



Department of Political Sciences  
Master's Degree in International Relations  
Major in Mediterranean Governance

Chair of Comparative History of Political Systems

# The Latin Union: A Dissertation on Alexandre Kojève and the End of Nation-states in Europe

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Academic Year 2022/2023

## **Abstract**

The theme of this essay will be the analysis, and actualization, of Alexandre Kojève's thoughts regarding the geopolitical future of the Latin Mediterranean states, using the concept of the 'Latin Empire', formulated by Kojève himself in a 1945 essay. The political transition that crosses contemporary times, characterized by the dissolution of the modern state towards a yet undefined horizon, analogous to the late medieval one that led to the creation of the nation-state, implies the need for the creation of new forms of sovereignty. The lack of realization, dictated by structural inhomogeneities, of a political project among the current components of the European Union, forces us to search for a viable alternative. Our objective is to analyse the conditions of possibility for the creation of a political union of the Latin Mediterranean countries. To do this, we will use a historical approach, analysing both primary and secondary sources. Initially, we will introduce an analogy between the late medieval period, marked by the Hundred Years' War and the creation of the first nation states, with the current historical period, marked by the crisis of the latter, and then we will discuss Kojève's thesis, and contextualize it in the historical period of its formulation. We will then summarize the history of the European Community, highlighting its internal power relations and structural limits, and finally use Kojève's idea to shed light on current events, laying the foundations for a discussion on the geopolitical future of the continent. Our analysis will reveal the need for European states to face the transition to supranational states, and the relevance of Kojève's proposal, which admitted this possibility only to homogeneous state entities representing a common civilization and mentality.

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## Introduction

The aim of this paper is to address the problem of the crisis of the modern European state, finding its historical causes and offering a possible prospective solution. In particular, we will focus on the idea of the Latin Empire developed by Alexandre Kojève in a text from 1945. The union of the Latin countries is justified, as we will argue, by two considerations: by the need for the creation of supranational political entities among European countries, due to a temporal acceleration, since the end of the IIWW, of the process of crisis of the nation-state; and by the failure, or impossibility, of the political project of the European Community. The history of the European states is at a decisive turning point, given the increasingly strong competition with non-European superpowers, and their consequent relative demographic and economic downsizing. Whereas in 1980 the European Union counted for about 25 per cent of the global GDP, in 2023 it counts for less than 15 per cent, in a negative trend that will continue in the coming decades.<sup>1</sup> The same applies to the demographic aspect, as the 27 countries of the European Union, which in 1960 accounted for 12% of the world's population, were worth just under 6% in 2020.<sup>2</sup> While logic counsels the regrouping of the continent's state realities, the debate on the issue does not seem to take it seriously. On the one hand, the political debate revolves around the sterile Europeanism-nationalism dichotomy, where the first position concerns a vague invocation of an impossible political union formed by the 27 states of the European Union, uneven in culture and strategic interests, usually called the 'United States of Europe'; while the second, concerns a nostalgic denial of the current international political context, accompanied by an equally vague hope for a recovery of national sovereignties. The superficiality of these positions is reflected in the academic debate, almost exclusively focused on the deconstructive critique of the European project, or on the technical analysis of its policies and possibilities for development. Our paper starts from the need to overcome both positions, analysing the historical path of the modern state, from its creation to its demise, the unbalanced process of European integration, which developed as a purely economic project revolving around the Franco-German alliance, and, finally, the Kojévian perspective of the Latin empire, which we consider the most probable future political horizon for the Latin Mediterranean countries of the European continent. Kojève's perspective, once the cosmetic nature of the

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<sup>1</sup> "GDP based on PPP, share of world", *Imf.org*, 2023, <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PPPSH@WEO/EU/CHN/USA>.

<sup>2</sup> "Percent of world population - Country rankings", *theGlobalEconomy.org*, 2020, [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/population\\_share/European-union/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/population_share/European-union/).

process of political integration between European states is proven, will emerge as a logical step in the process we are experiencing towards new supranational entities.

To do this, we have adopted a historical approach in our research. The debate to which we have referred is in fact hegemonised by disciplines such as sociology, political science, and economics. Despite their undisputed explanatory capacity in certain contexts, the problem with their methods is, with few internal exceptions, the scant consideration given to the time factor. Political or economic systems of secular development are often reduced to theoretical models; thus, decontextualised from the historical processes that generated them, and conceived as intransformable. Contemporary history is the context in which these disciplines operate, and this limits the overview needed to understand long historical processes. Moreover, their scientific ambition, especially for economics, implies another degree of fragmentation of the research field, which is useful to grasp every aspect of the object of study. But this approach, when applied to a subject like the European Community, generates at least two serious problems. The first, concerns the inability to think of the integration process as the result of a convergence between historical, culturally, and geographically defined subjects. Thinking of a political unification process driven by economic interests, agreements between governments, or new institutional constraints, is indicative of a poor consideration of historical processes and their conditions of possibility.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the insistence on contemporaneity produces a tendentially conservative research, unable to think of radical alternatives, but not excessively utopian, to the historical reality it criticises. A poor knowledge of the past equals a poor knowledge of the present and the future. The second problem concerns the high degree of disciplinary fragmentation, which prevents the study of a phenomenon as a whole. The result, applied to European Union studies, is a widespread intellectual blindness, where specialised scholars share the illogical hope of a unitary political future for the European Community. To remedy these problems, we have favoured the analysis of historical processes, which is able to identify the root causes of contemporary phenomena and provide an overall view. On the other hand, the sporadic use of the methods belonging to the disciplines we criticised was fundamental. The methodological approach of this research is interdisciplinary. In the first chapter, it is based on the use of social history, and the analysis of the relationship between economic, demographic, institutional and cultural processes, and the long-term transformation

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<sup>3</sup> Even the most experienced and acute political scientists, as is the case with scholar Sergio Fabbrini, have pondered the future of the European Community as if it depended on the contingent political inclination of the individual governments it comprises. Cfr. Sergio Fabbrini, *Which European Union?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

of social systems. Secular processes, in fact, depend on the slow modification of social variables that have a weak connection to the political, or economic, facts of contingency. This historical method, as noted, is indebted to the historiographic approach of the French *nouvelle histoire*.<sup>4</sup> As Jacques Le Goff summarised in 1979,

[...] in our world in which collective memory is changing, in which man, any man, faced with the acceleration of history, wants to escape the anguish of becoming a being without a past, without roots, in which men are passionately searching for their identity, in which everywhere there is an attempt to inventory and preserve heritages, to set up data banks for the past and the present, in which man, frightened, tries to master a history that seems to elude him: who, better than the new history, can offer him information and answers? This history that considers him in its secular duration, that enlightens him on permanence and change, that offers him a balance between material and spiritual elements, between the economic and the mental, that proposes choices to him without imposing them on him. History has always had a great social function, in the broadest sense: and in our age, if it is given the means of research, teaching (at all school levels) and dissemination that it needs, the new history is able to perform this function more than ever.<sup>5</sup>

In the second chapter, due to the focus on contemporary European history, the approach becomes more related to political and geopolitical analysis. Fundamental moments in the history of the integration process are observed in their political dynamics, in which the traces of different historical processes are highlighted. Furthermore, the history of ideas, on which the last chapter is based, assumes central importance.

In summary, we will analyse in the first chapter the trajectory taken by the modern state in Europe from the late medieval period to contemporary history. We will also draw an analogy between the process of the formation of the nation-state and the process that seems to be marking its demise. In the second chapter, we will trace the political history of the European Community, as well as the history of its idea, highlighting its limits and contractions. Finally, in the third and last chapter, we will describe the idea of the Latin Empire put forward by Kojève by contextualising it and briefly analysing its conditions of possibility.

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<sup>4</sup> This is an important French historiographic current that arose around the journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, an international journal founded in 1929 by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *La nuova storia* in *La nuova storia. Orientamenti della storiografia francese contemporanea*, a cura di J. Le Goff, trad. it. (Milano: Mondadori, 1980).

## Chapter 1. The crisis of the modern state

“*Un passato ostinatamente presente, vorace, inghiotte monotono il fragile tempo degli uomini.*”

F. Braudel<sup>6</sup>

This chapter focuses on understanding the general and long-term causes of the transitions leading to the formation of new political systems.<sup>7</sup> We will initially examine the process that led to the formation of modern states, first in England, France, and then in the rest of Europe, starting from fragmented feudal realities; we will then deal with the contemporary crisis of the modern state, reducible to the concept of the nation-state, whose historical path, its failure, and its probable transition towards undefined horizons we will attempt to summarise. The analogy between these two transitional periods, in fact, is meant to be a useful tool to illuminate certain aspects of contemporary history characterised by long and non-linear processes, difficult to identify, as explained in the introduction, with the methodological lenses of the sociologist or political scientist alone.<sup>8</sup> The crisis of the nation state cannot be understood outside the historical paradigm, and its causes are not determined by 20th century *histoire événementielle*,<sup>9</sup> but have much deeper roots that can only be investigated through the study of social history.<sup>10</sup>

To analyse the historical trajectory of the modern state we shall focus on the European region. The reason for this choice is twofold: the first reason is that the concept of the state, as understood from modernity onwards, has its origin on the European continent, and only belatedly spread, by coercive or imitative assimilation, to the rest of the world. The sources from which to draw are consequently more numerous in Europe than in other regions, and the authorship of the political model makes it possible to observe more clearly the reasons for that invention; the second reason is that our research takes its inspiration from Kojève’s essay written in 1945, which has European and French politics as its research focus. Moreover, the

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<sup>6</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Civiltà materiale, economia e capitalismo – Le strutture del quotidiano (secoli xv-xviii)*, trad. it. (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), xx. “A stubbornly present, voracious past, monotonously swallows up the fragile time of men.” My translation.

<sup>7</sup> For a deeper understanding of what is meant by a historical cause cfr Marc Bloch, *Apologia della storia o mestiere di storico* (Alessandria: Edizioni Falsopiano, 2015); Edward Hallett Carr, and Carlo Ginzburg, *Sei lezioni sulla storia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1966).

<sup>8</sup> Luciano Canfora, *L’uso politico dei paradigmi storici* (Bari:Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II: Volume one*, Vol. 1 (New York: Collins, 1972), 13-25.

<sup>10</sup> We refer to the broadest possible meaning of the term, following the example of the school of *Annales* and the research of sociologist Charles Tilly.

time span we will be analysing in this chapter includes the last centuries of medieval history and the beginning of modern history (from the 12th to the 17th century), up to the end of modern history and almost up to the present day (from the 18th to the most part of the 20th century). This wide temporal space will allow us to identify the most significant changes that have characterised European history from the end of the Middle Ages onwards, and to avoid the analysis of the *histoire événementielle*, without, at the same time, denying the importance of contingent conditions for the development of history. The aim is to strike the right balance between the search for causes and the search for conditions, without one ever completely prevailing over the other.

The history of political systems is a history of expansions and contractions, of fragmentations and unifications.<sup>11</sup> The expansion of a system, however fragmented, brings stability and prosperity within it. At the same time, this process tends to crystallize the dynamics that have ensured success. At this point, the risk of paralysis is high, and there is a lack of momentum toward a radical rethinking of the model, its dynamics, and hierarchies. Its contraction, on the other hand, brings instability and, if protracted, can be the cause of great political and social upheaval. This is the essential dynamic that characterises the dissolution and formation of political communities. What remains to be established are the reasons for expansions and contractions, as well as the ways in which systems can overcome or succumb to crises.<sup>12</sup> The modern state is the result of the end of a long phase of expansion that lasted at least until the 12th century, which led to a crisis and a long involuntary process in which more or less vast territories, initially fragmented into a large number of seigniorial estates,<sup>13</sup> were slowly unified by a single actor, the king, who became the holder of the coercive and judicial monopoly. This quasi-state system, passing through the Hundred Years' War of the 14th and 15th centuries, as well as the wars and commercial expansion of the 16th century, found its fulfilment in late 17th-century England,<sup>14</sup> before spreading throughout the rest of Europe and the world. After having expanded to its maximum capacity, finding in the England of the Industrial Revolution the most successful example,<sup>15</sup> this system entered a definitive crisis, that we are still experiencing, at the beginning of the 20th century.

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<sup>11</sup> That can be, usually, territorial, or economical.

<sup>12</sup> We deliberately do not refer to a possible middle ground between expansion and contraction, as the fierce competition between countries, and their different rates of development, has so far not allowed a stable equilibrium, be it political, economic, or military, to be maintained over a long period of time.

<sup>13</sup> Brian Nelson, *The making of the modern state: A theoretical evolution* (New York: Springer, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Starting from the so-called "Glorious Revolution".

<sup>15</sup> Of similar importance are the parables of France and, in more recent times, Italy and Germany.



The analogy between the two contractions, on the one hand that of the feudal system and on the other that of the modern state, or nation-state, will allow us to investigate the reasons behind the profound crises of the political systems. For instance, the process of the centralisation of coercive power that characterised the last phase of medieval history, in which the war between France and England played a fundamental role, and that of monetarisation, which allowed, in addition to important transformations in the social field, the development of new institutions, are fundamental in explaining the centralisation of power that led to the formation of states. Moreover, competition between various actors, first local lords, then regional lords, and finally kings, was what fuelled this transformation. Similar dynamics can be observed in contemporary European history, where the confrontation with larger political entities in the rest of the world imposes a challenge towards the unification of military and economic power within new supranational political entities. As Elias writes, “first it is a castle opposed to another castle, then a territory to another territory, then a state to another state; and today the first symptoms are appearing on the horizon of history and the first struggles are looming to integrate territories and human masses of a higher order of magnitude”.<sup>16</sup> Which countries should join the effort to tackle the crisis of nation-states and face the challenge of the complex era with more instruments,<sup>17</sup> however, is a topic of debate in the following chapters.

## 1.1 The formation of the nation-state

The first problem to face, when trying to describe the nature of a process, is that of periodization. If the modern state did not appear out of nowhere but was the result of a transformation lasting several centuries, then it remains to identify its beginning and its completion.

The beginning of this process, in agreement with N. Elias and J. Strayer,<sup>18</sup> is identified in the 12th century, considered by most historians as the century of transition from the early Middle Ages to the late Middle Ages. At that time, due to the success of a few local lords, united militarily through the mediation of kings and emperors, in France, Germany, and England, in defending their territory from invading peoples, there was an end to the political

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<sup>16</sup> My translation, Norbert Elias. *Potere e civiltà* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 121.

<sup>17</sup> On the definition of ‘Complex era’ see Pierluigi Fagan, *Verso un mondo multipolare: Il gioco dei giochi nell’era Trump* (Roma: Fazi Editore, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Among the two most important scholars who have dealt with the subject.

instability that had marked the European continent during the previous centuries. J. Strayer, in his book *On the medieval origins of the modern state*, summarises this process as follows:

[...] the gradual stabilization of Europe, the ending of a long period of migration, invasion, and conquest. The early Germanic kings had destroyed the Empire in the West, but then they went on to destroy each other, with new invaders coming along to help the process. The Franks conquered rival kingdoms in Gaul and Germany only to find themselves split by civil war and shaken by attacks of the Northmen. The Ostrogoths and the Vandals were wiped out by the Eastern Empire, the Visigoths by a Moslem invasion. The Danes put an end to most of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Only in the tenth century did the sole survivor, the kingdom of Wessex, gain control of most of England. But after 1000 such sweeping changes became rare. The chief surviving kingdoms, the kingdom of England, the kingdom of the West Franks (which was to become France), and the kingdom of the East Franks (the nucleus of Germany), were to endure in one form or another down to our own day.<sup>19</sup>

The 1100s also witnessed the moment of maximum fragmentation of the European territory, composed of a myriad of competing local lordships, only formally dependent on a single king, who had no need to create stable institutions, the hallmark of the future European states. Once a form of stability had been found outside, the conflict turned within the feudal kingdoms. The segmentary character of the European territory, in fact, is what will be lost with the fierce struggle between feudal lords, a struggle in which the kings participate without significant starting advantages. It is the fruits of their land that will determine their economic power, and it is their political alliances that will determine their military power. At the same time, the increasing difficulty of expanding across the continent, as will be evident when discussing contemporary history, did not prevent European kingdoms from looking elsewhere for outlets for their conquering will, starting with the crusades in the 12th century and continuing with the Atlantic expansion in later centuries. The control of a territory larger than political territorial unity will be an ineliminable *topos* of the modern state.

The completion of the process, if we can call it that, has a more debated periodisation. It is possible to identify the existence of a modern state system through the use of significant dates, such as the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 and the French Revolution of 1789,<sup>20</sup> or by looking at longer experiences, such as those of the Italian city-states, in particular the Republic of Venice in the 15th-16th centuries, the United Provinces during the first half of the 17th century, France under the Sun King, or England after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In our

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph R. Strayer, *On the medieval origins of the modern state* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> The Peace of Westphalia is linked to the creation of an interstate system in Europe.

view, however, it is precisely in post-1688 England that one can find all the characteristics of the modern state: a politically and culturally delimited territory where there exists a widespread and legitimised legal apparatus, a mixed parliamentary political system with its institutions, the presence of a fully centralised army and a developed capitalist economy, where the primary dynamic of social activity is the endless accumulation of capital.<sup>21</sup> The legal protection for English civilians, even with respect to the king's powers, which had already developed in the 13th century with the Magna Carta of 1212, found its fulfilment first in the Petition of Rights of 1628 and then in the Bill of Rights of 1689; the parliamentary political system, already at odds with the crown in the 1640s,<sup>22</sup> found its affirmation after 1688; the centralised army owes its existence to the experience of the New model army that fought, under the parliamentary banner, during the English revival of the 1640s; the capitalist economy, finally, as K. Polanyi in his book *The Great Transformation* stated,<sup>23</sup> owes its existence to the growth of the gentry in England and its consequent seizure of political power, which was indispensable for it to take a more active role in market regulation.<sup>24</sup>

The process of state formation is nothing other than that of the progressive concentration of power, cultural, juridical, economic, and political, in the hands of a single actor, capable of making its role as guarantor of order indispensable in a society that is strongly interconnected within itself. Naturally, this process was triggered by various historical causes,<sup>25</sup> which we will attempt to distinguish in terms of importance. We shall speak of primary and secondary causes, by the former we mean those fundamental to the triggering of the process of state formation, and by the latter those which, though influential, do not explain the evolution of the process on their own, and which are often dependent on the primary causes. In the first case we speak of phenomena such as the centralization of military power, monetarization, and the development of institutions; in the second case of the relationship between church and state, the development of a modern culture, the relationships between social classes, and the

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<sup>21</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The end of the world as we know it: Social science for the twenty-first century* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1999), 57.

<sup>22</sup> We could identify the English Revolution of 1642-51 as the first example of a modern revolution. In contrast to the coup d'état, assisted by a Dutch invasion, which is usually called the Glorious Revolution. Cfr. Christopher Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967).

<sup>23</sup> Karl Polanyi, *La grande trasformazione* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1974).

<sup>24</sup> Another text, no less important than K. Polanyi's, for understanding the economic course of seventeenth-century Europe and the birth of the 'modern system of the world economy' is Immanuel Wallerstein, *The modern world-system II: Mercantilism and the consolidation of the European world-economy, 1600-1750* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> For the debate on the possibility of using the concept of 'historical cause' we refer to specific essays. Cfr. Bloch, *Apologia della storia o mestiere di storico*.

demographic and economic changings. There is, however, no sharp break between the two types of causes, but their interdependence, linked to the most important events that marked those centuries,<sup>26</sup> is what allowed the development of so many different political systems, albeit influenced by very similar processes.

### 1.1.1 Primary causes

There are three, not listed in order of importance, that we identify as primary causes: the centralisation of military power, monetarisation, and the development of state institutions. The military aspect plays an inescapable role in this process, being the cause, as so often in history, of a strong acceleration towards the centralisation of power. War, in addition to its impact on demography, produced a great deal of technological innovation, economic crises, new institutions, and territorial losses or conquests. As Kojève writes, “The historical process which formerly replaced feudal entities with national States [...], can and must be explained by economic causes, which manifest themselves politically in and through the requirements of military technology”.<sup>27</sup> Before the XIV century, in the fragmented feudal realities of medieval Europe, various local lords held military authority within their territories. Only when the need for defence and stability grew, some lords successfully united militarily through the intervention of kings and emperors, the only people capable of leading large armies and securing substantial compensation in lands. It was the Hundred Years’ War, fought from 1337 to 1453, that marked the decisive push towards collaboration in the military field, with all that this entailed. The rivals, the leaders of England and France, were no longer local lords bound to defend a limited portion of their territory, but were great lords, allied with each other under the leadership of a king, determined to defend what they considered, due to the increasing degree of interdependence, their common territorial entity. The great need for men and resources, due to costly improvements in military equipment and the decline of the *heribannum*,<sup>28</sup> led to a sharp increase in taxation and indebtedness of the state, while strengthening the role of financial institutions, which, already by the mid-15th century, in France, formed a central taxation system, where bailiffs, i.e., royal officials had the important role of collecting taxes and administering justice. Moreover, the war led to the formation, first in England with the regular troops of ‘archers’ and ‘men-at-arms’ and then in France with the

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<sup>26</sup> Including the Black Death and the Hundred Years’ War.

<sup>27</sup> Alexandre Kojève, ‘Outline of a doctrine of French policy.’ *Policy Review* 126 (2004): 3.

<sup>28</sup> In France, the call to arms of the possessed subjects.

*compagnie d'ordonnance*, of two standing armies. The construction of a standing army first of all changed the way war was waged, and radically altered the social composition of society: chivalry, i.e. the nobility, was decimated and lost its military dominance to the infantry, while battles, such as those of Poitiers (1356) and Azincourt (1415), became bloodier.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, it guaranteed the king a monopoly of coercive power, which sanctioned his undisputed victory in the struggle for hegemony in a territory that was about to become national. On the formation of national culture, however, in addition to the role of war, the royal policies aimed at this purpose were crucial.<sup>30</sup> The process of military centralisation did not end with the Hundred Years War, but continued until the decisive developments of the late 17th century. In France, where King Charles VII had established the *compagnie d'ordonnance* between 1439 and 1445, a professionalisation of the troops was observed in the following centuries, until 1661, when, under the reign of Louis XIV, was created the 'Grand État-Major', a central body responsible for the planning and management of the army. In England, the centralised and permanent army began to take shape during the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509). After the War of the Roses, which had destabilised the kingdom, Henry VII sought to consolidate monarchical power and strengthen the army. In 1485, he founded the 'Yeomen of the Guard', a permanent royal guard composed of professional soldiers, and in 1487 he established the 'Council Learned in the Law' to oversee military administration. Later, during the reign of Henry VIII, the English army continued to develop and be centralised.<sup>31</sup> A further turning point came in the 17th century, when the New Model Army was created during the English Revolution of the 1640s, a well-paid and strongly ideologised army that also provided an efficient model for Restoration England.<sup>32</sup> A national army, composed of professional soldiers directly paid by the state apparatus, was the result of this long process.

The monetarisation process, another primary cause, brought about important transformations in the social field and facilitated the development of new institutions. The introduction and spread of money as a medium of exchange, due to the lengthening of production chains and war,<sup>33</sup> enabled economic transactions to become more efficient and

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<sup>29</sup> Some authors have estimated the loss of about 40% of the French cavalry in the first battle, and about 70% in the second. Jacques Dupâquier, *Histoire de la population française*, vol. 1 (Parigi: PUF, 1995), 367.

<sup>30</sup> René Grotenhuis, *Nation-building as necessary effort in fragile States* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 79.

<sup>31</sup> Cfr. Adrian R. Bell, et al, *The soldier in later medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Cfr. H.C.B. Rogers, *Battles and generals of the civil wars 1642-1651*, (London: Seeley Service & co., 1968).

<sup>33</sup> Michael J. Braddick, *State formation in early modern England, c. 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 177-281.

complex. This shift from a barter-based economy to a monetary system contributed to the growth of markets and trade and, consequently, marked the development of city-states and the first forms of modern finance, from the 13th century onwards.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, because of this process, the phenomenon of urbanization became unstoppable throughout the continent. By contrast, the feudal nobility, which based its wealth on landed estates, was severely weakened by the reintroduction of money.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the kings found themselves more and more economically stable, thanks to the introduction of new and modern taxes, but at the same time less independent in their political choices, which were due to the lack of efficiency of the tax and financial system. The bankers, and no longer the landed gentry, became the largest creditors of state expenditure, especially due to the numerous war campaigns, that led the sovereigns, at the expense of their financial credibility, to declare numerous bankruptcies.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the role of finance, public and non-public, grew in importance until it became an indispensable source of income for seventeenth-century states. In Holland, it marked the success of its economic system,<sup>37</sup> while, first in Sweden in 1668 and then in England in 1694, it led to the creation of the first two central banks of the modern era.<sup>38</sup> The bourgeois strata, especially those involved in finance and trade, benefited greatly from this situation, and became increasingly influential politically.<sup>39</sup> New institutions were financed thanks to the new monetary revenues in the pockets of European rulers, which made it possible to hire new royal officials and create a modern bureaucratic apparatus.

