Inventing Europe

Idea, Identity, Reality

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2 The Origins of the Idea of Europe

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter I want to focus on the genesis and development of a conceptual demarcation running through western society from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages whereby a particular discourse of power is privileged over against others. The nexus of this discourse is the West–East dualism and the corresponding counter-factualism of an 'us'/'them' polarity. I wish to show that one of the most enduring forms of western identity was the postulation of a centre, anchored in a historical myth of origins, and that this served to reinforce the formation of adversarial world-views. The origins of Eurocentrism, then, lay not in the idea of Europe itself as a cultural model, but in the structures of a discourse which served to reinforce the power of the centre. Thus, when the idea of Europe emerged as a cultural idea it became associated with structures of power and their identity projects. The cultural space for the formation of an autonomous discourse of Europe had not yet formed. Prior to the early modern period the idea of Europe was always articulated through other discourses, of which the most significant was Christendom. In other words, then, 'European' identity, as an ethno-cultural and political project, preceded the formation of the idea of Europe as such. But of course we cannot call this a 'European identity' since it was never focused on the idea of Europe itself. The idea of Europe when it did emerge was embedded in Christendom having become virtually coterminous with the notion of the Occident, which preceded the idea of Europe. It was this latter notion of the Occident or West that provided continuity between Hellenism, Christendom and the idea of Europe.

For the civilisations of antiquity the idea of Europe was relatively unimportant and did not come to designate the continent of Europe until the rise of Islam in the seventh century. For a long time Europe as a concept designated the wider Greek world of Asia Minor and included parts of northern Asia, not the western continent, most of which was unknown and only partly inhabited. We often forget that the culture and civilisation of the Occident owes its origin to the Orient. The world of antiquity was oriental not western. As a geographical entity Europe was a product of the break-up of the civilisation of the Mediterranean. Throughout the Middle Ages, the idea of Europe was linked to the idea of the Christian West and served as a hegemon against the ascendancy of Islam. The limits of Europe in the crucible of Christendom were set by the Muslim advance and Christianity became the territorial identity of medieval Europe. The idea of Europe gave to medieval Christendom a sense of territorial unity, though not a specific identity.

From a very early stage in its history Europe failed to develop a geo-political framework capable of integrating Latin and Greek Christianity into a unitary civilisation. This geo-political split was reflected in the emergence of two cultural frameworks in which the idea of Europe tended to become interchangeable with Latin Christendom. This was, I should like to stress, before the idea of Europe itself became an autonomous cultural framework and a basis of identity. Moreover, an enduring tension remained between the idea of Europe as a geographical concept and the notion of Christendom, the territory of Latin Christianity.

Since it is one of my central contentions that the idea of Europe in the modern period never emancipated itself from the adversarial East–West nexus with its roots deep in Christendom, a considerable amount of space will be devoted to an analysis of the early history of the idea. This will, I hope, have the additional value of demystifying the notion of the unity of Europe as a historical region with its roots in classical culture, the idea expressed by T. S. Eliot (1962, p. 130) that: 'We are all, so far as we inherit the the civilization of Europe, still citizens of the Roman Empire.'

EUROPE AND THE ANCIENTS

The idea of Europe had little meaning for the Ancients. Long before it became even a geographical expression the idea of Europe belonged more to the realm of myth than of science and politics (Hay, 1957, p. 5). Like many proto-national figures, Europe was the name of a woman. As such it had the power of mystification. In the Greek myths the Phoenician princess Europa, having been seduced by Zeus disguised as a white bull, abandoned her homeland in present day Lebanon for the western island of Crete where she later married the King of Crete. That Europe was therefore an eastern import did not worry the Greeks as they did not have a strong sense of division between a western territory extending beyond Greece, but to which Greece belonged, and an eastern or southern continent alien to Hellas. Indeed, in many of the myths, Europa was the half sister of Asia and Libya (the name of Africa) while for Homer Europa was the daughter of Phoenix (Buehler, 1968). This suggests that Europe was not a highly differentiated concept. Europe, after all, was not a Greek discovery but Phoenician and may even have had Semitic roots (Sattler, 1971, p. 19). The notion that Europe was of Greek origin was

undoubtedly a later invention and, according to the famous thesis of Bernal (1987), can be traced to the attempts of counter-revolutionary intellectuals – particularly in the period 1815 to 1830 when classics was founded as a conservative discipline – to fabricate a European cultural tradition whose roots lay in a purified ancient Greece that bore no recognition of its roots in the Orient.

It appears that Europe and Asia as individual regions were of little significance to the Greeks for whom everything non-Greek was simply 'barbarian'. Greece was often thought of as being a separate entity, distinct from Europe and Asia. This seems to have been the view of Aristotle who made a threefold distinction between Greeks, Europeans and Asians, but held that the latter two were 'barbarians'. In his reflections on the nature of kinship in *The Politics* (1962, pp. 136 and 269) he argued that the barbarians are more slavish than the Greeks, and Asiatics more so than Europeans. As is well known, the democracy afforded by the fabled Greek polis was based on slavery. Given that most slaves were Asiatic, it was not surprising that Aristotle expressed contempt for Asia and regarded barbarians, that is non-Greeks, in the same light as slaves (Puzzo, 1964, p. 580).

The authors of antiquity rarely used the word Europe. According to Hay (1957, p. 2) in his authoritative study on the early history of the idea of Europe, the term Europe may have been originally used to refer to the mainland areas of Greece and only later came to include the Aegean islands. The principal antithesis in Greek thinking was the dualism of Greeks versus barbarians (Gollwitzer, 1964, p. 20). For Plato in *The Republic* (1974, p. 358) there was a clear distinction between Greeks and barbarians, but we have little evidence to suggest that he attached importance to Europe. Aeschylus in the play *The Persians* constructed an opposition of Greeks versus Persians: the Persians were Asiatic while the Greeks were civilised. To the Greeks the concept of Asia was more firmly linked to a specific territory than Europe, which remained a vague area to the north of Hellas. For Herodotus in the fifth century the feud between the Greeks and the Persians amounted to a virtual conflict of civilisations. It is possible that this feud provided the terms of reference for the conflict of Europe and Asia in later centuries. Herodotus himself, however, had no clear distinction between Europe and Asia and simply called the wilderness north of the Black Sea *Scythia*. Europe and Asia were merely geographical terms while Greece and Persia were cultural-political terms. Isocrates, however, in the fourth century BC constructed an identification of Europe with Greece and Asia with Persia (Hay, 1957, p. 3). Ptolemy, in the second century AD, used the term *Sarmatia* and distinguished between *Sarmatia Europea* and *Sarmatia Asiatica* with the River Don separating them (Halecki, 1950, p. 85). This was to prove an enduring distinction and still remains one of the geographical definitions of Europe. At about this time the earlier twofold division of the world between Asia and Europe, or Persia and Greece, gave way to a threefold division: Europe, Asia and Africa. Earlier, it is thought that Africa may have been considered a part of Asia (Fuhrmann, 1981, p. 7). According to Hippocrates, the Sea of Azov was the boundary between Asia and Europe (Toynbee, 1954, pp. 708–29). The principal frontier known to the Greeks was the Nile, which separated Asia from Africa. It appears the distinction between these two continents was more significant than the singularity of Europe against Asia (Hay, 1957, p. 2). Toynbee (1954, p. 711) has argued that it is possible that Asia and Europe originally emerged as nautical terms used by the Aegean mariners to distinguish between the two land masses that set restrictions to navigation. In general we may conclude that the Greeks did not always consider themselves Europeans. Hellas was seen as the land of culture and civilisation and beyond it was barbarism. What is significant, however, is less the opposition of Europe versus Asia, than the fact of political dualism itself and the ethnocentrism that it constructed.

The idea of Europe began to emerge with the decline of classical Greek civilisation. After the Persian wars, the Greek city states were weakened as a result of internal strife and the ensuing Peloponnesian war between Sparta and Athens prepared the way for the ascendancy of Macedonia in 338 BC. Under Alexander the Great the centre of Greek civilisation moved towards Asia Minor after Macedonia annexed Greece and defeated the Persians in 331 BC. The idea of Europe, which began to take on a proto-political form in the Age of Alexander, served to mystify the territories of the Macedonian conquests by bestowing upon them the identity of a distinct geographical entity. This possibly may have been because Greek culture after Alexander the Great was no longer the property of the Greeks. Greek, which denotes language rather than a people, was able to lend itself to universalistic ambitions. Even though Greek culture and language had spread throughout the region, Greek political hegemony had given way to new political powers which were as much 'oriental' as 'western'. The idea of Greek superiority against the 'barbarians' of Europe diminished and a broader concept of Europe emerged and came increasingly to refer to what is essentially Asia Minor and included Greece, but with Asia still being the focal point of Otherness. Asia was in effect pushed eastwards beyond Persia after the conquests of Alexander (Baldry, 1965, pp. 120–1 and 132). It is interesting to observe that the territories united by Alexander eventually fell under Byzantine rule and only in later centuries ceased to be regarded as the essence of 'European' culture.

