

# 1 Europe in the world: systems and cultures of violence

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During recent years a series of important studies have attempted to deal synthetically with violent aspects of European history in the twentieth century. All of them refer to and replicate aspects of Eric Hobsbawm's masterpiece *Age of Extremes: the Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (1994), which in turn demarked that century from the 'long nineteenth century' with which Hobsbawm concluded his *Age of Empire 1875–1914* (1987). Key analyses in the 'classic' works of Volker Berghahn, Ian Kershaw and Mark Mazower share three broad arguments: first, they demonstrate the important role played by ideologies. Liberalism, different variants of aggrandizing nationalism, including colonial imperialism and Nazism, as well as socialism and Soviet communism were, in different phases, instrumental in intensifying political violence (or, as Kershaw terms it, 'state-sponsored violence'<sup>1</sup>) during the twentieth century. Mark Mazower reminds us in this respect of two realities: during the twentieth century, Europe was not on the whole shaped by a convergence of thinking and feeling, but by a series of violent clashes of diametrically opposed New Orders; and National Socialism, fascism and communism were not alien or novel imports into Europe but grew out of the heritages of previous periods of European history.<sup>2</sup> What was new therefore in the twentieth century was not that there were such ideologically driven conflicts, but their intensity. This owed something to the novel harshness of the expression of these ideologies, but was also a consequence of new forms of technology. Thus, during the first half of the twentieth century it became possible to think of ethnically homogenous nation-states because of the destructive potentials and practices delivered by bureaucracy and planning as well as by science and technology. To use the words of Ian Kershaw: 'The modernity of the killing methods ... was related to the modernity of the state directing them'.<sup>3</sup>

Second, these authors point to the importance the First World War had on shaping European history. Industrialized warfare, brutal mass killings of civilians and paranoia focused on imagined enemies within the state's own borders were important components which could

already be found in this war and which were not specific to the Second World War. It was against this background that the three dominant ideologies of the latter nineteenth century (liberalism, right-wing nationalism, and socialism) competed for world dominance. These developments were reinforced by another socio-cultural trend of the first decade of the twentieth century: what Kershaw, drawing on Ernst Jünger and Max Weber, terms the 'glamorisation of violence', which saw violence as a healthy means of protesting against decadent bourgeois society.<sup>4</sup>

Third, all of these studies divide the twentieth century in Europe into two parts: the violent first half and a much less violent second half of the century. In the second half of the twentieth century the Cold War prevented hot war and the emergence of mass consumer societies brought unprecedented prosperity. The latter enabled political and economic contacts and cooperation between states which in turn worked to inhibit politically motivated disorder. Simultaneously, many people tired of the ideologically-driven politics of recent decades. As Kershaw writes emphatically: the Second World War led 'to the containment, even eradication, of the main sources of state-sponsored violence, on any large scale in Europe'.<sup>5</sup>

The present volume accepts many of the insights bequeathed by these excellent studies, but, as hinted in the Introduction, it seeks to expand their focus and also amend their conclusions in a number of important ways. In terms of chronological parameters, it moves the opening back into the final decades of the nineteenth century, which brings with it a geographical re-focusing to the East and Southeast of Europe, and to the violence exported by Europe in the 'age of empire'. Moreover, it qualifies the stark division of the twentieth century into predominantly violent and peaceful halves by demonstrating the violence that continued within Europe, and that was carried out by European states outside Europe, during the second half of the century. Finally, it seeks to qualify the explanatory importance of different European political ideologies in generating violence by looking at the patterns of violence that transcended national borders and regime-types. Such a structural approach does, we believe, have the advantage of avoiding seeing the violence of the first half of the century as the by-product of other forces. Europe, one might say, was not violent because Hitler (and any number of his fellow enthusiasts for a militant German nationalism) dreamt or planned for violence. The violence was rooted more profoundly in the state structures, social conflicts and political economy of the continent. The political violence of Europe in the 'long twentieth century' was therefore not accidental but a very specific developmental phase in the

history of the continent, and, as a consequence of European imperial power, of the entire world.

Such a conceptualization of violence seeks to balance the need for historical specificity and a wider conceptual understanding. As historians, we do not aim to offer an ahistorical 'general theory of violence' to explain different manifestations of European political violence in the manner of social scientists. All too often, social science presumes the applicability of trans-historical 'covering laws' and processes that obtain at all times and places. Historians, on the other hand, tend to think that each historical episode and period needs to be studied on its own terms to understand the *specific* systems of meaning, social practices and mechanisms at play, and seek historical contextualization rather than the construction of general laws.<sup>6</sup> That said, there are some excellent examples of cross-fertilization between the two generic approaches: for instance the work of the historical sociologist Michael Mann on different fascist movements provides a model of a broad comparative approach that meshes together many variables in order to explain different national outcomes in ostensibly similar situations.<sup>7</sup> Though we address a wider range of movements and events than Mann, and have a longer chronology, we share the assumption that the phenomenon of political violence in the twentieth century cannot be ascribed to the coincidence of particularities alone; it is possible to observe patterns and logics to its occurrence. Ours, then, is not a simple narrative of politically violent incidents in chronological order, but an attempt to conceptualize the broader logics of violence in the period.

This chapter frames the succeeding discussions of particular types of political violence by tracing the outlines of a continental experience that, while immensely varied, also had some overall coherence. It does so by moving from the broadest level of analysis to a more narrow focus. It tries to conceptualize Europe's role and twentieth-century crisis within an international system that Europe itself had pioneered and continued to dominate in the early years of the century. In doing so, it adopts essentially three levels of analysis, which focus in turn on:

- (1) Europe's predominantly violent interaction within the wider world;
- (2) the development of forms of state structure within Europe, broadly defined; and
- (3) the context of the late nineteenth century within which Europe entered its age of political violence.

These three levels of analysis do not provide a complete explanation to the political violence of the European twentieth century. On the

contrary, it is only in conjunction with the other forces which are the subjects of the subsequent chapters that one can begin to approach a full understanding of why Europe turned violent. Instead, this chapter seeks to focus on the wider frameworks within which violence became actualized.

### **Europe and the world beyond**

Although this book is focused on European politics and cultures of conflict, the experience of the non-Western world at the hands of Europeans is a central element of the explanation of the violence of the European twentieth century. There is no better illustration of the dovetailing of cultural, geopolitical and geo-economic concerns than the way Europe treated its colonies and dependent territories (including British-controlled Ireland and French-controlled North Africa) and the far-flung lands and peoples from whom it extracted resources. Racism and resource-hunger went hand-in-hand in justifying the dispossession, enslavement or murder of 'others' who could be portrayed as beyond the community of reciprocal obligation. Even as Europe progressed to its more internally-peaceful later twentieth century, its war-making techniques in its colonies and outposts would have gained prosecutions for their implementers at the Nuremberg trials. It was not at all ironic, merely mendacious, that in the colonies, where European warfare was vicious, there also was deployed the most extensive rhetoric of the 'civilizing mission'.

