanisation and economic development are later phenomena. The area of early urban development runs from south to north – from central and northern Italy to Flanders, along the Rhine valley, continuing into south-eastern England and, with the Hanseatic League, along the Baltic coast. Its basis was trade and artisanal work carried on within the city walls, supported by guilds which guaranteed the quality of goods and the training of workers. The main trading posts were the maritime cities and the depots they established in foreign ports, and the great annual fairs in Champagne and Lyon. This region developed trade with the eastern Mediterranean, where the "Silk Road" began, and with the Rus' of Moscow and Kiev, and later with the new countries on the other side of the ocean; this region produced the financial resources that principates and states needed in order to fight their wars; this region, and especially England, would a few centuries later be the birthplace of industrialisation. Even in the twentieth century, after the Second World War, it was the states of this region that provided the impetus for the formation of the CECA, the European Coal and Steel Community. And for half a century France, Germany and Italy formed the central core of what is today the European Union.

Economic phenomena and religious phenomena, as Max Weber pointed out, are intimately linked, and that is particularly true of European history. Another internal boundary, indeed a split, was created by the Protestant Reformation and the division of Europe into two opposing camps, which led to a series of civil wars based on religious motivations. The centuries of the Middle Ages, too, had known different forms of Christian faith, conflicts between supporters of the "creed" laid down at Nicea and those of the Arian heresy; but those conflicts had usually been

resolved by the sovereigns of invading barbarian peoples converting to Roman Catholicism, and their peoples following their example. By this means the papacy had evangelised those populations; it had penetrated into the British Isles under Boniface, and had led the Crusades, while the Slavic world, gravitating towards Byzantium, had adopted the "orthodox" version of the Christian faith. With the Reformation, however, the split appeared within individual countries: Germany was divided between Catholic and Lutheran princes, and in the Swiss cantons reformers and reformed churches flourished in conflict with one another, while in France a strong Huguenot party challenged the sovereign power. It would be more than a century before, with the Peace of Westphalia, the map of religious confessions was stabilised, on the basis of the principle of the sovereign's choice and his people's obedience to that choice. France emerged from the war of religion still (at least nominally) Catholic; and in Italy and Spain Counter-Reformation Catholicism prevailed over the Protestant sympathies of some intellectual minorities, which were repressed by the Inquisition; Catholicism also prevailed in distant Poland; Germany remained divided between two camps, but peace was guaranteed by the princes' will; Lutheranism became the state church in Scandinavia; sects and small churches that called for more radical reform were persecuted, and their followers forced to migrate to the North American colonies. England had chosen a path of its own, that of a national church which preserved the Catholic doctrinal framework, but under the direct government of the sovereign, no longer that of the papacy.

A third boundary is that between countries where monarchic power had emerged during the Middle Ages, later giving rise, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to a national state, and those where the presence of powers with universal claims had prevented the development of monarchic rule. In the east and west monarchies had succeeded in defeating the nobility of feudal origin, or at least in incorporating it into their dominions, but in the central area of the European continent, from Prussia to the Italian peninsula, the process of centralisation had encountered a lasting obstacle in the form of the Habsburg empire and the papacy, indeed most often in an alliance between them. When, after the French revolution, the convergence between state and nation was presented as the main natural objective of politics, and each nationality – no matter how real or "invented" – claimed its own autonomy, the new emerging states overthrew the order established after the fall of Napoleon; a new empire arose in the heart of the continent, and the Italian peninsula was unified politically after centuries of frustrated aspirations. The division between old and new nation states was deepened by the fact that, while the former had been able to found colonies in other continents, the latter had no territories into which they could expand, except on European soil. Whereas the French revolution had proclaimed the "sacred"

nature of the nation under arms, the new nation states practised an aggressive policy in order to acquire that *Lebensraum* which they considered their right: not being able to find it in Africa or Asia, they sought it in the heart of Europe, with consequences that are well known to us.