For Antiquity the idea of Europe was subordinated to the notion of the Occident. The notion of the Occident first referred to the eastern Mediterranean

world and was not identical to the idea of Europe, which had less meaning as a cultural idea. It was a Hellenic Occident. It is even possible that the Greeks were more strongly aware of the world being structured on a north–south axis, from light and heat to darkness and cold, than on a west–east polarity. While the notion of the Occident referred, broadly speaking, to the wider Greek world, the idea of Europe was predominantly geographical. The idea of the Occident, which predates the usage of the notion of Europe, was in fact, like the early idea of Europe, what we today would call the Orient. Troy, the cradle of the Occident, for instance, was east of the Dardanelles. The ancient limits of the West were the borders of the known world in the western Mediterranean and Persia in the East. Orient and Occident, then, had quite different meanings from the connotations they were later to acquire when the centre of civilisation shifted westwards. But the notion of the Occident had another and more important meaning in Antiquity: it was believed to be the site of paradise, which lay somewhere in the unknown western ocean. It was to this mystique of the West that Europe was subordinated.

After the defeat of Macedonia by Rome in 197 BC, Greek civilisation moved from the eastern Mediterranean to its western shores. Like the Greeks before them, the Romans never had a strong sense of a European identity, possibly because parts of the Roman empire were spread over non-European territory and did not include much of the northern parts of the continent. The heart of the empire was located in the eastern Mediterranean basin. The Roman Empire was as much oriental as it was Hellenic, and it was only in a trivial sense 'western'. It included a great diversity of peoples: Celts, Germans, Romans, Iberians, Berbers, Illyrians, Libyans. The Chinese once believed that Antioch was the capital of the Roman Empire rather than its third largest city (Dudley, 1975, p. 243). Like the East, the Roman world was a maritime civilisation based on cities and written cultures. A great network of roads and seaways connected areas as far apart as the Thames and the Euphrates. The encounter of Roman civilisation with the Orient did not always amount to the same clash of cultures that resulted when the Romans annexed Europe north of the Alps. It is evident, however, that Europe in Roman times referred to a geographical region comprising, approximately, most of the present continent of Europe, with the exception of Scandinavia. The British Isles and the Iberian Peninsula were often excluded from Europe. Bede, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, suggests that Britain is separate from Europe. Europe was not yet a highly politicised concept. Europe had not yet been 'westernised'; nor, for that matter, had the East been 'orientalised'.

So, for much of Antiquity, Europe did not encompass what we associate with it today. It was at most a region and not a continent in the geo-political sense of the term: for the Roman Empire Europe did not constitute a cultural model. Nor did it signify cultural unity since much of the continent was inhabited by 'barbarians'. There is little historical congruity between the modern notion of Europe as the West and the ancient idea of Europe. When we look back into early history we find that relatively few claims were made on its behalf. We can detect, however, the beginning of a civilisational struggle towards the cultural hegemony of the West in the sense of the cultural superiority of the Romano-Hellenic world over the unconquered world.

For the Romans the idea of Europe was not as strongly pronounced as it was in the Middle Ages. Roman ethnocentrism was focused, not on the idea of Europe, but on the myth of Rome as the centre of the world. Even in the early Christian era to be a Christian was to be a Roman, not a European. The notion of a European identity as opposed to the idea of Europe had not yet emerged. Yet while Virgil's Aeneas symbolised the unity of Orient and Occident, he ultimately represented the superiority of the Occident. Virgil's great epic poem, *The Aeneid*, gave poetic expression to the myth of the origins of the Roman nation. According to their myth of origins, the Romans could trace their history back to the fall of Troy in Asia Minor. The idea that it was the destiny of the West to inherit the burden of Oriental civilisation is central to the myth of the origins of Rome. This was later to become a major legitimation of western attitudes to the Orient. The myth of Aeneas survived into the Middle Ages in the formation of a European myth of origins: the exiled Trojans were supposed to have established a series of cities in the West and many of the western kingdoms claimed to derive their genealogy from the exiles of Troy (Tazbir, 1986, p. 6; Tanner, 1993). Both the Tudor and Habsburg historical myths of legitimation, for instance, proclaimed the Trojans to be their ancestors, and in the east the Ottomans also appealed to Troy for a myth of origins.

We must not, once again, overstate the difference between east and west as far as Antiquity is concerned. For the peoples of Antiquity the divide between north and south was a more significant one than that of east versus west. It must not be forgotten that in a seafaring age the Alps represented a far greater geographical, and hence cultural, divide than the Mediterranean, which had been the centre of world civilisation for long before it became a Roman lake. The sea served to unite people and civilisations rather than to divide them. The entire trading networks of the ancient world criss-crossed the Mediterranean linking Cadiz, Carthage, Alexandria and Constantinople into a unified trading bloc. For the Romans the Danube and Rhine were more strategic frontiers than the Don (Hay, 1957, p. 5). A geographical image that had far greater reality to the ancient and early medieval mind was that of Ethiopia, which was believed to contain the source of the Nile with which paradise was associated (Baudet, 1976, p. 15).

The ancient idea of Europe, then, did not signify the western continent but rather expressed a vaguely defined Occident, the land of darkness, the land of the evening sun. But even this notion of Europe as the Occident had not yet become a unifying idea of consequence. While the word 'Europe' did exist, the term 'Europeans' was rarely used in ancient times. Thus, the natives of Syria and Iran still call modern Europeans 'Franks' because they have no other word for the crusading Franks who arrived from the West in the twelfth century. Similarly in Greece the Europeans were known as Franks, and in parts of North Africa Europeans are still called Romans (Davis, 1988, p. 3). This suggests that the notion of Europe was at most a geographical idea and was not yet a cultural idea of significance, still less a political identity. The idea of a European identity had yet to be forged. Ethno-culturalism was in general focused on other reference points: Hellenism, Rome and the Christian church after the fourth century.

The division of the Roman Empire into two parts in 286 by the Emperor Diocletian was crucial in the shaping of the future antagonism between east and west. The two basins of the Mediterranean, with Sicily in the centre, became the cores of the West and East. But this early division did not reflect the later civilisations of Orient and Europe. While the eastern half included Egypt, the western half included 'Africa', which meant for the Romans the western parts of North Africa. Greece and the Aegean, and most of the southern Balkans went to the eastern half of the empire and the Italian peninsula remained a natural dividing line between the two halves of the empire (Herrin, 1987, pp. 22/3). Following a brief period of reunification Constantine transferred the capital to Constantinople in 330, and in 395 the Roman Empire finally split into two parts, the Eastern and Western Empires. This division did not mean that the split which was eventually to come about was determined from the very beginning. Constantinople, founded on the bridge between West and East, was simply the New Rome, or the Second Rome, and its citizens called themselves Romans. It was founded as a political expedient in order to protect the empire from attacks from Persia. Western Europe itself was quickly lost to the barbarians coming from the east and north. What then happened was that the Occident shifted eastwards once more towards Asia Minor. Initially the links between Rome and Constantinople remained strong because of the Muslim victories in Palestine, Syria and Egypt. But this was not to endure. Rome had long since outlived its military usefulness and the capital of the western part of the empire had in fact shifted to Ravenna in 402. In 410 Rome itself was sacked by the Goths, and in the sixth century Justinian, the eastern emperor, failed in his bid to recover the western parts of the empire.

In the centuries after its foundation, Constantinople acquired an identity of its own when it became more oriental and in language more Greek than Latin. The notion of Europe subsequently came to designate the western part while the idea of the Empire came to refer to the Byzantine east, the Orient (Fischer, 1957, p. 44). So, Occident and Orient evolved to refer to the two halves of the Roman Empire. The term Occident, along with Europe, tended to be used increasingly for the western half of the former Roman Empire, making it possible to speak of the European Occident. Then, with the Byzantine empire laying claim to the imperial tradition, the identity of the western half came gradually to rest on Latin Christianity. Europe and Occident became synonyms for Christendom (Wallach, 1972).

The fissures of the conflict between Europe and Orient were slowly becoming apparent in these far-reaching developments. One thing was already clear: in the great transformation that accompanied the decline of the Roman Empire in the West, the notion of the Orient not only gained currency but its parameters were slowly creeping westwards. The Orient was no longer merely Persia, but was gradually coming to designate Asia Minor. With its advent the idea of Europe began to take shape as a cultural idea.