From the days of Christopher Columbus, an Italian trained in Portugal in the fifteenth century and financed by Spain, to the transnationally coordinated wars of European decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, violent colonial expansion was a shared European experience characterized by transnational learning processes, particularly with respect to the treatment of non-European natives and the construction of colonial identities of white supremacy. Transgressions of 'civilized warfare' (as codified in The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907) in the colonial sphere were common currency among Europe's colonial powers and it is no coincidence that Joseph Conrad's frequently invoked metaphor of the 'heart of darkness', which originally referred to the European violence unleashed in the (Belgian) Congo, quickly became the international synonym par excellence for parallel colonial universes of violent suppression and exploitation. Even historians inclined to defend the positive achievements of colonialism do not deny that the violent usurpation of land and resources, the systematic destruction of the economic and cultural infrastructure of the vanquished, and the introduction of

racially-discriminatory legislation by European colonial powers was standard procedure.<sup>8</sup>

To a large extent, the similarities in the chosen means of colonial rule and oppression – from economic pressure to systematic mass murder – were the result of mutual observation and transnational emulation.<sup>9</sup> Systematic mutual observation, international European collaboration and transnational learning processes were prominent in the contexts of colonial conquest and the repression of colonial revolts.<sup>10</sup> The violence unleashed by Europeans in the colonial sphere tended to follow highly similar patterns which included the deployment of indigenous auxiliary forces, the division of native populations into ‘hostile’ and ‘friendly’ tribes, the construction of concentration camps, and the systematic use of collective reprisals. There were also shared European technologies of subjugation, from torture to the use of poison gas and aerial bombing campaigns, as employed by the Spanish authorities in Morocco a few years before Mussolini’s air force did the same in Libya and Ethiopia.<sup>11</sup> Systematic mutual observation and transnational learning processes were also marked features of the wars of decolonization conducted by the European powers in Malaya, Indochina, Kenya and Algeria, where Britain and France drew on each other’s experiences (and those of others) in counter-insurgency warfare.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the obvious competitive rivalries that existed between European colonial powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they also cooperated in staking colonial claims. This usually entailed a coordination of exploitation and a mutual toleration of violence, even in places where this violence assumed genocidal proportions. At the Berlin Africa Conference of 1884–5, for example, the assembled diplomats not only divided Africa into spheres of interest and agreed on the joint economic exploitation of the Congo, but also signed an agreement that in the event of a European war, the combatants would not deploy any ‘coloured’ troops.<sup>13</sup> This form of segregation also dovetailed with the spatially limited validity of The Hague Conventions or the Kellogg-Briand Pact, whose rules for civilized warfare and the proscription of war were conceived for Europe, but not for the colonies.<sup>14</sup> When these conventions were perceived to have been violated, for example in the case of Germany’s ill-fated attempts to instigate in late 1914 a jihad in the Near East against French and British colonial troops,<sup>15</sup> Swiss missionaries protested vigorously against this breach of European conventions not to employ ‘savages’ against white soldiers.<sup>16</sup> The German response to the Allies’ use of colonial troops in the Great War and, more importantly, to the decision of France and Belgium to deploy more than 20,000 black troops during the occupation of the

Rhineland in 1923 was one of widespread horror about this ‘violation’ of European norms of warfare.<sup>17</sup>

On other occasions, however, Europeans cooperated militarily in various colonial trouble spots. The brutal crushing of the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) by the Eight Nations Alliance illustrates the fact that, despite prevailing tensions in the colonial sphere, Western powers were willing to cooperate when they felt that their common interests were threatened. The global alliance which enabled the German General Alfred von Waldersee to enter Beijing alongside the Bengalese cavalry of the British colonial army demonstrated that inner-European rivalries and conflicts could be transcended when common European interests were felt to be threatened in the colonial realm.<sup>18</sup>

When entering the colonial realm, Europeans often left their specific national contexts behind and formed new groups with other Europeans rather than with their respective colonial subjects. The crew of the Congo steamer on which Joseph Conrad’s fictional protagonist Marlow penetrated the *Heart of Darkness*, for example, was just as European in composition as the non-fictional crew that brought the Polish-British anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, to New Guinea a few years later.<sup>19</sup> Like so many other scholars working in colonial settings, Malinowski’s expedition relied heavily on European infrastructures and European cooperation.<sup>20</sup> The German explorer Hermann Wissmann had already referred to these pan-European structures in the early 1890s, when he dedicated his memoirs to King Leopold of the Belgians for whom he felt the ‘deepest gratitude’ for supporting his expeditions.<sup>21</sup>

One of the most striking aspects of the ways in which these explorers described their colonial experiences was the distinction between ‘savages’ and ‘Europeans’. In the 1920s, Malinowski, for example, referred to the relationship between the colonial actors and the natives in terms of ‘European culture’ and ‘non-European culture’. Even during the Second World War, at the height of divisive inner-European violence, Malinowski continued to refer to a common European culture and identity which appeared just as self-evident from his ‘African perspective’ as it had been twenty-five years earlier in the Pacific Islands.<sup>22</sup>

The worlds in which the settlers lived can be described as mixed European zones of experiences.<sup>23</sup> In Africa, Asia and the white dominions, settler communities were, more often than not, heterogeneous in national composition. This transnational composition, combined with a frontier situation in which white settlers felt threatened by the native population, created a scenario in which race became more important than nationality. In these contexts, the settlers systematically

distinguished themselves from the 'natives'. Overseas, the internal European boundaries, which were so clearly delineated on the continent, tended to fade in importance. What was regarded as European and what was not appeared to be far more evident from the perspective of the settlers abroad than in the European capitals.

European settlers often felt existentially threatened by their 'frontier situation' in which settlers were bound together by fear of real or imagined 'enemy natives'. The 'thin white line' of European settlers, so they feared, could always be crushed in a colonial uprising.<sup>24</sup> In these fragile 'Islands of White', the boundary between 'us' and 'them' was defined along the colour bar, and not necessarily along 'national' lines.<sup>25</sup> The new 'we group' (to use Georg Elwert's term) was composed of Europeans who transcended national differences. They defined their shared identity against the indigenous population, and they invented legal codes and conventions designed to separate the groups. Colonial uprisings were widely interpreted as attacks on the 'European civilization' represented by the white settlers.<sup>26</sup> The biologically-justified creation of new colonial legal norms was aimed at permanently separating Europeans and natives from each other, a process that was aided by strict marriage and workplace regulations, as well as colonial urban planning.<sup>27</sup> The metaphor of the trek and the laager, with which the nationally heterogeneous settlers conquered and subdued new territories and joined forces in violent attacks on the 'savages', thus accurately describes the self-perception of European settlers in the colonies.

One of the largest European settler communities in Africa, the *pieds-noirs* in Algeria, consisted of shopkeepers, craftsmen and merchants from France, Spain, Greece, Italy, Malta, Switzerland and Germany.<sup>28</sup> In most contemporary sources (both French and Arabic), these settlers were commonly referred to as Europeans and not as Frenchmen. Their living quarters in Algerian towns and cities were known as the European quarters.<sup>29</sup> The Algerian independence movement, the FLN, thus targeted European facilities as part of its urban terror campaigns. As it stated in the summer of 1956: 'shoot down any European from eighteen to fifty-four years of age. No women, no children, no elderly'.<sup>30</sup> In its tracts, the threat of 'terrible reprisals [that] will fall on the European civilian population' pointed to a conflict in which 'Europeans' could become legitimate targets.<sup>31</sup> The dichotomy between Algerians and Europeans (which blurred the internal national differences between Europeans) was also used in many decolonization manifestos within Europe. Jean-Paul Sartre's famous preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, for example, was not addressed to his fellow Frenchmen, but explicitly to 'the Europeans'.<sup>32</sup>

The situation in Eastern and Central Europe's land empires was somewhat different. The policies and mindsets of Romanov, Habsburg and Ottoman imperialists reflected the fact that their empires were based on contiguous landmasses. Consequently, new peoples falling under their rule did so more incrementally, and were generally not quite so culturally alien as those encountered in the maritime empires. These land empires were as accustomed to managing difference as obliterating it or enforcing apartheid; and, even though each had the concept of a ruling people or peoples, and more or less formal hierarchies of subjects, each embarked periodically on reforms aimed at greater emancipation of its subject peoples, albeit always to the end of imperial preservation.

