

THE

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—Robert Kagan

BREAKING OF NATIONS



ORDER AND CHAOS IN
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

ROBERT COOPER

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THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The point of this compressed historical survey is to make the case that what came to an end in 1989 was not just the Cold War or even, in a formal sense, the Second World War – since the ‘2+4’ Treaty (ending the post-war arrangements for Berlin and Germany) represents a final settlement of that war too. What came to an end in Europe (but perhaps only in Europe) were the political systems of three centuries: the balance of power and the imperial urge. The Cold War brought together the system of balance and empire and made the world a single whole, unified by a single struggle for supremacy and locked in a single balance of terror. But both balance and empire have today ceased to be the ruling concepts in Europe and, as a consequence, the world no longer forms a single political system.

THE PRE-MODERN WORLD

We live now in a divided world, but divided quite differently from the days of the East–West confrontation. First there is a pre-modern world: the pre-state, post-imperial chaos. Examples of this are Somalia, Afghanistan and Liberia. The state no longer fulfils Max Weber’s criterion of having the legitimate monopoly on the use of force. This circumstance may come about because the state has in the past abused that monopoly and has lost its legitimacy. In other cases, given the easy availability of conventional weapons today, it may

lose the monopoly. The state itself is a fragile structure. Whether in primitive societies which may have less need of it or in complex urban and industrial societies, which have a lower tolerance of disorder, but a more delicate structure of authority, the order provided by the state is vital to society. Too little order brings the risk of chaos; too much order and the state will stop society from functioning – as we have seen in Communist countries. ‘The rapier is like a bird,’ says the fencing master to his pupil in the film *Scaramouche*. ‘Grasp it too loosely and it will fly away, too tight and you will crush it.’⁴ So it is with the state and civil society.

The examples above are by no means the only cases of degeneration to a pre-modern state. It is early days since the end of the Cold War and more pre-modern states will emerge. Some areas of the former Soviet Union are candidates, most notably Chechnya. All of the world’s major drug-producing areas are part of the pre-modern world. In Afghanistan under the Taliban there was no real sovereign authority. It is much the same in up-country Burma or in some parts of South America, where drug barons threaten the state’s monopoly on force. No area of the world is without its risky cases.

What is different today is that the imperial urge is dead in the countries most capable of imperialism. Land and natural resources (with the exception of oil) are no longer a source of power for the most technologically advanced countries. Governing people, especially potentially hostile people, is a burden. Nobody wants to pay the costs of saving distant countries from ruin. The pre-modern world belongs, as it were, in a different time zone: here, as in the ancient world, the choice is again between empire or chaos. And today, because none of us sees the point of empires, we have often chosen chaos.

As a result we have, for the first time since the nineteenth

century, a *terra nullius*. It may remain so or it may not. The existence of such a zone of chaos is nothing new; but previously such areas, precisely because of their chaos, were isolated from the rest of the world. Not so today when a country without much law and order can still have an international airport.

While such countries no longer stimulate greed, they may excite pity: television pictures can bring their suffering into our homes. And, where the state is too weak to be dangerous, non-state actors might become too strong. If they become too dangerous for the established states to tolerate, it is possible to imagine a defensive imperialism. If non-state actors, notably drug, crime or terrorist syndicates take to using non-state (that is, pre-modern) bases for attacks on the more orderly parts of the world, then the organized states will eventually have to respond. This is what we have seen in Colombia, in Afghanistan and in part in Israel's forays into the Occupied Territories.⁵

RELIGION AND THE RISE OF THE MODERN

Religion is a crucial factor in this story. Most empires are characterized by a strong religious element. Perhaps this is because the societies they have governed have been largely agrarian, with the characteristic agrarian social structure of peasants, soldiers and priests. The eastern empire of Byzantium and the Western Carolingian Empire were Christian. The Ottoman and Mogul Empires were Islamic.

In the Russian Empire, Moscow was conceived as the third Rome and its subjects were identified by religion rather than ethnicity (Orthodoxy being the mainstream). Its

successor, the Soviet empire, was founded on a secular faith in scientific socialism. Indonesia under Suharto – something between an empire and a nation state – employed the state ideology of Pancasila, as well as the army, to hold it together. Only China among the great empires seems to have been without an obvious religious element; the Chinese emperor was nevertheless the Son of Heaven and if things went wrong he could lose his mandate.