CRUCIFIX AND CRESCENT

From the seventh century the idea of Europe came increasingly to be articulated against Islam, which for many centuries held the upper hand. After the death of Muhammad in 632 his followers spread out from Arabia and conquered the Persian empire of the Sasanids and annexed the Fertile Crescent (the lands of Iraq, Syria and Palestine). In the seventh and eighth centuries the Arabs conquered most of North Africa with Alexandria falling in 642 and Carthage in 698. Muslim power spread over Anatolia, Persia and Mesopotomia, and eventually reached India. The Arab empire of the Umayyad dynasty, established in Damascus in 661, began to look westwards and advanced into Europe with the fall of the kingdom of the Visigoths in Spain in 711. After 711, until the Christian reconquest of Spain, the effective frontier of European Christianity in the West was the Pyrenees. The proximity of the borders of Africa and Europe where there was for centuries an overlapping of civilisations led Napoleon to remark that 'Africa begins at the Pyrenees' (Sertina, 1992, p. 2). The Muslim conquest of Spain was almost extended to France until the Arabs, under Abdier Rahman, were defeated by the Franks at the battle of Tours in 732. Significantly, one of the first references to Europeans was the army with which the Frankish leader, Charles Martel, defeated the Muslims (Hay, 1957, p. 25). This battle was of major significance for the future of Europe. Had the Muslims not been defeated it is not inconceivable that Christianity would have been wiped out in Europe.

Whether this is true or not, the symbolic significance of the battle, as opposed to its possible military implications, is of greater importance in that it underlies the emergence of an adversarial identity in the West. Above all it heralded the arrival of Europe as a proto-cultural idea. Under the signs of the crucifix and the crescent, the clash of Christianity and Islam was crucial in the formation of the Eurocentric world-view.

Under the Abbasid caliphate, which emerged after the overthrow of the Umayyads in 750 and lasted until the mid-thirteenth century when it was sacked by the Mongols, Arab power, as a result of its non-Arabic conquests, became transformed into an Islamic political system whose centre had moved from Damascus to Baghdad, which was the new nerve centre of a vast trading network and linked up the entire Middle East. With the rise and consolidation of this Muslim world-system, the West was put on the defensive. Charlemagne failed to defeat the Moors in Spain in 778. The threat was no longer from the barbarian tribes of the north who had been attacking the Roman Empire since the fifth century, but from Islam. Many of the barbarian tribes, of which the most significant were the Franks, had been converted to Christianity and became the backbone of Christendom. The contours of Christendom became increasingly those of Europe so that the two ideas came to express the same cultural model. The Orient was thus destined to become the new image of hostility for, what was now effectively, the European Christian West and is best exemplified in the famous xenophobic paean, the *Song of Roland* (circa 1100).

With the expansion of the Islamic empire, the boundaries of Graeco-Roman civilisation shrank to the Pyrenees and the Bosporus, which was put under siege in 674–8 and again in 718. The Muslim civilisation that emerged in the seventh century was more advanced than the cultural remnants of the Graeco-Roman civilisation that had survived the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. In fact Muslim civilisation absorbed more of Greek culture than did the post-Roman West. Links between Europe and the Orient were broken during the period of Muslim ascendancy and it is believed that it was the Jews who were the principal links between the two hostile worlds (Lewis, 1993b, p. 95). But we must not get the impression that there were two mutually exclusive civilisations confronting each other. Much of the classical culture, which had been extinguished in the West after the break-up of the Roman world, was preserved, and indeed expanded, by the Arabs. Muslim Spain, in particular Cordoba and Toledo, was important in transmitting Islamic culture to Europe in the period after the Reconquest. Sicily had for long been a crossroads of the two civilisations and it was from there that many ideas entered the two worlds. Arab culture greatly influenced European civilisation until the sixteenth century, after which it had passed its zenith when Europe began to take over the leadership of the world.

The West was shaped by the Muslim onslaught in the one hundred years from about 650 to 750. This period, and not the beginning of the so-called Dark Ages after the break-up of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, was the real turning point as far as the formation of a European identity is concerned. After the Roman Empire had shaken off the barbarian menace by shifting to Constantinople, and later the Persian threat, it was confronted by Islam. The battle of Tours and the sieges of Constantinople marked the limits of Muslim expansion in the West. The Byzantine Empire had also reached the limit of its expansion and was unable to prevent Islam from encroaching upon its territory. But the Byzantines were only resilient; they succeeded merely in pushing the Muslims back but could not defeat them. After 700 the Byzantine empire had shrunk to Constantinople itself, parts of Asia Minor, Greece and parts of southern Italy. Nothing could alter the fact that Christendom was beleaguered by Muslim power in the east in Asia Minor, in the south from the southern shores of the Mediterranean and in the west in the Iberian peninsula. The annexation of Crete in 825 and Sicily in 827 imposed further restrictions on western Christendom. Islam by virtue of its possession of these strategic islands was in a position of real strength and virtually controlled the Mediterranean in the ninth century. In 826 Rome itself was sacked and the pope forced to pay tribute. By the twelfth century Christianity disappeared from the Maghreb. The spreading of Christianity was not only halted but was put on the defensive; and within Europe itself a wedge had been driven between the Latin west and the Greek east. Moreover, later conflicts between Persia and Byzantium exhausted both empires, preparing the way for Muslim ascendancy in the peripheries of Europe.

In the wake of the rise of Islam a new idea of Europe began to emerge whereby Europe came to refer to the north-western continent. With the loss of much of the Mediterranean to Islam, the Occident began to embrace the barbarian lands of the north-west. The West more or less abandoned the Mediterranean and the Byzantines were left to take the initiative on the eastern front. In 863 they defeated the Arabs in a major battle and, until the rise of the Seljuq dynasty in the mid-eleventh century, they pursued an offensive policy which held the Arabs at bay (Obolensky, 1971, p. 71).

CHRISTENDOM AND EUROPE

In this period, known as the Dark Ages, conventionally placed between 476, the year of the deposition at Ravenna of the last Roman emperor in the West, and the beginning of the Carolingian empire in the ninth century, Rome ceased to be the centre of Europe. The reforms that were carried out by the

emperors Diocletian and Constantine enabled only the eastern part of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine empire, to survive. Following the great population migration of the Germanic tribes in the fifth century and the consolidation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in England in the succeeding centuries, the centre of European civilisation shifted north-westwards, and the Baltic superseded the Mediterranean in importance. While the Germanic tribes were undermining the empire from the north, the Persians were attacking from the east. Western Europe was vulnerable to attack from all sides. In the ninth century the Vikings pressed southwards, the Magyars advanced from the east and the Muslims from the south. It was in this context that the idea of Europe gained currency (Leyser, 1992, pp. 40–1). The idea of Europe's historical uniqueness and autonomy begins to emerge in the face of opposition. The Islamic invasions along with the barbarian and Persian invasions gave a sense of a European identity to Christendom which served as a bulwark against the non-Christian world. It was a siege mentality, an identity born in defeat, not in victory. But with the gradual acceptance of Christianity by the northern tribes, from the Franks to the Vikings, the barbarian threat to Christendom was over and something like a European order was consolidated. The development towards a European civilisation centred in the north-west was enhanced by the ascendancy of Charlemagne who styled himself the 'father of Europe' (Fischer, 1957 p. 115). Europe had abandoned the Mediterranean for the Baltic. In this retreat it was to acquire a new identity.

Christianity provided the western monarchies with a powerful myth of legitimation which became increasingly consolidated with the encroachment of Islam. The need for cultural cohesion became all the more necessary because there was no central political authority under the system of feudalism that had emerged in the West after the break-up of the Carolingian empire in the tenth century. Christianity, with its ethic of obedience and hierarchy of power, was more adaptable to the settled agrarian world of feudalism than to the urban and secular world of trade and commerce. The notion of Europe as a geographical term became increasingly applied to the Christian parts of the West. Europe became identical with the notion of a Christian commonwealth, with the emphasis being on the north-west. With the rise of Islam, the ancient links between East and West took on the character of an enduring antagonism, and in this great and far-reaching shift in the formation of the identity of modern Europe, the northern and southern parts of Europe, for long separated by the Alps, merged to form medieval Christendom. A new border emerged, stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. From then on the greater division between West and East took on the character of a moral-religious divide with the Occident signifying civilisation and goodness and the Orient barbarity and evil. The identity of Europe was constructed

out of a sense of spiritual superiority in the disavowal of its own very origin in the Orient. Without the image of hostility afforded by Islam, the Christian West would have been unable to attain a single and high culture capable of unifying the diverse elements of European society.

This sense of western and Christian superiority is expressed in some of the early ideas of Europe. In early Christian times the idea emerged that the peoples of Europe, Asia and Africa were the descendants of Noah's three sons: Japheth, the originator of the Greeks, Gentiles and Christians; Shem, the originator of the Jews and Arabs; and Ham the progenitor of the Negroes. In the Christian mythology Japheth, the father of the Europeans, was accorded superiority over Shem, which meant Asia and designated primarily the Jews, and over Ham meaning Africa and referred to Africans. This idea survived into modern times as a conceptual tool in the service of Eurocentric philosophies of history for dividing the peoples of the world into races (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 46). With the decline of Rome, the notion of the Christian *oecumene*, the civilised world, emerged and Europe became closely identified with the Christian religion and its global aspirations. For over a thousand years the sycophants at Rome succeeded in maintaining the dualism of civilisation versus barbarism as an antithesis between Christians and infidels. Christianity then came to be associated with cultural superiority and civilisation while the non-Christian world was seen as uncivilised and barbarian.