Even so, each could also be utterly ruthless in crushing dissenting peoples and those unprepared to accept imperial suzerainty in the first place, as shown, for instance, by Russian actions in the north Caucasus mountains from the late eighteenth century and Ottoman responses to Balkan rebellions. Moreover, on the Ottoman frontiers in Southeastern Europe, in Asia Minor and Africa, as well as the Russian frontiers of Central and Eastern Asia and the Caucasus, the policies of settler colonialism were amply employed in order to consolidate the rule of the metropol, as 'great Russians' or Cossacks and loyal Sunni Muslims respectively were deployed to break up demographic concentrations of subject peoples and take leadership roles. Resettled, well-armed peasant farmers defended Russian outposts on the steppe, just as they defended Habsburg borders against 'the Turk' in the Krajina, in an echo of Vienna's historic role in fighting off the Ottoman besiegers of that city in 1683.

As the case of 1683 reminds us, the Habsburg Empire was the only one of the three land empires regarded as properly European. Both the Ottoman and Russian empires occupied ambiguous positions in the European imaginary, defined as that was by the tastes and proclivities of the more advanced states of the continent. The distribution of strength and especially strategic location demanded that both be given proper consideration in European diplomacy, with the Ottomans formally admitted to the concert of powers at the close of the Crimean War in 1856 for (anti-Russian) political reasons. Nevertheless, the Muslim character of the Ottoman Empire – its large and indisputably 'European' Balkan Christian populations notwithstanding – and the historic threat that Europe felt from earlier Turkic martial prowess were sufficient to distinguish that polity. As for Russia, Christian though it may have been, it was Orthodox, which for those in the West carried associations of primitivism. Despite the influential contributions made to music and



literature by a small Russian intellectual elite in the nineteenth century, Britain could stigmatize it as a bastion of autocratic repression in order to legitimate its own claims to dictate the international order, while Germany and Austria emphasized its Slavic backwardness, playing on established fears of 'Eastern hordes' of illiterate peasants who, in their vast numbers, could suffocate 'true' European civilization. Moreover, the remarkably rapid eastern expansion of Russia during the nineteenth century served, somewhat ironically, to undermine its European image. Russia was now, in its large majority, composed of Asian territory.<sup>33</sup> It became more Eastern still after the Great War and the Bolshevik Revolution, when it lost much of its European territory.

To what extent does this pattern of European colonial expansion and violence contribute to an understanding of other, more internal, patterns of European violence in the twentieth century? Perhaps most obviously, the empires of Europe served as training grounds and spaces for the construction of new techniques and mentalities of violence. The parallel, sometimes joint European penetration of the non-European world led to a continually expanding European colonial archive, to be understood as common knowledge on the treatment, exploitation and extermination of 'sub-humans' accumulated by the European powers over the course of colonial history. Once established, the knowledge accumulated in the colonial archive could and indeed was activated in different geographical areas closer to 'home'.<sup>34</sup>

The widespread use of concentration camps in the colonial sphere, for example, can be traced back to the Spanish-Cuban War of 1895–8. Before the commanding Spanish general, Valeriano Weyler, started his infamous re-concentration programme, which herded much of the rural population into Spanish-held towns and which cost the lives of perhaps 155,000 Cuban civilians, he had gathered experience in suppressing and exterminating indigenous populations in the Spanish-occupied Philippines. Weyler's concentration camps soon assumed a prominent place in the European colonial archive. By 1900 the Spanish term *reconcentración* had already been translated into English and was used to describe the British 'concentration camps', initiated by Lord Kitchener during the Second Boer War in South Africa (1899–1902). Just like Weyler in Cuba, Kitchener had become increasingly frustrated with the Boers' guerrilla tactics and duly 'concentrated' native civilians into camps in order to deprive the enemy combatants of shelter and support. Once again, misery and famine as well as soaring mortality rates were the result. The connection between the South African camps and the Cuban camps was clear to contemporaries: at the time, the British were both praised and attacked by the international press for

adapting ‘General Weyler’s methods’ to the Transvaal.<sup>35</sup> Shortly thereafter, the same ‘successful’ policy was adopted in another colonial setting, German Southwest Africa.<sup>36</sup>

The case of the subsequent German colonial wars against the Herero and Nama serves, however, to guard against any simple notion of the transfer of practices of empire to Europe. For an important element of the critique articulated against the use of violence in territories such as (British) South Africa and (German) Southwest Africa was that such practices were un-European. What such a term meant did of course remain unclear, but it indicated the way in which the exercise of state violence in the colonial space was rarely unproblematic. At one level, it served to undermine the arguments of European powers that they were engaged in an essentially pacific process of development, bringing the advantages of European civilization to other populations. And while the apparent contradiction might be reconciled along the lines of the long-term necessity of short-term violence (Kipling’s ‘savage wars of peace’), such counter-arguments themselves offended against the notion of Europe as the custodian and home of certain values of civilization, which stood in stark opposition to the unbridled use of state and military power.

Thus, Lothar von Trotha’s extermination campaign in Southwest Africa, just like Valeriano Weyler’s actions in Cuba, met with fierce criticism from parts of their respective domestic publics. In 1897 Valeriano ‘The Butcher’ Weyler was replaced with a more moderate military commander who abandoned the Spanish concentration camp system.<sup>37</sup> Massacres of indigenous populations in the colonies were frequently criticized in the contemporary press or in the parliaments in London, Paris or Berlin, often leading to the dismissal of the officers in charge. Even if those interventions came too late for the victims, the fact that such criticisms were voiced indicated that a frontier continued to exist, porous though it might be, between extra-European and European forms of violence.<sup>38</sup>

These criticisms did not however bring to an end policies of European colonial violence. During the second half of the twentieth century, in French Indochina and Algeria, Dutch Indonesia or the British colonies of Malaya and Kenya, the apparently generous logic of what is termed decolonization went hand-in-hand with the most brutal forms of ‘counter-insurgency’ aimed at real or imagined combatants and the civilian population at large. The upsurge in European violence directed against non-European peoples, which occurred during the twenty years following the Second World War, remains a phenomenon that is on the surface difficult to comprehend. Having recently intimated that the

wartime loyalty of these peoples might be rewarded with greater independence through the Atlantic Charter, and having created their own continental Convention on Human Rights, as well as signing up to the United Nations' global equivalent, the imperial powers were increasingly hard pressed at a rhetorical level to square their continued overlordship of colonized peoples and territories with the universal values of liberty that they purported to uphold.<sup>39</sup>

But this is perhaps to focus too much on words and less on realities. The Second World War was many things, but in part it took the form of a global mobilization of non-European peoples. Which side those peoples were on varied: French African troops famously fought against German invaders of France in the summer of 1940; Indian troops fought (with great distinction) in Burma and eastern India against Japanese invading armies that themselves were an amalgam of various conscripted and voluntary Asian troops; while Chinese soldiers and guerillas fought against Japanese occupying forces in China. Which side they were on did not in the end matter greatly in an important sense. What mattered more was the manifestation both to others and themselves of the ability of non-Western soldiers to make a difference. And the legacies of this experience were not limited to the undoubted sense of empowerment felt by former colonial soldiers after the Second World War in locations as different as India and West Africa. The other legacy, and one disguised by a European focus on the victory of the Allied powers in Europe, was the mobilization of the colonial empires against the dangers of indigenous uprising. The massacres that followed closely on the war in Madagascar and North Africa as well as the colonial wars conducted by the Dutch, French and British forces (often in collaboration with each other) in the Dutch East Indies, Indochina and Malaya in the immediate post-war years point to the importance of this phenomenon. Nor did violence decline as post-war peace returned to Europe and the economic and political logics of decolonization became more compelling. The continuation of colonial conflicts in territories such as Kenya, Aden and French North Africa point to the durability of these new mentalities of European violence. Above all, there was the Algerian War, a conflict that in many respects must stand as the archetype of the way in which extra-European and European logics of violence remained intricately intermingled into the second half of Europe's twentieth century.