Colonial empires are somewhat different. The European empires took with them a strong Christian element – missionaries played a significant part in their creation – but Christianity was rarely used to establish the legitimacy of the empire. Colonial empires are in any case a different kind of structure, since the imperial possessions are the possessions of a state rather than a part of it. The two do not together form a single unit of government; that is to say, Britain was never a part of the British Empire.

The nation state, in contrast to an empire, is characteristically secular. Whereas imperial rule is legitimized by the sanction of heaven (the emperor is appointed by God), national government is legitimized in the end by the nation; from below rather than above. For a while, European monarchs borrowed the authority of the Church and claimed divine right; but this position was difficult to sustain over many centuries. Religions are universal and it is hard to explain why God should appoint so many different monarchs for independent sovereign states.

This logic took some time to work its way through Europe, but by the end of the twentieth century government is in practice almost entirely secular. A striking illustration is provided by Turkey where Atatürk, perhaps instinctively understanding the logic of the nation, insisted that the

Turkish state, which he created out of the dissolving Ottoman Empire, should be secular. With the secularized state goes the amoral state of which Machiavelli was the prophet.

Although the legitimacy of emperors has a religious basis, empires are characterized by diversity, including a diversity of religions. Many of the subjects of the Mogul emperors were Hindus; the Russian emperor had Muslims as subjects; and the Ottoman emperor Christians. In the colonial empires (which governed by technical and cultural superiority together with force rather than by legitimacy) religious faith was equally varied.

Empires usually come to an end through military defeat. In the case of colonial empires, the end might also come as a result of changing circumstances in the colonizing country (the case of post-war Britain, for example, or Portugal). When an empire is defeated the most frequent result is break-up. Occasionally, one empire might be replaced by another, as the Russian empire was replaced by the Soviet empire – something similar happened in Indonesia following the Dutch withdrawal. But break-up is more usual. When an empire breaks up the question of identity becomes relevant for the first time. Under an imperial power there is no requirement for its subjects to identify with it; in contrast, a state, which is legitimized from below, requires some degree of identification from its citizens. National identities are usually created by states out of the raw material of history, culture and language. Sometimes they may exist within an empire, where a historic memory survives (as it did in the Baltic States under Soviet rule). Or they may have been fostered by the colonial power – as they were, up to a point, by Britain. But frequently these identities have proved weak in comparison with more deep-rooted (such as tribal) identities.

Where there is no other identification, religion provides a ready-made source of identity: it is fundamental in people's lives and gives them a sense of who they are. It provides a feeling of community. It is natural, therefore, that in the power vacuum left by a retreating empire group loyalties should coalesce around religious beliefs. Hence, the regular occurrence of religious clashes where a retreating or weakening empire leaves a power vacuum.

The story in Europe was somewhat different. Uniquely, the Christian empire of Western Europe divided itself into a spiritual component and a temporal component. The temporal empire ceased to be meaningful in the early Middle Ages, but the spiritual component survived, and while it did so it prevented the emergence of independent sovereign nation states. In theory at least, the Pope had the power and the duty to adjudicate in disputes between states and was their hierarchical superior. The Treaties of Tordesilla and Saragossa, which divided the world between Spain and Portugal, were a late exercise of this role. (Even today, in some European countries, the Papal Nuncio is still given precedence over the diplomatic representatives of other countries.) The wars of religion in Europe were thus the cause rather than the consequence of the break-up of the empire. It was the split in the Christian Church and the wars that followed that finally lost Christendom its legitimizing function. Thereafter, power and legitimacy belonged to the states – and later to the nation states – of Europe.

THE MODERN WORLD

The second part of the world is the modern. Here the

classical state system remains intact. States retain the monopoly of force and may be prepared to use it against each other. If there is order in this part of the system it is because there is a balance of power or because of the presence of hegemonic states which see an interest in maintaining the status quo, as the United States does in the Pacific. The modern world is for the most part orderly, but it remains full of risks. The Persian Gulf, for example, is an area where it has been necessary to think in balance-of-power terms. The Western concept has sometimes been of a balance between Iran and Iraq. Unfortunately, Iraq's emergence as the stronger power following the Iran-Iraq war brought that theory to an end. And (as in Europe in the first half of the century) the United States has been obliged to become the balancing element, if not the permanent guarantor of peace.