Christianity was effectively 'Europeanised' from the eighth century onwards. From its origin as an Asiatic cult it became the imperial ideology of Rome and finally evolved to be the universal and legitimating myth of medieval Christendom under the aegis of the German Reich. The word Christendom was used from the ninth century (Phillips, 1988, p. 32). That Christendom as an expression was itself such a relatively late development – it was not in common usage until the eleventh century – we should not be surprised to find that the idea of Europe was an even later invention. From the early third century the notion of a Christian age had been established as the basis of historical chronology, while Islam established its own system of dating after the death of Muhammad in 632 (Herrin, 1987, pp. 1–6). The idea of a universal empire was taken over by the Church, which cultivated a historical memory based on nostalgia for the imperial past: the universal empire became the universal church and the cult of emperor worship was transposed to the papacy. In this transformation the Roman citizen became a Christian subject. The quest for universal imperialism was thus destined to become a crucial component in the identity of Europe. But, as Wallace-Hadrill (1985, p. 151) points out, 'the truth is that most people did not see the situation in this light and thought that European unity was an overrated ideal, like that of its parent, the *Imperium Christianum*.'

The word Europe, however, was rarely used until the fifteenth century. This was not surprising because Christianity, with which Europe was usually associated, was not a territorially unified culture. This inevitably led to ambiguity since Christian unity transcended European unity and was in its early phase a universal religion that was not specifically European. The Greek, or Byzantine, church became increasingly identified with the Orient. The Byzantine Empire never tried to monopolise the notion of Europe, which came to be applied, but never exclusively, to the former western empire after its restoration by the Franks and their Germanic successors, the Ottonians. In time the separation of the two empires would become a division of *ecclesia* versus *imperium*, or Christendom versus Empire. This enduring division, which has shaped the face of Europe until the present day, was also reflected in the schism within the Christian church itself, whose two halves spoke different languages and eventually acquired different cultural and ecclesiastical customs (Chadwick, 1990, p. 228). The attempt to enforce orthodoxy at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 prepared the ground for future secession. This, of course did not become irreversible until much later. Charlemagne's defeat of the Byzantines in 789 hastened the split within Europe. After the burning of the papal bull issued to excommunicate the eastern church at Constantinople in 1054, the division between the eastern Orthodox church and the western Roman church finally became permanent. The culmination of this was the sacking of Constantinople in 1204 by the Fourth Crusade. The idea of Europe as it became articulated in this period served as a means of alienating the Greek church from the Latin West.

It is significant that the identity of the Byzantine empire was constructed by the state which fused the sacred with the secular. In the Latin West, in contrast, the pattern of cultural and political identity formation rested on a separation of state and church. This was the basis of the West's divergent path of development. It meant that in the West, the state could decouple itself from the burden of legitimation with which the Byzantine state was encumbered. This was to be to the long-term advantage of the West, which was able to undergo a more differentiated logic of development. In this it is possible to see how the idea of Europe would become the secular identity of the West while Christendom would be its religious identity.

With the limits of Europe being set by the Muslim advance, Christianity had effectively become the territorial religion of medieval Europe. Christ was Europeanised and the crucifixion, after the tenth century, became the universal symbol of European mastery. To be a Christian was to be no longer merely a Roman or an imitator of Rome but to be a member of the universal Christian polity, the *oecumene*. Europe was the secular identity of Christendom which was for long associated with the Frankish empire. The

idea of Europe gave to medieval Christendom a certain territorial unity with which it could confront the Orient. But this was a unity constituted only in confrontation and did not succeed in concealing the real divisions within the western system of medieval kingdoms. The notion of the Orient came to refer to the entire heathen lands of Asia Minor, Asia, India and the Maghreb. The rise of Christianity in the West, in effect, led to the equation of the Occident with Europe.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter has been to show that the early history of the idea of Europe reveals a tension between its function as a geographical construct and as a cultural-political idea. The principal political polarisation with which the idea of Europe was linked, Christendom versus Islam, had in reality very little to do with the idea of Europe, but nevertheless influenced the future history of the notion to a great extent. We can conclude that by the tenth century the idea of Europe had evolved from a mere geographical expression to a cultural idea which had political uses but which had not yet stabilised to be the basis of a specifically European identity. The consolidation of the idea of Europe and the formation of an identity focused on it is the theme of the next chapter.

3 The Westernisation of Europe

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This chapter is mostly concerned with the consolidation of the idea of Europe as a cultural framework and the formation of a European identity in the Middle Ages. The counter-offensive, in the form of the crusades that the West launched against the Muslim Orient, failed to restore western fortunes, and, as a result, the identity of Europe as the Christian West found its focus of hostility in Islam. But the idea of Europe as a cultural model was mostly overshadowed by the rise of the Holy Roman Empire as the centre of Europe moved from the Mediterranean towards the Baltic. The foundation was thus provided for an enduring tension between the idea of Europe and the Holy Roman Empire, which sought to legitimate itself as the guardian of civilisation. Modern western Europe can be seen as the result of the failure of the empire to impose its rule over its vast territories.

Until the late fifteenth century the idea of Europe was principally a geographical expression and subordinated to Christendom which was the dominant identity system in the West. The idea of Europe as the West began to be consolidated in the foreign conquests of the age of 'discovery'. Europe then begins to shed itself of its association with Christendom and slowly becomes an autonomous discourse. As a result of the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 and the subsequent colonial expansion of the western European powers after 1492, the idea of Europe became linked to a system of what was coming to be regarded as specifically European values, though these did not become fully articulated as a European identity until the late seventeenth century. It was thus in the encounter with non-European peoples and in resistance to Ottoman expansion that the idea of Europe itself became the focus for the construction of a specifically European identity.

What we are therefore witnessing, in the period under discussion in this chapter, is the transformation of the idea of Europe into a European identity whereby Europe refers not merely to a geographical area but a system of 'civilisational' values. In this movement the idea of Europe supplanted Christendom as the cultural frame of reference for new processes of identity formation and the rise of new centres of power. In doing so, however, a tension emerged between the cultural idea of Europe and the geographical framework to which it referred. As a cultural framework Europe became the

normative idea of a civilisation that was in the process of expanding overseas, but as the name of that civilisation's geographical territory it was faced with the problem that a considerable part lay under Ottoman suzerainty. This tension could not easily be reconciled, and so we find that the idea of Europe tended to be overshadowed by the hegemonic notion of the West, which became the driving force of the ascending European powers in their conquest of the Americas. The older ambivalence between Christendom and Europe was thus replaced by a new one with Europe and the West as the shifting signifiers of a rapidly expanding world-system with its epicentre in western Europe.

With expansion in the East for a time closed off, the lands beyond the seas provided room for European expansionary zeal. The age of discovery was a renewal of the crusading idea but with the difference that it was primarily western bound and the product of the new absolutist regimes and Counter-Reformation Roman Catholicism. In this transformation a new being was born: the European. The acquisition of the New World greatly strengthened a sense of European superiority at a time when the West had failed to defeat the Muslim Orient. In its colonising thrust across the Atlantic a myth was created. This was the European myth of the West, which was in subsequent centuries to become an important part of the identity of North America in the myth of the limitless frontier of the West. And, Europe, as the Old World, became the cultural repository of the New World. The myth of European civilisation was thus given substance.

In this period Europe emerged to become a clearly defined region, the centre of what Wallerstein (1974 and 1980) has called a 'world-system', and acquired an enduring identity based on its westward thrust. Up until the sixteenth century there were several world-systems, of which the European was relatively insignificant (Braudel, 1979, pp. 80–5). What may have been of greater significance was the Oriental-western world-system in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the Mediterranean civilisation of the sixteenth century (Abu-Lughod, 1989). It may therefore have been, as Marshall Hodgson (1962/3, p. 250) once suggested, that European modernity was 'the outcome of a breakdown of the common historical conditions on which rested the pre-modern Afro-Eurasian historical complex as a whole'. It is important to appreciate that the 'unity of Europe' which was constituted in this transformation was an invented unity. To imagine Europe involves the privileging of a particular discourse over others. In the Middle Ages this was Christianity against Islam; in the early modern period it was the victory of civilisation over nature.

THE EMERGENCE OF A EUROPEAN POLITY

What we today understand as Europe in its strict geographical definition was throughout the Middle Ages merely, to use Paul Valery's apt phrase, a 'peninsula of Asia' and was considerably less populated. It consists of not more than 7 per cent of the land surface of the earth, depending on how far the eastern limit is taken. Until the tenth century 'Europe' was less than one third its present size since the entity it designated did not include the northern regions. In comparison to China it was technologically backward (Needham, 1961). From the seventh to the late thirteenth centuries, China under the T'ang and Sung dynasties attained a higher level of development than the West. In this period western Europe was undermined by a process of fragmentation resulting from population movement and the decline of the Roman Empire. Medieval Europe consisted of some 500 political entities, including duchies, bishoprics, principalities and city states (Tilly, 1990, p. 45). Western Europe was weak in comparison with the Orient. The 'Little Ice Age' of the early fourteenth century and the ensuing Black Death of 1347–50 greatly weakened western Europe, which suffered a loss of as much as one third of its population. In contrast, the Byzantine east suffered less from these setbacks and, in fact, experienced a period of growth in the fourteenth century. Moreover, Europe was militarily ill-equipped to defend itself against Muslim expansion.