If one interprets the use of colonial violence as a common European legacy, the issue of colonialism's impact on Europe proper becomes more complicated than is often acknowledged. Why are the countries with the longest and (over the course of centuries) most violent colonial

traditions *not* identical with those countries that unleashed the greatest degree of racist destruction within Europe after 1918? If, as is often maintained, the intensive experience of colonial subjugation and extermination contributed to an individual and institutional brutalization that was subsequently transferred back to Europe, then the discrepancies between England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands on the one hand, and Germany and Austria on the other, seem difficult to explain. In part the difficulty of tracing direct continuities between Africa and Auschwitz can be explained by the fact that neither Britain nor France sought territorial expansion within Europe. In another attempt to explain this discrepancy, Dirk Schumann has recently argued that the relative domestic stability of interwar France and Britain (relative, that is, when measured against the situation in post-1929 Germany) was partly due to the fact that their violent potential was ‘relieved’ in the colonies, an option no longer available to Germany after 1918.<sup>40</sup> This argument complements Pascal Grosse’s suggestion that while there was ‘no innate difference’ between European colonialisms before 1914, there ‘certainly was in their experience of decolonization’. In Grosse’s view, Germany’s unique experience of decolonization and its ‘colonialism without colonies’ after 1918 became a ‘fundamental factor in the interwar radicalization of pre-First World War ideas and practices of expansionist biopolitics’ within Europe.<sup>41</sup>

Nazi Germany certainly viewed the Slavic lands to its east in colonial terms as they understood them.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, there was a correlation between the level of violence perpetrated against the peoples temporarily controlled by both of the fascist empires of Germany and Italy and the place of those peoples on the fascists’ proclaimed cultural-cum-racial gradient. Moreover, even within Europe, the most extreme violence perpetrated by Nazi Germany was perpetrated beyond Germany’s borders – even in a totalitarian state, some notions of a *Rechtsstaat* remained rooted in German mentalities in a way that they did not in the ‘wild east’.<sup>43</sup> In this sense, the most uncharacteristic of the European empires, as of world empires more generally, was not the Nazi version but its Soviet counterpart, which discriminated far less between locations and peoples in its brutality. Much the same goes for the USSR’s theoretical commitment, sometimes put into practice, to the equality of all peoples within its reach.<sup>44</sup>

Nor have the colonial mentalities of discrimination and violence disappeared over the remaining decade of the twentieth century. In the political rhetoric of many politicians of the late twentieth century, or more recently in debates about the expansion of the European Union and the impact of Islamic-inspired terrorism, the theme has reappeared

that Europe's borders and populations have to be 'defended' against immigrants, many of whom can of course trace their origins to former European colonial territories in Africa and Asia. Empire is therefore not over, but remains a territory of the mind and a source of violence in contemporary Europe. The metaphor of the colonial laager, once used to describe European settlements in Africa, is now being used to describe the 'beleaguered' old world. The frontier of the laager has shifted to Europe itself and the alleged threat from the colonial other provides a rallying cry for a common European identity in defence of common values.

### **European state structures in the world system**

The last fifty years of historiography, historical sociology and international relations literature have, in different ways, addressed the rise of European nation-states, their empires and the development of capitalism since the sixteenth century. Whatever the differences within these literatures, it is clear that European power reached its zenith in the first third of our period, in the decades preceding the First World War. Western Europe's unprecedented global domination was based on its industrial capacity, the internal constitutional order of its most advanced states, the possession of vast maritime colonial empires, and the weakening of continental rivals, especially the Ottoman Empire, to the point where they were in danger of bloody collapse.

European power ebbed after the First World War as the industrial muscle of the United States superseded the indebted and fractious European states, although US reluctance to engage in an active diplomacy and initial Soviet weakness meant that British and French diplomacy – and their colonialism in Africa and the Middle East – expanded rather than retreated during the interwar years.<sup>45</sup> If Britain, for example, managed to avoid bloodshed at home (i.e. outside Ireland), the same can certainly not be said about its imperial sphere of interest. Its attempt to use Greece as the sword of its Eastern Mediterranean policy resulted in catastrophic Greek defeat at the hands of Mustafa Kemal's resurgent Turkish nationalist forces. Elsewhere, soon after the end of the Great War, British para-police formations and troops, some of whom had been brutalized on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918, were engaged in a guerrilla war with the IRA in Ireland. In Egypt, demands for independence led to a violent wave of strikes and demonstrations in the summer of 1919, culminating in roughly 1,000 deaths during the British military intervention.<sup>46</sup> The fight against foreign control was taken up from the late 1920s by what was to become one of the most

important proponents of a new fundamentalist Islamism, the Egyptian ‘Muslim Brotherhood’: its influence spread throughout the Arab world and fundamentalism became the major competitor with Arab nationalism as a developmental alternative for the post-Ottoman lands, and one that proved much less quiescent to subordination to Western interests. The revolt in Iraq in the following autumn claimed the lives of perhaps 8,500 Iraqis and 2,000 British soldiers,<sup>47</sup> while the British intervention in neighbouring Hejaz paved the way for the subsequent creation of Saudi Arabia. In India, where 70,000 British soldiers were stationed, the end of the war and the first round of broken promises of national self-determination helped to inflame nationalist sentiment, leading to tensions that culminated in the Amritsar massacre of April 1919 and the resurgence of the Khalifat movement that had surfaced in India as a response to the contemporaneous dismemberment of the seat of the Caliph, the Ottoman Empire. In adjacent parts of the empire, too, such as Afghanistan and Burma, the British faced new forms of armed resistance.<sup>48</sup> At the other end of the interwar period, the ‘Arab revolt’ in Palestine in 1936–9 was only put down with considerable violence.<sup>49</sup>

The travails of the Second World War weakened European power further when France and Britain had to rely on the United States and the Soviet Union to defeat Germany, even as the reconstructed European economies came to comprise a large part of the wealthy core of developed states after 1945. The era of the Cold War was bipolar, not Eurocentric; important geo-strategic decisions were now taken in Washington and Moscow, not in London or Paris, and certainly not in Bonn or Berlin, to some extent replicating the rivalry between an Anglo-Saxon power (at that time Great Britain) and Russia that determined mid-nineteenth century international relations. But if political peace had finally come to Western Europe, it did so for reasons that had only partly to do with a new-found pacificism, as the violence of decolonization amply demonstrated. The peace between European states was an *enforced* one. The violence within states was of a much lower intensity than before, which may partly be explained by the dampening of the class struggle, and such violence tended to be that threatened or enacted by increasingly powerful states against their citizenry in the interests of the established order. Where violence did spread across state boundaries within Europe in the Cold War period, it also did so overwhelmingly in one direction and for similar repressive purposes: from the Eastern hegemon, the Soviet Union, outwards within its own transnational sphere of influence, as was the case in Budapest in 1956 and in Prague in 1968. The collapse of the Soviet Union and unleashing of ethnic violence in the periphery of its former empire rounded off

the long twentieth century by returning Europe to those zones of political violence at the end of empire with which the century began: the Balkans and the Caucasus.