Precisely the development of institutions was a crucial aspect of state formation. In a feudal system, where the administration of the various territories was in the hands of local lords, there was no need to create permanent institutions: accounting, justice, finance, everything was the property of the feudal lord, and was managed as such. As the power of kings and central authorities increased, stable institutions were needed to govern and administer the territories. These institutions encompassed various aspects, including financial and judicial

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<sup>34</sup> We refer to the innovations introduced by Florentine bankers as early as the 12th century. Giovanni Arrighi, *Il lungo ventesimo secolo. Denaro, potere e le origini del nostro tempo* (Milano: il Saggiatore, 2014), 143-159. Cfr. Carlo M. Cipolla, *Storia dell'economica dell'Europa preindustriale* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1974).

<sup>35</sup> Norbert Elias, *Potere e Civiltà*, 13.

<sup>36</sup> During the reign of Philip II, Spain declared four bankruptcies: 1657, 1560, 1575, 1596.

<sup>37</sup> Wallerstein, *The modern world-system II: Mercantilism and the consolidation of the European world-economy, 1600–1750*, 51-107.

<sup>38</sup> Sveriges Riksbank and Bank of England

<sup>39</sup> Michael Kwass, 'A Kingdom of Taxpayers: State Formation, Privilege, and Political Culture in Eighteenth-Century France.' *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 2 (1998): 295–339. <https://doi.org/10.1086/235070>.

functions. Accounting, hence financial income, was the first problem of sovereigns, indispensable for waging war and administering vast territories:

The first permanent functionaries were estate-managers—the reeves and shire-reeves (sheriffs) of England, the *prévôts* of France, the ministerials of Germany. They centralized the scattered revenues of their territories and made them available to their masters. In doing this, they had to keep some sort of records and subject themselves to some sort of accounting.<sup>40</sup>

The legal apparatus, through the creation of courts, played another significant role in defining the nature of the modern state. While in the beginning, before the 11th century, the justice system was mainly considered a source of income, in the following centuries it became an important source of legitimisation of royal power.<sup>41</sup> The king's authority, through his courts and attempts to regulate the judicial system, assumed an essential role in settling legal disputes. The importance of justice is given in those centuries by its pervasiveness: "European law was not merely criminal law, as was that of many other regions; it regulated family and business relationships, and the possession and the use of property".<sup>42</sup> In France, even the ordinances struggled to standardise the system,<sup>43</sup> the authority of royal justice was affirmed with the establishment of provincial parliaments, and only the 17th-century codes,<sup>44</sup> although not in the same way as the Napoleonic code, helped to organise all existing laws. In England, royal courts were established as early as the 12th century, such as the King's Bench, the 'Court of Common Pleas', the 'Court of Exchequer' and the 'Court of Star Chamber', and the 'Court of Chancery' founded on the principles of Equity. The modernity of the English legal system compared to its continental neighbours, apart from its greater efficiency and spread throughout the land, was given by its ability to regulate itself, remaining partly independent of the king. In fact, the legal protections for individuals, such as the *Magna Carta* in England in the 13th century, laid the foundation for limiting the powers of the monarchy and establishing the rule of law. Over time, legal frameworks evolved to safeguard the rights and liberties of citizens, balancing the authority of the state with the protection of individual freedoms. Documents like the *Petition of Rights* (1628) and the *Bill of Rights* (1689) in England exemplified the development of legal

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph R. Strayer, *On the medieval origins of the modern state*, 28.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> During the Middle Ages, French kings issued a series of ordinances (*ordonnances*) to establish rules and laws at a national level. For example, the Ordinance of Saint Louis (1254) was a collection of laws that provided a basis for the administration of justice in France.

<sup>44</sup> *Code Michau* (1629) and *Code Louis* (1667). Cfr. Alexis De Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution: The Complete Text*. Vol. 1. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

protections within the context of the modern state. The creation of new institutions also developed a modern bureaucratic apparatus for the first time. Especially in France, the buying and selling of offices, used by the sovereign to reward the nobility and bourgeoisie, went hand in hand with the granting of land, leading to similar problems of political instability.<sup>45</sup> Slowly, thanks also to the technical role that officials played,<sup>46</sup> a new social class of employees loyal to the crown was formed, committed to standardising the interpretation and application of royal laws throughout the territory. The institutions, born out of the necessities of the process of political centralisation, became the self-validating backbone of the state structure.

These primary causes interacted and influenced one another, contributing to the transformation of fragmented feudal societies into centralized political entities. However, it is important to note that these causes alone do not provide a comprehensive explanation of the process. Secondary causes, such as the relationship between state and church, the development of modern culture, changing social class dynamics, and demographic factors, also played significant roles in shaping the evolution of the state formation process.

### 1.1.2 Secondary causes

Secondary causes played a crucial role in shaping the evolution of the state formation process alongside the primary causes discussed earlier. These secondary causes were often interdependent and influenced by the primary factors, contributing to the complex nature of political transformations in medieval and early modern Europe. An example can be found in the relationship between church and state. The high point in the history of their relationship can be easily traced back to the Gregorian reform of the 11th century and the ensuing investiture struggle.<sup>47</sup> Starting with the pontificate of Gregory VII, the Vatican Church began to successfully claim stronger temporal power, challenging the authority of the imperial power in religious matters.<sup>48</sup> The Vatican Church, however, while asserting its temporal power over a

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<sup>45</sup> Offices often became hereditary, creating many problems for the exercise of royal authority. Norbert Elias. *Potere e civiltà*, 22-41.

<sup>46</sup> Wolfram Fischer, and Peter Lundgreen, 'The Recruitment and Training of Administrative and Technical Personnel', *The formation of national states in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>47</sup> The European sovereigns, in particular the Holy Roman Emperor, claimed the right to appoint and invest bishops and abbots, while the Church claimed the right to appoint them with papal approval. This struggle ended in 1122 with the Concordat of Worms, which sanctioned a compromise solution between pope and emperor.

<sup>48</sup> Cfr. Giovanni Miccoli, and Andrea Tilatti, *Chiesa gregoriana: ricerche sulla riforma del secolo XI*, Vol. 6000 (Roma: Herder, 1999).



vast territory, failed to curb the disintegrating thrust of religious politics in Europe. First, its authority was weakened during the Avignon Captivity (1309-1377) and the Western Schism (1378-1417), then, the Protestant Reformation marked the end of Roman hegemony in the religious field in most European territories.<sup>49</sup> This conflict, in addition to irreparably separating the two institutions, weakened the authority of European sovereigns, who were increasingly forced to base their legitimacy “primarily as a guarantor and a distributor of justice”.<sup>50</sup> This fundamental aspect is made evident by the slow decay of beliefs related to the healing powers of sovereigns. The thaumaturgical powers of sovereigns, of which the best known was the touch of the scrofula,<sup>51</sup> began to be practised less and less, according to Bloch, for two main reasons: “the definitive disappearance of the touch had as its immediate cause, first in England, then in France, political revolutions: but these contingencies acted effectively only because faith in the supernatural character of kingship had been profoundly shaken, almost without warning, in the souls of at least some of the two peoples”; furthermore, “the decadence of the royal miracle is closely linked to that effort of the spirits, at least in the elite, aimed at eliminating the supernatural and the arbitrary from the order of the world, and at the same time at conceiving political institutions under a purely rational aspect”.<sup>52</sup> Proof of this is the fact that the scrofula touch was last practised in England by Queen Anne in 1714, a few decades after the Glorious Revolution, and in France at the dawn of the French Revolution.<sup>53</sup> To summarise, from the 12th century onwards, the union between church and state began to falter and the sovereign power had to look for new sources of legitimacy, diminishing more and more, in a long non-rational process,<sup>54</sup> the links of religious power with the political sphere. This process culminates in the 17th century, especially in England, with the strong development of a modern scientific culture.

Another secondary cause that affected state formation was the development of modern culture and education. The emergence of universities in the 12th century, in cities as Bologna, Paris, and Oxford, led to a flourishing of knowledge and intellectual exchange. As education became more widespread, a more educated class of individuals emerged, questioning established authority, and demanding greater participation in governance. The new institutions began to be managed by this new class, essentially formed by law students, who began to explore new ideas and engage in critical thinking, challenging traditional norms and beliefs. It

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<sup>49</sup> Holy Roman Empire and England above all.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph R. Strayer, *On the medieval origins of the modern state*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> Cfr. March Bloch, *I re taumaturghi*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1989).

<sup>52</sup> My translation. Ibid, 297, 300.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 303, 310.

<sup>54</sup> Not directed by some historical figure but a child of the structural dynamics of society.

was the study of Roman and common law that allowed the development of concepts such as public welfare, general taxation, or the idea of the state, still referred to as *respublica* or commonwealth. The development of the secular culture of state administration and politics accelerated in Italy during the Renaissance, with the spread of humanist values, which emphasised the individual and the development of the arts and sciences, and the parallel criticism of the ecclesiastical institution and its abuses of power. In the field of politics, the greatest modern scholar was Machiavelli, who with his *The Prince, De Principatibus*, written in 1513 but only published posthumously in 1532, revolutionised the way of approaching the art of politics. This process accelerated further in the 17th century, thanks also to the contribution of philosophers, scientists, and strange as it may seem, religious preachers. In England, in fact, it was the Protestant preachers who, before and during the English Revolution, contributed to the emergence of a critique of the traditional concept of divine right, and of the autocratic management of power by sovereigns.<sup>55</sup> As for philosophers and scientists, we could name many more, but the best-known names are Hobbes,<sup>56</sup> Descartes, Spinoza, and Locke for philosophers; Bacon, Galilei, and Newton for scientists. The pluralistic culture of tolerance, the rationalisation of state administration, the scientific method, and the dimensioning of religious interests in politics and science, are the main themes that these scholars, in the late 16th and early 18th centuries, addressed in their writings. In addition, the national cultures of European states began to take shape in this period. National cultures arose spontaneously because of state formation, and at the same time contributed to its legitimisation. Indeed, the centralisation of power in the hands of sovereigns led to the standardisation of living practices within their territories. The development of common rules of law, a national class of civil servants, an army increasingly engaged in long wars, a politically active bourgeoisie, and a common language, first among the bureaucracy and later in vernacular literature,<sup>57</sup> slowly spread an early form of national consciousness, encouraged by European rulers for purposes of legitimisation and administration. The development of nations has been one of the strongest unifying forces of the modern state, but also one of its great limitations in terms of expansion.

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<sup>55</sup> The subject is amply developed in Michael Walzer, *La rivoluzione dei santi: il puritanesimo alle origini del radicalismo politico* (Torino: Claudiana, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> The *Leviathan*, written in 1651, was undoubtedly the most important treatise on political philosophy of the entire modern age. In the text, the need to centralise political power in the hands of an absolute ruler is justified. The context in which *Leviathan* was born is that of the English Revolution, but the ideas it proposes can be generalised to the model of the early modern states in England and France, linked to the need to maintain unity in a highly dynamic society in a context of capitalist accumulation. Cfr. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviatano* (Milano: BUR, 2011).

<sup>57</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The construction of nationhood: Ethnicity, religion and nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2-3.

The inability of the state to encompass new territories, as demonstrated by the two world wars and the process of decolonisation, marked a moment of crisis for these institutions, unable to adapt to the new challenges of complexity.

Changing social class dynamics were another influential secondary cause in the process of state formation. The way classes were stratified in the various European kingdoms influenced the development of different political systems. Feudal societies were characterized by a rigid social hierarchy, with power concentrated in the hands of a fragmented nobility. However, as economic activities shifted from agrarian-based systems to commercial and urban centres, new opportunities arose for the merchant class. The growth of trade and commerce expanded the economic power of the bourgeoisie, who sought to secure their interests and influence political decisions. This led to a shift in power dynamics, with monarchs increasingly relying on the support of the bourgeoisie and other emerging classes to consolidate their authority. But it is the balance between the bourgeoisie, the clergy, the lay landlords, and the king and his officials that contributes to the construction, and the variety of forms, of the modern state. These elites,<sup>58</sup> in their quest for political dominance, formed, according to R. Lachmann, two different types of absolutism:

Horizontal absolutism [England] is distinguished by the crown's ability to subordinate its two principal rivals at the national level great nobles, referred to by historians and in this article as magnates, who fielded their own independent armed forces and subordinated lesser landlords, and clerics organized into a national church. Thus, horizontal absolutism exists where the crown exercised a monopoly over armed force and dominated the national church'; 'The second form of absolutism resulted from monarchs' inability to eliminate rival magnates or to dominate the national church. As a second-best strategy, rulers formed direct ties to locally based officials and corporate bodies, hence the term vertical absolutism [France].<sup>59</sup>

It was Henry VIII's reform that enabled the English crown, through the resources it obtained, to limit the power of local magnates and gain control of parliament. The weakness of the landed aristocracy and the clergy ensured the development of the gentry,<sup>60</sup> made up of the remaining landlords and new families, who were to become large landowners by the end of the 16th century. In France, on the other hand, the lack of funds forced the king to create an increasing number of venal officials, maintaining 'absolute' control over the actions of local lords. These

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<sup>58</sup> Richard Lachmann, 'Elite Conflict and State Formation in 16th- and 17th-Century England and France.' *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 2 (1989): 147. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095787>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 145-146.

<sup>60</sup> Small rural nobility. Cfr. Giampaolo Garavaglia, *Società e rivoluzione in Inghilterra 1640-1689* (Torino: Loescher, 1978).

differences marked the development trajectory of the various European countries and, in the English case, the formation of the early modern state, a separate political apparatus separated from royal power, but at the same time dependent on the social groups that controlled production.

It is difficult to discuss the birth of the modern state without considering demographic and economic variables in the equation. One crucial demographic change that influenced state formation was the growth of population in Europe.<sup>61</sup> The continent experienced a significant increase in population from the 12th century onwards, after a long period of instability and migration. Factors such as improved agricultural practices, technological advancements, and the cessation of major invasions contributed to this population growth. The rise in population led to increased pressure on resources and land, resulting in conflicts over territorial control. As rulers sought to expand their territories to accommodate the growing population, wars and territorial disputes became more frequent, and so the demand for protection. During this period, again due to the increase in population, and especially in the 13th and 14th centuries, there was a parallel urbanisation associated with the development of European municipalities and trading centres. The lengthening of supply chains also produced the phenomenon of monetarisation. The economic changes during this period, in fact, were closely linked to demographic shifts and technological advancements. Proof of this can be seen in the events of the 14th century. Due to the plague in the mid-14th century, in fact, almost a third of the European population disappeared, also causing a severe economic crisis. By the middle of the 14th century, however, both Europe's economy and demography returned to growth. With fewer peasants available to work the lands of the feudal lords, many workers began to demand better working conditions and pay. This caused an improvement in the population's standard of living and led to a push toward innovation in agricultural techniques and in the commercial sector.<sup>62</sup> The economic upswing lasted well into the 15th and 16th centuries, with the growth of maritime powers (Italian maritime republics and the Hanseatic League), and the development of new trade routes with the rest of the world.<sup>63</sup> During the 17th century, war, with the resulting epidemics and famine, slowed down demographic growth in much of the continent. Meanwhile, the economy experienced a period of maximum development in Holland and in England. The 17th century

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<sup>61</sup> For the analysis, quantitative and otherwise, of demographic change in Europe, we mainly rely on Massimo Livi Bacci, *Population and nutrition: An essay on European demographic history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>62</sup> Andrea Zorzi, *Manuale di storia medioevale*. (Torino: Utet, 2021), 326-37.

<sup>63</sup> We refer to the routes to the Indies and the exploitation of the new continent.

is the period of maximum acceleration of capitalist accumulation, i.e., of great concentrations of private fortunes, created thanks to the protective action of states. Finally, the great exploitation of the land, improvements in navigation techniques, and in financial systems, helped to strengthen state institutions and transform them into bodies capable of protecting and developing the national economy.<sup>64</sup>

In conclusion, the process of state formation in medieval Europe was a complex interplay of primary and secondary causes. While primary causes such as the centralization of military power, monetarization, and the development of institutions were foundational in shaping the evolution of centralized states, secondary causes like the relationship between state and church, the development of modern culture, changing social class dynamics, and demographic and economic factors also played significant roles. Understanding these multifaceted causes helps shed light on the non-linear nature of the historical processes that led to the formation of modern political systems in Europe.

## 1.2 The end of the nation-state

The process of state formation described in the previous chapter did not actually end in the 17th century. But in that century, in England, all the characteristics that form the modern state come into play: a politically and culturally delimited territory where there exists a widespread and legitimised legal apparatus, a mixed parliamentary political system with its institutions, the presence of a fully centralised army and a developed capitalist economy, where the primary dynamic of social activity is the endless accumulation of capital. Their development, however, continued in Europe in the following centuries until the crisis of the 20th century, marked by the outbreak of the two world wars. Until then, state institutions continued to strengthen due to the processes described above and the action of rulers: “The concern of rulers had been to strengthen the state in two ways: to strengthen its authority—that is, its capacity to make efficacious decisions within its frontiers; and to strengthen its world power—that is, its capacity to impose its will on other states and diminish their possibility of doing the converse”.<sup>65</sup> This

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<sup>64</sup> Cfr. Wallerstein, *The modern world-system II: Mercantilism and the consolidation of the European world-economy, 1600–1750*, 51-107.

<sup>65</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The modern world-system IV: Centrist liberalism triumphant, 1789–1914*. (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2011), 22.

dual dynamic, internal and external, is useful to explain two fundamental changes that occurred in the modern state between the 18th and 19th centuries.

The first change concerns the subject holding decision-making power in the political sphere, the 'Ruler'. If until the French Revolution the sovereign was the absolute holder of political power in European states,<sup>66</sup> after 1789 this hegemony was called into question.<sup>67</sup> One part of the bourgeois class, itself part of what was called the third state,<sup>68</sup> was able, thanks to the revolution, to secure for itself the largest slice of decision-making power. On the other hand, while the clergy and the nobility, the first and second 'state', had seen their influence decline due to the development of the modern economy and the spread of Enlightenment ideas,<sup>69</sup> the sovereigns lost their traditional role as mediators between these different classes and had to yield to the growing influence of the bourgeoisie. The total hegemony of this class, however, only materialised with the creation of the liberal state. This new state, formed in advance in France and England at the beginning of the 19th century, represented more strongly the interests of the capitalist groups that dominated the economy at the time, blurring the boundary between the economic and political spheres, and turning the government apparatuses into "a committee, which administers the common affairs of the bourgeois class as a whole".<sup>70</sup> In parallel, the liberal ideology, which arose in close opposition to the conservative and socialist ideology,<sup>71</sup> and developed in the first half of the 19th century,<sup>72</sup> claimed the need to introduce forms of democracy into the political process, following the French example of the Declaration of Rights of 1789 and the French Constitution of 1791.<sup>73</sup> The democratic thrust, however, was only directed towards the extension of suffrage,<sup>74</sup> and did not involve a real upheaval of decision-making power, not least because of the common association between the revolutionary period

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<sup>66</sup> A partial exception, as repeatedly pointed out, is the English case, where, however, even in the late 18th century, the king had enormous decision-making power in the political sphere. He could, among other things, appoint ministers at will.

<sup>67</sup> When we write 'after 1789', we do not mean the years immediately following, but the period, lasting almost until the end of the 19th century, in which the changes produced by the revolution settled into society.

<sup>68</sup> That contained peasants, artisans, bourgeois, merchants, and professionals.

<sup>69</sup> Among others, it is worth mentioning Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Adam Smith.

<sup>70</sup> My translation. Friedrich Engels, and Karl Marx, *Manifesto del partito comunista* (Bari: Laterza, 2016), 65. Radical as it may seem, this statement sums up the essential characteristic of the modern state, namely that of existing in symbiosis with a free market economy.

<sup>71</sup> By the latter we mean all the groups of radicals, democrats, and revolutionaries who wanted to accelerate the process of change set in motion by the French Revolution. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The modern world-system IV: Centrist liberalism triumphant, 1789–1914*, 1-77.

<sup>72</sup> Among the most important thinkers, one must mention Guizot and Bentham.

<sup>73</sup> Massimo L. Salvadori, *Storia di un'idea tra mito e realtà* (Roma: Donzelli, 2016), 145-173.

<sup>74</sup> Still during the 19th century extremely limited and only became, with much effort, universal during the 20th century.

of terror and democracy.<sup>75</sup> The liberal ideology, founded on individualism, rule of law, limitation of government action, and free market, served as a source of legitimisation for the new European ruling class, which began to transform state institutions to make them more efficient in defending the economic structure. The public bureaucracy was enlarged, in contrast to the concept of the minimal state in liberal theory, and the instruments with which the state could intervene in the economy were refined. The main instruments, identified by Wallerstein,<sup>76</sup> were three. The foremost approach involved legal limitations, granting states the power to either ban or authorize monopolies. Among the frequently adopted tactics were restrictions on imports and exports, and even more crucially, the enforcement of patents. Another instrument the state had at its disposal was the assumption of part of the entrepreneur's costs. The construction of infrastructures was a clear example of this mechanism. Moreover, there was the use of their enormous purchasing power to monopolise certain sectors, and guarantee the existence of monopolies. Finally, there was the ability of states to intervene in the international context, through war or diplomacy, favouring their national economic interests. The action of the state, concentrated on protecting the big capitalists, and thus the monopolies, was instead directed against the poorer classes. The Peterloo massacre of 16 August 1819 in Manchester was the highest example of the repression of the working classes in England. Manchester was also the centre of Manchester Liberalism, which contributed to the development of the concepts of free trade and *laissez-faire*. This further centralisation of central power in the hands of the capitalist class, despite the search for popular legitimisation through weak democratic instruments, is what characterised the birth of the liberal state.

The second change that affected the modern state in the 18th and 19th centuries was the expansion of inter-state conflict to the entire globe, partly due to the strengthening of colonial empires. This expansion was linked to three closely interrelated phenomena that had their origin in the centuries discussed in the previous chapter: economic globalisation, the building of colonial empires, and the emergence of an interstate regime. Economic globalisation, parallel to the late medieval monetarisation process, has its origin in the experience of Italian cities such as Genoa, Venice, and Florence. In these cities, the control of government, more or

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<sup>75</sup> 'In the name of this experience, men like Louis Guizot or Benjamin Constant refused the extension of political rights to the needy classes', Immanuel Wallerstein, *The modern world-system IV: Centrist liberalism triumphant, 1789–1914*, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The end of the world as we know it: Social science for the twenty-first century*, 57-76.

less indirectly,<sup>77</sup> by particularly active merchant aristocracies, produced two phenomena essential to the scaling up of the economy: the affirmation of the financial system as the fundamental engine of the economy, and the increasing focus on the control of trade routes. The lengthening of production chains and the expansion of trade, phenomena common to all modern Europe, allowed these expansive dynamics to take hold.<sup>78</sup> The birth of colonial empires, first in Portugal and Spain, then in Holland, France and England, was dictated by the need to protect and expand the trade routes of the various states. The colonies, initially seen as outposts of trade routes and reservoirs of raw materials, began, from the end of the 17th century,<sup>79</sup> to become more complexly integrated into the world economy.<sup>80</sup> The control of non-European territories became a way to give vent to the expansionist needs of European states, which were increasingly unable to expand across the continent. European territorial wars, in fact, were costly and did not encourage the development of free trade. It was the birth of an inter-state regime that allowed the resolution of the contrast between commercial and territorial expansion.<sup>81</sup> The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 marked the birth of this regime, enshrining the concept of state sovereignty and guaranteeing an early form of balance of power. The treaties that followed also established the need to maintain trade flows even in times of war. This system underwent great development until the Congress of Vienna, which represents the most important attempt to stabilise the traditional order, in an era of socio-economic and political change, before the outbreak of the First World War. Despite the attempt to redefine the balance of power in Europe, economic globalisation, coupled with the expansion of colonial empires, grew exponentially during the 19th century, partly due to the industrial revolution that had begun in England as early as the 18th century, and increased the scale of conflicts between European powers. European states, at that time, competed for hegemony over the world economy, and their material interests depended largely on what was produced outside their national territory.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the modern state system entered a crisis.<sup>82</sup> By crisis we mean a point of rupture that marks the transition between two *long durée* periods; it

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<sup>77</sup> In the case of Genoa, for example, the merchant class had to ally itself with the more powerful landed aristocracy devoted to trade. Giovanni Arrighi, *Il lungo ventesimo secolo. Denaro, potere e le origini del nostro tempo*, 160-179.

<sup>78</sup> Fernand Braudel, *La dinamica del capitalismo* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1988).

<sup>79</sup> Wallerstein, *The modern world-system II: Mercantilism and the consolidation of the European world-economy, 1600–1750*, 189-263.

<sup>80</sup> We have taken the term used by Braudel. Cfr. Fernand Braudel, *La dinamica del capitalismo*.