Only in the High Middle Ages (c.900–1250) did the West begin to overtake China, which underwent a process of stagnation following the Mongol invasions (Jones, 1987; Chirot, 1985). Western Europe, according to Hodgson (1962/3, p. 248), played a peripheral and until well into the Middle Ages a backward role. Though Chinese decline was offset by a period of recovery following the rise of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the development of capitalism and the system of nation-states that emerged in the West finally outpaced China (Mann, 1986).

So the relative underdevelopment of the West was to its eventual long-term advantage. Europe, as a result of the process of disintegration during the Dark Ages, in fact succeeded in discarding the burden of Antiquity, in the form of the ancient empires, and could therefore outpace the eastern empire and the oriental civilisations whose development had been retarded by the yoke of pre-feudal modes of production (Anderson, 1974a). The Black Death, for instance, in removing a large surplus population, may have provided a crucial condition for the emergence of capitalism in the West. The relative advancement of the East was ultimately an expression of the survival of Antiquity. It had surpassed its limits and was living on borrowed time into the second millennium; and the comparative backwardness of the

West was a sign of the transition to the feudal mode of production. Yet, the West did not finally surpass the Orient until the seventeenth century, though the roots of its advance did lie much earlier.

During the Dark Ages, from the fourth to the ninth centuries, 'Europe' – by which of course we mean Christendom – was unable to assert itself against Islam. The first wave of feudalism, from the fifth to the ninth century, had produced a static agrarian world. It was not until the High Middle Ages, from about 900 to 1250, that Christendom, enhanced by a forward thrust in the feudal mode of production – which led to a demographic explosion in which Europe's population doubled and a revival of trade occurred – attempted to launch a counter-offensive against the Orient. This was ultimately a failure, despite a relative expansion of frontiers, and Christendom had to reconcile itself to the fact that it had failed in its ambition for world mastery. But it was a failure that was not without success.

The collapse of the Carolingian empire led to the emergence of a number of independent Christian kingdoms from the ninth century. Strengthened by feudalism, these kingdoms gained a considerable amount of territory during the following centuries. Most notable was the rise of Norman power which, in the aftermath of the conquest of England in 1066, culminated in the capture of Palermo from the Arabs and in 1091 the annexation of Sicily. The thirteenth century reconquest of Spain consolidated these developments and by the early twelfth century the Mediterranean was once again, after some five centuries, recovered for Christian traders. These developments amounted to a general widening of the frontiers of Europe in the form of expansion of the French civilisation. The penetration of Norman power into the British Isles after 1066 and in Sicily after 1072 belong to the same dynamic. Between about 1000 and 1250 a whole new civilisational pattern based upon feudalism expanded as far west as Ireland and as far east as Jerusalem, bringing with it a uniform society (Bartlett, 1993). This new framework is what we call Europe: the watchword for the expansion of Franco-Latin Christendom.

THE RISE OF A CRUSADING IDEOLOGY

What was crucial to the identity of Europe was less its territorial expansion than its increased internal homogeneity. The idea of a Christian community provided not only a legitimating myth for medieval kingship, but also served as a medium of cultural cohesion for groups otherwise separated by language and ethnic traditions. Strengthened with an official liturgy and a centrally organised and militant episcopacy, Europe evolved a new counter-offensive against the Muslim Orient. The ensuing crusading ideology that emerged

became an integral component of the identity of the European. The importance of the crusades is that they shaped the formation of an ethno-culturally homogenising identity, which subsequently became a core component of European identity.

The crusades were a collective mobilisation of Christendom and gave a strong sense of territorial identity to medieval Europe. The political energy of the feudal kingdoms in western Europe was transformed into an eastern-ward movement towards colonisation. This was also Christendom's counter-offensive against Islam and the idea of a Holy War against the infidel was born. The crusades were able to take advantage of a period of crisis in the Islamic world in the tenth century when the Abbasid dynasty was overthrown by the Buyids. This period of disintegration and renewal lasted until the twelfth century, when a new centre of power emerged, based on the Seljuks, an ascending Turkish dynasty who adhered to Sunni Islam and who established themselves at Baghdad in 1055 and expanded into Anatolia in Asia Minor. The political unity of Islam split into a number of units, principally those centred around Cordoba, Cairo and Baghdad respectively. The Seljuk victory over the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 won them most of Anatolia and precipitated four centuries of crusades. The entrenched Byzantines, who now had lost most of Asia Minor, sought the help of Gregory VII, whose successor, Urban II, responded with the First Crusade (1096–99) which he preached at Clermont in 1095. Though there are no records of Urban's famous speech, a English chronicler reports one of the first references to Europe, which is positively identified with Christianity in the context of the Islamic threat (Hay, 1957, p. 32).

This was also a period of Reconquest for the Latin West. The king of Leon and Castile, Alfonso VI, captured Toledo from the Muslims in 1084. This was an event of epochal significance for it signalled the advent of a new and larger Europe and a major victory for Christendom. Spain was the first of the former Christian lands to be reconquered until the recovery of Hungary in 1699 (Lomax, 1978, p. 1). However, further advance in the Iberian peninsula failed until the thirteenth century as a result of a renewal of the Arab power. The Latin West therefore concentrated on its eastern frontier in the confrontation with the Orient. The term 'Cold War' was first applied to the resulting tension between Muslims and Christians in the thirteenth century (Bozeman, 1960, p. 426) and the dichotomy of Self and Other that it postulated remained a determining force in the European identity for centuries.

The crusaders were also unable to overcome the differences that existed between them. The unity of Christendom was only a unity in the face of a common enemy. The crusaders were also disadvantaged by the revival of Muslim military power in the twelfth century. By 1187 Jerusalem had been

recaptured by the Muslims. The subsequent crusades that were launched failed to reverse the fortunes of the West. The feudal states that the crusaders set up did not stand the test of time and by the late thirteenth century their lands were recovered by Muslims, with Acre, the last Christian state in the Holy Land, falling in 1291.

The idea of Europe was not central to the crusades; in fact it was probably its negation. Christianity was the principal identity of the crusaders. The symbol of the crusaders was the transnational symbol of the cross, not a national emblem, and they were known as 'the army of God' or 'the host of God' (Bartlett, 1993, p. 261). The crusaders retained the political identity of their respective kingdoms but their collective identity was that of Christian pilgrims taking the cross and sword. However, the term 'Frank' was in more common use than the notion of 'Europeans'. While Europe was in the process of becoming a clearly defined entity, 'Europeans' still hardly existed. Apparently the Byzantines, like the Muslims, labelled any westerners 'Franks' regardless of their origins (Bartlett, 1993, pp. 103–4). To the Chinese in their encounter with Europeans in the fifteenth century, the term Franks, as a pejorative word for Europeans, had found its way into their language (Bitterli, 1993). The dualism of Christians and infidels was more significant than the later opposition of Europeans versus barbarians. But the terms of reference for the construction of an adversarial system of contrasting identities had been created in what was to be an enduring notion of difference, of otherness. The emphasis on Christendom rather than Europe was not surprising since between 1099 and 1187 when Jersusalem was occupied by the crusaders, Christianity extended beyond its European frontiers.

The dominant power in the West was no longer Byzantium. Its age had passed and in 1071 it suffered a double defeat, one by the Turks at Manzikert and the other by the Normans, the ascending power in the West, who had taken Bari, one of the principal cities of Byzantine Italy. After the Fourth Crusade ended with the pillage of Constantinople the empire never really recovered its former glory. The hostility of the eastern empire to Christendom was enhanced by the crusades. The Byzantines regarded the crusades, not as a Christian counter-force against Islam, but a formidable power which threatened their own existence. It was this divide that outlived the crusades which had effectively divided Europe internally as much as externally.

EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND THE EASTERN FRONTIER

The Ottoman empire established by the Turks became the principal military

in the north-western part of Anatolia which was to become the basis of the future empire. In 1354 the Turks crossed the Dardanelles to Gallipoli and, after 1361, established their capital at Adrianople. Then they began their conquest of the Balkans with the famous battle of Kossovo in 1389 at which the Serbs were defeated and the whole of Christendom was put on the defensive. A further Turkish victory over a crusade that was sent to halt their advance at Nicopolis in 1398 confirmed their power on both sides of the Straits. The Latin West, weakened by the Black Death and destabilised by peasant revolts, was helpless to stop the Islamic revival of the fourteenth century. The fifteenth century saw the consolidation of Ottoman supremacy in the Balkans, Anatolia and the Aegean. In 1453 the Sultan Mehmet II seized Constantinople and, with the death of Constantine XI, the last eastern emperor, brought an end to the Byzantine Empire.