Over the past decades, various attempts have been made to explain the relationship between violent sub-state actors and the state that characterized all of these conflicts, and to relate both of those agents in turn to supranational developments. One tantalizingly clear approach has been suggested by 'world systems theory', which distinguishes between systemic and anti-systemic violence. The latter refers to popular protest movements against states participating in the world capitalist economy, which began in embryo with the Spanish conquest of the Americas in the late fifteenth century. There were two types of anti-systemic movements: social- or class-based protests on the one hand, and some national liberation struggles on the other hand (while other nationalist movements simply sought their own share in the system). Each sought to gain control of the state and the two types of opposition movement were often fused, especially in peripheral and semi-peripheral zones of the world system – that is, in areas beyond the Western metropolitan core states. In Europe after the middle of the nineteenth century, in contrast, these hitherto more spontaneous outbursts of protest became increasingly institutionalized in organized labour movements and nationalist parties. In doing so, these established labour movements marginalized and thus radicalized those, such as the anarchists, who advocated direct action, though at the same time many of the 'respectable' nationalist organizations in the multi-national empires had terrorist wings that furthered the nationalist agenda through violence. More often than not, these sub-state actors aspired to become state actors themselves: the Bolshevik Red Army of the civil war period, the *comitadjis* in the pre-1914 Balkans or the partisans of the Second World War were ultimately para-state armies of different sizes ultimately seeking to establish themselves as the sole authority of legitimate violence.

These sub-state forces won a number of victories after the First World War. The revolutionary Bolsheviks managed to seize the state when the world conflict destabilized the Russian Empire, as did ultra-nationalists in Central Europe and the former Ottoman lands. In most places by the First World War, nationalism had, however, triumphed over socialism, as the agendas of even triumphant Social Democratic parties revealed. In the pessimistic conclusion drawn by advocates of the world system approach, Immanuel Wallerstein and Giovanni Arrighi, anti-systemic movements, whatever their stripe, all too readily engaged in class or national oppression of their own because they became creatures of the international system that constrained them.<sup>50</sup>

The innovation of such world systems theory is to take the European-dominated world economy as its object of inquiry or unit of analysis, rather than individual nation-states, based on the proposition that their development and policies cannot be explained in national terms. National policy was made in circumstances not controlled by policy-makers but dictated by imperatives of the system itself. Nation-states, or often empire-states, operated in a hierarchical and structured field, in which strong Western European core states exploited largely non-European peripheral economies that yielded up their cheap agricultural and mineral products in exchange for value-added industrial products from the core, thereby reproducing the domestic social division of labour in these asymmetrical relations between world regions. Between them lay semi-peripheral states, striving to insulate themselves from core market penetration by strengthening their state apparatus with mercantilist measures. Rather than posit ahistorical laws, Wallerstein traces the evolution of this capitalist system since the seventeenth century, showing how market-induced competition constituted a dynamic process that drove domestic innovation and change. His insistence on the priority of the 'system' provides an analytical challenge to national ways of thinking history which have so often rested at least implicitly on an assumption of sovereign European states as given entities in the Westphalian constellation.<sup>51</sup>

Wallerstein's approach has many advantages but, like all such theories, it suffers from its emphasis on a single factor, in this case capitalism. His world systems theory posits a monism in which every important development in European history is somehow referable to international market pressures, thereby rendering interstate power politics epiphenomenal. Only such a view could regard France in the second half of the nineteenth century as a 'semi-peripheral' state (on account of its economic backwardness compared with Great Britain) and explain the Russian and Nazi revolutions primarily as attempts to compensate for economic decline!<sup>52</sup> In fact, the French conquest of Algeria after 1830 and eventual acquisition of the second-largest colonial empire by the end of the nineteenth were the fruit of *geo-strategic* rather than economic competition with rivals, such as compensating for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany in 1871. Meanwhile, the scramble for Africa was precipitated by the strategic concerns of a Britain seeking to maintain its Eastern Mediterranean hegemony, with its eyes on protection of the Suez Canal and the routes to India. The cause of tensions between Germany and Great Britain was Germany's naval building programme, designed to confront Britain's fleet, rather than specifically or primarily economic or colonial rivalry.<sup>53</sup> If we want to speak of a



system, it is necessary therefore to refer also to what traditional diplomatic history calls the interaction between the Great Powers.<sup>54</sup>

Neither does Wallerstein's theory account for the role of international actors such as the Comintern or NATO whose decisions had the potential to trigger macro-level developments that had a direct impact on the appearance or radicalization of violent sub-state actors. The notion of an integrated 'system' therefore needs to be differentiated. Our unit of analysis cannot just be 'the system' as a whole, then, but also its constituent parts: nation-states, empires and transnational agents of violent change. What Michael Mann writes about societies – 'as confederal, overlapping, intersecting networks rather than as simple totalities' – can be applied to Europe and the globe as a whole.<sup>55</sup> Global society, as Martin Shaw puts it, is not 'a social system but a field of social relations in which many specific systems have formed'.<sup>56</sup> Instead of talking about the international system, then, we should assess the relative importance in any given moment of the economic, military and social 'sub-systems', and the shifting cultural matrices in which they are located: an approach more congenial to historians who prefer to assemble multiple causes without necessarily placing them in a hierarchy, as opposed to social scientists who try to isolate the decisive, causal independent variable.<sup>57</sup>

As Mark Levene has suggested, we also ought to think in terms of processes within a dynamic framework of state (whether nation-state or empire-state) foundation, formation and consolidation.<sup>58</sup> *Pace* Arno Mayer, Eric Hobsbawm, François Furet and Walter Laqueur, the rival political projects of the long twentieth century split along more than the left–right axis. Anti-communist nationalist Poles and Ukrainians butchered one another as brutally in 1943–4 as red and white forces had done in the Russian Civil War between 1917 and 1921. With the exception of anarchists, all of them wanted a state for themselves and, in certain circumstances, were prepared to entertain violence for that end. This is the reason why this volume centres the state and the interstate system within its analysis of political violence. As Charles Tilly commented, forms of collective violence nearly always in the end involve governments, be it governments as objects of political claims, or as the thing to be established or taken over.<sup>59</sup>

This particular focus on states and competition for their control does not entail abandoning the synthetic insights of the 'systemic' approach, because the actions and agendas of the states in question can only be meaningfully understood in relation to other states. Some of these states were more powerful, and some less so: Wallerstein and the members of the English School of international relations were

correct to highlight the dominant position of the core powers. Non-core powers, within Europe as in the non-European world, had to compete against them by adopting what Fred Halliday calls ‘defensive modernisation’, imitating the policies and structures of the dominant states, while sub-state groups were even worse off. Given that the cards were stacked against them by the structure of international relations – both the developmental norms forced upon them by the logic of the system itself and the self-interested policies of the dominant powers in the system – states engaged in the ‘pathos of semi-peripheral escape’, namely ‘the attempt over the past century by a range of countries that were not in the forefront of Western capitalist development to take developmental routes that defied the established model of political and economic organization’. This response to what the Russian-born economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron famously termed ‘uneven development’ led to the ‘homogenization’ of internal polities, as states accelerated state-building to consolidate their domestic power in order to compete, or just survive, internationally.<sup>60</sup> Such an analysis can certainly be applied to the modernizing dictatorships of the early twentieth century, such as Atatürk’s Turkey, but it can even be extended to include the entire project of post-1917 Soviet-influenced communism. The quest to establish communist states on top of the pre-existing societies of Russia and, after 1945, of East-Central Europe stands as a striking example of the challenges faced by such non-core states. The communist states struck out on their own alternative path but, Halliday points out that they ‘were ultimately broken by international pressures, whether those of war, non-military competition or cultural-ideological influence’.<sup>61</sup>

In combating communism, indirect *war* was the first and preferred method in Europe, via external sponsorship of counter-revolutionary forces in the Russian civil war, even though the subsequent and ultimately more efficacious methods were ultimately less costly in terms of *European* blood. Despite the propaganda of each side in the Cold War about the other’s aggression, it was ultimately a conflict that could be managed without resort to all-out war. The more unambiguously aggressive challenge of the revisionist powers, as the fascist states and, outside Europe, Japan, became in the twentieth century – Levene calls them ‘system-defying regimes’ – by contrast, had to be met with concerted military opposition at a huge cost in blood to peoples across almost the entire span of Europe.<sup>62</sup> Had Europe’s right-wing regimes not engaged upon extensive territorial expansion, and contented themselves merely with internal consolidation and murderous repression, as did Franco’s Spain and Kemalist Turkey, it is highly probable that they would have

been similarly tolerated and even, like Turkey, held up as something of a developmental model out of 'backwardness'. After all, from a systemic perspective, European authoritarian right-wing regimes that basically respected property rights were, just like the United States' Latin American client states later in the century, infinitely preferable to the socialists whom they so vehemently opposed.<sup>63</sup>