<sup>81</sup> Giovanni Arrighi, *Il lungo ventesimo secolo. Denaro, potere e le origini del nostro tempo*, 69-81.

<sup>82</sup> We are referring to the experience of European states.



is a moment of profound transformation in which the economic, political and social foundations of the world-system are called into question and, when the system's adjustment mechanisms fail, can lead to a profound redefinition of power structures.<sup>83</sup> The crisis of the state, in which we are still immersed, became evident with the outbreak of the two world wars, and is characterised by the ambition of European states to expand outside their national borders. The impossibility of this, arose from the inadequacy of European political systems in comparison with the international context, the entry of new and larger non-European players, and their national character. The colonial empires that clashed during the two world wars, in fact, had a pronounced national character, and political decision-making did not pass under the scrutiny of the colonies. This centre-periphery dependency mechanism reached its peak in the mid-20th century, and slowly disintegrated during the period of decolonisation.<sup>84</sup> The control of political power also became increasingly dependent on new forms of popular legitimisation, as on the intermediary bodies, often strongly ideologised, representing the interests of large masses of people. The formation of new social groups with increasingly internationally oriented economic interests caused a ripple in the power system of the nation-states, which began to struggle to defend their economic power outside their borders. The cost of maintaining large empires became increasingly burdensome, not least because of the enormous wartime development experienced in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. In summary, all the elements of the crisis of the modern state were present before 1914. If externally the European states had difficulty maintaining their hegemony, internally they had to contend with continuous political instability. On the one hand the war, on the other the growth of authoritarian movements and the fall of liberalism.<sup>85</sup>

Before getting to the analysis of the root causes that led to the crisis of the modern state, and the comparison with the previous crisis of the feudal state, we will discuss the main characteristic of the contemporary crisis, to distinguish it from its predecessor. We will refer to the numerical, i.e., demographic, technological, and temporal characteristic. The demographic aspect has played a fundamental role during the 20th century, acting as an exponential multiplier of the number of changes occurring in society. The speed of population growth soared unprecedentedly, in Europe as in the world, during the 20th century. As shown in the

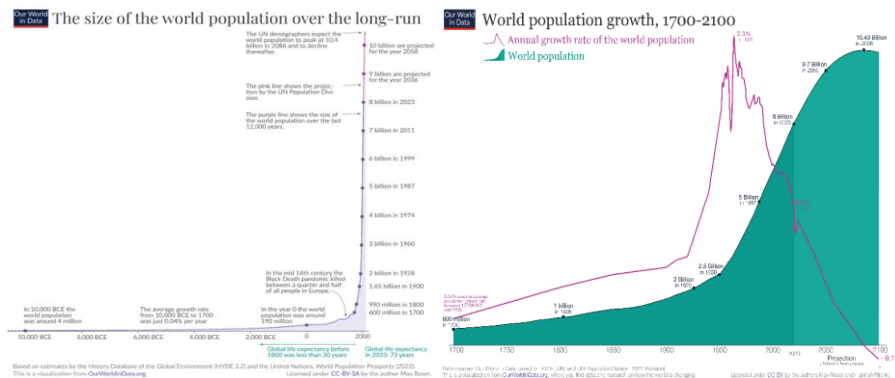
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<sup>83</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The politics of the world-economy: The states, the movements and the civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 52.

<sup>84</sup> Cfr. Eric John Hobsbawn, *Il secolo breve* (Milano: Bur, 2018), 239-67.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 135-73.

figures (1-2)<sup>86</sup>, according to UN estimates, the world’s population hit one billion in 1805, marking the initial milestone. Subsequently, it took 120 more years to reach two billion by 1925. The journey to three billion in 1960 required a mere 30 years. Following this, the global population reached four billion in 1974 after 14 years, five billion in 1987 after 13 years, six billion in 1999 after 12 years, seven billion after 11 years, and eight billion after 12 years in 2023. In not even seventy years, the world population has tripled from 2.5 million in 1950 to 7.5 million in 2016.



Figures 1-2. The size of the word population in the long run, and the word population growth, 1700-2100

This growth has been fuelled by enormous technological development, another important aspect of this historical phase, which has allowed life expectancy to increase and mortality to decrease, resulting in a population increase. Moreover, the industrial revolution, fuelled by the modern economic system,<sup>87</sup> was in turn influenced by the demographic surge that caused a cycle of economic expansion that lasted at least, in the European case, until the 1970s. Indeed, population growth was an unprecedented opportunity for national economies, international development cooperation, and intercultural exchange; but also, the cause of new problems, such as ecology, lack of agricultural resources, and increasing social inequalities. The different growth rates between states and geographical regions (figure 3)<sup>88</sup> have also led to the need to adapt to a changing world. Such a strong interconnection between the countries of the world has made politics more complex, creating a series of dynamics that are difficult to predict and regulate.

<sup>86</sup> Hannah Ritchie, et al., “Population Growth”, *ourworldindata.org*, 2023, <https://ourworldindata.org/population-growth>.

<sup>87</sup> We define ‘system of the modern economy’ as an economic system founded on the union of science, technology, and capital.

<sup>88</sup> Hannah Ritchie, et al., “Population Growth”, *ourworldindata.org*, 2023, <https://ourworldindata.org/population-growth>.

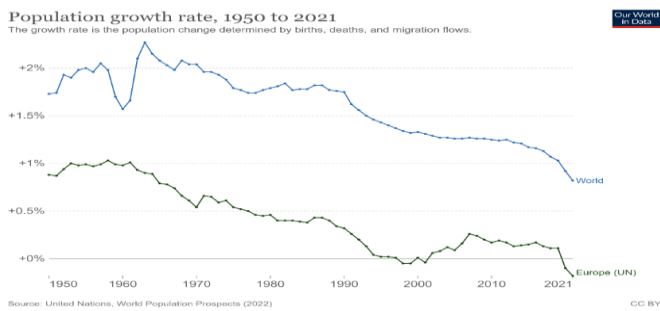


Figure 3. Population growth rate, 1950 to 2021

The third aspect, a direct consequence of the dynamics just described, is the temporal one. Never, in history, so many changes occurred in human societies as in the last 150 years. If the crisis of feudal society continued for centuries in a slow and laboured process of adaptation, despite the accelerations of the 14th and 17th centuries, the crisis of the modern state is likely to be much shorter-lived. The internal and external pressures affecting modern states, especially in a highly fragmented reality such as Europe, induce them to renew themselves as quickly as possible. Political structures, this is the challenge of contemporary times, will have to keep up with all the other social dynamics: economic, financial, technological, anthropological, and cultural.

### 1.2.1 Causes of the Decline of Modern States

Despite the peculiarities of the transitional phase we are currently experiencing, there are long-term dynamics comparable with those that occurred in the past. The main causes that we have identified in analysing the decline of feudal realities can also be identified in the current crisis: the military cause, the economic cause, and the institutional cause.<sup>89</sup> We will therefore analyse the most recent changes that have taken place in these areas, and their relation to the crisis of the modern state.

War, once again, is a decisive factor in the transition between historical epochs. It is a phenomenon capable of highlighting the weaknesses of social systems, and, in the case of a deep crisis of the latter, of forcing them to completely rethink their structure. Its evolution, in the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, can be divided into three main phases: the total war phase, the most decisive for the fate of the European continent, which mainly concerns the First and Second World Wars; the Cold War phase, from 1945 until the collapse of the Soviet Union;

<sup>89</sup> We will only partially deal with what we have previously termed 'secondary causes', to avoid an overly detailed reconstruction of a process that is still ongoing.

and the post-September 11 phase, which concerns the war on terrorism and the renewed conflict between the United States and Russia. The two world wars were decisive events in the decline of European states. These states, by 1914 defined as colonial empires, committed all their military, social, cultural, and economic power to emerge victorious in these conflicts.<sup>90</sup> The increasing need for material resources during times of war, also dictated by the introduction of new military technologies, forced states to strengthen their systems of taxation, industrial production, and social surveillance, also leading to the formation of the first welfare state systems during the First World War.<sup>91</sup> The cost of these wars, financially speaking, accelerated the transition to a historical era of US hegemony,<sup>92</sup> and highlighted the structural limits of the European system, where small states were forced to engage in protracted conflicts, on an international scale, and involving a large portion of their population. It was precisely the involvement of the masses in these conflicts that raised a crucial contradiction for European states: on the one hand, European states only cemented their national character in this period, when national sentiment and its concept spread among all strata of the population;<sup>93</sup> on the other hand, the existence of nations became a constraint that prevented real control of colonies, territorial expansion or, in more general terms, the formation of stable empires. Since 1945, the trauma of the two world wars and the birth of NATO have obscured European countries from active military policy. If the two world wars had materially destroyed the European states, increased their financial debt to the Atlantic ally, and caused a widespread cultural crisis across the continent, the US-led Atlantic alliance brought a clear end to European hegemony. Thus began the Cold War period, characterised by a clash for hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union, the introduction of new military technologies, and the deterrent of the atomic bomb. The evolution of the war industry, dictated by the arms race between the two superpowers, increasingly became a capital and technology-intensive sector. European states were further excluded from this game:

War had become an enterprise that required the complete commitment of a society—its entire economy drawing on the wealth of entire continents. Nations smaller than the United States or the Soviet Union were simply not large enough—not enough men, minerals, or factories—to field the

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<sup>90</sup> Hence the term 'Total War'. The term 'total war' was coined by German general Erich Ludendorff during the First World War. Eric John Hobsbawm, *Il secolo breve*, 33-71.

<sup>91</sup> Cfr. Giovanna Procacci, *Warfare-welfare. Intervento dello Stato e diritti dei cittadini (1914-18)* (Roma, Carocci, 2013).

<sup>92</sup> After the long phase of English hegemony, which began at least in the 18th century.

<sup>93</sup> Cfr. Antonio Gibelli *L'officina della guerra. La grande guerra e le trasformazioni del mondo mentale*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2007).

forces necessary to wage modern war. Indeed, modern warfare had become so vast and all-consuming that the mere act of feeding and fuelling troops had become not only overwhelming but frequently impossible, dwarfing the war-fighting capabilities of armies. The European military culture had become senile. It still functioned, but only at a ruinous cost to everything around it.<sup>94</sup>

Despite the end of the Total War era, the commitment to the war industry and the expansion of conflicts to the entire international context required a great deal of effort in terms of finance and, above all, in convincing public opinion. Conflicts, despite the introduction of advanced automated weapons,<sup>95</sup> became increasingly violent toward the civilian population: “In the wars fought in Europe during the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries between 70 and 80 per cent of the casualties were military”.<sup>96</sup> By contrast, since 1945, the majority of the approximately fifty million people killed in war have been civilians. The end of the Cold War, after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, marked the beginning of a period of almost absolute US hegemony, and the continued strategic dependence of the European continent. The 1990s also saw the advent of the so-called ‘information revolution’,<sup>97</sup> characterised by the use of new instruments of warfare related to the areas of digitisation, computers, and information technologies.<sup>98</sup> Already since that time, but especially after 2001, due to the US propagated war on terror, two dynamics unfavourable to European states became evident: the first is the total strategic dependence of Europe on US policy, of which the continued existence of the Atlantic alliance (NATO) is the greatest proof;<sup>99</sup> the second concerns the fact that US-sponsored wars have, more or less directly, damaged the interests of most European countries, as evidenced by the decades-long systematic political destabilisation in the Middle East. The

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<sup>94</sup> George Friedman, and Meredith Friedman, *The Future of War: Power, Technology and American World Dominance in the Twenty-first Century*, (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), 116.

<sup>95</sup> “At three points and times—Port Said in 1967, North Vietnam in 1972, and in the Sinai Desert in 1973—a new weapons culture showed itself. A new epoch was born. [...] Suddenly, inexpensive missiles carried by a small ship, a few planes, or by infantrymen proved themselves capable of shattering the behemoths of the reigning military culture. Giant warships, massive tanks, invulnerable bridges, all suddenly fell before a handful of simple and relatively inexpensive weapons. The age of total war had ended.” Ibid, 114,116.

<sup>96</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare. The Triumph of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 395.

<sup>97</sup> Cfr. Darnton, G. “Information Warfare, Revolutions in Military Affairs, and International Law.” *Journal of Information Warfare* 4, no. 1 (2005): 1–20. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26504013>.

<sup>98</sup> Cfr. Sean T. Lawson, *Nonlinear Science and Warfare: Chaos, complexity and the US military in the information age* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>99</sup> This alliance, born in the context of the Cold War, managed to stay alive despite the failure of its premise: the existence of the USSR from which to defend Western countries.

level of expenditure required to maintain a competitive military has also put European states in crisis (figure 4)<sup>100</sup>. In the US, for example,<sup>101</sup>

Almost half of the U.S. federal discretionary budget is allocated to the Department of Defense (DoD) (\$849 billion out of \$1.82 trillion in FY2023), and more than half of the discretionary budget goes to ‘defense’ overall, which includes not only the DoD but also nuclear weapons programs within the Department of Energy and additional defense spending in other departments. The total allocated to national security is about 55% of discretionary spending when funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Veterans Affairs is included.<sup>102</sup>

The continent, due to its fragmentation, lacked the capacity to handle contemporary armed crises:

a sustained ability to manage international crises and prevent them from turning into armed conflicts, the outcome of which is always unpredictable; the continued willingness to pay (in both human and material terms) for defence against perils that are not immediately apparent; and the maintenance of each state’s political control over its armed forces because, in the memorable epigram attributed to Georges Clemenceau, the architect of French victory in World War I, ‘War is too important to be left to the generals’.<sup>103</sup>

In summary, modern states have entered crisis because they were unable, due to the size and trauma of the two world wars, to effectively bear the consequences of contemporary warfare, the direct and the indirect. The first is related to the ability to pay the costs of war, both in financial terms and in terms of human lives; the second is dependent on the ability to manage international crises, intervening diplomatically, when possible, in any potentially large-scale dispute. Due to the general demographic increase, and the interrelationships that follow, any conflict can trigger unforeseen consequences across the globe, testing states ill-equipped to handle the repercussions. An example of this is the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2020, which has not only proven Europe’s inability to handle international conflicts, but has also destabilised the entire international economy and politics.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> “Sipri Military Expenditure Database”, *sipri.org*, 2019, SIPRI Military Expenditure Database | SIPRI.

<sup>101</sup> “SIPRI YEARBOOK 2022: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security”, *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep43750.10>.

<sup>102</sup> Heidi Peltier, *We Get What We Pay For: The Cycle of Military Spending, Industry Power, and Economic Dependence*, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, *Cost of War* (2023): 1-2.

<sup>103</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare. The Triumph of the West*, 400.

<sup>104</sup> “OECD Economic Outlook, Interim Report September 2022: Paying the Price of War”, *OECDiLibrary.org*, 2022, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/ae8c39ec-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/ae8c39ec-en>

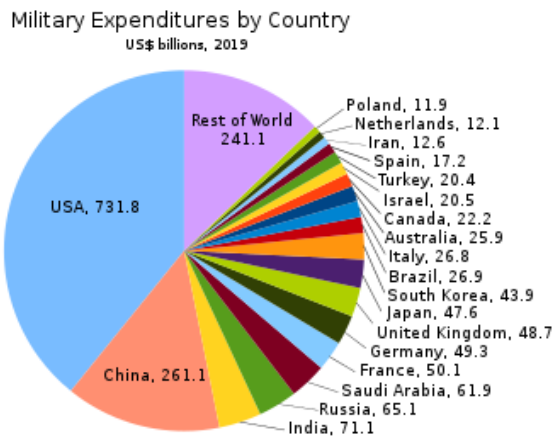


Figure 4. Military expenditures by country

From an economic perspective, the development of industry and the process of financialisation irreversibly marked the decline of European states. Between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the Industrial Revolution produced many technical inventions that radically transformed the economies of the most developed countries. Electrification and electronic technology, the steel, textile, chemical, transport, and automotive industries, in which the assembly line was successfully applied, and from which the term ‘Fordist economy’ derives,<sup>105</sup> are some of the sectors that developed during this expansive phase. In addition to the technological aspect, economic growth depended on the existence of increasingly cohesive national markets, the growth of international trade,<sup>106</sup> and, especially for England, France, and Germany, the further expansion and exploitation of colonial empires. The pivotal example of the latter two dynamics is the English case:

Between 1865 and 1914 more than £4 billion flowed from Britain to the rest of the world, giving the country a historically unprecedented and since unequalled position as a global net creditor-‘the world’s banker’ indeed; or, to be exact, the world’s bond market. By 1914 total British assets overseas amounted to somewhere between £3.1 and £4.5 billion, as against British GDP of £2.5 billion. [...] around 45 percent of British investment went to the United States and the colonies of white settlement, 20 percent to Latin America, 16 percent to Asia and 13 percent to Africa, compared with just 6 percent to the rest of the Europe.<sup>107</sup>

The two world wars, as in the military sector, played a fundamental role in the development of the world economy. In addition to the crisis of the international financial system, which was

<sup>105</sup> The name comes from the car manufacturing company of the well-known entrepreneur Henry Ford.

<sup>106</sup> The latter is closely linked to the development of the shipbuilding industry and the creation of the railway industry.

<sup>107</sup> Niall Ferguson, “The Empire Effect: The Determinants of Country Risk in the First Age of Globalization, 1880-1913.” *The Journal of Economic History* 66, no. 2 (2006): 284-85. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3874878>.

abandoned due to the rigidities of the gold standard,<sup>108</sup> and the persistent economic crisis in European countries,<sup>109</sup> state intervention in the economy increased during this period. Before 1914, the state intervened in the economy mainly through tariffs, the construction of infrastructures, or the protection of intellectual property; later, industrial policy became increasingly interventionist, both in the inter-war period and in the reconstruction phase.<sup>110</sup> Despite the exponential economic growth of the European countries of the Western bloc in the post-war period, due to the opportunities of reconstruction, the virtuous cycle initiated by the US ally, and the existence of massively expanding national markets, from the end of the Second World War, two closely related dynamics were already beginning to be seen that would put the European powers in crisis: the start of the inexorable process of decolonisation, which in a few decades would break up the European colonial empires, and the slow saturation of national markets, continually in need of labour and markets in which to expand. Wallerstein clearly summarised these dynamics:

The periodic stagnation of the world-economy, manifested by a deficiency of world effective demand, has been regularly resolved by a triple process: technological change, proletarianization, and the incorporations of new zones into the world-economy. They have provided respectively new sources of high-profit products (via the new leading sectors), new pools of monetary demand (via the increase of money income to workers receiving a larger proportion of total income through wage income), and new pools of low-cost labour (via the creation of new households engaged in part-time wage-labour). Of the three mechanisms, only technological change may continue for an indefinite future. The other two mechanisms move toward limits; hence the structural underpinnings of the 'crisis'".<sup>111</sup>

This crisis affected European countries especially from the 1970s onwards, when the weight of services in the economies of Western countries became predominant, marking the demise of an economy driven by industrial production and trade.<sup>112</sup> The development of complex financial systems is another aspect of the evolution of the economy in Europe, but also of its crisis. In all the countries that have been leaders of the economic and financial system in modernity,

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<sup>108</sup> Attempts to re-establish a functioning system, such as the 1922 conference in Genoa, did not have the desired effect.

<sup>109</sup> An exception to the period of economic crisis, not for all European countries, are the 1920s, at least until the crisis of 1929.

<sup>110</sup> In Italy, a well-known example is the creation of the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI) in 1933.

<sup>111</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The politics of the world-economy: The states, the movements and the civilizations*, 53.

<sup>112</sup> The role of the services is also important in understanding the overtaking of the United States at the expense of British power. Stephen N. Broadberry, "How Did the United States and Germany Overtake Britain? A Sectoral Analysis of Comparative Productivity Levels, 1870-1990." *The Journal of Economic History* 58, no. 2 (1998): 375-407. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2566739>.



Holland, England, and the United States, a form of financial revolution took place before their decisive economic growth.<sup>113</sup> The changes adopted by these countries influenced the global economic system. Already with the adoption of the gold standard in the 19th century, with its adoption by the Bank of England in 1821, an international financial system developed, which entered into crisis shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. But it was only after 1945, with the Bretton Woods conference and the establishment of its institutions, that the contemporary international financial system, based on gold-dollar convertibility, became established. During this period, the financial sector grew faster and faster, especially after Nixon's 1971 decision to suspend dollar convertibility, essentially ending the Bretton Woods agreements. The subsequent period of financial liberalisation in the 1980s, continued by the Washington Consensus policies,<sup>114</sup> increased the interconnectedness of the global economy and the importance of the financial sector: "In the United States, the financial sector's share of GDP increased from 15% in 1960 to approximately 23% in 2001, surpassing manufacturing in the early 1990s. The percentage of corporate profits in the financial industry increased from 20% in 1980 to 30% in early 1990s and to roughly 40% by 2000."<sup>115</sup> This process, accompanied by its cultural aspect, i.e. bringing the citizens of Western countries closer to the use of financial instruments, is often referred to as the process of financialization:

Financialization is posited as a systemic transformation of mature capitalist economies that comprises three fundamental elements: first, large non-financial corporations have reduced their reliance on bank loans and have acquired financial capacities; second, banks have expanded their mediating activities in financial markets as well as lending to households; third, households have become increasingly involved in the realm of finance both as debtors and as asset holders.<sup>116</sup>

This process, already in the making before 1914,<sup>117</sup> has reduced the control of states over economic activity and favoured the creation of multinational corporate companies. The contemporary financial system, and the almost total freedom of capital movement, is essential

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<sup>113</sup> Richard Sylla, "Financial Systems and Economic Modernization." *The Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 2 (2002): 281. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2698181>.

<sup>114</sup> The term 'Washington Consensus' was coined by John Williamson in 1989 and reflects the approach promoted by international financial institutions, many of which are based in Washington D.C., USA.

<sup>115</sup> Gerald F. Davis, and Suntae Kim. "Financialization of the Economy." *Annual Review of Sociology* 41 (2015): 205. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24807596>.

<sup>116</sup> Costas Lapavistas, "Theorizing Financialization." *Work, Employment & Society* 25, no. 4 (2011): 611-12. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23749350>.

<sup>117</sup> The importance of finance grew in Europe and the United States throughout the 20th century. The rise of joint-stock companies was encouraged by the process of industrialisation, improved transport, and the first regulations of the financial system. An important example is the JointStock Companies Act, which came into force in England in 1844.

for companies, whether it's to facilitate a merger or acquisition of another company, fund the research and implementation of innovative technologies, or support expansion efforts into untapped markets.<sup>118</sup> Companies began to systematically produce in other countries, usually where labour is cheaper, and to lengthen production chains, until many companies from all over the world were involved in the creation and marketing of a single product. The existence of an international archipelago of tax havens has also facilitated tax avoidance, and thus the expansion of multinational companies.<sup>119</sup> The result of this process has been the formation of a transnational class, which is not directly dependent on a single national market with its policy, and a reduction in the decision-making power of states in matters such as tax policy or interest rates. Large multinational companies and financial groups also have the power to influence the political decisions of the states in which they operate. Although states have instruments to combat this limitation of their sovereignty, such as control over capital flows, antitrust measures on monopolies, strict regulations on privacy, or radical industrial policies, few states have the actual power to use them, and to manage the arrogance of the global market. It is the less developed states, mainly in Africa, South-East Asia, and South America, that bear the brunt of the international financial system and the multinational corporations that operate on their territory, often decisively influencing their political decision-making. Even European states, in the context of fiscal policy and the signing of international trade treaties,<sup>120</sup> have struggled to

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<sup>118</sup> Susan Strange, *The retreat of the state: The diffusion of power in the world economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1996), 11.

<sup>119</sup> Tax havens originated in England and the United States to defend the value of their currencies. In England, during the period of decolonisation, the creation of a tax empire, starting in the 1960s, governed by the existence of numerous tax havens, allowed the country to replace its formal colonial empire with an informal financial one. "The Spider's Web: Britain's Second Empire | Finance Documentary | History", *youtube.com*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYfnkLurLA8>; Nicholas Shaxson, *Le isole del tesoro: viaggio nei paradisi fiscali dove è nascosto il tesoro della globalizzazione* (Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 2014).