The fall of Constantinople was one of the really decisive events in the formation of European modernity. According to convention, the European Middle Ages came to an end in 1453 when the eastern empire fell to the Turks. Sunni Islam had finally won a major victory over the Christian world. Constantinople, renamed Istanbul, the city of Islam, was now the capital of the Sunni empire of the Ottomans. The capital of the greatest Islamic civilisation in the world was now located in Europe, giving birth to what for centuries was to be known as 'Turkey in Europe'. Within a decade the last Christian enclave in Asia Minor had fallen to the Turks. From then onwards the Latin West was put on the defensive: with the disappearance of the Greek Christian empire of the East, the Latin West was directly exposed to Islam which was within striking distance of the heart of Christendom and had occupied about a quarter of the territory of Europe. Equally important was the fact that both Europe and Islam had to compete for control of the same territory, which became the eastern frontier of the West. Moreover, the danger was not always military, but the fear of mass conversion to Islam (Lewis, 1993a, p. 13). The events of 1453 gained momentum in the following decades with the expansion of Ottoman supremacy over the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, culminating in the conquest of Syria and Egypt in 1517, at the height of the Reformation in Europe, and its expansion across the Maghreb.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages we can speak of an epochal break between the Orient and Occident. A sense of European identity existed by the fifteenth century, but it was an identity that was shaped more by defeat than by victory and was buttressed by the image of the Orient as its common enemy. According to Hay (1957, pp. 86–7) there is a significant increase in the frequency of use of the word Europe in connection with the Turkish advance. Pope Pius II frequently used the word Europe in the context of the Islamic advance, though the traditional notion of Christendom was more frequently employed, and we find such expressions commonplace in the language of diplomacy: 'the common enemy, the Christian republic, the Christian world, the provinces of Christendom' (Hay, 1957, pp. 96 and 114). Burke (1980, p. 23) points out that when Pius II first heard of the fall of Constantinople he remarked: 'Now we have really been struck in Europe, that is, at home.' He was also one of the first to use the adjective 'Europeans', which he did in the context of the Turkish threat (Yapp, 1992, p. 141). His concept of Europe was not only that of Latin Christendom, but in the wake of the Turkish advance, it also included Greece, the Balkans and Byzantium (Barraclough, 1963, p. 24). Even the great humanists of the Renaissance were conscious of the increased importance of the Sublime Porte over the Holy See. This is evidenced by the proliferation of European publications on the Ottoman empire in the sixteenth century (Springborg, 1992, p. 277). Erasmus, who has often been called 'the first European', believed that the Christian princes should stop quarrelling in order to be able to form a united front against Ottoman power (Tazbir, 1986, pp. 11 and 16). He thus exhorted the 'nations of Europe' to a crusade against the Turks (Coles, 1968, p. 148; Curio, 1958, pp. 190–1). Luther, too, had hoped that Latin Christendom would be able to heal its self-inflicted injuries and take up the mission of the cross against the Muslim infidels. In his 'War Sermon' in 1529, Luther gave vent to the 'Great Fear' of peasants in Germany and central Europe that they would be overrun by the Turks in the fulfilment of an ancient prophesy (Bohnstedt, 1968; Coles, 1968, p. 146; Southern, 1962, pp. 104-9).

The origins of European identity can be found in the sixteenth century resistance to the Turks (Beck, 1987; Schwoebel, 1967). It was a consciousness that was sustained by the principle of exclusivity rather than on any kind of immanent collective cohesion. It was this adversarial identity that survived the demise of Ottoman sea supremacy after Lepanto in 1571 and provided the receptacle for a racial notion of European identity in the age of imperialism. At about this time the idea of Europe began to replace Christendom as a cultural frame of reference for the construction of new forms of identification. In this transformation Europe no longer signified a geographical area but a system of values. This is what made it possible for a French poet in 1555 to suggest that Europe might be saved by abandoning European territory and transferring European societies to the New World (Coles, 1968, p. 148). It also made sense to replace Christendom with the word Europe since it was obvious that not all of Europe was Christian. Moreover, the Greek writers who fled to the Latin West after 1453 undoubtedly found the rhetorical use of the Greek word 'Europe' more natural than that of Christendom, a development that was probably also reflected in the more general humanist preference for classical words (Hay, 1957, pp. 87–8). With Bodin in the sixteenth

century, a shift is evident that Europe was in the process of replacing Christendom (Fritzemeyer, 1931, p. 90). But the idea of 'Europeans' seems to have been a later development. When Francis Bacon used the phrase 'We Europeans' in 1623, it is probable that it was already clear who they were (Hale, 1993, p. 46). So by the early sixteenth century we can speak of the creation of a discourse of Europe, which did not become a self-conscious identity until the late seventeenth century when the wars of religion petered out.

The formation of a European identity was never a predetermined. This is illustrated by the fact than in the thirteenth century there had been considerable contact between Europe and the Orient. For instance, European kings had their representatives at the Mongol court. In 1245 Pope Innocent IV sent an envoy to the court of the Khan and in 1255 Marco Polo went on his fourteen year journey through Asia. In this period many travellers had set forth to China from where many cultural and aesthetic influences came to Europe (Wittkower, 1977, pp. 10–14). In fact, the possibility of an alliance between Europe and the Mongols had been a very real possibility in the thirteenth century (Phillips, 1988, pp. 22–5). Chinese culture was an important part of the imagination of Europe until the mid-fourteenth century when the Ming Dynasty replaced the Mongol empire and contacts with Europe ceased. It was significant that this occurred at a time when the Latin West was also put on the defensive against the rising tide of Muslim power in Asia Minor.

The idea of a recovery of the Christian lands overseas never died and the ideal of Christian world mastery continued to be a powerful cultural motif in the West, which was never able to accept its diminished status. The idea of the enemy outside enhanced the mystique of Europe as the crucible of Christendom. By its very failure to expand, Christianity gave to Europe its identity. It was fateful that this was to be largely a German identity.

EUROPE AND THE MAKING OF GERMANY

In what follows, I should like to backtrack on the historical narrative in order to sketch the rise of the Holy Roman Empire and its creation of a competing notion of Europe. It is important to appreciate that the identity of Europe was not only formed in opposition to Islam, but was also shaped by tensions within Europe, which was never a homogeneous geo-political entity.

The main contender for the mantle of Christendom was the Germanic empire of the Franks. The shift to the north-west from the south-east was largely associated with the movements of the Germanic tribes. In the early Middle Ages Europe receded northwards following the movement of the Franks from their old capital at Aachen towards the Rhine. The division

between the Roman world of the Mediterranean and the barbarian world of northern Europe began to be blurred in the formation of a Frankish-Germanic empire.

An embryonic Europe of nations emerged by the late ninth century with the contours of Germany and France already becoming visible. The borders of Charlemagne's empire coincided to a remarkable extent with those of the original EC and it has frequently been observed that the border between West and East Germany was not very different from the line of Charlemagne's advance into Germany (Seton-Watson, 1989, p. 39). The Frankish empire extended only as far eastward as the Elbe, the mountains of Bohemia and the Alpine districts of Austria; it was a small Europe, which excluded the Slav lands to the east and did not include all of Germanic civilisation (Barraclough, 1976, p. 18). In fact one of the early political uses of the word 'Europe' was at Charlemagne's court at Aachen (Barraclough, 1963, p. 12).

It was the Germans, who by aping the Carolingians, succeeded in evoking the imperial tradition. Ever since the crowning of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III as Emperor of the Romans on Christmas Day in the year 800, this association of imperial authority was bound to the notion of a Christian king. Charlemagne used the church as a bulwark against the aristocracy. Gregory the Great associated the Roman Church with the idea of Europe by making the papacy the centre of European gravity (Ullmann, 1969, p. 135).

The Carolingian Renaissance was also a 'European' movement. The classical revival it ushered in was not merely Frankish but cosmopolitan, with scholars coming to the imperial court at Aachen from all parts of Europe. 'The ideological concept of Europe determined its territorial extent: Europe as conceived in the Carolingian age stopped where Roman Christianity ceased to be effective' (Ullmann, 1969, p. 137). The new idea of Europe was institutionalised in religious institutions and brought about an ideological transformation of Rome into Europe. Following the ascendancy of the papacy, the idea of Rome had been broadened to include Europe with the consequence that a Greek was seen as a non-European and a Roman Christian a European (Ullmann, 1969, p. 139). The ecclesiastical conflict between Rome and Constantinople expressed itself in an enduring tension between the Latin West and the Greek Orient. Christianity effectively took over the ancient notion of the barbarian and applied it to non-Christians. The new dichotomy would therefore be one of Christians versus barbarians, and the hallmark of civilisation came to be membership of the Christian *oecumene*, the 'civilised' world.