### The late nineteenth-century context

The late nineteenth century provided the crucible within which the forces that generated the violence of Europe's twentieth century took shape. Those forces were more plural than singular, but they consisted primarily of three inter-related currents of change. First, there was the disruptive impact of new forms of state power, and more especially their projection into regions and areas where state power had formerly been characterized by informal overlordship rather than direct administration. Second, there occurred important shifts in power between states, notably on the eastern borderlands of Europe, which set in motion new dynamics of ethnic and diplomatic conflict that impinged upon Western and Central Europe before, during and after the First World War. Third, the final decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the transition to forms of mass politics in the states of Western and Central Europe. In some cases, such as in France and Britain, this was achieved by a process of incremental change that left the defining shell of the constitutional regime unchanged; in many other cases, however, such as in Spain, or in Italy and Germany after the First World War, it took the form of a disruptive and often violent succession of regime changes. Such differences in the form of the transition mattered, but they should not lead us to lose sight of the wider phenomenon, namely the way in which the late nineteenth century marked the moment when the masses ceased to be a periodic and disruptive presence in politics (what one might term the era of revolutions of the early and mid-nineteenth century) and became the defining element of politics.<sup>64</sup>

The cultural critic Terry Eagleton described the closing decades of the nineteenth century as a period characterized by

an astonishing blend of political and cultural radicalism. It is the period both of anarchism and aestheticism, *The Yellow Book* and the Second International, decadence and the great dock strike. Oscar Wilde believed in both socialism and art for art's sake. William Morris was a Marxist revolutionary who championed medieval art. In Ireland, Maud Gonne and Constance Markievicz moved easily between theatre, the women's movement, prison reform, Irish Republicanism and the Parisian avant-garde.<sup>65</sup>

Such political and cultural upheaval was mirrored by social and economic change. Within the continent, with the exception of France, populations were increasing rapidly. From 1800 to 1900, most countries had experienced growth of at least 100 per cent, which encouraged urbanization, especially after the emancipation of the serfs in the Austrian and Russian empires in 1848 and 1861 respectively allowed more people to leave the land. Extra labour power fuelled industrialization, particularly in the North, and increasingly in western Russia. Yet in the very many rural regions of Europe, growth swiftly meant overpopulation. Unlike the Great Depression of the interwar years, which primarily affected developed economies, the depressions of 1873–96 were a predominantly rural problem. The first, lasting from approximately 1873–8, brought many countries on the semi-periphery of the world system to their knees, from the Ottoman Empire to Brazil; as the Sublime Porte could not repay loans raised in Paris and London over recent decades, Britain and France gained direct control of a large slice of Istanbul's fiscal policy, ensuring that they would not be out of pocket as they managed the empire's decline. Elsewhere in greater Europe, long-established patterns of life were upset as the price of agricultural commodities plummeted relative to manufactures because of cheap grain imports from the United States, as the white settlers expanded to the western seaboard at the cost of the native peoples.<sup>66</sup> If some European countryfolk saw opportunity in leaving the land for the cities of Europe or, through transatlantic migration to North and Latin America, many others were forced into the move.

Social discontent ensuing from industrialization and urbanization was being more stridently expressed as more (and larger) social groups were represented in politics. Philosophers, avant-garde artists and writers focused on the uncertainties of life amid this rapid change. As with Gustav Le Bon's fashionable study of the *Psychologie des foules*, first published in 1895, many intellectuals felt the massification of society would strangle creativity, that wider democracy would encourage demagoguery and populism. Rootlessness, alienation and disorientation were feared as results of urbanization, industrial modernity and intensified secularism. The watchword 'degeneration' could stand for anything from the demise of social stratification to the destruction of traditional culture or to the dilution of 'racial value'.<sup>67</sup>

Not everything of course was new, as different manifestations of political violence showed. The Paris Commune, for instance, demonstrated the continuing force of a form of popular neighbourhood politics that drew on the twin currents of the Jacobinism of the French Revolutionary era and the Marxist-inflected socialism of the mid-nineteenth century.

For all of its disruptive power, and the social alarm it generated well beyond the frontiers of France, however, the Commune proved to be more of an end than a beginning. Both in its actions and its language, it looked backwards towards an earlier era when popular insurrection had seemed imminent and possible, while the emphatic manner of its bloody suppression in the spring of 1871 by the disciplined conscript troops mobilized by the predominantly republican politicians gathered at Versailles outside Paris demonstrated the emergence of a new and implacable language of state-led counter-revolution.<sup>68</sup>

The future therefore belonged to new languages and strategies of revolution, such as the Marxist revolutionaries, anarchists and Populists who gained political momentum during the final decades of the nineteenth century in the Russian Empire as well as in Southern Europe, most notably Italy and Spain. These revolutionaries of the new Europe (as opposed to the old revolutionary Europe of Paris, Berlin or Vienna), sought a radical redistribution of political power, yet were often socially conservative in seeking to protect the peasant commune or the independent craftsman from the dislocations of urbanizing, industrializing modernity. Nor was revolution or political violence any longer the monopoly of the left. New languages of right-wing revolution came to the fore in Europe in the later nineteenth century, driven by the loosely associated rhetorics of national assertion, anti-capitalism, hostility to liberalism and anti-Semitism. The right-wing revolutionaries of Boulangism and the various patriotic leagues in France or of the conservatives and the further-right parties in Germany and German-speaking Austria provided a new language of political violence which defined itself categorically against the revolutionary ideologies of old. It also presented rulers with a new choice: to oppose revolution and violence in the name of defence of the status quo, or to run with the revolutionaries, seeking to ally themselves to their interests. That choice, defined in different ways at different times and in different places, would in many respects provide the key political dynamic of much of Western and Central Europe between the 1890s and the 1930s.

The pressures in *fin de siècle* Europe were not, however, all internal and political. The system was also put under increasing pressure as the pace of industrial change accelerated from the 1870s with the second industrial revolution, as the old European land empires started to feel the strain of subject nationalisms, and as the scramble began for territories in Africa and the Pacific, especially when the newly-united states of Italy and Germany entered the imperial fray from the 1880s onwards. Recent advancements in military technology, particularly the Maxim gun, meant that it was easier to crush non-European forces,

making the half century from around 1880 into ‘the iron age of gun-boat diplomacy’.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, advances in gun sizes and exponential increases in their range reduced battlefield mobility and gave a decisive advantage to defences in any prospective war between industrialized states. In turn, this development meant that prospective attackers needed to mobilize the maximum number of soldiers and material, thus contributing to spiralling military expenditure, as well as to the increasingly shrill appeal to patriotic sentiment.<sup>70</sup>

Engaging in increasingly ‘catastrophic competition’, as Mark Levene has termed it, the empire-states consumed all global territory – except for the few states able to withstand European penetration: Siam, Ethiopia and Japan – until there was no neutral space between them.<sup>71</sup> In what, in the fashionable sub-Darwinian language of the age, seemed to be a struggle for ascendancy between the major empires of the era, the land-based empires of Eastern and Southeastern Europe were at a disadvantage. They lacked the same ability to break through to the centralized structures of modern imperial states, or the same opportunity to project their power beyond their often ill-defined borders. Thus, it was no accident that it was the Russian Tsar who called a disarmament conference in 1898, as Russia was incapable of perpetuating competition with the industrialized nation-states, as its humiliating, seminal defeat at the hands of the Asian power of the modern Japanese Empire would show seven years later. The elites within these empires found themselves in an increasingly beleaguered position, subjected to the progressively assertive, and violent, demands of intellectuals, workers and peasants, who were driven forward by the various languages of Marxist, Populist, anarchist and ethnic revolution. Unsurprisingly, therefore, their only salvation lay in increasingly desperate resorts to state power, engaging in all manner of measures of violent pacification and coercion as in Russia after the revolution of 1905 and, in the case of the Ottoman Empire, even unleashing massacres against the Armenians in the 1890s and in 1909.