<sup>120</sup> An emblematic example regarding the problem of tax evasion is the Apple case. In 2016, the European Commission concluded a lengthy investigation into the tax agreement between Apple and the Irish government. According to the findings of the investigation, Ireland had granted illegal tax advantages to Apple, allowing it to pay very low taxes compared to the current rules. The Commission ruled that Apple had to repay well over EUR 13 billion in unpaid taxes to Ireland. Although the ruling was annulled in 2020, this case highlighted the controversy that exists around the definition of illegal state aid and the assessment of selective tax advantages. Another high-profile case is *Ikea v The Netherlands*. In 2017, IKEA was accused by the EU antitrust authorities of receiving tax advantages from the Netherlands amounting to approximately EUR 1 billion to the Netherlands. As far as international trade treaties are concerned, the most debated issues relate to investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), protection of intellectual property, and effective enforcement of environmental standards. Stuart Jeffries, "What is TTIP and Why we should be angry about it", *theguardian.com*, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/aug/03/ttip-what-why-angry-transatlantic-tradeinvestment-partnership-guide>; "UNCTAD Recent Developments in Investor State Dispute Settle", *unctad.org*, 2013, [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/webdiaepcb2013d3\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/webdiaepcb2013d3_en.pdf); Milena Gabanelli, "Tasse, ecco come sei Paesi europei sottraggono all'Italia 6,5 miliardi di euro", *Corriere.it*, 2020, <https://www.corriere.it/dataroom-milena-gabanelli/tasse-evasione-ecco-come-sei-paesi-europei-sottraggono-all-italia-65-miliardi-euro/84ad216c-baf3-11ea-9e85-8f24b6c04102-va.shtml>; Luca Zorloni, "Caso Ikea, perché le multinazionali vogliono pagare le

impose their sovereignty on these groups. At the same time, however, the most powerful states can exploit these dynamics to their advantage, whether we are talking about multinational corporations capable of expanding political, economic, and cultural influence outside their nation of origin, or about a financial system capable of attracting large flows of capital. An example of the first dynamic can be made for the United States, which, holding the record for the number of companies with the highest market capitalisation,<sup>121</sup> has managed to establish a strong economic and cultural influence in the countries with which it has ties, and for China, which is similarly expanding the action of its companies in parallel with the development of its international relations. In contrast, the economic, and political, influence that France has maintained over its former African colonies, due to its limited resources and the asymmetrical competition it is forced to play with the superpowers, will be difficult to maintain in the long run.<sup>122</sup> Regarding the importance of the financial aspect, we can again mention the United States, the major beneficiary of the currency used as a global reserve, the dollar. Even the existence of the ‘big four’ accounting firms,<sup>123</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG, the first two of which are American and the others British, show how strong the concentration of financial power is in a few countries.<sup>124</sup> The US and UK are also the countries that benefit most from tax havens, with which their financial centres have strong ties.<sup>125</sup> Some states, such as those named above, act to protect and extend the influence of their corporations and financial spots, in continuity with the main purpose for which modern states were created: the total vocation of politics to protect the economic and financial interests of the nation. On the other hand, many small states are unable, or will not be able in the foreseeable future, to fulfil this task. This will be the case for European states, which will struggle more and more to defend their economies from the excessive power of foreign companies and financial centres. The lack of political cohesion between European forces prevents a common

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tasse in Olanda, Irlanda e Lussemburgo?”, *wired.it*, 2017, <https://www.wired.it/economia/finanza/2017/12/19/tasse-olanda-irlanda-lussemburgo/>; “Apple vince contro la Ue, annullata la decisione sul rimborso da 13 miliardi all’Irlanda”, *ilsole24ore.com*, 2020, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/apple-tribunale-ue-annulla-decisione-commissione-antitrust-non-provato-vantaggio-fiscale-AD2kCTe>.

<sup>121</sup> Claudia Cervi, “Le 10 società con la più alta capitalizzazione del mondo”, *money.it*, 2023, <https://www.money.it/classifica-10-societa-piu-alta-capitalizzazione-mondo>.

<sup>122</sup> Proof of this are the recent events in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, from which French troops were forced to withdraw. “Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso... la nostra politica africana ci crolla addosso”, *ilfoglio.it*, 2023, <https://www.ilfoglio.it/il-foglio-internazionale/2023/08/14/news/-niger-mali-burkina-faso-la-nostra-politica-africana-ci-crolla-addosso--5595076/>.

<sup>123</sup> Will Kenton, “What Are the Big 4 Accounting Firms? Definition and Critique”, *Investopedia.com*, 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/bigfour.asp>.

<sup>124</sup> Susan Strange, *The retreat of the state: The diffusion of power in the world economy*, 134.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 110.

strategy on long-term decisions, leaving room for economic competition that is still purely national.

The third cause of the crisis of the modern state can be identified in the development of a system of international organisations (IOs). Since the creation of an inter-state system, from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, European states began to use the diplomatic route of international congresses as conflict resolution. Cases of bilateral agreements to resolve disputes between states also increased, and the need to develop a framework of international law to regulate them became clear. A European inter-state system was formed based on the mutual recognition of sovereignty and political independence, framing an increasingly stable balance of power. But it was only in the 19th century, with the increasing use of international diplomatic forums and the formation of the first IOs, that this system of coexistence partly became a system of cooperation.<sup>126</sup> While with the Congress of Vienna and The Hague Conferences the European states laid the foundations for this system, with the creation of the first real IOs the high level of cooperation definitively limited the decision-making autonomy of state policy in certain matters.<sup>127</sup> The 20th century saw the birth of the first IO with a general character, i.e. without a specific purpose, and universal, i.e. in which most of the world's states participated: the League of Nations (1919), which was followed by the creation of the United Nations through an informal and undeclared succession process.<sup>128</sup> Since 1945, the number of IOs, whether regional or global, technical or political, intergovernmental or supranational,<sup>129</sup> has grown exponentially, spreading across the globe. According to the International Law Commission,<sup>130</sup> an International Organisation can be defined as “an organization established by a treaty or other instrument governed by international law and possessing its own international legal personality. International organizations may include as members, in addition to States, other entities.” In most of the definitions given to IOs,<sup>131</sup> there are two important aspects that have made their legal nature ambiguous: the possession of an international legal

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<sup>126</sup> Jan Klabbers, *An introduction to international organizations law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 16-39.

<sup>127</sup> An example is the Rhine Commission (1815), established to deal with shipping and trade, which is considered the first contemporary IO, the Anti-Slavery Convention (1840); the Red Cross (1863); or the International Telegraphic Union (1865). Ibid, 16-39.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 99-105.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 16-39.

<sup>130</sup> “United Nations, Report of the International Law Commission, 2011”, *un.org*, 2011, [https://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/reports/a\\_66\\_10.pdf](https://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/reports/a_66_10.pdf), 54.

<sup>131</sup> Stephen Bouwhuis, “The international law commission’s definition of international organizations.” *International Organizations Law Review* 9.2 (2012): 451-465. Jan Klabbers, *An introduction to international organizations law*, 1-16.

personality,<sup>132</sup> together with an organ with a will separate from that of its member states; and the importance reserved for the member states that, through “a treaty or other instrument governed by international law”, are the founders of IOs.<sup>133</sup> This dual nature is what has weakened the institutions of modern states. On the one hand, the autonomy of IOs from their member states has contributed to the emergence of supranational regulations and instruments of control; on the other, the emphasis on inter-state negotiation within IO bodies has allowed the most powerful states to take control and dictate their development,<sup>134</sup> accentuating the gap between centre and periphery in international relations. The sectors in which this double dynamic has been most evident are the economic-financial sector (GATT-WTO, World Bank, IMF), military organisations (NATO), and international politics (UN). International Economic Organisations, such as the GATT-WTO, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), played crucial roles in shaping the global economic order during the 20th century. GATT, which began in 1947 as a temporary agreement, evolved into the creation of the WTO in 1995, a full-fledged IO with a permanent structure, and the objective of facilitating international trade and resolving trade disputes. The standards promoted by the WTO, however, depend on a political negotiation process where a few countries, historically the United States, some European states, and Japan, are able to impose their will on the rest of the world.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, the World Bank and the IMF, both founded in 1944 and dedicated to financing development projects in developing countries and promoting financial stability, are an even more striking example of the inequality that exists between countries in international politics. The system of weighted voting, which allows member states to have a number of votes proportional to their economic strength,<sup>136</sup> is proof of this. In these organisations, economically

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<sup>132</sup> There is also a heated debate on the definition of ‘international legal personality’. Jan Klabbers, *An introduction to international organizations law*, 46-50.

<sup>133</sup> There are exceptions to this, as in the case of IOs created by other IOs (UNESCO, FAO, ICJ ect.).

<sup>134</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions.” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 5–49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539078>; Kenneth W. Abbott, and Duncan Snidal. “Why States Act through Formal International Organizations.” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 1 (1998): 3–32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/174551>; Nicholas Rostow, “Tensions Between the State and International Organizations.” *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)* 89 (1995): 264–66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25658922>.

<sup>135</sup> “Trade agreements are political documents, reflecting the interests of dominant coalitions: Trade rules must acknowledge the benefits of divergent economic models such as China’s”. Dani Rodrik, “The WTO has become dysfunctional”, *ft.com*, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/c2beedfe-964d-11e8-95f8-8640db9060a7>; Martin Khor, “RETHINKING LIBERALISATION AND REFORMING THE WTO: Martin Khor's Presentation at Davos”, *web.archive.org*, 2000, <https://web.archive.org/web/20061006063924/http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/davos2-cn.htm>.

<sup>136</sup> “The votes of each member equal the sum of its basic votes (equally distributed among all members) and quota-based votes, so that a member’s quota determines its voting power”; “Quotas are the building blocks of the IMF’s financial and governance structure. An individual member country’s quota broadly reflects its relative position in

developed countries such as the United States, which are founders of both IOs and host their headquarters, have undisputed hegemony. The political fragmentation of Europe, as in the case of weighted voting, plays to its disadvantage: European states have relatively weak bargaining power compared to superpowers such as the United States and China. The numerical, demographic, economic, and consequently political factor weighs negatively on the autonomy of European states. In the case of international organisations with military purposes, such as NATO or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), the supremacy of the superpowers, in the first case the US and in the second Russia, plays an even more decisive role. For the US, which is the organisation's largest financier,<sup>137</sup> NATO has been a useful tool, which can be seen as a natural complement to the Marshall Plan,<sup>138</sup> to hegemonise European politics after 1945.<sup>139</sup> NATO was used by the US to militarily control European countries,<sup>140</sup> to have a geostrategic advantage over its Russian rival, and to influence the European Union process. The latter, as the discussions in the late 1940s among Western countries show,<sup>141</sup> was favoured by the US by steering it according to its own interests, despite the reluctance of some European countries. A case in point is Robert Schuman, considered one of the founding fathers of the European Union, who, in a secret conversation with Truman and various representatives of Atlantic Alliance members in 1949, in response to Truman's proposal to turn defeated Germany into an ally, states:

The premise of this policy is that Germany will democratise and turn towards the West, but France, which has suffered three invasions in seventy years, has great doubts about the success of the operation. The perpetual neutralisation of Germany, a policy to which even the Russians, having themselves experienced invasion by Germans, might agree, seems to us the ideal solution.<sup>142</sup>

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the world economy". "HOW DOES THE IMF MAKE DECISIONS?", *imf.org*, 2022, <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2022/How-the-IMF-makes-decisions>

<sup>137</sup> "NATO's Financing Gap Why NATO Should Create Its Own Bank", *americanprogress.org*, 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/natos-financing-gap/>.

<sup>138</sup> Eric John Hobsbawm, *Il secolo breve*, 284.

<sup>139</sup> Rosemary S. Foot, Neil MacFarlane, and Michael Mastanduno, eds. *US hegemony and international organizations: the United States and multilateral institutions* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2003), 15-39.

<sup>140</sup> The military subordination of the European continent became even more evident after the failure of the treaty establishing for the European Defence Community (EDC), due to France's non-ratification in 1954. This, moreover, was a fundamental historical moment that marked the future of the European Community.

<sup>141</sup> "La strategia segreta della Nato – Verbale", *limesonline.com*, 2019, <https://www.limesonline.com/cartaceo/nato-strategia-segreta-verbale-1949>.

<sup>142</sup> My translation. Ibid. Schuman, ironically, was also the author of the "Schuman Declaration", in 1950, which laid the foundation for future Franco-German cooperation.

This conversation, considering the treaties of Paris (1951) and Rome (1957) signed a few years later,<sup>143</sup> gives an idea of the role played by the US in structuring the European Community. It was the US that imposed the creation of common democratic institutions on the European states, and integrated Germany, and its economy, into the Western European bloc. The NATO missions of the following decades, both internal to NATO countries and external,<sup>144</sup> confirm how the Atlantic Alliance pursued US strategic interests. Finally, the creation of general-purpose political IOs, such as the UN or the EU, made evident the crisis of the institutions of modern states. On the one hand, these organisations have made it possible to address problems that cannot be reducible to the national scale, such as the protection of human rights, the observance of treaties of various kinds, or the fight against climate change; on the other hand, they have maintained within them a hierarchy of power, formal and informal, that has benefited some member states at the expense of others. Within the UN, this dichotomy is evident in the relationship between the General Assembly, the organisation's plenary body, and the Security Council, the executive body. The assembly, composed of all UN member states, is a democratic body with numerous powers,<sup>145</sup> including the power to promote the ratification of new treaties and IOs,<sup>146</sup> to create new specific organs of the organisation,<sup>147</sup> to approve the organisation's budget, and to settle disputes between states.<sup>148</sup> The variety of tasks of the assembly contributed to a legal environment of international cooperation, where states deliberately limited their sovereignty in favour of higher standards. One example is the defence of human rights, which became a salient topic after the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human

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<sup>143</sup> The first called the *Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community* (ECSC Treaty), and the second the 'Treaty establishing the *European Economic Community* (EEC Treaty), are considered the founding documents of the European Community.

<sup>144</sup> By the external ones, we refer to the well-known military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, etc. By the former, we also refer to covert operations aimed at political stabilisation or the anti-communist struggle. An example of the latter is Operation Gladio in Italy, promoted by the American secret service (CIA), while in other European countries, it acted under various acronyms. Cfr. Daniele Ganser, *NATO's secret armies: Operation Gladio and terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>145</sup> Countries are equally represented, and all have the power to participate in discussions. Despite this, resolutions taken by the assembly are not binding, and require the vote of a significant majority of the member countries to be adopted. Art 10-14 of the UN Charter. "United Nations Charter", *un.org*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>.

<sup>146</sup> Some examples are World Health Organisation (WHO) - 1948, International Labour Organisation (ILO) - 1919, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) - 1945, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) - 1946, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) - 1950, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) - 1966, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) - 1993, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) - 1969, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - 1972.

<sup>147</sup> The legitimacy of this power was accepted after the 1954 "Effect of awards" case. "Effect of Awards of Compensation Made by the United Nations Administrative Tribunal", *icj-cij.org*, 2023, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/21>.

<sup>148</sup> As stated in the 1950 GA resolution 'Uniting for peace'. "Uniting for peace G.A. Resolution 377 (V) 1950", *studiperlapace.it*, [https://www.studiperlapace.it/view\\_news\\_html?news\\_id=20050108094353](https://www.studiperlapace.it/view_news_html?news_id=20050108094353).

Rights (UDHR) in 1948.<sup>149</sup> The creation of monitoring bodies linked to this declaration, and the birth of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 1949, are proof of the ability of the IOs to downgrade the power of national realities.<sup>150</sup> The Security Council, on the other hand, is a plastic demonstration of the asymmetry of power that exists within the UN. The membership and voting system are characterised by the existence of five permanent members with veto power, which are the United States, China,<sup>151</sup> Russia, England, and France,<sup>152</sup> who can hegemonise the body's decision-making process. The importance of the powers attributed to the Security Council, contained mainly in Chapter VII of the UN Charter,<sup>153</sup> where it speaks "Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression",<sup>154</sup> gives these countries a power capable of eclipsing that of the General Assembly. Despite the ongoing debate on the possible reform of the Security Council,<sup>155</sup> the withdrawal of one of the permanent seats is unlikely, and only the addition of new seats is possible.<sup>156</sup> European countries, on the other hand, would be weakened by these developments, crushed by the power of the superpowers represented in the Council. France, for example, will have to fight to retain decisive power within the UN, and ceding its permanent seat to the EU, despite German demands,<sup>157</sup> does not seem a likely scenario. IOs, finally, play an important role in spreading a non-national culture through the formation of new bureaucracies. One example is the European Union,<sup>158</sup> where the central administration has a character that is not strictly reducible to national cultures, producing supranational norms and policies. Law, in this sense, is a powerful weapon of cultural diffusion.

To conclude, the decline of the modern state results from profound processes that are difficult to reverse. On the one hand, the demographic aspect entails challenges that all states will have to face; on the other, the ongoing military, economic, and institutional processes

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<sup>149</sup> Olivier De Schutter, *International human rights law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) 126-54.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 1484-1785.

<sup>151</sup> Before 1971, the China represented at the UN Security Council was the Republic of China (ROC), or Taiwan. After 1971, however, the People's Republic of China (PRC), which had controlled the mainland since 1949, became the sole representative.

<sup>152</sup> The permanent members of the Council are derived from the balance of forces that resulted at the end of the IIWW.

<sup>153</sup> "United Nations Charter, Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression". "United Nations Charter", *un.org*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-7>.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Stewart Patrick, "UN Security Council Reform: What the World Thinks", *carnegieendowment.org*, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/06/28/un-security-council-reform-what-world-thinks-pub-90032>.

<sup>156</sup> For which countries such as India and Brazil would be candidates.

<sup>157</sup> "Germany calls for France to give its UN Security Council seat to the EU", *france24.com*, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20181128-paris-france-german-proposal-un-eu-macron-merkel-security-council-nations>.

<sup>158</sup> We will discuss this issue in depth in Chapter 3.



suggest a progressive loss of power by the old European state institutions. Of course, European culture of the 19th and 20th centuries also discussed the crisis of the modern state, and, more generally, of its civilisation. From Nietzsche to Spengler, from Freud to Heidegger, the theme of the decline of European culture became increasingly widespread. It has coincided with a critique of the decline of Enlightenment culture, the end of religious cultural hegemony, and the transition to a new, more fragmentary, and irreducible conception of the human being; on the other hand, intellectual and artistic criticism has never managed to escape from a deconstructionist paradigm, a sign that the transition phase is still ongoing. How these states can cope with this transition phase is the topic of the next chapters.

## Chapter 2. The age of empires

*“La crisi consiste appunto nel fatto che il vecchio muore e il nuovo non può nascere: in questo interregno si verificano i fenomeni morbosi più svariati.”*

A. Gramsci<sup>159</sup>

The contemporary era, from the late 19th century to the present day, is a long transitional phase, characterised in Europe by the crisis of modern states. The difficulty individual European states have in dealing with global geopolitical problems, from alliance management to war prevention, is proof of their lack of sovereignty in the international context.<sup>160</sup> The examples are numerous: the mismanagement by France and Germany of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis since 2014,<sup>161</sup> the general inability to counter the influence of the United States and China, and to manage the terrorist phenomenon in the African context, or the inability of European states to make themselves militarily independent of NATO, which severely limits their sovereignty. Between superpowers, the bargaining power of nation-states is diminishing, and this situation, based on the processes described above, is unlikely to change in the future. An increasingly interconnected system favours the creation of imperial entities, hence multinationals, capable of weighing their numbers in international conflicts, and linked to the strategic interests of large territorial agglomerations, resulting in their greater understanding of geopolitical dynamics. The creation of new political entities, however, is not a linear process. As in the late medieval period, which witnessed the slow disintegration, accompanied by constant violent turmoil, of feudal entities, and the subsequent formation of the first nation-states, we are observing a similar process in the present day, which, although potentially of shorter duration, will face comparable difficulties.

Political practice, to be effective, must be based on an adequate theoretical vision of the problems and objectives to be achieved. Without this vision, a state runs the risk of

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<sup>159</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni dal carcere* (Q 3, §34, p. 311) s:Pagina:Gramsci - Quaderni del carcere, Einaudi, I.djvu/318. “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old dies and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, the most varied morbid phenomena occur.” My translation.

<sup>160</sup> Cfr. Carlo Galli, “Sovranità e questione europea”, un dialogo a partire dal volume di Carlo Galli, ‘Sovranità’, *youtube.com*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7BgOyUa4n8&pp=ygUkY2FybG8gZ2FsbGkgc292cmFuaXTDoCBzdGF0aSBldXJvcGVp>.

<sup>161</sup> France and Germany were the mediators of the failed Minsk agreements. Alessandro Azzoni, “accordi di Minsk, un naufragio annunciato”, *limesonline.com*, 2022, <https://www.limesonline.com/cartaceo/accordi-di-minsk-un-naufragio-annunciato>.

contradicting itself, of losing credibility, and, in more general terms, of failing to understand how to pursue its strategic interests. It is not enough, in fact, to proclaim the end of the nation-state and its institutions, but it is necessary to understand the root causes of this process, to be able to formulate the hypothesis of a new project. A centralised and multinational political union, which we synthesise with the concept of empire, must be promoted with targeted policies on the part of the states involved, and through a profound work of cultural elaboration on the subject. Without a strong will, both political and intellectual, it is unlikely that the European states will be able to overcome their national character, ending up incorporated in the periphery of a great power. This is the situation that almost all the countries of the continent have been experiencing since 1991 in relation to the United States of America. The inability to think of a common political project, of which the European Union is for now a faded copy, is what makes these countries fragile. Culturally, in fact, the positions that intellectuals, and politicians, have taken towards the current crisis of nation-states are mainly three, and all equally problematic: the liberal position, the most common, the socialist position, which is less and less publicised, and the more recent populist position. The first two positions are clearly summarised by Kojève in the *Esquisse*:<sup>162</sup>

On the one hand, “bourgeois” Liberalism proclaimed more or less publicly the end of the State as such, which is to say [the end] of the strictly political existence of Nations. By not conceiving of the State outside of the national setting, and by observing at the same time – more or less consciously – that the nation-State was no longer politically viable, Liberalism proposed to abolish it voluntarily. The essentially political – i.e., in the final analysis martial – entity, which is the State in the strict sense, had to be replaced by a simple economic and social, not to say a police Administration, put at the disposal and at the service of “Society” which had moreover been conceived of as an aggregate of individuals [...] On the other hand, “internationalist” Socialism believed it could see that political reality was in the process of moving from Nations to Humanity as such. If the State was still supposed to have political meaning and *raison d’être*, it could only have them on the condition of finding its foundation in “the human race.”<sup>163</sup>

While the socialist position gradually lost importance, especially after the collapse of Soviet communism in the early 1990s, the liberal position maintained an important, if not hegemonic, role in the European debate of the late 20th and early 21st century. The liberal view, which is strongly individualistic, sees in state institutions only possible facilitators of economic activity. Already widespread in the Anglo-Saxon world, this idea has also taken root in continental

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<sup>162</sup> We will discuss Kojève and the *Esquisse* in detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

<sup>163</sup> Kojève, Alexandre. “Outline of a doctrine of French policy.” *Policy Review* 126 (2004): 7.

Europe, even among Latin countries. In fact, it was put into practice during the European integration process, in which economic thinking played a decisive role, shaping the Community institutions and bureaucracy.<sup>164</sup> The European Union can be considered a partial realisation of the liberalism described by Kojève because of several features:<sup>165</sup> the existence of a decision-making process that is weakly democratic and managed by a technocratic apparatus, represented by the commission, the leader of the integration process;<sup>166</sup> economic policies that promote the development of the free market; and the development of an enlargement process that does not take into account the cultural, geographical, or political differences that exist between the countries requesting access to the organisation and the member states.<sup>167</sup> The end of the state, in the case of EU, has been transformed into the end of the idea of the nation, and the nation-state, considered by liberals as the only institutional system in which the political will of a people can express itself in a democratic way. With the nation removed, hence the cultural background that indirectly informs political action, all that remains is an administrative apparatus designed to maintain order and facilitate exchanges between individuals. Finally, populism, which became a major political phenomenon after the 2008 financial crisis,<sup>168</sup> has developed the idea that the nation-state is the only possible horizon for the future of European states. This deeply reactionary idea is based on the denial of a systemic crisis of the state in Europe, and on the emphasis placed on the concept of sovereignty.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, there is a clear contradiction between the national character of populisms and their political praxis, which is little marked by the reaffirmation of the sovereignty of the nation-state.<sup>170</sup> Kojève's perspective, with respect to these positions, thus appears extremely topical. What is necessary, according to the philosopher, is to be able to think of political, non-technocratic entities beyond the national realities that characterise individual European states. The Latin empire, once again,

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<sup>164</sup> On the relationship between economic thinking and political decision-making during the European integration process, Cfr. Barry Eichengreen, *The political economy of European monetary unification* (London: Routledge, 2018); and Ashoka Mody, *EuroTragedy: a drama in nine acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>165</sup> 'Partial' because it is still characterised by the existence of many national realities.

<sup>166</sup> On the role of the commission in the integration process, Cris Shore, *Building Europe: The cultural politics of European integration* (London: Routledge, 2013), 130-47.

<sup>167</sup> Among the so-called 'Copenhagen criteria', the criterion on the existence of a strong and stable market economy has decisive weight. "Accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria)", *eur-lex-europa.eu*, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession\\_criteria\\_copenhagen.html](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen.html).

<sup>168</sup> On the recent history of populism in Italy, but parallel to that of most European countries, Marco Tarchi, *Italia populista: dal qualunquismo a Beppe Grillo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018).