An important characteristic of the modern order (which I call 'modern' not because it is new – it is in fact very old-fashioned – but because it is linked to that great engine of modernization, the nation state) is the recognition of state sovereignty and the consequent separation of domestic and foreign affairs, with a prohibition on external interference in the former. This is still a world in which the ultimate guarantor of security is force, a world in which, in theory at least, borders can be changed by force. It is not that, in the modern order, might is right, but that right is not particularly relevant; power and *raison d'état* are the things that matter. In international relations, this is the world of the calculus of interests and forces described by Machiavelli and Clausewitz.

The concepts, values and vocabulary of the modern world still dominate thinking about international relations. Palmerston's classic statement that Britain had no permanent

friends or enemies, but that only its interests were eternal is still quoted as though it were a lasting truth of universal application. Theories of international relations are still broadly based on these assumptions. This is clearly true for 'realist' theories, for example those based on the calculus of interests and the balance of power; it is also true for 'idealist' theories – based on the hope that the anarchy of nations can be replaced by the hegemony of a world government or a collective-security system.

The United Nations, as originally conceived, belongs to this universe. It represents an attempt to establish law and order within the modern state system. The UN Charter emphasizes state sovereignty on the one hand and aims to maintain order by force. The veto power is a device to ensure that the UN system does not take on more than it can handle by attacking the interests of the great powers. The United Nations was thus conceived to stabilize the order of states and not to create a fundamentally new order. This is not the whole story since the United Nations has developed since its inception; but in conception the collective-security element of the UN Charter represents an attempt to throw the weight of the international system behind the *status quo*, so that the international community as a whole would become the balancing actor in the balance-of-power system.

Before passing to the third element in the world system, it is worth noting that the modern order contains some continuing problems characteristic of balance-of-power systems. The most notable is the lack of a real balance in many areas of the world. In the Gulf, for instance, we have already seen the consequences of that. But elsewhere there are also powerful states that might under certain circumstances become destabilizing factors. India is one

example – is the nuclear balance with Pakistan going to remain stable? China is another – without the US presence in the region would a balance between China and Japan be stable?

None of these is directly threatening at the moment; for the most part they are preoccupied with economic development and with their own internal security and cohesion. That is also one reason why they hate external interference, which is both a challenge to state sovereignty and a threat to internal order. Any of these countries could, if things went badly wrong for them, revert to a pre-modern state.

But it could be equally alarming if things went right for them. The establishment of internal cohesion has often been the prelude to external expansion. So it was for Britain after England and Scotland unified (the Empire was always 'British'); for Japan after 1868; for Germany after 1871. Both China and India, though they are part of the nation state system, have some of the characteristics of empires. Were they to develop the nation state's ability to concentrate loyalty and power they would be very formidable indeed. In fact, the arrival of any cohesive and powerful state in many parts of the world could prove too much for any regional balance-of-power system.

There are many countries that could become too powerful or too aggressive for regional balance. The names mentioned are merely those of the largest regional actors; but we should not become too fixated by size. Internal cohesion and modern (especially nuclear) technology can compensate for small size as, historically, the case of Britain demonstrates. In the pre-modern world, states (or rather would-be states) may be dangerous because they are failures. In the modern world, it is the successful states that are potentially dangerous.

If powerful new states emerge it is possible that we shall see a new imperialism. Someone may decide to make some part of the chaos a non-white man's burden. If they do so, it will probably not be for economic reasons; taming chaos is not very profitable today – perhaps it never has been. Imperialism is more likely from defensive motives – when a nearby state of chaos becomes in some way a threat. Or imperialism might be in pursuit of an idea. To persuade your own people to risk their lives in chaotic foreign countries requires the belief that you are spreading some gospel, pursuing a mission of civilization or (in the worst case) establishing the natural superiority of your race. It requires confidence and conviction. And then, if you are to be successful, you have to persuade the people that you are subjugating that you are doing this in their own interests and in the service of a higher good; most people are subjugated by ideas rather than by force. In this context, Islam is at least a possibility. A successful Islamist state, fired with enthusiasm for bringing the teachings of the Koran to unbelievers, is more likely to be a threat (or a saviour) for the pre-modern world than sceptical Europeans or a tough-minded, realistic United States.