These (and other) boundaries which characterise European history through the centuries have now lost much of their importance. National identities have faded, and religious allegiance too seems a weak bond in a secularised society. If any dividing lines do exist in late twentieth-century Europe, they are traceable rather to differing outcomes of the implementation of the welfare state, with the guarantees that this has offered, and continues to offer, to its citizens. Much of the continent – central and northern Europe, including France – has succeeded in balancing the support given to individuals with a fiscal policy that has made it possible to redistribute income among the various layers of society. In Mediterranean Europe, however, the weakness of the state structure, added to the resistance of the wealthier classes, has prevented this, and continues to do so. In the east, from Poland to the Balkan peninsula, the welfare state is still a mirage, and the economic level makes it impossible even today to adopt effective policies of redistribution. In this sense it is possible to speak of different Europes; but the boundaries between one and the other have become fluid, and the European world today is like a large, internally unbalanced market, where many firms migrate towards the eastern countries, while workers, particularly qualified ones, aspire to move to the centre and north.

Not only the internal boundaries but also those with the surrounding world have been increasingly relativised. While Europe's relationship with Russia and Turkey seems one of extraneity in some respects and possible convergence in others, the seas have acquired a new role – on the one hand as a meeting place, on the other as a physical, political and cultural frontier. This role, however, has developed in a different, indeed antithetical manner in the cases of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. In the first half of the last century, from the "Wilson doctrine" to the Marshall Plan, ties between the two shores of the Atlantic strengthened, and Anglo-Saxon solidarity extended to the western part of the continent. The defence of liberal democracy and of an economy based on free trade, values which were threatened first by Hitlerian Germany and later by the Soviet Union, seemed to have made these ties irreversible. Indeed the Atlantic Pact, though its primary objectives were political and military, was for decades far more than a mere alliance between the powers on the two sides of the ocean. Today the situation is very different: the process of European unification has highlighted differences both in interests and in political attitudes. The Mediterranean, for its part, has again become, as it was in the seventh and eighth centuries, and again in the fifteenth and sixteenth, the boundary between Europe and an Islamic world torn

between aspirations to renewal and integralist tendencies. The increasing rela-
tivisation of boundaries may have made them much more permeable than in the
past, fomenting unstoppable streams of migration – after many centuries, Sicily
has once again become the gateway to Europe – but it seems far from making this
sea and its coasts a meeting place between civilisations.

Translated from the Italian by Jonathan Hunt

Bibliography

Abulafia, D 2011, *The Great Sea: a Human History of the Mediterranean*, Oxford University
    Press, Oxford.
Anderson, BR 1983, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of
    nationalism*, Verso, London.
Braudel, F 1966, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 2nd edn,
    Colin, Paris.
Brown, P 1995, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
Dawson, C 1956, *The Making of Europe. An Introduction to the History of European Unity*,
    Meridian, New York.
Febvre, L 1999, *L'Europe. Genèse d'une civilisation*, Perrin, Paris.
Fischer, J 1957, *Oriens-Occidens-Europa. Begriff und Gedanke „Europa" in der späten Antike
    und im Frühen Mittelalter*, Steiner, Wiesbaden.
Galasso, G 2001, *Storia d'Europa*, Bari, Roma.
Geary, PJ 2002, *The Myth of Nations. The Medieval Origins of Europe*, Princeton University
    Press, Princeton.
Groh, D 1961, *Russland und das Selbstverständnis Europas. Ein Beitrag zur europäischen
    Geistesgeschichte*, H. Luchterhand, Neuwied.
Lewis, B 1993, *Islam and the West*, Oxford University Press, New York.
Osterhammel,J 1998, *Die Entzauberung Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reichen im 18.
    Jahrhundert*, C.H. Beck, München.
Pirenne, H 1937, *Mahomet et Charlesmagne*, Alcan & Nouvelle Société d'éditions,
    Paris-Bruxelles.
Pomian, K 1990, *L'Europe et ses nations*, Gallimard, Paris.
Rossi, P 2007, *L'identità dell'Europa*, Il Mulino, Bologna.
Tilly, C 1975, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Princeton University Press,
    Princeton.
Weber, M 1923, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Abriß der universalen Sozial- und Wirtschafts-
    geschichte*, Duncker & Humblot, München.