<sup>169</sup> Cfr. Carlo Galli, "'Sovranità e questione europea', un dialogo a partire dal volume di Carlo Galli, 'Sovranità'".

<sup>170</sup> This is the case with the recent Meloni government in office since 22 October 2022. Its moderate attitude towards the European community, despite the anti-European radicalism shown in the electoral campaign, and its Atlanticist stance in the field of foreign policy, including the unconditional support shown towards the Atlantic Alliance, are examples of the populist contradiction. The same argument, again in Italy, could be made for the policies promoted by the Conte I government, in office from June 2018 to September 2019.

appears as an attractive geopolitical possibility to address an ongoing process. But before addressing this issue, we will analyse the history of the European Community, trying to identify its premises and structural limits. The European project, based on weak theoretical foundations, has failed to emancipate itself from its economic nature. The main cause is that France and Germany, two countries with different interests and worldviews, have become the important pillar of the European Community. To understand this asymmetry, we will address the theoretical birth of this project and analyse its geopolitical dynamics.

## 2.1 The Impossible European Union

Europe could be seen as an archipelago of alliances. There are the Benelux countries (the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg), named after the customs union that was granted in 1944 by their respective governments in exile in London; the Visegrad group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland), born out of the Visegrad Declaration of 1991; the Northern group of countries, comprising Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway, which is not part of the European Union but has numerous trade relations with it; the Southern countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Italy, which have not yet managed to create a stable forum for intergovernmental cooperation; and, finally, there is the Franco-German alliance, which is fundamental to the existence of the European Union. In addition to signed agreements, as in the Franco-German case, these alliances are based on the existence of an informal internal dialogue, which fosters the convergence of political choices, and tactics to be used, in the context of European and international politics. Examples are the case of the New Hanseatic League (2019), or the Three Seas Agreement (2016).<sup>171</sup> Not all these alliances are stable, and very often overlap with each other in specific contexts, but they all depend on the degree of geo-historical affinity that unites and divides the various European countries. Indeed, geo-history affects the strategic interest that the various European countries have. For example, for Denmark one of the biggest political problems of the future will be the exploitation of the North Pole, for the former Warsaw Pact it will be the danger of the neighbouring Russian power, for England it will be the re-establishment of some form of Commonwealth, while for the Latin Mediterranean countries it will be the African migration problem, the neighbourhood problem with the Middle Eastern countries, and the control of the Mediterranean. This variety of

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<sup>171</sup> The New Hanseatic League, conceived after the 2018 Brexit, consists of the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, the Baltics, and Ireland; while the Three Seas Agreement was signed by Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

interests, as well as historical, cultural, and linguistic roots, is the litmus test for understanding the nature of the European integration process.

### 2.1.1 The idea of Europe

The cultural identity of a region depends on the perceived differences established with the people living outside its borders. There is no identity independent of its surroundings, and the larger and more heterogeneous a region is, the more nuanced its identity will be. It is always possible, therefore, to establish a common historical and cultural root between different peoples, whether one considers a municipal, state, or continental reality. Western civilisation, in the same way, could be culturally distinct from Asian civilisation, just as the whole of human civilisation could be distinct from that found on another planet in the galaxy. This reasoning, beyond the provocative aspect, serves to underline the dynamism of the concept of cultural identity,<sup>172</sup> and the importance of geo-history in binding peoples together. It was useless, for example, the concept of Europe during the Roman Empire, when political power was busy legitimising its presence over a larger territory, and which revolved around the Mediterranean; but it was also necessary at the conclusion of the Battle of Poitiers in 732, fought between the Franks and the Arab-Spaniards, to unite and distinguish the Christian world from the Arab-Muslim world.<sup>173</sup> When external geopolitical pressures become more pressing, as has happened at various stages of the European continent, the interrelationships between different territories and, consequently, their similarities and sense of belonging, increase. At the same time, the awareness of belonging to the same civilisation is not enough to build a common political project.

The first hypotheses of a union of European countries date back to at least the 18th century, with illustrious precursors such as the Abbot Charles-Irénée Castel de Saint-Pierre,

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<sup>172</sup> Francesco Remotti, “Francesco Remotti: Identità e impoverimento culturale”, *youtube.com*, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KungHukdtoI>; Federico Petroni, “LA NUOVA LEGA ANSEATICA”, *limesonline.com*, 2019, <https://www.limesonline.com/cartaceo/la-nuova-lega-anseatica>; Miłosz J. Cordes, “ALLARGARE IL TRIMARIUM PER ALLARGARE LA PACE”, *limesonline.com*, 2023, <https://www.limesonline.com/tag/trimarium>.

<sup>173</sup> Denys Hay, *Europe: the Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1968), 73. Lucien Febvre, *L'Europa: storia di una civiltà: corso tenuto al Collège de France nell'anno accademico 1944-1945* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 1999), 103-13. Giulio D'Arrigo, “L'evoluzione dell'idea di Europa: la dialettica tra un territorio e le sue interpretazioni (prima parte)”, *treccani.it*, [https://www.treccani.it/magazine/chiasmo/storia\\_e\\_filosofia/Spazio/SSC\\_L\\_evoluzione\\_di\\_idea\\_di\\_Europa.htm](https://www.treccani.it/magazine/chiasmo/storia_e_filosofia/Spazio/SSC_L_evoluzione_di_idea_di_Europa.htm) l.

with his book *Memoire pour rendre la paix perpetuelle en Europe* (1712), or Immanuel Kant, with his short essay *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), who proposed the idea of a federation of peace between the states of the continent.<sup>174</sup> What stands out to the historian's eye is the relationship between these proposals and the wars of the time:

While Saint-Pierre had published his works between the Seven Years' War and the War of the Austrian Succession, Kant wrote his short treatise in 1795 after the Battle of Valmy on the eve of the French campaigns in Germany and Italy. It is the war then, seen from Paris or Kronigsberg, that is the main cause of these reflections.<sup>175</sup>

In the course of the 19th century, however, after the experience of the American Revolution,<sup>176</sup> out of a spirit of emulation of the model, the concept of a United States of Europe began to spread in Europe.<sup>177</sup> From Mazzini's definition of *Giovine Europa* to the calls for a 'United States of Europe' by Carlo Cattaneo and Victor Hugo, the discussion on a possible supranational union of European states became increasingly heated.<sup>178</sup> The two world wars, predictably, made the debate on the United States of Europe even more salient, as demonstrated by the political commitment of Luigi Einaudi,<sup>179</sup> the pan-European project of Count Richard Nikolaus of Coudenhove-Kalergi, or the *Ventotene Manifesto* of Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi (1944).<sup>180</sup> The hypotheses produced up to 1945 on the possible political union of European states were essentially two: the first, the Kantian one, saw in a possible military alliance a brake on the internal coercion of individual states; a second, of a broader Enlightenment tradition, which saw its fulfilment in the *Ventotene Manifesto* of 1944, viewed as necessary the creation of a great multinational state that would overcome the traditional division of the European continent into nation-states. This second idea is what unites the *Ventotene Manifesto*, Kalergi's *PanEuropa* text (1923),<sup>181</sup> and Kojève's *Esquisse*: the most

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<sup>174</sup> Sergio Romano, *Europa: storia di un'idea: dall'Impero all'Unione* (Milan: Longanesi, 2004), 170-1.

<sup>175</sup> My translation. *Ibid.*, 171. Similarly, Alexandre Kojève wrote the *Esquisse* in reaction to the events of the Second World War, another sign of the link between war and cultural ferment, and between war and political upheaval.

<sup>176</sup> The American Revolution was not a revolution at all, but a war of independence that led to the formation of a federal state.

<sup>177</sup> Zhenis Kembayev, "Evolution of the Idea of a United Europe: Some Legal Conclusions." *J. Phil. Int'l L.* 4 (2013): 19-21.

<sup>178</sup> Moreover, these ideas spread before the formal unification of important European countries such as Germany and Italy, both of which took place in 1870. Sergio Romano, *Europa: storia di un'idea: dall'Impero all'Unione*, 171-4.

<sup>179</sup> Sergio Romano, *Europa: storia di un'idea: dall'Impero all'Unione*, 172-3.

<sup>180</sup> Ernesto Rossi, and Altiero Spinelli, *Per un'Europa libera e unita. Il Manifesto di Ventotene*, edizione trilingue (italiano, francese e inglese), (Roma: Senato della Repubblica, 2017).

<sup>181</sup> Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europa, un grande progetto per l'Europa unita* (Rimini: il Cerchio, 1991).

systematic and ambitious programmatic manifestos on the geopolitical future of European states. All three texts have in common their focus on the internal problems of Europe, for Kalergi the IWW while for the other two the IIWW, and on extra-European problems, e.g., Kalergi clearly describes the problem of the Japanese rise, and foreshadows the possible Chinese rise. In *Paneuropa*, the need for political union among Europeans is thus made clear:

The European question is posed in these terms: “Can politically fragmented and economically divided Europe ensure its own peace and independence in the face of the burgeoning non-European world powers? Or will it be forced, in order to save its own existence, to organise itself into a federation of states?” Just asking the question leads to the answer.<sup>182</sup>

For Kalergi, who envisions an imperial future for Europe, the danger posed by Russia and the United States to Europe is also clear, since “Russia wants to conquer it, America wants to buy it”.<sup>183</sup> The European Union is, therefore, a strategy for not falling under the influence of foreign empires. Kalergi, in his text, offers a very precise examination of the contemporary European situation at home and in the international context, which we could call protogeopolitical.<sup>184</sup> The new superstate, or empire, would include all states from Portugal to Poland:<sup>185</sup>

Altogether, 26 states and 7 territories, listed with tabular rigour, covering 5 million square kilometres and 300 million inhabitants. To these must be added the colonies of the European empires, in Africa and elsewhere, which brings the sovereign space of Pan-Europe to 26 million square kilometres, with 431 million souls. Excluded remains England, as a world empire.<sup>186</sup>

Kalergi, throughout his eleven-chapter essay-manifesto, analyses the profound reasons for his project, its real conditions of possibility, and the policies needed to structure it, while admitting the utopian nature of the proposal.<sup>187</sup> If Kalergi was the first to understand the external problem that made the creation of an empire necessary, he did not, however, take into account the cultural constraint in the creation of the project, as Kojève did, attempting to substitute the non-existent shared European sentiment with the mobilisation of a narrow cultural elite. In concrete terms, his attempt to build a pan-European project was reduced to the creation of the pan-European movement and the Pan-European Congress of 1926.<sup>188</sup> Kalergi's ambitious project,

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<sup>182</sup> My translation. *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>184</sup> Lucio Caracciolo, *La pace è finita: così ricomincia la storia in Europa* (Milano: Feltrinelli 2022), 27-32.

<sup>185</sup> Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europa, un grande progetto per l'Europa unita*, 26-7.

<sup>186</sup> My translation. Lucio Caracciolo, *La pace è finita: così ricomincia la storia in Europa*, 30.

<sup>187</sup> “Every great historical event began as utopia to end as reality”. It is with this quote, not surprisingly, that the text opens. Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europa, un grande progetto per l'Europa unita*, 7.

<sup>188</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell'Unione europea*, 17.



despite these problems, remains the most systematic and realistic of those that have dealt with defining a possible political union between European states. The *Ventotene Manifesto* itself does not reach the analytical depth of *PanEuropa*.<sup>189</sup> What is to be fought, according to the two authors of the *Manifesto*, are “the germs of capitalist imperialism, which our generation has seen grow to the formation of totalitarian states and the outbreak of world wars”.<sup>190</sup> The nation, in totalitarian states, becomes a “divine entity, an organism that must think only of its own existence and development, without in any way caring about the harm that others may suffer”.<sup>191</sup> It is totalitarianism, therefore, that is the main concern of the *Manifesto*, which does not go into detailed geopolitical analysis. Moreover, in the second part, the programmatic one, Rossi and Spinelli keep the discussion on the construction of the United States of Europe on a highly abstract level, and once again tainted by an elitist approach to politics. In the *Manifesto*, the spatial, social, and institutional boundaries of the future European Union are not specified, rendering the document of little programmatic value. It is precisely this vagueness, perhaps, that has marked the success of this document, much more often named than *PanEuropa* as the ideal precursor of the current European Union. Despite the numerous problems of these texts, their ambitious and systematic treatment of the subject, which shares a formal structure with Kojève’s *Esquisse*, has not been attempted since the end of the IIWW. The texts that are considered fundamental to the construction of the European project, apart from the founding documents,<sup>192</sup> are generally short statements, such as Winston Churchill’s speech at the University of Zurich in 1946 or the Schumann Declaration of 1950, and do not have the ambition to deal with the European question in a systematic way. Even before entering the merits of the idea of a united Europe, in fact, it is necessary to note the gap between the enormous complexity of this ambitious project and the scarce production of publications on the subject. Looking at the history of the European integration process, the idea in question is a purely theoretical construct, conceptually covering a series of practices that have nothing to do with the idea itself.

The concept of a United States of Europe, for example, takes the American federation as its model. This reference, however, is indicative of the lack of concreteness of the proposals

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<sup>189</sup> Lucio Caracciolo, *La pace è finita: così ricomincia la storia in Europa*, 32-5.

<sup>190</sup> My translation. Ernesto Rossi, and Altiero Spinelli, *Per un’Europa libera e unita. Il Manifesto di Ventotene*, 13.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Substantially silent on the federation issue.

aimed at creating a federal Europe.<sup>193</sup> The differences with the US case are so numerous as to be incomparable. In 1780, four years after the Declaration of Independence of 1776, the United States had about 2.8 million inhabitants divided into 13 states. The present population was also very homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, and social status.<sup>194</sup> Geographically, too, those states had unique characteristics: located on the east coast of the American continent, they had a vast territory behind them that ensured decades of continuous expansion, both demographic and territorial; they were self-sufficient in raw materials, with an entire continent to exploit beneath the surface; and they were positioned between two oceans, without the presence of particularly fearsome neighbours. Despite these favourable circumstances, it took roughly one hundred years, including a civil war (1861-5), for the United States to become a united and largely pacified state. Without delving further into the reasons, and historical events, that led to the creation of the American Federation,<sup>195</sup> the contrast with the European situation is obvious. In 2023, the population of the 27 states of the European Union is around 450 million,<sup>196</sup> with 24 official languages,<sup>197</sup> and a good religious variety, especially within the common Christian stock. At the cultural level, there are also huge differences between the member states in terms of forms of law, economic systems, lifestyles, and political traditions, in addition to the well-known long-standing mutual hatreds. Geographically, too, the European reality differs from that of the United States: a continent with a high population density, few mineral resources, and no oceans separating it from the Asian and African continents. Finally, European culture, especially as regards the Latin Mediterranean countries, is profoundly different from Anglo-American culture, in terms of geo-history and even in terms of the concept of a federal state.<sup>198</sup> It remains an open question

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<sup>193</sup> That the topic is debated is evidenced by the numerous texts on the subject, such as Thomas R. Reid, *The United States of Europe: the new superpower and the end of American supremacy* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); Jeremy Rifkin, *The European dream: How Europe's vision of the future is quietly eclipsing the American dream* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2013); Glyn Morgan, *The Idea of a European Superstate: Public Justification and European Integration-New Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). The occasional references to the idea by politicians and various opinion leaders indicate its topicality. Moreover, there are numerous references by European politicians and institutions to the American experience. Just think of the decision in 2001 to create a "Convention on the future of Europe" as the Constituent Assembly of the European Union, following the example of the Philadelphia Convention that led to the adoption of the Federal Constitution of the United States. Sergio Romano, *Europa: storia di un'idea: dall'Impero all'Unione*, 203-4.

<sup>194</sup> Before the Constitution of 1789 the states were called provinces or colonies. For an in-depth look at the characteristics of the American population in the late 18th century, Cfr. *Ibid*.

<sup>195</sup> For an in-depth, Cfr. Michael Burgess, *Comparative federalism: Theory and practice*. (London: Routledge, 2006), 50-75.

<sup>196</sup> "Facts and figures on life in the European Union", *European-union.europa.eu*, [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/key-facts-and-figures/life-eu\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/key-facts-and-figures/life-eu_en).

<sup>197</sup> To which could be added the dialects that in certain regions possess the informal status of languages.

<sup>198</sup> Cfr. Michael Burgess, *Comparative federalism: Theory and practice*, 161-9.

how it is possible for European states to take the American case as a model for designing their federation. Many other examples of federations highlight the difficulties of this process, which becomes more complicated as internal inhomogeneity increases. An emblematic example is Switzerland, which became a federation in 1848. Its origins, however, go back at least to the 13th century, when in 1291 the rural Alpine communities of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden entered a league of mutual defence against the House of Habsburg. From then on, the Swiss confederation experienced a slow project of aggregation, until the civil war of 1847, which marked the victory of the liberal Protestant cantons against the conservative Catholic cantons, and thus the formation of the federation.<sup>199</sup> What enabled the creation of the federal system, however, was the slow formation of a common culture:

The most pronounced features of this long federal progeniture in Switzerland are its slow, almost organic, accumulation of customs, conventions and political usages built up from below that have informed its political institutions.<sup>200</sup>

It was not until the mid-19th century that Switzerland became a single economic unit, after at least six centuries of close cooperation. The Swiss story teaches that political and military aspects are indispensable for the formation of a federal state. A state made up of 26 cantons, in which four official languages are spoken, and several religions are practised, cannot be built in the space of a few decades according to the dispositions of a few narrow social groups. What is needed is a shared culture, underpinned by common values and life practices, which only a long-studied project consistent with geo-historical similarities can achieve. In the case of the European Union, which is more like Switzerland than to the United States, this is precisely what is missing.

### 2.1.2 Geometry of power in European contemporary history

The history of the European Union, taking pro-European or anti-European rhetoric off the table, is characterised by inter-state power relations. In this case, the history of the integration process is largely the history of relations between France and Germany.<sup>201</sup> Every treaty, institution, or

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> The literature on the history of the European Community, and its functioning, has extensively addressed this issue, highlighting the great weight that this relationship between states has had in the Community project. Cfr. Douglas Webber, ed. *The Franco-German Relationship in the EU*. Vol. 7 (London: Routledge, 2005); Carine Germond, and Henning Türk, eds. *A history of Franco-German relations in Europe: From "Hereditary Enemies" to partners* (Berlin: Springer, 2008).

important EU political decision is the result of a compromise between these two countries, which makes the European project stable, and at the same time condemns it to the impossibility of a real political perspective. The unionist project is an agreement between the Continent's two greatest economic powers and is independent of old and new enlargements. The predominance of the Franco-German relationship, from the Treaty of Paris (1951) to the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), has relegated the other European countries to an often-marginal role in political bargaining, has given a strictly economic stamp to the European Union, and has prevented its real development in a democratic sense. The geo-historical differences between France and Germany, in fact, are a constraint that is difficult to eliminate, marking their divergence in perspective on many issues: from economic policy to monetary, foreign, and social policy, and the perceived function of political institutions. On the one hand, these differences led the two countries to apply a functionalist approach to European policy,<sup>202</sup> on the other hand, it forced them to initiate a close process of bilateral cooperation, starting with the Elysée Treaty (1963), which formed the main alliance of the European Community. To demonstrate what has been said so far, we will briefly analyse what we consider to be the key moments in the process of European integration: the birth of the Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), following the Treaty of Paris (1951), the failure, in the early 1950s, of the plans for a Common European Defence (CED) and for a substantial form of political union, the signing of the Elysée Treaty (1963) between France and Germany, and German reunification, which ended in 1991, with the subsequent Maastricht Treaty signed the following year. While the first and last historical events marked two of the milestones in the formal, hence institutional, construction of the European Community, the other two had an indirect but equally important effect on it. Without going into detail on more recent issues, we will summarise, with examples, what are the current structural limits of the European Union.

As for the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1951, it was certainly one of the key moments in the integration process. France and Germany had a centuries-long history of frequent conflict situations behind them. This historical rivalry reached its peak in the period from the Liberation Wars of 1813-4, where Napoleon's army clashed with members of the Sixth Coalition,<sup>203</sup> to the outbreak of the Second World War. In almost a century and a half, the two countries had

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<sup>202</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell'Unione europea*, 45-9.

<sup>203</sup> The Sixth Coalition was a politico-military alliance, formed to halt Napoleon's advance on the Continent, which included Sweden, Prussia, the Russian Empire, Great Britain, the Austrian Empire, the Kingdom of Spain, and some German states.

developed a strong enmity, which was to be among the most important problems faced by continental Europe after the Second World War.<sup>204</sup> One of the problems of the dispute, and among the causes of the friction that led to the Second World War, was the territorial dispute. After the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1, which led to the unification of Germany under the leadership of Chancellor Bismarck, the German annexation of the regions of Alsace and Lorraine, which returned permanently under French control only in 1945, caused a strong discontent in French public opinion. It is in this period that a revanchist sentiment was born in France, of a strongly nationalist and anti-German nature. This feeling increased at least until 1914, when the well-known events of the two world wars complicated the picture of territorial disputes.<sup>205</sup> An example was the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, as well as the Rhineland from 1918, due to Germany's failure to pay its war debts. These regions, which will be at the centre of the community treaty on coal and steel, were rich in mineral resources, including coal, an essential material for German industrial development.<sup>206</sup> Until 1948, in fact, the French government insisted on the separation of the Rhineland and the Ruhr from Germany, and on the French protectorate for the Saar, which it obtained until 1957, when it returned under German control.<sup>207</sup> The goal of this policy was to prevent Germany from obtaining the raw materials to develop its steel industry. The fear of German economic-military power, mindful of the recent military defeat against Hitler's army, was a characteristic element of French politics in those years. But with the birth of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, thanks to the promulgation of the Fundamental Law, a moderation of the French position seemed necessary, also due to US requests that aimed to make Germany a future political ally with an anti-Soviet function. It was Jean Monnet, an absolute protagonist of French and community politics after the Second World War, who proposed to Robert Schuman, French Foreign Minister, a plan to guarantee the coordinated exploitation of the mineral resources of the Ruhr. The modernization plan that Monnet was thinking of, in fact, was based on the relaunch of energy and steel production, both dependent on German coal.<sup>208</sup> In this way the treaty for the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) of 1951 was born, to which Belgium, France,

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<sup>204</sup> Carine Germond, and Henning Türk, eds. *A history of Franco-German relations in Europe: From "Hereditary Enemies" to partners*, 13-75.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-89.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-101.

<sup>207</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell'Unione europea*, 46.

<sup>208</sup> Sergio Romano, *Europa: storia di un'idea: dall'Impero all'Unione*, 177-8.

Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany were added.<sup>209</sup> The Benelux countries were of extreme importance because, worried about the potential of the Franco-German rivalry, they pressured France to create the ECSC.<sup>210</sup> It is worth specifying, however, that the ECSC was conceived as an essentially Franco-German project, at least in the French intention. As Schuman states in his famous statement,

The coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. Any action taken must in the first place concern these two countries. [...] It proposes that Franco-German production of coal and steel as a whole be placed under a common High Authority, within the framework of an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe.<sup>211</sup>

On the one hand, France ensured the supply of coal for its modernization project, and limited German industrial power, also controlling its possible rearmament plan; on the other hand, Germany obtained to be considered as an equal during the negotiation, and, therefore, to be rehabilitated in the context of international politics. This functionalist approach to European politics, together with the dialogue between France and Germany, is what will characterize the entire integration process, and will mark its greatest limit.

If the ECSC is the start of the European project, the EDC (European Defence Community) represents its failure from a political point of view. When France, which was the main promoter of the project, refused to give up a share of sovereignty as foreseen by the treaty, the integration process suffered a major setback. But let's proceed in order. From 1945, the military presence of the Americans, and even more so with the creation of NATO in 1948, became an important factor in the development of European politics. The first hypothesis for a European defense plan, in fact, came from a memorandum that the Italian Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza sent to the US ambassador James Dunn.<sup>212</sup> Subsequently, all the proposals relating to the topic in question were discussed with representatives of US politics. France, worried about the possible rearmament of Germany, proposed a plan for the creation of a European

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<sup>209</sup> England chose not to join, concerned about the possible political drift of this treaty. England, from then on, and until the Brexit of 2018, maintained an attitude of permanent suspicion towards plans for political union. "We could never accept a supranational authority with the power to tell us to stop mining coal and producing steel, and to grow tomatoes instead", Churchill declared. F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany and the New Europe 1945-1967* (Stanford: Stanford, 1968), 128.

<sup>210</sup> While Italy was added, but without having any weight in the political discussion.

<sup>211</sup> Robert Schuman, "Dichiarazione Schuman maggio 1950", *european-union.europa.eu*, [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950\\_it](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950_it).

<sup>212</sup> F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany and the New Europe 1945-1967*, 58.

army, in turn integrated into the Atlantic forces.<sup>213</sup> Meanwhile, within the discussions on the EDC, the Italian government, under the leadership of De Gasperi, put forward the proposal for the creation of a real federal union, through the introduction of article 38.<sup>214</sup> With the support of Schumann was given the task of constituent to the ECSC assembly, to lay the foundations of the future political community (EPC). The blueprint for the EPC, completed by a constituent commission appointed by the assembly, was completed in 1953. European governments, however, were first obliged to wait for the ratification of the EDC.