The conditions for the success of such a new imperialism are much more difficult today than in previous centuries. The new imperialists would encounter a national consciousness awakened (or created) by previous generations of imperialists. They would also have to explain why the idea they offer is superior to the liberal/capitalist/consumerist democracy of the West. These are difficult challenges for a country aiming to establish a new empire; they might well make it impossible to sustain one.

A new imperialism from any of the modern states would

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not necessarily be damaging for Western interests since it would be established in a zone that the West had chosen to abandon. More problematic would be the attempt to establish a regional hegemony. This might in the short run be threatening to Western interests and in the long run be threatening to the West itself. We have already seen such a threat in the Gulf with Saddam Hussein's abortive attempt to take over Kuwait; and it is possible to imagine threats arising in the Pacific. If they did, in some years' time, will the West be equipped materially, psychologically and politically to deal with them? That brings us to the problem of postmodernity.

THE POSTMODERN WORLD

The third part of the international system may be called the postmodern element.⁶ Here the state system of the modern world is also collapsing, but unlike the pre-modern it is collapsing into greater order rather than disorder. Modern Europe was born with the Peace of Westphalia. Postmodern Europe begins with two treaties. The first of these, the Treaty of Rome (1957), was created out of the failures of the modern system: the balance of power which ceased to balance and the nation state which took nationalism to destructive extremes. The Treaty of Rome is a conscious and successful attempt to go beyond the nation state.

The second foundation of the postmodern era is the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (the CFE Treaty): this was born of the failures, wastes and absurdities of the Cold War. In aspiration at least the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also belongs to this world. So, in different ways, do the Chemical Weapons

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Convention (CWC), the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines and the treaty establishing an International Criminal Court.

The postmodern system does not rely on balance; nor does it emphasize sovereignty or the separation of domestic and foreign affairs. The European Union is a highly developed system for mutual interference in each other's domestic affairs, right down to beer and sausages. The CFE Treaty also breaks new ground in intrusion in areas normally within state sovereignty. Parties to the treaty – essentially the then membership of NATO and the Warsaw Pact – have to notify the location of their heavy weapons (which are in any case limited by the treaty) and allow challenge inspections. Under this treaty, more than 50,000 items of heavy military equipment – tanks, artillery, helicopters and so on – have been destroyed by mutual agreement, surely an unprecedented event. The legitimate monopoly on force that is the essence of statehood is thus subject to international – but self-imposed – constraints.

It is important to realize what an extraordinary revolution this is. The normal, logical behaviour of armed forces is to conceal their strength and hide their equipment from potential enemies. Treaties to regulate such matters are an absurdity in strategic logic. In the first place, you do not reach agreements with enemies since, if they are enemies, they cannot be trusted. In the second place, you do not let the enemy come snooping around your bases counting weapons. The CFE Treaty does precisely that. What is it that has brought about this weird behaviour? The answer must be that behind the paradox of the CFE Treaty lies the equal and opposite paradox of the nuclear age: that in order to defend yourself you had to be prepared to destroy yourself. The

shared interest of European countries in avoiding a nuclear catastrophe has proved enough to overcome the normal strategic logic of distrust and concealment. The mutual vulnerability that provided stability in the nuclear age has now been extended to the conventional end of the spectrum where it becomes mutual transparency. (The Cold War nuclear stalemate already contained some elements of the postmodern since it relied on transparency. For deterrence to work it has to be visible.)

The path towards the CFE Treaty was laid through one of the few real innovations in diplomacy – confidence-building measures. Through the fog of mistrust and deception, the Cold War states began to understand late in the day that their ideological opponent might not, in fact, be planning to attack them. Measures to prevent war through miscalculation grew out of this, for example, observation of manoeuvres. These grew eventually into observation of weapons systems and to limitations on them. The solution to the prisoners' dilemma lies in ending mutual secrecy.⁷

In one respect, the CFE Treaty collapsed at an early stage under its own contradictions. As originally designed, it embodied the idea of balance between two opposing blocs. The underlying assumption was one of enmity: balance was required to make it unlikely that either side would take the risk of making an attack. Transparency was required to make sure that there was really a balance. But by the time balance and transparency have been achieved, it is difficult to retain enmity. The result is that transparency remains, but enmity and balance (and one of the blocs) have effectively gone. This was not, of course, the work of the CFE Treaty alone, but of the political revolution that made the treaty possible. It does suggest, however, that there is a basic incompatibility between

the two systems: the modern based on balance and the postmodern based on openness do not co-exist well together.