The adoption of Christianity in northern Europe – complete with the conversion of the western Slavs in the twelfth century – facilitated the emergence of a new and wider civilisation in the lands of the Carolingian empire (Christiansen, 1980). It was this idea of a Christian empire that outlived the

German empire and became a major part of the culture and identity of Europe. It created the idea of a spiritual unity between Germany and Italy, Emperor and Pope. The wars Charlemagne fought were in the name of Christianity. The most significant of these were the wars against the Muslims in Spain which, like the crusades that were to follow, were conceived of as Holy Wars against the infidel. We can thus see how the contours of Europe became visible with the consolidation of two centres of power: the domains of Frankish emperors and the Byzantine emperor. Europe slowly ceased to be merely a geographical expression and came to denote a cultural unity that referred to the territories under Carolingian rule as opposed to those under Byzantine authority.

From the tenth century onwards in the wake of the break-up of the Carolingian empire the restored Roman empire, under Otto I, shifted to Germany and away from the east Franks. With the collapse of the Carolingian empire – which in fact was more of an international order than a Frankist one – in the late ninth century, the Germans were able to take advantage of the political vacuum that emerged. In 962 Pope John XII crowned Otto, as protector of the papacy, Roman Emperor. Thus the tradition of a Christian emperor that had begun with Charlemagne was reinvoked and the imperial title passed to Germany, providing that country with an abiding aspiration to make its frontiers coterminous with those of Europe.

Throughout the Middle Ages the German rulers contended for a hegemonic concept of European mastery with the invention of the Holy Roman Empire. For the eastern emperors the Holy Roman Emperors were mere usurpers and the gap between East and West widened. With the rise of the German empire, Europe became a more clearly defined territorial entity. This was of enduring significance, for it meant that the idea of Europe would be closely tied to German national identity. This is best exemplified in the tension inherent in that famous piece of political obscurantism: the 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation'. With the first part of the equation containing the tacit identification of the empire with Christendom, the second part effectively tied Europe to the 'German Nation'. It was out of this feud that the idea of Europe began to take on the increasing coherence of a cultural frame of reference for the northern princes. This was strengthened by the Habsburgs, who, though ostensibly Germans, were in reality more of a European house.

The German empire – an alliance of princes and counts under oaths of allegiance to the suzerainty of an elected emperor – was sufficiently large to be able to claim to be Europe, though what it in effect engendered was a generic form of *Mitteleuropa*. Dante, for instance, hoped that the German emperors rather than the papacy would unite Europe. According to Denis de Rougement (1980, p. 31) this was one of the first statements of the unity of

Europe. In the Middle Ages the idea of Europe became closely linked with Romano-Germanic culture. Europe had not been a clearly defined geo-political framework until it became fixed as the territory of the German rulers of the Reich. Europe then became 'Mother Europe' and was symbolised by the German Reich (Fischer, 1957, p. 111). The eventual collapse of the empire left its shell, Europe, more or less intact, but nonetheless, not unified. An abiding discord remained between France, heir to the Roman tradition, and Germany, which was only in part Romanised and the focus of its leadership shifted progressively eastwards (Cahnman, 1952, p. 619).

THE MYTH OF UNITY

We should not overstate the political or cultural unity of the Middle Ages. The unity of the Middle Ages is a myth (Balzaretti, 1992; Reuter, 1992; Rubin, 1992). To the extent to which we can speak of a common culture, it was expressed in a great variety of different forms. In western Europe there always had been a more significant difference between the towns and the countryside than in eastern Europe, where towns never reached the same degree of autonomy as in the West. The rise of autonomous cities not subjected to outside influences was a crucial development in the rise of western Europe (Benevolo, 1993, p. 23). According to Weber (1958) the rise of an urban population was the distinctive aspect of the European city. Popular diversity has been the key to the formation of Europeanism. Above all, revolutionary traditions have played a major role in the formation of the identity of Europe (Tilly, 1993; Pillorget, 1988). What was unique to Europe was not so much the nature of power exercised by the state, but the opposition that came from society. The stronger separation of state and society in Europe is often held to be a reason for its divergent path of development (Scüzs, 1988). Europe was never fully integrated from 'above' because of traditions of autonomous rights that had evolved as early as the so-called Dark Ages. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries various groups succeeded in winning liberties from central authority thereby providing the basis for a lasting and organic process of development (Reynolds, 1984). It was upon the foundations of these traditions that revolutionary ideologies emerged.

Western Europe never reached the same degree of unity as other world empires had. Islam, for instance, like Christianity, is a religion of unity, but unlike Christianity it claims that all laws derive directly from God (Black, 1993). It is possible that the diversity of Europe was precisely as a result of the failure of the Church to unite western Europe into a single bloc. The answer that Europe found to the problem of cultural uniformity was the cre-

ation of what could be called a central institution in the form of the Church, which had succeeded in devising master codes for the organisation of knowledge according to a differentiated and rationalised world-view, but a world-view, it must be added, that failed to control political life. So, a civilisation such as India, in contrast, failed to develop unifying master codes to deal with its own diversity (Saberwal, 1986, pp. 23–3). The problem, then, is in using the idea of Europe to describe what are, in fact, structures of polymorphous diversity and manifold opposition to power. The 'unity' of Europe was more the pose of elites than a political reality.

Cultural diversity within Christendom ensured that the unity that Europe was to find was in foreign conquest and a focus of hostility beyond its frontiers. The hegemony Roman Catholicism eventually achieved should not blind one to the fact of the essential disunity of the Middle Ages. As Braudel (1990, p. 190) has remarked, Europe is diversity itself. The One Hundred Years War (1337–1453) between England and France, for instance, prevented the unification of the two countries and the formation of a mega-bloc in western Europe. For much of the fourteenth century there was a major schism in the Church with the popes resident in Avignon. Nor should we forget the long tradition of anti-Roman Catholicism that eventually culminated in the Protestant Reformation. Ironically, as the use of the word Europe increased in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the continent became more divided than ever before. In addition to the international religious orders, other important agents of cultural change were the revival of Roman law, international trade, chartered towns and the universities (Bartlett, 1993, p. 288). The European universities can be seen as constituting a kind of European order and were rarely closely identified with any one particular country. Europeanism, then, did not always mean religious unity but a whole range of other factors as well as a long heretical tradition. The great European architectural styles – Romanesque, Gothic – could also be said to have given Europe a distinct form. So, if we are to speak of the unity of Europe it must be a cultural Europe rather than a political Europe that we are referring to.

THE WESTERNISATION OF EUROPE

As we have seen, the year 1453 was a turning point. After the fall of the Byzantine empire, the Latin West began to look westwards. The great defeat that the Turkish seizure of Constantinople signalled for the West was compensated for within four decades. The year 1492 was symbolically an important one in the formation of a European identity. In that year the Reconquest begun in the twelfth century was completed with the seizure of Granada from

the Muslims, their last stronghold in the West. The Jews were expelled from Spain and the Muslims were forcibly converted to Christianity. The Christianised Muslims, the Morescos, were finally expelled from Spain in the early seventeenth century. This event in the history of Europe gave rise to the doctrine of the purity of the blood, which became the core of European racism in subsequent ages and a major legitimation of 'ethnic cleansing' (Poliakov, 1974, p. 137). The destruction of the mosques, the burning of Moorish libraries and the establishment of the Inquisition in the late fifteenth century further enhanced the homogeneity of western civilisation as a Christian polity.

After the late twelfth century the segregation of the Jews established a fear of pollution in Europe. According to R. I. Moore (1987) and Cohen (1993) Europe became a persecuting society in the early twelfth century when the new apparatus of government turned to minorities for a focus of hostility: heretics and Jews, for instance. The repression and persecution of minorities thus became a central component in European modernisation. It is possible that the split in Latin Christianity that occurred with the Reformation was projected onto scapegoats such as the Jews and women. This could explain the mass exodus of Jews from Central Europe and the increased witch-hunting which accompanied the zenith of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation (Israel, 1985, pp. 6–7). With the deliverance of Europe from the external enemy following the final retreat of Islam from the Iberian peninsula, the function of the victim, Europe's Other, was transferred onto the internal enemy, the Jews. This is also a demonstration that European unity was often the result of violent homogenisation.

The ascendant absolute monarchy in Spain required the cultivation of a myth of legitimation based on universal Catholic monarchy in which there could be no room for even the traces of earlier civilisations. From being a frontier land, Spain became a bulwark of a revived and imperialist Roman Catholicism. 'Europe conquered the Peninsula', Braudel (1990, p. 824) has written, 'by way of the Pyrenees and by the Atlantic and Mediterranean shipping routes: along this frontier zone it defeated Islam with the victories of the Reconquest which were victories for Europe.' Europe became subordinated to the notion of the West in the wake of the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula. Until the Reconquest Spain, being under Muslim rule, was not in the 'West' for Christendom. Prior to the Age of Discovery, the West as the Occident was defined by reference to the eastern frontier, that is, in opposition to Islam. After 1492 the ground had been prepared for the invention of a new myth of the West: Columbus replaced Charlemagne as the harbinger of the new age. The notion of the West became transformed into an outward movement.