The EPC would have been responsible for general problems relating to international relations and defence, and would have provided for the coordination of the economic and financial policies of the member states. In foreign policy, the Executive Council would have acted "as a common representative of the member states", that is, it would have carried out the functions of a true "European government", albeit with the assistance of a Council of Ministers of the member states. The European Parliament would have been made up of a Chamber of Peoples (268 deputies elected for a five-year term by direct universal suffrage) and a Senate (87 senators elected for a five-year term by the national parliaments). The laws would be voted on by a simple majority.<sup>215</sup>

The ambitious project was rejected by the French parliament, through a procedural expedient, in 1954. Italy, however, committed to resolving its problems of internal political instability, had postponed ratification while awaiting the French result. While Germany, interested in obtaining a minimum of strategic independence from the United States through the European army, together with the Benelux countries, had already approved the ratification. The two countries promoting the project were therefore the cause of its failure.<sup>216</sup> The problems that led to this conclusion, in the most optimistic period for the European community, were multiple: on the one hand, Stalin's death in 1953 had a strong impact on international politics, contributing to the spread of a climate of détente, attenuating the perceived need of a European army; on the other hand, the nationalism of the French population and politics was reawakened, focused on

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<sup>213</sup> "The Pleven plan envisaged the establishment of a European army consisting of six divisions, with an international staff under the orders of the commander-in-chief of the Atlantic forces. This would be placed under the control of a European defence minister and a political authority to be appointed at the same time. The institutional structure followed that of the ECSC and aimed to dilute the Germanic presence by integrating it with that of the other participants. The European Defence Community (EDC) would not come into force before the ECSC, a condition set to highlight the complementarity of the two treaties proposed by France". Ibid., 60.

<sup>214</sup> Article 38 was about the commitment to provide the European community with a constitution and democratic institutions. This, for Italy, was the only historical moment of political activism in the European context. Ibid., 64-5.

<sup>215</sup> My translation. Ibid., 68.

<sup>216</sup> Germany and the Benelux countries had already approved ratification.

the failed war in Indochina, and on the fear of a possible German rearmament.<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, the Catholic roots of the major political representatives who discussed the treaty, De Gasperi, Adenauer, and De Gaulle, annoyed the large portion of the non-Catholic European population. More generally, the debate on the EDC reawakened nationalist sentiments in all six Community countries. Spinelli spoke of an “anti-European coalition” formed in these countries in the aftermath of the French vote.<sup>218</sup> This composite coalition was made up of the French nationalists, the economic right-wing circles, the neutralists, who in Germany feared that the EDC would prolong the reunification process, the military, unwilling to cede sovereignty in their sector, and the communists, committed in their anti-Western battle in the service of Moscow.<sup>219</sup> The promoters of the EDC had misinterpreted the widespread sentiment in public opinion in the aftermath of the IIWW,

The need for security had been confused, the legitimate concern which was at the origin of the requests for greater American protection against the Soviet threat and which were somehow intertwined with the recovery projects of Germany, with a presumed "revolutionary" will to change the rules of the old centralist state. That will simply did not exist or was in the minority.<sup>220</sup>

Here, once again, the problem of national interests arises. The process of European integration, in fact, was born in a fragmented way from very heterogeneous countries; therefore, aimed at protecting their national interest, and without a serious political project behind it. The European project, after the failure of the EDC, developed according to an exclusively economic logic.

The 1963 Elysée Treaty can be considered the most important founding act in the process of European integration.<sup>221</sup> The treaty was a turning point in the path of diplomatic reconciliation between France and Germany, already successfully started since the birth of the ECSC. After De Gaulle’s return to the presidency of the country in 1958, there were numerous meetings between him and German Chancellor Adenauer. This closeness was also shown on a symbolic level, as illustrated by the rhetoric used by the two heads of state, and the two famous photographs from 1962 which portray them together, first at the cathedral of Reims, in the historic coronation site of the French kings, and subsequently in an embrace after the signing

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<sup>217</sup> Carine Germond, and Henning Türk, eds. *A history of Franco-German relations in Europe: From “Hereditary Enemies” to partners*, 165-177; Altiero Spinelli, *L'Europa non cade dal cielo*, 196-201.

<sup>218</sup> Altiero Spinelli, *L'Europa non cade dal cielo* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1960), 191.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-95.

<sup>220</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell'Unione europea*, 74.

<sup>221</sup> It was originally conceived as a document. The idea of turning it into a treaty came from Adenauer, who was concerned about forcing his successors to comply with the agreement as well.



of the Treaty.<sup>222</sup> The Elysée Treaty was the symbol of the end of a centuries-old conflict between the two countries. The history of this achievement, however, was once again marked by a functionalist approach to politics, and by significant US interference in European affairs. The two Fouchet Plans, proposed a few months apart by France in 1962, designed a European political community according to the intergovernmentalism logic, which was also a cause of their failure.<sup>223</sup> In fact, European countries were afraid of possible French domination within the Community. Another cause concerned the fact that, while the Anglo-Saxon countries did not look favorably on French policy, the rest of the European countries, following the logic of the Cold War, wanted to guarantee American protection. Furthermore, equally important was the Anglo-American desire, and of the Benelux countries,<sup>224</sup> to favour England's entry into the EEC.<sup>225</sup> The entry of England would have weakened the internal cohesion of the European Community, transforming it into an Atlantic community led by the United States. Therefore, the "no" that France gave to English entry into the EEC was also a rejection of the American strategy.

I repeat – De Gaulle stated – that France intends to have its own national defense. Principles and reality combine to induce our country to equip itself with its own atomic force [...] It is clear that this French initiative does not seem too satisfactory to certain American circles. In politics and strategy, as in economics, monopoly naturally appears to those who hold it as the most advantageous system possible.<sup>226</sup>

The Franco-German bilateral agreement was the alternative solution for France to maintain its leading role in European politics. De Gaulle, who thought of national interest as the main horizon of politics, saw the agreement with Germany as the only possibility of promoting the European cooperation process, useful for guaranteeing France's strategic independence from the United States. Adenauer, committed to the international rehabilitation of the country, moved foreign policy between two poles, that of European integration, which had its fundamental

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<sup>222</sup> Carine Germond, and Henning Türk, eds. *A history of Franco-German relations in Europe: From "Hereditary Enemies" to partners*, 189.

<sup>223</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell'Unione europea*, 105-11.

<sup>224</sup> Italy too, through the words of President-in-Office Amintore Fanfani, aligned itself with the Atlanticist position. *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>225</sup> "If our neighbours have refused to follow France's call for the union and independence of a European Europe, it is partly because, following their tradition, they fear the primacy of France, but mainly because in the cold war climate in which the world finds itself, everything else takes second place in order to secure American protection". *Ibid.*, 110. My translation.

<sup>226</sup> My translation. *Ibid.*, 113.

premise in the Elysée Treaty, and that of protection by the Atlantic Pact.<sup>227</sup> It was the United States, fearful of the independent French foreign policy, which intervened in the discussion of the treaty, putting strong pressure on the German government to loosen its independence spirit, through President Kennedy. The result was the preamble to the treaty introduced by the Bundestag, the German parliament, before ratification. The preamble,<sup>228</sup> clearly Atlanticist in nature, mentioned several times the importance of cooperation with the United States for Germany, also in the sense of integration into NATO, mentioned a possible British entry into the EEC, and an international free trade agreement in the context of the GATT. The French disappointment was profound,<sup>229</sup> but it did not erase the historical importance of that treaty. The Treaty, despite its brevity, is divided into two sections: one focused on the organisation, which sets out the methods of contact and dialogue between the two countries; and a second strictly political one, divided into further sections on foreign affairs, defense, and education and young people.<sup>230</sup> The first section establishes the obligation of regular meetings between representatives of the various institutions of the two countries, including the heads of state and government, defense ministers, and the respective authorities in the fields of defence, education and youth. In addition to these meetings, the treaty encouraged the establishment, in subsequent years, of close communication between the two countries “beyond and below the stipulations of the Élysée Treaty”.<sup>231</sup> In the second section, in addition to the important cooperation on foreign policy and defence, the provisions on youth policy were of extreme importance. Since the creation of the French-German Youth Office on 5 July 1963, the cooperation of France and Germany in the cultural field has become increasingly closer, marking one of the greatest successes of the treaty.<sup>232</sup> The Elysée Treaty, despite its partial failure for the Gaullist perspective, established a long period of convergence between the national interests of France and Germany. An important moment of this collaboration was the Aachen Treaty of 2019, considered as an update of the Elysée Treaty, which formalized many collaborative practices

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<sup>227</sup> Carine Germond, and Henning Türk, eds. *A history of Franco-German relations in Europe: From “Hereditary Enemies” to partners*, 189-197.

<sup>228</sup> “Preamble to the Élysée Treaty ratification Bill (Bonn, 15 June 1963)”, *cvce.eu*, [https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/preamble\\_to\\_the\\_elysee\\_treaty\\_ratification\\_bill\\_bonn\\_15\\_june\\_1963-en-cb4f6630-4187-436a-922b-f14f13a2ea2e.html](https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/preamble_to_the_elysee_treaty_ratification_bill_bonn_15_june_1963-en-cb4f6630-4187-436a-922b-f14f13a2ea2e.html).

<sup>229</sup> Carine Germond, and Henning Türk, eds. *A history of Franco-German relations in Europe: From “Hereditary Enemies” to partners*, 195.

<sup>230</sup> “3. FRENCH-GERMAN TREATY OF 22 JANUARY 1963”, *fransamaltongvongesau.com*, <https://www.fransamaltongvongesau.com/documents/dl2/h6/2.6.3.pdf>.

<sup>231</sup> Ulrich Krotz, “Structure as Processes: The Regularized Intergovernmentalism of Franco-German Bilateralism”. *Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies*, Harvard University, Cambridge (2002): 10.

<sup>232</sup> Corine Defrance, “The Élysée Treaty in the context of Franco-German socio-cultural relations.” *German Politics and Society* 31.1 (2013): 70-91.

that had been established over time, and introduced many new articles.<sup>233</sup> The importance of the latter treaty, especially in the post-Brexit context since 2018, has been downplayed by public opinion and academic circles, when it comes to another fundamental moment in European history. As can be seen in the figure (figure 5)<sup>234</sup>, the exchange of information between the two countries has become, starting from the Elysée, an essential factor in European politics, creating one of the most advanced forms of bilateral cooperation that has ever been achieved. This cooperation has given rise to a binary system, which has become asymmetrical since at least 1991, when Germany surpassed France demographically. The latter, however, which has no less pride, history, and presumption than the former, will be forced to pay prices of political submission for its recognition. In the case of Germany, however, we will see how it will be able to stabilize the relationship in the future. Despite the strong external pressures deriving from the non-European context, it will be the weight of internal contradictions that will determine the future of the system. A disadvantageous situation, however, is that of Spain and Italy, which due to the Franco-German agreement found themselves without solid alliances in the European archipelago.<sup>235</sup>

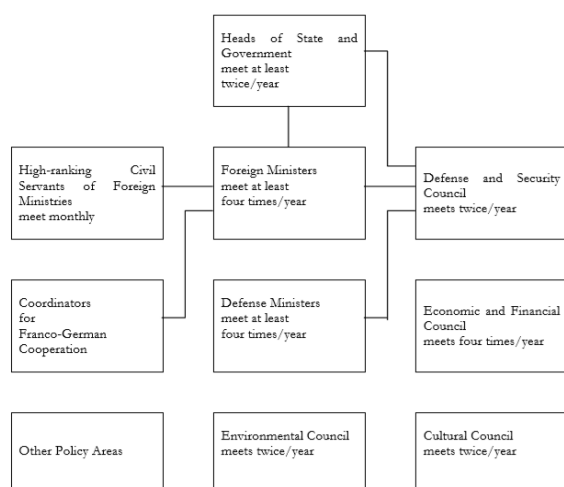


Figure 5: Regularized Bilateral Franco-German Intergovernmentalism

Finally, another key moment in the European integration process was that of German reunification. At that time, despite the advancement of the European project, thanks to the

<sup>233</sup> Cfr. Elie Perot, “The Aachen Mutual Defence Clause: A Closer Look at the Franco-German Treaty.” *Egmont Institute* (2019), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21385>; Delphine Deshaux-Dutard, “Le Traité d’Aix-La-Chapelle, Un an Après.” *DSI (Défense et Sécurité Internationale)*, no. 147 (2020): 38–39. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48605636>; “Texte du Traité d’Aix-La-Chapelle de 2019.

<sup>234</sup> Ulrich Krotz, “Regularized intergovernmentalism: France–Germany and beyond (1963–2009).” *Foreign policy analysis* 6.2 (2010): 22

<sup>235</sup> Massimo Cacciari, *L’arcipelago* (Milano: Adelphi, 1997).

Schengen Agreement (1985) and the Single European Act (1987), the thought of a possible German reunification frightened the rest of the European countries, especially France, which was worried about the economic, political, and military power that the new German state could wield. The German expansionist vocation would have pushed the EU to take an interest in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, thus limiting the Franco-German EU drive.<sup>236</sup> Moreover, a country of just over 60 million came to number around 80 million on 9 May 1991, becoming the most populous state in the European Community. As Giulio Andreotti said in a famous aphorism, uttered in the aftermath of reunification to summarise his fear of reunification, “I love Germany so much that I preferred two”.<sup>237</sup> At the time, France and Germany were led by Mitterrand and Kohl respectively. The former, who would later be remembered for his commitment to European integration, had a strong concern for a federal Germany, and expressed the gist of this in several private conversations.<sup>238</sup> The French president could not deny the legitimacy of that German action, but he hoped that it would take longer than the time frame. On the other hand, Kohl was interested in the German reunification process because, in addition to the internal cultural-historical importance of the event, it would have sanctioned the country’s final political rehabilitation, put an end to the Franco-European conflict, and guaranteed the definitive support of the United States.<sup>239</sup> The results of German unification in European politics were mainly two: the birth of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) of the European Union, and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. As Mertes maintains,

the Treaty of Maastricht and its EMU project had been the result of a joint Franco-German initiative in the spring of 1990, aimed at making the imminent German reunification acceptable to Germany’s neighbors. [...] ‘Irreversibility,’ as Kohl understood it, meant that Germany had to be put on rails she would be unable to jump.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell’Unione europea*, 212.

<sup>237</sup> Sergio Romano, “Andreotti e Mauriac”, *corriere.it*, 2013, [https://www.corriere.it/lettere-al-corriere/13\\_Maggio\\_09/-Andreotti-e-Mauriac-\\_c09d096e-b86a-11e2-8563-aab5ecf30b92.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/lettere-al-corriere/13_Maggio_09/-Andreotti-e-Mauriac-_c09d096e-b86a-11e2-8563-aab5ecf30b92.shtml).

<sup>238</sup> De Michelis tells of a dinner at the Elysée Palace with other representatives of the EU institutions, “After dinner, we gather around the fireplace for coffee [...] I am sitting behind Andreotti and Kohl. Mitterrand speaks, and immediately makes it clear that for him the question of German unity is a historical eventuality, to be examined in an unspecified future. On the same tone, the interventions of the others, from González to Thatcher. Kohl turns red with rage and when it’s his turn he almost seems to cry. The gist of his speech is this: you cannot make me return to Bonn without a clear message of Europe’s support for German reunification. He is very emotional because he realises that he is risking returning empty-handed”. Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell’Unione europea*, 212-3.

<sup>239</sup> Unification, in fact, was politically and economically an annexation of pro-Soviet East Germany by pro-Atlantic West Germany. Cfr. Vladimiro Giacché, *Anschluss. L’annessione: L’unificazione della Germania e il futuro dell’Europa*. (Rimini: Diarkos, 2019).

<sup>240</sup> Michael Mertes, “Helmut Kohl’s legacy for Germany.” *Washington Quarterly* 25.4 (2002): 79-80.

The EMU, from which the euro and the European Central Bank (ECB) were born, was a project presented by the President of the Commission, Jacques Delors (1985-95), already a key player in the events that led to the creation of the Single Act, at the 1989 European Council. The goal was to achieve complete economic and monetary union between the EEC countries, and to do this, the report listed the three steps needed to achieve this result.<sup>241</sup> Once again, it was the Franco-German system that engineered the EMU. France saw the EMU as the guarantee for a future leading role in the global geopolitical scenario, as well as for its economic link with Germany. By linking the German currency to a regional system, Germany's possible independentist ambitions would be curbed.<sup>242</sup> Germany, on the other hand, wanted to reassure its European partners that German reunification would not mean the break-up of the EEC. The choice of Kohl, hotly debated by public opinion in the country at the time,<sup>243</sup> was particularly courageous for Germany, since

the deutsche Mark had become the symbol of the seriousness, credibility and success of the new Germany, a kind of moral compensation for frustrated hopes and lost honour. Kohl had the courage to sacrifice it and his gesture made the birth of monetary union possible in less than a year and a half, i.e. the greatest progress achieved by the idea of Europe since the signing of the Treaties of Rome.<sup>244</sup>

On the other hand, the characteristics with which the EMU was structured from the outset were particularly favourable to the German vision. Clauses such as the independence of the future ECB, structured on the example of the German Bundesbank,<sup>245</sup> and the member states' commitment to anti-inflationary policies, even at the expense of employment, fully met Germany's expectations.<sup>246</sup> It is precisely the prevalence of the German economic view that

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<sup>241</sup> As in the 1970 Werner Report, three conditions were necessary to build monetary union: "the assurance of total and irreversible convertibility of currencies; the complete liberalisation of capital transactions and the full integration of banking and financial markets; and the elimination of fluctuation margins and the irrevocable locking of exchange rate parities". Report on economic and monetary union in the European Community. Jacques Delors, "Presented April 17, 1989 (commonly called the Delors Plan or Report) By Committee for the Study of Economic and Monetary Union", *aei.pitt.edu*, 2014, <http://aei.pitt.edu/1007>, 14.

<sup>242</sup> In the Delors Report, however, the creation of a single currency, the euro, had not yet become a certainty. "The adoption of a single currency, while not strictly necessary for the creation of a monetary union, might be seen for economic as well as psychological and political reasons as a natural and desirable further development of the monetary union". *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>243</sup> The danger perceived by the German population, linked to the trauma of the IIWW, was that of inflation, historically seen as the greatest fault of monetary policy. Having to rely on supranational institutions to keep the currency stable was the concern of the defenders of the mark and the Bundesbank.

<sup>244</sup> My translation. Sergio Romano, *Europa: storia di un'idea: dall'Impero all'Unione*, 187.

<sup>245</sup> The most important documents for the construction of the future ECB were the German government's proposal for an ECB in 1988, the Delors Report in 1989 and the Bundesbank position paper of October 1990. Douglas Webber, ed. *The Franco-German Relationship in the EU*. Vol. 7 (London: Routledge, 2005), 37.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-43.

will be the main cause of future instability in the European Union.<sup>247</sup> The Maastricht Treaty, or Treaty on European Union (TEU),<sup>248</sup> signed in 1992, on the other hand, represents another consequence of German unification. The negotiation process in the European Council, in fact, was dominated by the dialogue between France and Germany.<sup>249</sup> The Treaty divided European policy into three pillars: the first concerning the European Community, which would incorporate the ECSC, EEC, and the EAA; the second on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP); and the third on Home Affairs and Justice (CGAI). While the first pillar, focusing on economic and monetary issues, is characterised by the presence of mechanisms of a supranational nature, the other two are essentially intergovernmental in nature. This fact, i.e., the unwillingness to pool sovereignty in foreign and domestic affairs, is a further confirmation of the Community's economic character. The greatest novelty introduced by the treaty is, in fact, the provisions concerning the EMU. The provisions in the Delors Protocol are confirmed, and the future entry into force of the single currency is discussed.<sup>250</sup> With regard to the single currency, convergence criteria for member states are also established, including the famous 3% and 60% limits on public deficit and public debt, respectively.<sup>251</sup> The other two pillars, better defined as small additions to the foundations of the economic project, list a series of vague objectives that denote the desire for autonomy on the part of the twelve signatory states. In subsequent years, institutional practice has confirmed the lack of effectiveness of the provisions contained in the second and third pillars.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Cfr. Ashoka Mody, *EuroTragedy: a drama in nine acts*.

<sup>248</sup> The term "European Union" first came into being with this treaty. "Gazzetta ufficiale delle Comunità europee, EUR-Lex", *eur-lex.europa.eu*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11992M/TXT>.

<sup>249</sup> Flavia Giannini, "A FRANCO-GERMAN EUROPE? Maastricht as a new power assessment between France and unified Germany" (Bachelor diss., LUISS, 2018), 29-35.

<sup>250</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell'Unione europea*, 225.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> The scientific literature on the European policies listed in the second and third pillars is largely in agreement in noting their lack of effectiveness and, in general, the dominance of the intergovernmental approach on these issues. Cfr. Ariadna Ripoll Servent, and Florian Trauner, eds. *The Routledge handbook of justice and home affairs research* (London: Routledge, 2017); Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré. "The high representative and EU foreign policy integration A comparative study of Kosovo and Ukraine." (2018); Schumacher, Tobias, Andreas Marchetti, and Thomas Demmelhuber, eds. *The Routledge handbook on the European neighbourhood policy* (London: Routledge, 2017).

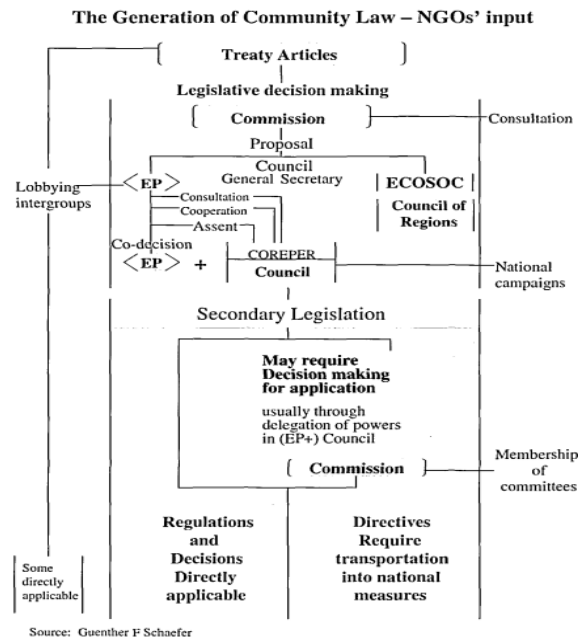


Figure 6. The generation of community law and NGOs' input

### 2.1.3 Structural problems of the EU

The EU is not a politically inefficient institution, nor is it a moment of transition to a vague federative future. The EU is an economic union project born out of a long-term agreement between France and Germany. This observation is evident when looking at three current problems/issues of the EU: the democratic deficit of its institutions; the uninterrupted enlargement process; and a general lack of solidarity between member states on several occasions, including in response to migration and economic crises. To demonstrate the EU's lack of democratic value, which is widely discussed in the literature, one only must observe the abstruse functioning of its decision-making process (figure 6).<sup>253</sup> The power of legislative initiative is in the hands of the Commission alone, the organisation's executive body whose members are elected by the European Council with the approval of the Parliament; intergovernmental bodies such as the two Councils play a central role in the decision-making process; and the Parliament, which is the only democratic body elected by universal suffrage, has more powers of control and advice than of legislative initiative. The Parliament, moreover, is a poorly representative body, considering the historically low turnout recorded for its

<sup>253</sup> Although the scheme dates to 1998, it would not change substantially if updated. Pedler, Robin. "EU public affairs: The growing role of NGOs in the decision-making process". *Journal of Communication Management* 3.3 (1999): 236. Instead, for a more precise description of the functioning of the European institutions, Cfr. Jonathan Olsen, and John McCormick, *The European Union: politics and policies* (London: Routledge, 2018), 77-181.

elections, which in 2019 registered 50 per cent.<sup>254</sup> Finally, the role of lobbies and the phenomenon of comitology help paint a picture of an International Organisation with low democratic legitimisation.<sup>255</sup>

The enlargement process, on the other hand, is a clear admission of the economic matrix of the European project. The enlargement of the European Union, with the addition of ten new member states in 2004 as a milestone,<sup>256</sup> brought the organisation to 27 member states after the Brexit of 2018. Although this process did not paralyse the decision-making process of the EU,<sup>257</sup> which had grown from 378 to 453 million citizens,<sup>258</sup> it made a change in a democratic sense even more unlikely. The Laeken Declaration of 2001, in fact, which led to the creation of the failed European Convention,<sup>259</sup> failed to solve the institutional problems left over from the Treaty of Nice. Once again, it was France that, by referendum, scuttled the project in 2005. Whereas Germany, which aimed to become the first trading partner of the new Eastern European countries, a goal successfully achieved in the following years,<sup>260</sup> looked favourably on both enlargement and the possible turnaround of the Convention. Regardless of the will of France and Germany, however, it was clear that the path to political unification would fade away proportionally as the number of member countries increased. Most of the new countries, and especially the former members of the Soviet bloc, saw the European project as a chance to join that economic bubble and the Atlantic military alliance. A possible federative idea, even more so than for the founding countries of the Union, was a vague project with no chance of success. Moreover, the very idea of promoting a federal political union among 27 culturally

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<sup>254</sup> “2019 European election results”, *europarl.europa.eu*, <https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/turnout/>.