Intrusive verification – which is at the heart of the CFE system – is a key element in a postmodern order where state sovereignty is no longer seen as an absolute. But far-reaching as they might be, arms control treaties such as the CFE Treaty and the CWC are only partial approaches towards a postmodern order.

Although their acceptance of intrusive verification breaks with the absolutist tradition of state sovereignty, the field in which sovereignty has been sacrificed is limited to foreign affairs and security. Thus what is permitted is interference in the domestic aspect of foreign affairs.

The aspirations of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe go rather further. OSCE principles cover standards of domestic behaviour – democratic procedures, treatment of minorities, freedom of the press – which are distant from the traditional concerns of foreign and security policy. Whether the OSCE will develop – as it aspires to – into a system for international monitoring of domestic behaviour remains to be seen. If it does, this will be a further break with the tradition of sovereignty in the European state system, which will take all the OSCE countries (or all those who play by the rules) decisively into a postmodern world.

The characteristics of this world are that within it the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs begins to break down. Is the management of the EU single market domestic or foreign business? The answer is that it is both. Mutual interference in some areas of domestic affairs and mutual surveillance (of food safety, of state subsidies, of budget deficits) is normal for postmodern states. Within the

European Union mergers and subsidies are subject to common rules. In most European countries the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights on all kinds of domestic matters (whether you can beat your children for example) are accepted as final. Force is rejected as a way of settling disputes. Minor disputes might be settled by common rules or court decisions; more fundamental matters, such as the British-Spanish dispute over Gibraltar, are left to time and negotiation. For the most part the rules in the system are self-enforced. No one compels states to obey the rules of the CFE Treaty or to pay fines imposed on them by the European Court of Justice. They do so because of their interest as individual states in making the collective system work and, within the European Union, because all have an interest in maintaining the rule of EU law.

Borders are increasingly irrelevant for postmodern states. Thanks to the missile, the motor car and the satellite, this is a fact of life in the twenty-first century. Within most of the European Union border signs have been removed and you know you are in a different country only by the different colours of the road signs. Legal judgements are now enforced across state borders, right down to parking fines. In this environment security, which was once based on walls, is now based on openness and transparency and mutual vulnerability. In some postmodern relationships – for example, with Russia – transparency is limited and carefully defined in treaties, such as the CFE Treaty. This is a revolution in strategic affairs. Among others the wider application of postmodern principles has brought a revolution in the life of the state.

The most prominent postmodern institutions have already been mentioned, but this list is by no means exclusive.

The Strasbourg Court of Human Rights belongs in this category: it interferes directly in domestic jurisdiction. No less striking is the Convention on Torture, which permits challenge inspection of prisons: inspection visits without warning and without visas, anytime, anywhere. In the economic sphere, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) operate systems of economic surveillance. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), taken together with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and special inspection regimes, is also a part of postmodern security – the IAEA additional protocol permits access to any site at any time by nuclear inspectors. The lack of openness on the part of the nuclear powers themselves, not to mention NPT states such as India, Pakistan and Israel, leaves the system incomplete for the moment.

The International Criminal Court is a striking example of the postmodern breakdown of the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs. If the world is going to be governed by law rather than force then those who break the law will be treated as criminals. Thus, in the postmodern world, *raison d'état* and the amorality of Machiavelli have been replaced by a moral consciousness that applies to international relations as well as to domestic affairs: hence also the renewed interest in the question of whether or not wars should be considered just. These institutions have been established by conventional treaties between sovereign states and ratified by national parliaments, but the result is a growing web of institutions that go beyond the traditional norms of international diplomacy.

The new security system of the postmodern world deals with the problems identified earlier that made the balance of

power unworkable. By aiming to avoid war it takes account of the horrors of war that modern technology represents; indeed, it depends to a degree on the technology and on the fear of the horrors. It is also more compatible with democratic societies: the open society domestically is reflected in a more open international order. And finally, since security no longer depends on balance, it is able to incorporate large and potentially powerful states. The peaceful reunification of Germany is in itself a proof that the system has changed.