The pressures generated by the processes of socio-economic, political and ethnic change, however, were not specific to the empires of the East. Everywhere in Europe, and most especially along its southern shores, monarchs and governmental ministers struggled to retain the ascendancy of the state authorities over the anti-systemic forces from below. Therefore, rather than the revolutionary ideologies, such as integral nationalism, anarchism and radical socialism acting as self-contained sources of conflict, these ideologies were primarily the consequences of the broader pressures of the age. The political violence that gathered pace across Europe during the final years of the nineteenth century

was the product of this wider 'political environment of almost perpetual crisis' and the pressure it placed on national leaderships to impose sovereign viability.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, however, this political environment was both shaped by and produced socialist and nationalist leaders who aimed at the 'suppression or overthrow of discredited or bankrupt traditional regimes and their replacement by at least in part popularly legitimised radical ones with maximalist agendas for social or national regeneration'.<sup>73</sup> The only way to enjoy freedom from permanent subjection was to strengthen one's own state, seize control of the state, or have one's own. The struggle did not end there, for the achievement of statehood began battles with other states.

Nationalism, or more specifically some form of nation-*statism*, ultimately prevailed in most places beyond Russia. The revolutionary left suffered from possessing as few military divisions as notoriously did the Pope, and from doctrinal splits that did not trouble the right to anything like the same degree. Besides, nationalism had its own attractions, even if they were not quite those promised by the liberal nationalists of 1848.<sup>74</sup> As a system of political organization, nationalism theoretically presupposed popular participation in political life. In practice, though, many national leaders allowed neither internal pluralism nor external toleration in the conditions of the late nineteenth century. Rulers exploited nationalism's mobilizing potential as a means to enhance state military power, while restricting its emancipatory and egalitarian connotations. The trick, temporarily perfected by Bismarck in Germany in the 1870s and 1880s, was to tap into the rhetoric of 'the people' without surrendering too much by way of popular sovereignty: welfare could be a substitute for emancipation and the labour movement stigmatized as anti-national. But this trick could best be played when there was something that could be dressed-up as a single people, which was not the case everywhere.<sup>75</sup>

In new nation-states, perhaps most obviously Italy, armies and schools could indeed be the enforcers of national consciousness; for Europe's multi-national land empires of Central and Eastern Europe, however, there was no direct route to nationhood. To the manifold legacies of previous centuries of ethnic, confessional and linguistic diversity was added during the nineteenth century the new language of national liberation, driven in its contradictory and competing directions by Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Croat and Serb nationalists, to name but a few. In these territories, therefore, the attempts of imperial rulers to assert their power and to wield it to generate a more homogenous imperial entity, risked only provoking opposition and cycles of increasingly bitter intra-ethnic conflict.<sup>76</sup>

Nationalism in its various forms was therefore rarely the vehicle for peaceful modernization. In Finland and Norway, new nation-states did emerge in 1905, built upon the rhetoric if not quite the reality of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. But elsewhere, nationalism, and more especially its increasingly ethnic manifestations, divided more than it united. In Spain, Ireland, eastern Poland and Ukraine, and many other lands in between, definitions of nationalism based on linguistic or religious identity set in motion processes of struggle in which ethnic liberation often became analogous to civil war.<sup>77</sup>

The sum total of all of these trends did not make any particular instances of political violence inevitable. Strong countervailing tendencies to autarkic competition and bellicose nationalism were discernible throughout Europe: the increasing capitalist interconnectivity of the period provided strong pressures *against* wars, while an increasingly assertive and articulate peace movement protested against the arms race, and found powerful allies in transnational and international movements, such as socialism and feminism.<sup>78</sup> Economic growth was unprecedented, as well, leading many contemporaries to regard theirs as a *belle époque*.

For all that, unlike the increasingly enveloping post-1945 and particularly post-1990 economic orders, which contributed significantly to the peace that often reigns between *capitalist* countries (but not between *democracies*, as the spurious ‘democratic peace theory’ claims), these countervailing forces did not prevail during the first half of the twentieth century. Intra-European conflict replaced the internally regulated division and exploitation of the Eastern and Southern parts of the globe, even as Europe was better placed than ever to cash in on empire. The problems that came to seem insoluble except through violence were in the first place problems intrinsic to the landmass of greater Europe at a time of rapid modernization.

This violence, it is necessary to add, was also committed largely though not exclusively by men. How far gender provides an explanation of Europe’s ‘violent turn’ is an emerging theme in historical accounts of Europe in the early twentieth century. Historians have rightly begun to focus on the new languages and images of aggressive masculinity that emerged in the gendered recruitment propaganda of the First World War and, more especially in its violent aftermath, in the ultra-nationalist paramilitaries such as the German *Freikorps*, the Italian *Arditi*, or the Hungarian white militias with their cult of the hardened male soldier protecting hearth and home against red hordes.<sup>79</sup>

And yet, gender cannot be easily distinguished from other identities. Thus class divisions among feminists were reflected in the positions



they adopted during the First World War, when nationalist women on all sides could 'shame' male citizens into performing their 'male' duty to sacrifice themselves for the nation. Indeed, as Jean Bethke Elshtain points out, 'women in overwhelming numbers have supported their state's wars in the modern West'.<sup>80</sup> Middle-class feminists, too, were wont to support racist and biopolitical measures to improve the 'fitness' of the nation, reflecting the widespread apprehension of cultural and racial 'degeneration'. Women might be therefore as readily in the ranks of those advocating violence as of the peace activists.<sup>81</sup>

Still, it would be foolish to deny that the perpetration of violence was overwhelmingly a male affair. As Raewyn Connell has noted, 'Violence becomes important in gender politics among men' and 'Most episodes of major violence ... are transactions among men'.<sup>82</sup> Not only did women and men have different access to decision-making power in Europe during the twentieth century, but they also experienced violence differently, and were often targeted in different ways, notably through the prevalence of rape and of forms of gendered humiliation such as head shaving in the final years of the Second World War.<sup>83</sup>

At the same time, it is equally apparent that in terms of casualties, on and beyond the battlefield, men were also the primary victims of political violence. Thus, though political violence often engulfed communities, and indeed entire societies, especially in civil war and genocide,<sup>84</sup> many of the dynamics of such conflict were powerfully gendered. Elites instrumentalized gendered discourses of community vulnerability to promote a sense of panic and emergency in populations, thereby generating a hardening of male subjectivities, including the marginalized masculinities of youths among ethnic minorities. The emotional affects involved in perpetrating violence against 'enemy' men, women and children were shot through with powerfully gendered images of dangerous others.

The force of these self-images and constructions of masculinity went beyond the tools of rulers and of propagandists. They became, as many studies of Nazism have demonstrated indisputably, one of the ways in which the energies of political violence were mobilized. Men internalized a self-image in which a propensity to see violence as a necessary element of masculinity was an integral element. That process was not, as the events of the Second World War would demonstrate, one that turned all men into violent killers. Concepts of the male duty to engage in violence co-existed alongside other and powerful notions of civilized behaviour and of Christian charity that also found their expression in the violence of the twentieth century. But the violence that men committed, against other men and against women and children in the

conflicts of the twentieth century, demonstrates the way in which logics of violence were inscribed almost invisibly into the temper of twentieth-century European history.