<sup>255</sup> Cfr. Robin Pedler, “EU public affairs: The growing role of NGOs in the decision making process.” *Journal of Communication Management* 3.3 (1999): 235-247; Alexander Ballmann, David Epstein, and Sharyn O’Halloran. “Delegation, Comitology, and the Separation of Powers in the European Union.” *International Organization* 56, no. 3 (2002): 551–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3078588>.

<sup>256</sup> While Bulgaria and Romania failed to meet the criteria set by the Commission in 2004, and only joined the European Union in 2007. On the effects of enlargement, Cfr. Ulrich Sedelmeier, “Europe after the eastern enlargement of the European Union: 2004–2014.” *Heinrich Böll Stiftung* 10 (2014), <https://eu.boell.org/en/2014/06/10/europe-after-eastern-enlargement-european-union-2004-2014>.

<sup>257</sup> Also, thanks to the signing of the Treaty of Nice in 2000. Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Giuseppe Mammarella, and Paolo Cacace. *Storia e politica dell'Unione europea*, 286.

<sup>259</sup> Sergio Fabbrini, *Which European Union?*, 65-70.

<sup>260</sup> “International trade in goods by partner”, *ec.europa.eu*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_by\\_partner#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%204%20principal,the%20United%20Kingdom%20and%20Switzerland.&text=In%202022%2C%20China%20had%20the,goods%20exported%20by%20the%20EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_trade_in_goods_by_partner#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%204%20principal,the%20United%20Kingdom%20and%20Switzerland.&text=In%202022%2C%20China%20had%20the,goods%20exported%20by%20the%20EU).



disparate countries, as suspected, remained at the level of political rhetoric. The ongoing negotiations for further enlargement are proof enough of this impossibility.<sup>261</sup>

Finally, the difficulty of political convergence between European states on many issues is the tip of the iceberg of what has been said so far. European policy on the management of migration flows, for example, has developed in a strictly intergovernmental sense. The topic has been highly politicised,<sup>262</sup> and no real harmonisation of migration policies has been achieved, leading to the well-known 2015 crisis.<sup>263</sup> This result is due to the will of European states to maintain their sovereignty in this area, to the different sensitivities of their public opinions, but also to their uneven foreign policies, as shown by their inability to create a common European list for safe countries of origin.<sup>264</sup> The different positions on foreign policy, which is a core competence for a federal state, mark the cosmetic nature of the European political project. Besides the migrant issue, in fact, European positions differ on a vast range of topics: relations with Russia, China, and the United States, the importance attached to the Arctic, Africa, the Mediterranean, and so on. Once again, it is the longstanding understanding between France and Germany that holds the union together, hiding its cracks not related to economic management. As for the responses to economic crises, while they are the argument most often wielded by Eurosceptic theorists, they are only a small part of the puzzle we have described. The European monetary system, strongly influenced by the ordoliberal views of the German state,<sup>265</sup> imposed very restrictive measures on debtor countries in the years following the 2008 crisis. This lack of solidarity, coupled with the German refusal to pool public debt, led to a clear division between creditor and debtor countries.<sup>266</sup> The most damaging results were observed in Greece, where a programme of adjustment of the country's national finances

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<sup>261</sup> The current candidate countries are Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, North Macedonia, Albania, Ukraine, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Politica di allargamento dell'UE", *consilium.europa.eu*, 2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/enlargement/>.

<sup>262</sup> Cfr. Witold Klaus, "Security first: The new right-wing government in Poland and its policy towards immigrants and refugees." *Surveillance & Society* 15.3/4 (2017): 523-528; Edgar Grande, Tobias Schwarzbözl, and Matthias Fatke. "Politicizing immigration in Western Europe." *Journal of European Public Policy* 26.10 (2019): 1444-1463.

<sup>263</sup> Arne Niemann, and Natascha Zaun. "EU refugee policies and politics in times of crisis: Theoretical and empirical perspectives." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 56.1 (2018): 3-22., 12-3.

<sup>264</sup> Natalia Gierowska, "Why Does No Common European List on Safe Country of Origin Exist Despite Numerous Efforts Aimed at the Harmonisation of European Asylum Policy?." *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 23.4 (2022): 2031-2046.

<sup>265</sup> An obvious example is in the structure of the ECB. Paul De Grauwe, "Towards Financial Stability: A European Perspective." *Towards Financial Stability: a European Perspective* (2011): 61-79.

<sup>266</sup> Cfr. Ashoka Mody, *EuroTragedy: a drama in nine acts*.

caused a major drop in the population's standard of living.<sup>267</sup> Moreover, the divergences in the economic-monetary field between France and Germany are one of the main causes of their friction and, consequently, of instability in European politics. In fact, the two countries' views on the subject can be seen as a dichotomy that is repeated in the rest of Europe. While France opts for a more solidary attitude in economic matters, often seeking the support of the other Latin-Mediterranean countries, Germany prefers a mercantilist approach and strict financial austerity. The German approach, however, is what prevents real economic stability in the EU system, which is unable to cooperate around an entity that promotes competition rather than cooperation at the economic level.<sup>268</sup> Without going into further examples, it is evident that European cooperation is lacking in several areas, even in the economic-monetary area, which has also marked its greatest successes. While the relationship between France and Germany is always central to these dynamics, it is also important to emphasise the political difficulty faced by an organisation of 27 different states.

As already mentioned, the 2019 Treaty of Aachen is a further confirmation of the role played by this alliance, around which the current European Union was born. The alliance, despite the political vacuity of the pro-European project, may tighten further soon. As written in the 2019 treaty,

the time has come to take their bilateral relations to the next level and prepare for the challenges that the two countries and Europe face in the 21st century and aiming to further the convergence of their economies and social models, promote cultural diversity and bring their societies and citizens closer together.<sup>269</sup>

This prospect would further weaken the position of the Latin-Mediterranean countries in European politics and prevent their alternative existence outside the EU project. Italy will have the task of wrenching France out of the constraints of the Franco-German agreement, involving it in a common alliance. This is the obligatory way for Latin countries, united by interests and traditions, to conceive of their existence within a larger political union. It is this, in fact, that we will address in the concluding part of the essay. As far as the impossible federal option of the European Union is concerned, a further example will serve as the concluding argument.

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<sup>267</sup> Guillaume Duval, "La crisi greca spiegata in dieci grafici", *internazionale.it*, 2018, <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/guillaume-duval/2018/08/31/crisi-grecia-dieci-grafici>.

<sup>268</sup> Philip G. Cerny, "In the shadow of ordoliberalism: The paradox of neoliberalism in the 21st century." *European Review of International Studies* 3.1 (2016): 78-91.

<sup>269</sup> "Texte du Traité d'Aix-La-Chapelle de 2019", *de.ambafrance.org*, 2019, 2. [https://de.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/traite\\_d\\_aix\\_la\\_chapelle\\_complet.pdf?24964/c93e8e99d78672a677366b4b8a799a155f01144d](https://de.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/traite_d_aix_la_chapelle_complet.pdf?24964/c93e8e99d78672a677366b4b8a799a155f01144d).

Consider, through a little thought experiment, the signing of a treaty between the eurozone countries, which would create a democratic parliament with full legislative powers. Germany, in this parliament, would have about 25% per cent of the votes, and supposing it managed to attract to itself the votes of Austria, Finland, the Netherlands, and the three Baltic countries, it would reach 35%. France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, on the other hand, would get almost 60% of the votes.<sup>270</sup> At the first sitting of this hypothetical parliament, given the numerical advantage of the Latin Mediterranean countries, the reform of the currency, and thus of the system with the ECB at its centre, and the issuance of common debt would be on the agenda. Germany, and the rest of the Nordic countries, despite their staunch opposition to these structural changes, would have no choice but to leave the parliamentary session and withdraw from the treaty as soon as possible. Other issues, moreover, would cause the same reaction. Whether we are talking about monetary policy, foreign policy, given the interest of the Latin countries in the southern Mediterranean, or social and economic policy, the existence of divisions between these countries would be a problem difficult to reconcile. The impossibility of making the hypothetical institution we have envisaged work is the unmasking of the rhetorical federation projects that have concerned the countries of the European Community over time.

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<sup>270</sup> “Main population indicators”, *ec.europa.eu*, 2023, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00001/default/table?lang=en>.

## Chapter 3. Kojève and the Latin Empire

“*val meglio una buona speranza che un cattivo avere*”.

M. de Cervantes<sup>271</sup>

Let's go back a few decades. The crisis of the modern state in Europe was already a topic of discussion in the 20th century, especially after the end of the two world wars. Two issues spread this awareness among the intellectuals of the time:<sup>272</sup> the expansion, albeit at different times, of the United States and the USSR, which gradually eclipsed the role of the European powers; and the trauma of the two world wars, which deeply marked the souls of the peoples who experienced them, as well as the politics of their states.<sup>273</sup> European states seemed destined to lose not only their hegemony in the international geopolitical context but also their autonomy as independent sovereign entities. What seemed, and still seems, less clear was whether an alternative perspective existed for their future. Criticism of the limitations of the nation-state, made evident by the two world wars, was publicly accepted, but there was a lack of viable solutions. If the political union of the whole of Europe was a rather widespread idea,<sup>274</sup> at the same time there were no concrete plans to realise it.<sup>275</sup> The European Community that has been taking shape since the 1950s was not among them, being based exclusively on economic logic, in clear opposition to political logic in terms of practices and objectives. An example of this incompatibility is the theoretically unlimited openness of an economic union,<sup>276</sup> albeit a regional one, which cannot be reconciled with the necessary focus of a political union on political sovereignty,<sup>277</sup> dependent, among other things, on the existence of a certain degree of cultural homogeneity,<sup>278</sup> on the protection of its territory, thanks to the existence of a centralised army and established borders,<sup>279</sup> and on its strategic autonomy, i.e. the development of a single

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<sup>271</sup> Miguel De Cervantes, *Don Chisciotte della Mancia* (Milano: Bur, 2007), LXV.

<sup>272</sup> This is not to say that the “issues” discussed are the causes of the crisis of the European state, which we discussed earlier, but that they were the tip of the iceberg of this crisis.

<sup>273</sup> As De Gaulle clearly wrote at the end of the war “During the catastrophe, beneath the burden of defeat, a great change had occurred in men’s minds. To many, the disaster of 1940 seemed like the failure of the ruling class and system in every realm.” Tony Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 63.

<sup>274</sup> Cfr. George Steiner, *The idea of Europe: an essay* (New York: Abrams, 2015); Zhenis Kembayev, “Evolution of the Idea of a United Europe: Some Legal Conclusions.” *J. Phil. Int'l L.* 4 (2013): 4-14.

<sup>275</sup> There are exceptions, which we will discuss in the next chapter, such as Kalergi's pan-European text (1929) and Spinelli's *Ventotene Manifesto* (1944).

<sup>276</sup> The continuous enlargement of the European Community, after Maastricht called the European Union, has led to 27 member states in 2022. The number of members, moreover, may increase over the next few years.

<sup>277</sup> On the concept of sovereignty Cfr. Carlo Galli, “Sovranità e questione europea”, un dialogo a partire dal volume di Carlo Galli, “Sovranità”.

<sup>278</sup> Indispensable for democratic decision-making.

<sup>279</sup> The existence of NATO is a clear limitation on the sovereignty of European states.

foreign policy according to a hierarchy of well-defined priorities.<sup>280</sup> Prior to these developments, Kojève's proposal, while having the concepts and ideas of his philosophical research in the background, aimed at that missing concreteness. His reflection, summarised in the memorandum *Esquisse d'une doctrine de la politique française*,<sup>281</sup> written in 1945, starts from the historical and political analysis of the crisis of the modern state, to offer a possible solution: to encourage the creation, according to a strictly political logic, of imperial realities between similar states. According to Kojève, on the way to the creation of a universal state, the so-called 'end of history', the world would see the temporary emergence of empires. As written in the *Esquisse*, "Before being embodied in Humanity, the Hegelian Weltgeist, which has abandoned the Nations, inhabits Empires".<sup>282</sup> These empires, as anticipated, would be formed through the political union of related states. In the case of Empire Latin, he was referring to France, Italy, Spain and, potentially, Portugal, including the colonies. This idea, although never made public by the philosopher during his lifetime, seems to us of extreme interest, both to understand the current situation and to attempt to transform it. His analysis, in fact, offers a still little-explored possibility for thinking about the construction of new political entities in the European context. Below we will discuss Kojève and his essay on the Latin Empire.

### 3.1 Kojève

Although his figure is currently little studied,<sup>283</sup> Alexandre Kojève was one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century.<sup>284</sup> Born in Russia in 1902 into a wealthy family of merchants, thanks to which he could claim kinship with his uncle Vasily Vasil'evič Kandinsky, he was forced to leave the country in 1920 following problems with Soviet justice for his activities in the Moscow black market.<sup>285</sup> He then moved to Germany, where he studied philosophy in Hilderberg, completing his studies with a doctoral thesis on the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solov'ëv. In 1926, he moved to Paris, where he continued his studies,

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<sup>280</sup> The more countries differ from each other, the more difficult it is to identify common strategic interests.

<sup>281</sup> Italics refer to Alexandre Kojève, "*L'empire latin – Esquisse d'une doctrine de la politique française*", [laregledujeu.org](https://laregledujeu.org), 2021, <https://laregledujeu.org/2021/10/07/37763/1-empire-latin-par-alexandre-kojeve/>. The essay first appeared in "la regle du jeu" in 1991, 23 years after Kojève's death.

<sup>282</sup> Alexandre Kojève, 'Outline of a doctrine of French policy', 8.

<sup>283</sup> One of the reasons seems to be the discredit he suffered after his death in 1968 due to rumours, so they still appear today, about his alleged double life as a French state bureaucrat and a Russian KGB spy. Marco Filoni, *L'azione politica del filosofo. La vita e il pensiero di Alexandre Kojève* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2021), 12.

<sup>284</sup> For the account of Kojève's biography, we drew mainly from Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Following the October Revolution (1917), he is forced to work on the black market due to the family's financial problems. He is saved from being shot thanks to his uncle, who was Lenin's personal physician. Ibid., 27-87.

also delving into disciplines such as theology, art criticism, the study of Oriental languages, mathematics, and physics. As far as philosophy is concerned, we could safely say that Kojève was the major interpreter of Hegelian philosophy in France in the first half of the 20th century, contributing to the renewed interest in the study of the German philosopher, considering that his lectures on the ‘phenomenology of spirit’, delivered at the *Ecole pratiques des hautes études* from 1933 to 1939, influenced a generation of French intellectuals. Among those who attended his courses were figures such as Jacques Lacan, Georges Bataille, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Queneau, Gaston Fessard, Eric Weil, Aron Gurwitsch, Roger Caillois, Jean Hyppolite, Raymond Aron, Robert Marjolin, and occasionally André Breton.<sup>286</sup> Kojève stands out as a charismatic, original, and often provocative philosopher. Much discussed, were his frequent pro-Stalinist statements, of which we have various testimonials.<sup>287</sup> Another characteristic of Kojève was the close relationship between his intellectual research and his commitment to political action, as demonstrated in his intellectual dialogue with his friend and colleague Strauss.<sup>288</sup> During the war, he moved to Marseilles, where he actively sided with the resistance to Nazi Fascism.<sup>289</sup> In the same period, he wrote two important essays: *The Notion of Authority* (1942),<sup>290</sup> which contains an appendix dedicated to Petain’s analysis, and *Esquisse d’une phénoménologie du droit* (1943).<sup>291</sup> In both essays, Kojève confronts two philosophical problems that are highly topical and useful for understanding the theoretical developments underlying his *Esquisse*.<sup>292</sup> In the second text, for instance, he discusses the problem of the necessary end of the nation-state, starting with the definition of the anthropological foundation of the state, according to him closely linked to the desire for recognition, the concept of citizenship, which is incompatible with the existence of the state,<sup>293</sup> of law, whose complete

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 144-93.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 195-200; Jeff Love, “Alexandre Kojève and Philosophical Stalinism.” *Studies in East European Thought* 70, no. 4 (2018): 263–71. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48700921>.

<sup>288</sup> Cfr. Alexandre Kojève, and Antonio Gnoli. *Il silenzio della tirannide* (Milano: Adelphi, 2004).

<sup>289</sup> He risks the death sentence again after infiltrating a group of Nazis formed by Muslim Tatars, who discover him and report him to the authorities. Marco Filoni, *L’azione politica del filosofo. La vita e il pensiero di Alexandre Kojève*, 193-5.

<sup>290</sup> Alexandre Kojève, and Marco Filoni, *La nozione di autorità*. (Milano: Adelphi, 2011).

<sup>291</sup> Cfr. Marco Filoni, Matteo Vegetti, Alessandro Aresu, and Massimo Cacciari “Il pensiero giuridico di Alexandre Kojève”, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRi9Aty24c4&pp=ygUPQ2FjY2lhcmkga29qZXZl), 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRi9Aty24c4&pp=ygUPQ2FjY2lhcmkga29qZXZl>.

<sup>292</sup> By ‘*Esquisse*’ we mean, again, Alexandre Kojève, “Outline of a doctrine of French policy”.

<sup>293</sup> “If citizenship is inscribed in a political-anthropological terrain broader than the state, this means that the idea of the state is as such inadequate to its concept. The search for the satisfaction of the desire for recognition proper to the figure of the citizen (the *Befriedigung*) therefore necessarily has an expansive character, because its very reality depends on the possibility of the state proving to be objectively universal, that is, such as to encompass the whole of humanity. Citizenship thus expresses the impossibility of maintaining order within a static and closed form such as the state, and therefore unleashes an imperialistic vocation, aimed at dissolving all socio-political

autonomy with respect to the political sphere he claims, and the concept, fundamental to Kojévian production, of the end of history.<sup>294</sup> In these essays, he also develops the idea of empire as a necessary evolution of state reality, an idea that we find clearly stated in the *Esquisse* of 1945. At the very end of the Second World War, Kojève decided to abandon life as an academic philosopher and to join the French administration. From 1947 to 1968, the year of his death, he skilfully played the role of negotiator for the French state in the context of international economics, first as an advisor to Robert Marjolin, and then as an advisor to the French government during important international treaties, including the GATT, from its formation to the Kennedy Round in the 1960s.<sup>295</sup> As Marjolin wrote: “I saw Kojève again in 1945, when I was Director of External Economic Relations in the Ministry of the National Economy. He came to see me one day and explained that he wanted to get into the civil service. I had him appointed *chargé de mission* in the ministry, where he was to stay until his death in 1968. Valued counsellor of Oliver Wormser, Bernard Clappier and many others, he enjoyed considerable authority there.”<sup>296</sup> In his later years, therefore, he distinguished himself as an able civil servant, relegating philosophy to a minor role.<sup>297</sup> This apparent contradiction between research and action in Kojève should come as no surprise, given the great focus on praxis in his philosophical research, as demonstrated in his essay on the Latin Empire.

### 3.2 The Latin Empire

In 1945, at the end of World War II, the European continent became a theatre of contention between the victorious powers of the war, and in particular between the United States, England, and the Soviet Union.<sup>298</sup> All three countries were imperial realities, and given the strategic affinity of the first two, the use of the term ‘Anglo-Saxon Empire’ was justified.<sup>299</sup> These

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differences, which retains its epicentre in the state”. My translation. Matteo Vegetti, “STATO TOTALE, IMPERIALISMO, IMPERO. SUL PENSIERO POLITICO DI ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE.” *Rivista Di Storia Della Filosofia* (1984-) 63, no. 4 (2008): 621–51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44024093>, 627.

<sup>294</sup> Fundamental to understanding the evolution of Kojève's political philosophical thought is the article by Matteo Vegetti. Cfr. *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> Evidence of Kojève's work in this phase of life can be found in Florence De Lussy, *Hommage à Alexandre Kojève* Éditions de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2007, 56-86.

<sup>296</sup> Robert Marjolin, *Architect of European Unity: Memoirs 1911-1986* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1989), 52.

<sup>297</sup> His dialogues with his friends and colleagues Levi Strauss and Carl Smicht remain important.

<sup>298</sup> Cfr. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945*, 100-29.

<sup>299</sup> Outline. Although the term “Anglo-American empire” is preferable. Florence De Lussy, *Hommage à Alexandre Kojève*, 65.

countries, meeting in numerous conferences between the outbreak of war and 1945,<sup>300</sup> decided the political future of the European continent. The only shared certainties between the US and USSR were that Germany was the defeated European country and solely responsible for the outbreak of war, and that the two superpowers would redistribute military, then political and social influence, on the continent.<sup>301</sup> Among the pro-Western European states, France was the only country that, due to its title as the victor country,<sup>302</sup> had political weight in discussions regarding the postwar situation. The main concerns of French intellectuals, bureaucrats, and politicians were to ensure Germany's perpetual neutrality,<sup>303</sup> and the country's political autonomy from the influence of the surrounding superpowers. De Gaulle, as is well known, dealt extensively with this issue during all his mandate, as evidenced by the 1966 decision of France's exit from NATO military command.<sup>304</sup> Kojève, who from the end of the conflict became an advisor within the French administration, also wrote a short essay, technically a memorandum, that we have already frequently mentioned: "*L'empire latin – Esquisse d'une doctrine de la politique française*".<sup>305</sup>

The 1945 memorandum, probably drafted by Kojève during his first months as a French state official, was found unsigned in the philosopher's personal archive. The text was first published in part in 1991 by the French journal *La regle du jeu*.<sup>306</sup> Until then, it was completely unknown, as were the theses it contained. Within the same archive, however, another undated, nine-page text called *Notes sur le défailances de la politique française*.<sup>307</sup> The text, probably the work of Jean Cassou and another unknown author dating from the war years, bears great similarities to Kojève's future work on the Latin Empire, briefly anticipating its theses.<sup>308</sup> As far as the author of the text is concerned, it should be Robert Marjolin or another senior representative of the French administration,<sup>309</sup> who apparently did not find the work

<sup>300</sup> The most important were the Casablanca (1943), Tehran (1943), Yalta (1945), and Postdam (1945) conferences.

<sup>301</sup> As Stalin stated in one of his famous aphorisms "This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes upon it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise." Tony Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945*, 129.

<sup>302</sup> The doubt concerned, more than the resounding defeat against the German army, the widespread collaborationism present within the Vichy puppet state.

<sup>303</sup> "La strategia segreta della Nato – Verbale".

<sup>304</sup> On the fundamental figure of Charles De Gaulle for French and European history in the 20th century.

<sup>305</sup> The addition of the term "*L'Empire Latin*" is attributed to the magazine *la regle du jeu*.

<sup>306</sup> Marco Filoni, Alexandre Kojève, "philosophe de la politique mondiale, une conversation avec Marco Filoni", interview by Gerardo Muñoz, *Le Grand Continent*, 2022, <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2022/01/25/alexandre-kojeve-philosophe-de-la-politique-mondiale-une-conversation-avec-marco-filoni/>.

<sup>307</sup> Marco Filoni, *L'azione politica del filosofo. La vita e il pensiero di Alexandre Kojève*, 230-33.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Marco Filoni, "Alexandre Kojève, philosophe de la politique mondiale, une conversation avec Marco Filoni", It does not seem plausible, however, to name De Gaulle as the Memorandum's owner, as is often claimed. For



particularly interesting.<sup>310</sup> Kojève wrote this ambitious text, the only one to systematically address a topical geopolitical issue among his works, with the clear intention of bringing Marjolin closer to his ideas, and potentially influencing the general direction of the French government, hence De Gaulle. In fact, the writing does not contain any specific opinions on contingent issues, but provides an analysis, albeit propagandistic, that moves from historical to economic, geopolitical, and cultural background. Kojève thinks about the future of the French state in the context of global interstate competition, and imagines it at the head of a new imperial reality called the ‘Latin Empire’. The idea of a Latin Empire, or Latin union, was not entirely new, despite Kojève's original exposition. This idea has always been linked to the concept of the Mediterranean, and found an early form in the ‘*système de la Méditerranée*’ conceived by the Sansimonians in the first half of the 19th century,<sup>311</sup> which included the southern Mediterranean countries. Subsequently, a specifically Latin policy, in terms of colonial, foreign, and monetary policy, was promoted by Napoleon III and his government.<sup>312</sup> This policy came to an end with the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. From the end of the 19th century to the IIWW, the discourse on Latinity remained present, especially in an anti-German function, in the diplomatic relations between France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and at times even in the public opinion of these countries.<sup>313</sup> Between France and Italy, the concept of Latinity assumed significant importance during this period, and composed the rhetoric accompanying the diplomatic relations between these two countries.<sup>314</sup> Despite these precedents, through the *Esquisse*, Kojève offers a detailed proposal regarding the concept of Latinity and Latin union in the light of the new post-IWW geopolitical scenario.