THE IDENTITY OF EUROPE AND THE WESTERN FRONTIER

It was Portugal that preceded Spain in the 'age of discovery'. With expansion in the Iberian peninsula closed off, Portugal sought its legitimating myth in overseas conquest. What is interesting is the transformation of the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula into a movement towards world domination: reconquest became conquest on a far greater scale than anything that preceded it. The crusading ideal was revived in the making of a new European identity. The Portuguese explorer, Henry the Navigator, for instance, had been a crusader and a member of the Order of Christ (Phillips, 1988, pp. 248–9).

The year 1492 was also the year of the 'discovery' of America, though it was not for about two decades that it was finally recognised that a new continent had been discovered. Of course 'Columbus did not discover a new world; he established contact between two worlds, both already old' (Parry, quoted in Jennings, 1975, p. 39). It was at this time that the concept of the 'continent' entered the consciousness of a burgeoning Europe, which then became a mental image. In 1566 the first book in any modern language bearing the title *History of Europe* was published by a Florentine historian (Dionisotti, 1971, p. 13). Europe became an entity defined in space as well as in time. This was made all the more possible by developments in cartography (Lach, 1965, 1977; Hale, 1993). The advent of the map and the coming of the book made Europe tangible, a visible configuration: the Continent had finally arrived.

The period from the second half of the fifteenth century was one of growth for western Europe, which began to recover from decline in the fourteenth century. The shift from the northern Italian city states to the Baltic had been marked by the burgeoning Hansa cities which dominated trade in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Now, even their age was over: the age of exploration saw the rise of larger territorial states, proto-nation-states such as England, the United Provinces of the Netherlands, Spain and France. Preoccupation with the Turks thus shifted to overseas conquest. This was often seen as the only means of 'saving' Europe.

It was significant that this occurred at a time when the Orient seemed to reach the limits of its growth. These developments were consolidated with the gradual dismantling of medieval feudalism and the arrival of the great absolutist states with their mercantilist economies in the latter part of the fifteenth century. The long civil wars of the Middle Ages drew to a close, giving the West a respite from the Ottoman victory of 1453. The year 1453 also saw the ending of the One Hundred Years War (1337–1453) between England and France. The marriage in 1469 of Isabella and Ferdinand heralded the

unification of Castile and Aragon in 1479 when the civil wars came to an end. Spain then ceased to be a frontier and became a world power (MacKay, 1977). The union of the crowns in Spain was accompanied by the extension of Spanish domination to North Africa and a new frontier was formed by 1511, the Ibero-African frontier (Hess, 1978). In 1480 the Russians under Ivan the Great finally ended the Tartar Yoke and the foundations of modern Russia were laid. And in 1493 the Pope, Alexander VI, divided the New World between Spain and Portugal. The victory of the Holy League over the Turks at the great sea battle of Lepanto in 1571 secured the conditions for western expansion. At about this time the other Islamic civilisations underwent an irreversible period of decline: the Safavid empire in Persia and the Mughal empire in India had become stagnant by the seventeenth century and were unable to withstand western colonialism (Umar, 1988). According to Toynbee (1953a, p. 21) the West had still not abandoned its desire to crush Islam but decided not to make a fresh frontal attack on the Islamic world, which was far from defeated after 1571. Instead, the West hoped to encircle Islam by conquering the ocean and opening up a new East Asian frontier between Christendom and Islam.

In this period the old polarity of Orient and Europe began to be replaced by a new one, Europe and the 'Overseas' (Gollwitzer, 1964, p. 39). New categories of differentiation emerged. We thus find the emergence of a new discourse of otherness. Cannibalism, for instance, became a major motif in western sterotypes of the non-European world (Hulme, 1986; Arens, 1979). With the decline in Turkish supremacy after Lepanto in 1571 and the completion of the conversion of Europe to Christianity, the idea of Europe tended to lose its strictly religious meaning and acquired a secular resonance. The term 'barbarian', for instance, rather than infidel tended to be increasingly applied to the inhabitants of the non-European parts of the world opened up in the age of exploration (Jones, W. R. 1971). Within a few decades the 'discovery' of the Americas impinged itself upon European consciousness to the extent that Europe began to find its identity more in westward expansion than in defensive postures against Islam. America rather than Islam was the great dominating theme in early modern Europe (Chiapelli, 1976; Honour, 1976; Jennings, 1975; Sale, 1991). Christendom was not so much abandoned as transformed into a western crusading movement. The Christian myth was simply transferred from the eastern frontier to the western in the substitution of the Islamic 'infidel' with the new construct the 'savage'. The idea of 'civilisation' became associated with Europe, which gradually began to replace Christendom and became an absolute value. In this migration of symbols the myth of the frontier became an enduring aspect of European identity now based on the nascent notion of the West. This crystallised in what Webb

(1952) has called the 'Great Frontier', which in his view has been one of the primary factors in modern history (Gerhard, 1958). We can now see how a new tension in fact arose between the ideas of Europe and the West. In this the idea of Europe was linked to the formation of a specifically 'western' identity. While the eastern frontier was a frontier of defence, the western frontier was one of expansion. Both frontiers, it should be noted, were created by the same dynamic: the Spanish simply transferred their war-machine from the wars with the Moors to the conquest of the New World. The western frontier was after all originally supposed to be the continuation of the eastern frontier, since it was only by accident that Columbus stumbled on the 'New World'.

It was Europe's mastery of the Atlantic – with the aid of new and improved methods of shipbuilding and navigation – that signalled the arrival of a new age and a specifically European identity. It is noteworthy that these developments coincided with the Galilean revolution in science (Mann, 1988) which enhanced Europe's secular identity. With the discovery of the Atlantic and the new trading routes it opened up, the conquest of the Americas and the Far East began. The Portuguese were the first to set up a vast trading empire and were followed by Spain which established a colonial empire. England and Holland followed in their wake with the foundation of the English and Dutch East India Companies in the early seventeenth century. An important dimension to the Commonwealth, 1649–1660, was the Cromwellian 'Western Design' – the mission to colonise the Caribbean – which provided Puritan consciousness with a means of recovery from the debilitating effects of the Civil War. The Western Design illustrated the manner in which European countries began to focus their identity in the conquest of foreign lands rather than in Europe itself.

European mastery thus passed to the control of the sea with the decline of the old agrarian based economies of the Middle Ages. The Muslims never commanded the sea in the way that the Europeans did. It was this mastery of the sea that helped to shape modern Europe. No point in Western Europe is further than 350 km from the sea, a distance which is doubled in Central Europe and reaches 11,000 km for the Russian plains (Mollat du Jourdin, 1993, pp. 4–6). Moreover, the course of European rivers facilitates links between the seas and the agriculturally rich hinterland.

The divergence of European Christendom from the Muslim Orient and its spheres of influence in Europe now took on a new manifestation which was less confrontational. The new collision course between the two civilisations was more for the struggle to gain mastery over the seas than the extension of imperial domains within Europe. At least those countries which were to take over the leadership of the West, Spain, France, Holland and England,

looked westwards. It is significant that this was at a time when the Habsburgs were still looking eastwards. The developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries favoured nation-states with maritime and mercantilist economies rather than feudalist-agrarian and polyethnic empires. The development of Europe's maritime trade, however, did not have enough strength, at the end of the sixteenth century, to challenge the near eastern economy and the Ottoman Empire remained a formidable power on land. The result was that the deep discord between western and eastern Europe grew firmer: western Europe evolved to become a polity of mercantilist nation-states with non-European empires, while central and eastern Europe remained agrarian polyethnic conglomerate empires with their focus on the eastern frontier of Europe. The result was the formation of two notions of Europe, the idea of Europe as the West with its destiny beyond the seas – an 'Oceanic' Europe and a 'Continental' Europe (Cahnman, 1952) – and the old idea of Europe as a Christian bastion against the Muslim Orient. These two notions of Europe found their embodiment in the two imperial traditions: the colonial empires and the central European empires. Thus we can see how the construction of European world-views in focusing on a point outside themselves created the conditions for the future internal division of the continent into opposing camps.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to show how the idea of Europe in evolving from a geographical concept to a cultural idea came to rest on two different kinds of identity. The first was shaped by the conditions of the eastern frontier in the confrontation with Islam during the crusades and the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The second was formed by the western frontier after 1492 when the European world system was consolidated by the ascending sea powers. These two models were reflected in different forms of empires. From the sixteenth century we can speak of a European identity, in the sense of an identity focused on the idea of Europe as opposed to Christendom. But this was always ambivalent as the cultural shift from Christendom to Europe occurred at a time of the birth of the more hegemonic notion of the West. In this transformation the new dichotomy of Self and Other came to rest on the myth of the savage and on the internal enemy, the Jews.