If there was anything so specific as a spatio-temporal point of departure for the expression of these logics of violence and for the way in which they gained momentum, it lay probably in the events encapsulated in the misleadingly dry-sounding concept of the Eastern Crisis of the 1870s. This complex amalgam of international, imperial and ethnic conflicts provides a point of departure for examining the intertwined agendas of great powers, smaller powers and increasingly violent insurgent sub-state actors that would so shape all of Europe in the following decades. From then until 1914, while the world focused on Christian victims of Ottoman massacre in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria, Muslims were in fact the primary victims of political violence in the Eastern Mediterranean. As Serbia, Montenegro, Romania and part of Bulgaria achieved full independence from Istanbul, and as Bosnia, Herzegovina and other parts of Bulgaria gained extensive autonomy, hundreds of thousands of Muslims were expelled from these former Ottoman domains, with many others murdered in the process. To them may be added millions more Muslims from the Caucasus, expelled or fleeing in the face of Russian imperial policy: the flood from the Caucasus had begun in earnest around the time of the Crimean war of 1854–6, but was greatly augmented during the 1877–8 Ottoman-Russian war as Russia expanded at Ottoman expense.

The Eastern Crisis was precipitated by little more than a tax revolt in Herzegovina, but the wider context was vital. The 1873 Vienna stockmarket crash that brought on the rural depression coincided with poor harvests, drought and famine in the Ottoman domains. The crash meant that the debt-ridden empire, which could no longer avail itself of sufficient foreign loans, tried to raise capital domestically by increasing taxes. The tax-farmers in the Balkans squeezed the predominantly Christian peasantry, already suffering environmental hardships. Nationalist agitators stirred the ensuing revolt and found some willing support among the population, though neither the nationalist element nor the scale of popular participation should be overplayed.<sup>85</sup> The Catholics amongst the agitators had been encouraged by recent Austro-Hungarian overtures, while Orthodox Serb agitators were encouraged by Serbia, which cast jealous eyes on Bosnia, and enjoyed geopolitical and ‘pan-Slavic’ Russian support. Swiftly the crisis achieved regional dimensions, as Russia backed Serbia unsuccessfully in a military campaign and then decided to do the job itself, causing great concern to Austria-Hungary, Germany and Britain over the balance of power.

The involvement of the Powers gave the nationalists and their irregular, paramilitary proxies opportunities to avenge themselves against members of a group associated with the subordination of the Christian majority populations.

In Turkish ethnic memory the suffering and dislocation experienced at the time of the Eastern Crisis is known as the *sökümü*, the disaster or 'unweaving'.<sup>86</sup> For its part, the 1877–8 Russian war radicalized a generation of future Ottoman leaders. The crisis was marked not by old-fashioned barbarity, but by a very modern form of violence: systematic ethnic cleansing. Though not all Bulgarian or Bosnian Muslims would die or flee, the purpose of the violence was to reverse the ethnic power balance and pave the way for Christian ethnic dominance in the future. We should not ascribe the extreme violence to popular passions unleashed. In this, as in later episodes of Balkan violence, public sentiment was manipulated by nationalist elites seeking to inculcate nationalism in their often apolitical countrymen, while much of the killing was, again, done by paramilitary forces often operating with their own local agendas.<sup>87</sup>

The misleading impression conveyed by much Western scholarship that the forty-three years between the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War were years of European peace is therefore only accurate if one chooses to ignore the Southeast of the European continent and the Eastern Mediterranean. In fact the 'Second Eastern Crisis' of 1885–8, the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, the Macedonian Ilinden Uprising of 1903, the Italian-Turkish or 'Tripolitanian' War of 1911–12 and the two Balkan wars of 1912–13, were all accompanied by often indiscriminate violence against civilians.<sup>88</sup> In the Balkan wars Muslim civilians were again the primary – but by no means the only – victims of the massive violence, with tens of thousands of deaths and as many as 400,000 fleeing into Ottoman Anatolia. Each of the enumerated conflicts had distinctly ethnic aspects, coloured by religious sentiment: the Ottoman leaders of the resistance to Italy in Tripoli rallied their side with incitements to jihad – holy war – while the Christian states in the first Balkan War of 1912 declared themselves to be engaged in a crusade against Ottoman rule. The regional significance of these conflicts is underlined by the fact that in Serbia the First World War is often referred to as the Third Balkan War.

The explanation of this continuity of political violence in Southeastern Europe in the decades preceding 1914 lay in the intersection of imperial and national or ethnic ambitions. Under the terms of the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, Germany, France, Britain and Russia became drawn more directly into the management of the crises of the Balkans. Their

initial impact was indeed pacific: the Treaty of 1878 prevented a general conflagration in the Balkans, but in the medium and longer term it served largely to exacerbate the internal conflicts. Germany, Russia and Britain all became the defenders of particular ethnic groups within the region: the German ethnic populations of Southeast Europe, the Slavic populations of Bulgaria and Serbia and, in the British case (by treaty), the Christian populations of eastern Anatolia and Armenia. In this way, external intervention and internal radicalization became drawn together in a way which intensified local conflicts and magnified their international significance.<sup>89</sup>

Central to this process was the new logic of ethnic massacres. The massacres of Bulgarian Christians, so deplored by Gladstone, and the increasing momentum of violent actions committed by the Ottoman authorities and their Turkish successors against the Christian populations within Anatolia formed only one element of the wider unravelling of ethnic and religious co-existence that occurred in Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean during the decades preceding 1914. To be sure, none of this was entirely novel: there never had been a peaceful era of co-existence. But the tools and mentalities available to state authorities and their opponents had become more powerful and more intransigent. A new logic of mass violence had entered European politics, which would provide a thread which linked together the events of the 1870s and the forms of ethnic resettlement and violence which, unintentionally encouraged by Woodrow Wilson's doctrine of national self-determination, occurred in large areas of South- and Central-Eastern Europe after the First World War. While the connections between, say, successive Armenian massacres and the massive violence that accompanied the forced resettlement of Greek populations from Anatolia to the Greek Balkans and the parallel expulsion of Muslim populations from the Balkans to Anatolia, might appear self-evident, larger continuities are also visible. It was, after all, German troops and their allies who played the decisive role in the continued ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and Southeastern Europe during the early 1940s, and in turn the memory of the events of those years that did so much to feed the renewed conflicts in Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

By focusing on the role of these conflicts in Southeastern Europe, it is therefore possible to reshape our understanding of the dynamics of political violence in twentieth-century Europe. The immediate origin of the First World War itself in the Balkans is one of the best-known tales of modern history. A small, young nation-state – Serbia – with irredentist aims in a neighbouring territory – Bosnia – provoked a dynastic power – the Habsburg Empire – that had itself annexed the

contested territory in 1878 (formalized in 1908) from a rival empire – the Ottoman. Much of the rest of Europe was then drawn into the conflagration as a result of the alliance system and the increasing instability of the competitive continental order. What this familiar account of the First World War's origins omits, however, is an appreciation of the way in which so much of the subsequent violence in Europe was prefigured and initially reached its full expression in Southeast Europe. Here, in the imperial shatterzones, where insurgent nationalizing elites vied with imperial elites – and with one another – to establish fledgling monocultural states by assimilating, deporting and killing 'enemy' civilians, was the crucible of a bloody twentieth century.

The pattern of state oppression, revolt, ethnic conflict, international intervention, forced resettlement of populations and ethnic cleansing and genocide was one that had already been established in Europe long before 1914. The Great War only expanded the scope of such violence and took it to quantitatively new levels. Total war also drove the dynamic of political radicalization, further pressurizing the tense relationship between state and citizenry across the continent, and becoming the mother of revolution.