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instance, in Giorgio Agamben, “l’Impero Latino”, *quodlibet.it*, 2013, <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-l-impero-latino>.

<sup>310</sup> As Marco Filoni states, quoting a note attached to the manuscript, “Marjolin n’en pensa pas grand-chose et lui répondit que le texte était plein d’idées archaïques utilisées dans les articles de propagande pour la promotion des accords Mussolini-Laval de 1935. Marco Filoni, “Alexandre Kojève, philosophe de la politique mondiale, une conversation avec Marco Filoni”. Regarding the Franco-Italian agreements, Cfr. “The Secret Laval-Mussolini Agreement of 1935 on Ethiopia.” *Middle East Journal* 15, no. 1 (1961): 69–78. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4323317>.

<sup>311</sup> Michel Chevalier, *Religion saint-simonienne: politique industrielle et système de la Méditerranée* (Éverat, 1832).

<sup>312</sup> “la politique coloniale incluait un projet de royaume arabe, la politique étrangère une tentative de créer, au nom du panlatinisme, une base mexicaine destinée à freiner l’extension de la puissance des Etats-Unis. Enfin, la même logique présida à la création d’une Union monétaire latine, dont l’objectif était d’assurer la suprématie de la France en Europe par le biais de la politique monétaire, mais qui échoua à cause du refus de la Prusse d’intégrer l’Union.” Wolf Lepenies, “L’Option Latine”, *Le Grand Continent*, <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2018/11/15/leurope-latine/#easy-footnote-5-11782>.

<sup>313</sup> As evidenced by the emergence of magazines such as *Revue du monde latin* (1883) and *Renaissance latine* (1902). Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Cfr. Christophe Poupault, “La latinité au service du rapprochement franco-italien (fin du xixe siècle-1940): un grand récit culturel entre grandeurs et rivalités nationales.” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 95 (2017): 31-45. An important moment in these relations are the Mussolini Naval Agreements of 1935.

We now come to a more in-depth analysis of the text. The writing, with its simple and fluent syntax, is characterised by short and expressive sentences at the beginning of paragraphs, which are then argued with the clarity of a propaganda text. The style is thus suited to the necessary highly schematic synthesis, where the author conceals his vision to outline an analysis that seems as scientific as possible. The *Esquisse* is structured in the form of an essay divided, in addition to the introduction, into four chapters: ‘The Historical Situation’, ‘France’s Situation’, ‘The Idea of the Latin Empire’, ‘Means of Realization’. The expository clarity of the text is already evident in its first lines, where the reasons for the urgency of the imperial project for the French state are set out:

Two dangers threaten France in the postwar world. The first is more or less immediate; the other is much more distant but also incomparably graver. The immediate danger is the German danger, which is not military, but economic and thus political. [...] The more distant danger is, it is true, less certain. But on the other hand, it could be described as mortal, in the strict sense of the word. It is the danger that France is running of being involved in a Third World War and serving anew as an aerial or other kind of battlefield in it.<sup>315</sup>

For Kojève, the identification of Germany as an immediate danger is not due to the events of the IIWW, but concerns the awareness of potential German superiority in the economic field, which would reduce French power on the continent. The danger also relates to Germany’s possible future alliances, as it will be forced to decide whether to belong to the Anglo-Saxon or the Slavic-Soviet empire. Both solutions, according to Kojève, would lead France to a situation of political irrelevance, forcing it to be absorbed by one of these empires and potentially being dragged into a new world war. The second danger, in fact, concerns the possibility of a geopolitically isolated France, a situation that “renders illusory the autonomy of the French nation, which includes barely 40 million individuals”.<sup>316</sup> In the first chapter, regarding the historical situation, Kojève addresses the problem from its roots, proposing an analogy between the end of political realities in the late Middle Ages and the end of nation-states in contemporary times:<sup>317</sup>

There is no doubt that we are currently witnessing a decisive turning point in history, comparable to the one that took place at the end of the Middle Ages. The beginning of the modern age is characterized by the unstoppable process of the progressive elimination of “feudal” political formations dividing the national units to the benefit of kingdoms, which is to say of nation-States.

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<sup>315</sup> Alexandre Kojève, “Outline of a doctrine of French policy”, 3-4.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>317</sup> The first chapter of this thesis can be read as an expansion of that of the *Esquisse*.

At present, it is these nation-States which, irresistably, are gradually giving way to political formations which transgress national borders and which could be designated with the term “Empires. [...] To be politically viable, the modern State must rest on a “vast ‘imperial’ union of affiliated Nations.” The modern State is only truly a State if it is an Empire.<sup>318</sup>

Kojève also analyses the causes that led to the end of these political realities, feudal and national. These processes “can and must be explained by economic causes, which manifest themselves politically in and through the requirements of military technology”.<sup>319</sup> In contemporary times, Kojève sees in the failure of the German Imperial Project of the Third Reich the inadequacy of the political form of the nation-state. The nation-state, in fact, lives in the paradox of having to fight wars to affirm its national idea, but at the same time not being able to win them, if not at the cost of its negation as a national reality.<sup>320</sup> As the philosopher writes, after describing Hitler's role in this process:

This [Germany] is a State which, on the one hand, strove to realize all national political possibilities, and which, on the other hand, wanted to use only the power of the German nation, by consciously establishing, qua State, the (ethnic) limits of the latter. Well, this “ideal” nation-State lost its crucial political war. [...] And it is certainly the eminently and consciously national character of the German State which is the cause of this “fate.” For to be able to sustain a modern war, the Third Reich had to occupy and exploit non-German countries and import more than 10 million foreign workers. But a nation-State cannot assimilate non-nationals, and it must treat them politically as slaves.<sup>321</sup>

The future imposition of imperial realities on the European continent is then evident. The need to create a Latin empire, for France, is not dictated by purely economic or social issues, but concerns the ability to preserve its civilisation, which is part of the Latin Catholic civilisation, with its cultural specificity. The Latin Empire is the lifeline for France,<sup>322</sup> Italy, and Spain, from being incorporated by the Anglo-Saxon empire, becoming a sterile periphery of it. These countries, in fact, are united by a similar civilisation process that led to the creation of a common mentality and values. Their affinity from a linguistic, political, and economic point of view, as well as their common belonging to the Catholic tradition and the Mediterranean geographical area,<sup>323</sup> is what guarantees the possibility of a Latin Union, of which France,

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>320</sup> Marco Filoni, Matteo Vegetti, Alessandro Aresu, and Massimo Cacciari “Il pensiero giuridico di Alexandre Kojève”.

<sup>321</sup> Alexandre Kojève, “Outline of a doctrine of French policy”, 6.

<sup>322</sup> The use of the term “empire” has its own conceptual value, but Kojève did not think it should be part of the name of this new political reality, so the terms “union”, “accord”, or “agreement” are certainly more suitable. Ibid., 25.

<sup>323</sup> Kojève develops these points in the third and fourth chapters of the *Esquisse*.

according to Kojève, should take the lead. In the second chapter, entirely dedicated to the French situation, the increasingly depoliticised culture of this country is criticised, still tied to the concept of nation formulated during the French Revolution. Despite the certain subordination that France will suffer in the future with regard to its political, economic, and cultural sovereignty, in the event that it is absorbed by a foreign empire, the French population does not envisage an alternative: “It could almost be said that for the ‘average Frenchman’ the current war entailed, from the beginning, only two political possibilities: France’s politico-economic subordination, either to Germany or to England.”<sup>324</sup> What Kojève reiterates is that the anachronistic concept of the nation-state is the number one danger to European states. The third chapter, with the redundancy typical of the text, reaffirms why he is talking about a Latin Empire. Kojève defined “latin mentality” as “specifically characterized by that art of leisure which is the source of art in general, by the aptitude for creating this “sweetness of living” [in the original text *douceur de vivre*] which has nothing to do with material comfort, by that “dolce far niente” itself which degenerates into pure laziness only if it does not follow a productive and fertile labor”.<sup>325</sup> Another aspect uniting the Latin countries is their Catholic culture, to which Kojève devotes many pages of the essay,<sup>326</sup> which is the bearer of values and traditions distinct from those of the Protestant and Orthodox religions, which characterise the Anglo-Saxon empire, with the addition of Germany, and the Orthodox empire. As Kojève points out, probably with Weber’s writings in mind,<sup>327</sup> the historical development of religions in different countries influenced their economic and political development. Catholicism, despite potential anti-Catholic sentiments within the Latin countries, would be an indispensable glue for the realisation of the Latin empire. Kojève, after justifying the idea of a Latin empire, places strict conditions of existence on his project. First, “Economic union is the condition sine qua non of Latin imperial union.”<sup>328</sup> Although not the goal of the project, which is essentially political, economics plays an important role in facilitating its construction. This means pooling the resources drawn from colonial possessions,<sup>329</sup> and fostering the emergence of a democratically regulated common market. Another prerequisite is the creation of a single foreign policy:

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 38-40.

<sup>327</sup> Cfr. Max Weber, *L’etica protestante e lo spirito del capitalismo*, trad. di AM Marietti. (Milano: BUR, 1991).

<sup>328</sup> Alexandre Kojève, “Outline of a doctrine of French policy”, 20.

<sup>329</sup> As optimistically stated by Kojève, “It is even possible that it is in this unified Latino-African world that the Muslim problem (and perhaps the “colonial” problem in general) can one day be resolved.” Ibid., 19.

The Empire can thus exist only on condition of establishing a single guiding principle of foreign policy accepted by all the participants, as much in the domain of general orientation as in that of practical execution.<sup>330</sup>

Obviously, the foreign policy of the Latin Empire should focus on the domination of the Mediterranean, going so far as to reserve exclusive rights over this sea. Finally, the last condition, inextricably linked to foreign policy, is the creation of a common army, of which France should be placed at the helm. The army, as Kojève reiterates, is not necessarily a catalyst for bellicose policies, but can be an instrument of peace. Even a pacifist state, to be so, needs to be militarily autonomous and not dependent on foreign armies. As summarised in the text: “It will need an army powerful enough to be able to assure its autonomy in peacetime, and peace in autonomy, and not in dependence on one of the two rival Empires.”<sup>331</sup> In the last chapter, concerning the means of realisation, Kojève discusses the strategies to be promoted, and the obstacles to be overcome, for the creation of the Latin Empire. The possible reaction of the major world powers to this project is described, from the certain British opposition, to the more ambiguous position of the US and USSR, and of the countries involved, with a special focus on the political and cultural situation in France.<sup>332</sup> Finally, economic and religious issues concerning the future are discussed in detail, with a long-term view that, as in the rest of the text, is not limited to the situation existing in 1945.

Following this brief examination, we can affirm the plausibility of the Latin option at the time it was formulated. The Latin Empire was a viable solution against the threat of German rearmament and a possible future war between international empires. In our opinion, however, this proposal, in its essential elements, has a validity that transcends the era in which it was formulated. European history, from 1945 to the present day, confirms many of Kojève’s theses, and offers numerous clues to the necessity of that lost project. From a geopolitical point of view, for example, the current situation is similar to the one described by the philosopher: two empires, the Russian and the Anglo-Saxon, to which should be added China and a whole series of new variable allies, the Japanese, Koreans, Persians, Ottomans, and Arabs, in conflict for

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>332</sup> According to Kojève, this project should involve different social classes within the country: “neither the creation of the Latin Empire nor even the economic and political reconstruction of France can come about without the prior creation of a certain political elite, which would reunite “constructive” members of the Resistance, functionaries having preserved a faith in the State, technicians loving their work in itself, and “capitalists” still imbued with a will to autonomy, expansion, and economic power.” Ibid., 33.

hegemony in the international context.<sup>333</sup> Germany, as prophesied in *Esquisse*, which has already achieved economic supremacy in the European contest, is playing its game to gain political supremacy as well. And, geopolitically contested between the two empires, Russian and Anglo-Saxon,<sup>334</sup> it has opted for the latter at the moment of final choice. Moreover, the concerns about France have almost been fully realised: to be reduced, due to German growth, to a secondary power in the European context; and to find itself strategically dependent on the Anglo-Saxon empire, of which it risks becoming a weak periphery. In fact, if Kojève's premises are still valid, concerning the end of nation-states and the formation of empires, what is missing, even today, is the construction of one or more autonomous sovereign, and supranational, political realities within the European continent. Given the failed nature of the European Project, as we have already argued, European countries will be forced to imagine possible alternatives. As for the Latin countries, their homogeneity is maintained at a level of spontaneous convergence of opinions, but lacks a necessary system of agreements. One policy framework that brought these countries closer together was the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) regarding the south of the Mediterranean, from the Barcelona Process to the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (2008).<sup>335</sup> Although it was a failed process, especially in relation to the Arab Spring phenomenon,<sup>336</sup> and involved all EU countries, the interest in Arab and North African countries brought Latin states closer together. It is no coincidence that the proposal of the Mediterranean Union, first expressed by Sarkozy during his election campaign in 2007, would have included, in addition to several Middle Eastern and North African countries, only the European states bordering the Mediterranean. The idea, which had the immediate support of Spain and Italy, proposed the creation of a parallel, but integrated institutional system to that of the European Union. Given Germany's opposition and the purely propagandistic nature of the proposal, the Mediterranean Union was transformed into the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), comprising all 27 EU countries. Despite its failure, the Mediterranean Union was an implicit admission of the converging foreign policy interests of the Latin countries. This convergence has also shown itself in other contexts, such

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<sup>333</sup> Even though Russia's expansionist ambition was considerably reduced after the collapse of the USSR.

<sup>334</sup> Although the choice for the Western leader was determined in Germany with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the country had subsequently established deep economic relations with Russia, particularly in the energy sector. It was the war in Ukraine that forced Germany towards US interests.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Demmelhuber, T. (2018) 'The challenges of a changing southern neighbourhood'. In Schumacher, T. Marchetti, A. and Demmelhuber, T. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy* (London: Routledge), 177-185. Young, R. (2018) 'A new era in Euro-Mediterranean Relations'. In Gillespie, R. and Volpi, F. (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Mediterranean Politics* (London: Routledge), pp. 72-82.

<sup>336</sup> Federica Bicchì, "More for More' or Less of the Same?". *Mediterranean Politics* 19 (2014).

as in the case of European economic and monetary policy, where France has repeatedly sought the support of Latin countries in opposing northern European ones, or in the creation of the more general Euro Med informal discussion forum,<sup>337</sup> despite its political fragility.<sup>338</sup> Indeed, among the Latin countries, there are no solid inter-state agreements, or regular informal discussion meetings that could unite their positions in view of European summits. Two partial exceptions are the Franco-Italian agreement signed in 2021, the Quirinal Treaty, and the 2023 Barcelona Treaty between France and Spain. The former was signed by French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and is modelled, as the Barcelona Treaty does,<sup>339</sup> on the Franco-German Elysée Agreement. The treaty begins with an affirmation of closeness between the two countries:

Considering the breadth and depth of the friendship that unites them, anchored in history and geography; reaffirming in this spirit their common bond with the Mediterranean as a crossroads of civilisations and a junction between the peoples of East and West, of Europe and Africa;<sup>340</sup>

The common commitment within the EU and NATO, as well as in ecological policies, is then reaffirmed. The text goes on to discuss councils of ministers with the participation of a minister from the other country, the establishment of a bilateral defence council, exchanges between administrations, and frequent consultations between ministries. In addition, the creation of commissions and cooperative activities is encouraged to ensure a deep and mutual understanding between the two-state apparatuses. The measures, contained in twelve chapters, include, to name but a few, ‘foreign, security and defence affairs’, ‘European affairs’, ‘migration policies’, ‘economic, industrial and digital cooperation’, ‘culture, youth and civil society’, ‘education and training, research and innovation’, and ‘space’, to which an entire article is devoted.<sup>341</sup> Chapters 1 and 3 also explicitly refer to the need to “build a European strategic autonomy”.<sup>342</sup> The broad form of interaction envisaged in the treaty is evidence of an ambitious project regarding bilateral relations between these two countries. Despite the

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<sup>337</sup> “A Madrid les pays du sud de l’UE affichent leur “unite” post-Brexit”, *capital.fr*, 2017, <https://www.capital.fr/entreprises-marches/a-madrid-les-pays-du-sud-de-l-ue-affichent-leur-unite-post-brexit-1220894>.

<sup>338</sup> Kerry Longhurst, “A new Mediterranean Union will mean a weaker Europe”, *politico.eu*, 2007, <https://www.politico.eu/article/a-new-mediterranean-union-will-mean-a-weaker-europe/>.

<sup>339</sup> Jean-Pierre Darnis, “I punti in comune fra il Trattato di Barcellona e il Trattato del Quirinale”, *ilfoglio.it*, 2023, <https://www.ilfoglio.it/esteri/2023/03/03/news/i-punti-in-comune-fra-il-trattato-di-barcellona-e-il-trattato-del-quirinale-4916177/>.

<sup>340</sup> My translation. “Trattato del Quirinale”, *governo.it*, 2021, [https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/Trattato\\_del\\_Quirinale.pdf](https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/Trattato_del_Quirinale.pdf)

<sup>341</sup> Ibid. “spazio”, art. 7.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 6.

communication impasse between the two administrations after the treaty was signed, following the birth of the Meloni government in 2022,<sup>343</sup> the agreement seems to lay the foundations for future cooperation. Both countries, in fact, need an internal alliance within the European community to restore the balance towards the south of the continent. The eastward enlargement of the EU interest, reinforced after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has in fact eclipsed the geopolitical interests of the Latin countries. Moreover, this agreement could act as a counterbalance to the relationship with Germany in the short and long term: finding support on issues such as energy and European budget rules; and bringing the Mediterranean question to the centre of the European discussion. With similar intentions, France and Spain signed the Barcelona Treaty in 2023.<sup>344</sup> This text, consisting of ten chapters, has a structure very similar to the Quirinal Treaty. The international ties of the two countries, EU and NATO, are reaffirmed, their similar worldviews are emphasised,<sup>345</sup> and future patterns of cooperation are described. This agreement, like the Franco-Italian one,<sup>346</sup> has an extremely important symbolic value.<sup>347</sup> If relations between these three countries were to develop, including through trilateral agreements, a new centre of influence for EU policy could emerge. Without having to wait until the end of the process, these states would have to nurture their alternative by encouraging the convergence of their policies. Kojève's lesson, also thanks to these treaties, still seems relevant, and its development will depend on several factors: the internal pressures of EU policy, which will increasingly push French policy towards the Latin allies; the external pressures, which will favour the emergence of a common front between these countries to resolve issues of great geopolitical importance, such as the management of African migratory flows, the attention paid to the Mediterranean and the countries bordering it, and the dialogue with the superpowers, from China to the United States; finally, the ability of the political class in favouring this rapprochement with a slow but fruitful cooperation. If, absurdly, the Latin Empire were born at the present time, it would become the third largest country in the world by GDP (nominal),

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<sup>343</sup> Jean-Pierre Darnis, "Crise bilatérale permanente : comment structurer la relation entre la France et l'Italie ?", *legrandcontinent.eu*, 2023, <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2023/06/06/crise-bilaterale-permanente-comment-structurer-la-relation-entre-la-france-et-litalie/>. Which recalls the cooling of bilateral relations between France and Germany that followed the signing of the Elysée Treaty in 1963, and lasted at least until the end of the Gaullist presidency in 1969.

<sup>344</sup> Pablo Del Amo, "TRAITÉ DE BARCELONE: TEXTE INTÉGRAL", *legrandcontinent.eu*, 2023, <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2023/01/19/traite-de-barcelone-texte-integral/>.

<sup>345</sup> Con un importante riferimento alla sensibilità ecologica. Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Jean-Pierre Darnis, "I punti in comune fra il Trattato di Barcellona e il Trattato del Quirinale".

<sup>347</sup> Anna Palacio, *et al.*, "Un nouvel axe franco-espagnol ?", *legrandcontinent.eu*, 2023, <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2023/01/19/un-nouvel-axe-franco-espagnol/>.



after the US and China,<sup>348</sup> and the eighth largest by population, after China, India, the US, Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, and Nigeria.<sup>349</sup> It would also have a decisive influence in a large number of sectors, potentially becoming a global superpower. Without dwelling on technical descriptions of how the Latin option might take shape, a task to which the project's supporters will have to devote much energy, what we would like to do is reiterate its historical necessity. Whether we consider long-term history or focus on current problems, the pressures of global phenomena are pushing for the policies of Latin countries to begin to converge. The Latin Union will be the natural solution to this convergence.

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<sup>348</sup> “World Economic Outlook Database, April 2023”, *imf.org.*, 2013, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2023/April>.

<sup>349</sup> “World Population Prospects 2022”, *population.un.org.*, 2022, <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, the idea of a Latin Union rests on two solid foundations: on the one hand on the historical process that threatens the existence of nation-states; and on the other on the lack, or impossibility, of a European project aimed at overcoming national politics. The crisis of nation-states is a process that concerns the adaptive capacities of political systems. Due to the complexity, and the ever-increasing scale, of the problems they face, as well as competition with empires of global scope, European states need to transform themselves into new supranational entities. As in the long process that led to the formation of modern states, which began in the 12th century and first came to fruition in England in 1689, the current one is evident from the same three long-term dynamics: the growth, in size and complexity, of the economic world; the changes that have taken place in the military; and the emergence of new institutions. Demography, moreover, has accompanied all these processes, highlighting how a quantitative increase in population implies a qualitative change in society. A sudden demographic change, such as the one that occurred in the second half of the 20th century, implies an acceleration of the processes influenced by it. Despite the forcing of the analogy, what it has helped us to demonstrate is the complementarity, in transformative processes, of a system's internal and external pressures. If military pressure played a key role in accelerating state creation in the late medieval period, the struggles for internal domination of the various European regions and the centripetal thrusts of the new state bureaucracies played an important role. The same is true for Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries, where an increasingly strong competition with the non-European world forced the old nation-states to seek new forms of cooperation. In addition to the external cause, however, it was the failure of national policies, first under colonialism and then in the two world wars, that brought European states into disrepute. The solution, on the other hand, did not prove adequate. The European Community came into being without the foundations of a structured political project, without the cultural homogeneity necessary to allow a complete fusion of national policies, and without a parallel intellectual production on the subject. The most systematic text on the possibility of a federal union between European states remains Kalergi's *PanEuropa*. The history of the future European Union, in fact, is characterised by a functionalist approach on the part of the European powers, and the prevalence of the Franco-German alliance in the process of community building. The founding moments of this process, including the birth of the ECSC, the failure of the EDC, the Elysée Treaty, and the Maastricht Treaty, were the result of a dialogue between France and Germany. This duopoly, as well as the general political

fragmentation of the European continent, is the main cause of the current limits of the European Union. More generally, the geo-cultural differences between the various European countries, which are deep and difficult to synthesise, prevent the communion of such diverse strategic interests. The enlargement process, moreover, is a phenomenon that aggravates this dynamic. The result is a system of economic alliances in which countries pool economic policies and, for those in the eurozone, monetary policies. The European institutions' lack of democracy and their intergovernmental constraint in matters outside the economic world are a consequence of the European integration process we have described. Having established the cosmetic nature of the European Union's reform proposals in a federalist sense, there remains a vacuum for political projects of a supranational nature. Consequently, if nation-states are to become part of supranational political entities, ways must be found for this to happen as quickly as possible. The time factor is what forces European peoples to make a choice: progressive subjugation to the superpowers that dominate international politics, as has been the case since 1945; or the radical transformation of their political systems. Kojève's proposal, which concerns the creation of a Latin Empire among the Latin Mediterranean countries, is a possible solution to this dilemma. France, Italy, and Spain have a high degree of cultural homogeneity and share many strategic interests. This shared worldview is the condition of possibility for the creation of close political cooperation, and this is precisely the fundamental aspect ignored by Kalergi's text. Kojève's analysis, which in its broad outline still seems to us to be relevant today, focuses not only on the economic aspect, but also on the importance of sharing an army, a foreign policy, and the promotion of a unifying culture. The means to achieve this, following the example of Kojève's careful analysis in 1945, however, deserve a more detailed study. What remains open in this research is an in-depth examination of the conditions necessary to promote the creation of a Latin empire, through the analysis of the contemporary history of Latin countries and the most relevant examples of federative processes. Although any kind of alliance, even within the context of the European Union, is useful for the development of close cooperation between these countries, intellectual production will be a fundamental aspect of this process. External pressures are not enough to lead the radical turnaround needed in this transitional phase. Moreover, the idea of a Latin Empire, which will necessarily have to be called an alliance or union, is theoretically applicable to other groups of countries on the European continent. Since Europe is highly fragmented from a cultural point of view, it is logical that future political projects will have to be conceived with these veins of being in mind.

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