A difficulty for the postmodern state is that democracy and democratic institutions are firmly wedded to the territorial state. The package of national identity, national territory, a national army, a national economy and national democratic institutions has been immensely successful. Economy, law-making and defence may be increasingly embedded in international frameworks and the borders of territory might be less important, but identity and democratic institutions remain stubbornly national. This is the reason why traditional states will remain the fundamental unit of international relations for the foreseeable future, even though they might have ceased to behave in traditional ways.

What is the origin of this change? The fundamental point is that 'the world's grown honest'. A large number of the most powerful states no longer want to fight or to conquer. This gives rise both to the pre-modern and to the postmodern world. France no longer thinks of invading Germany or Italy, although it has nuclear weapons, which should theoretically put it in a position of overwhelming superiority. Nor does it think of invading Algeria to restore order. The imperial instinct is dead, at least among the Western powers. (Though, as we shall see later, imperialism

might be returning in new forms.) Acquiring territory is no longer of interest. Acquiring subject populations would for most states be a nightmare.

This is not altogether a novelty. Imperialism has been dying slowly for a long time. Britain was inventing dominion status in the nineteenth century and – admittedly under intense pressure – was letting Ireland go in the early twentieth. Sweden acquiesced in Norwegian independence in 1905. What is completely new, however, is that Europe should consist more or less entirely of states that are no longer governed by the territorial imperative.

If this view is correct, it follows that we should not think of the European Union or even NATO as the reason for half a century of peace in Western Europe; at least not in the crude way that this is sometimes argued – that states which merge their steel and coal industries cannot fight each other, since the raw material of war is commonly owned. Nor does the existence of joint military planning or joint headquarters in the NATO framework mean that war is impossible. Joint institutions do not lead automatically to peace. Nor are they even necessary. After all, the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries did not fight each other, even though for a long time most were members of neither NATO nor the European Union. If countries want to fight each other they will find a way. Yugoslavia has shown that a single market and a single currency and integrated armed forces can be broken up if those concerned want to fight.

NATO and the European Union have, nevertheless, played an important role in reinforcing and sustaining the basic fact that Western European countries no longer want to fight each other. NATO has promoted a greater degree of military openness than has ever existed before. Force

planning is done in the open, even if it is not quite as much of a joint procedure as it is supposed to be. Joint exercises and an integrated command structure reinforce this openness. Thus within Western Europe there has been, informally, a kind of internal CFE Treaty for many years – since everyone knew exactly what armaments their neighbours had. With the difference that most of the time states were urging each other to increase rather than to cut defence spending.

No doubt the solidarity created by having a common enemy also played a part, at least initially. More important was the existence of a common friend. The presence of US forces enabled Germany to keep forces at lower levels than its strategic position would have warranted: without them Germany would have needed to maintain forces large enough to deal with a war on two fronts – against France and Russia simultaneously. Such forces would always be a cause of alarm to both its neighbours and would probably have provoked an arms race as well. This situation, sometimes called the strategic dilemma, is typical of the balance-of-power system. The defensive forces of one country are seen by its neighbours as a threat. If everyone supposes the worst, an arms race or some other form of instability is the result. Such is the logic of the balance of power. The same reasoning would have applied in the nuclear sphere too. As it was, the US nuclear guarantee enabled Germany to remain non-nuclear. But even if Germany had pursued a policy of a low level of armaments and had chosen to remain non-nuclear this would not have been enough, at least not if these policies had been followed in isolation. France or Britain might still have suspected a secret German troop build-up or a secret nuclear weapons programme. What mattered above all

therefore was the openness NATO created. NATO was and is a massive intra-Western confidence-building measure.

This is why the reunification of Germany within NATO was so important. In a curious way, it is part of how NATO won the Cold War: not by beating Russia, but by changing the strategic position of Germany. NATO provided a framework within which Germany – the epicentre of the Cold War – could be reunited. The balance-of-power system broke down in Europe because of Germany and, for a while, it seemed that the solution to the problem was to divide Germany (just as it had been after the Thirty Years War). And, by the same logic, the Cold War was needed to maintain the division. Balance in Europe required a divided Germany and a divided Germany required a divided Europe. For Germany to be reunited, a different security system was required: in effect a post-balance, postmodern system, of which NATO is one key element.

A united Europe was the other: the European Union's security role is similar to that of NATO, though this is harder to see since it is further from the sharp end of military hardware. It is not the Coal and Steel Authority (which did not integrate the industry so much as the market – German coalmines remained German and French steel mills remained French) that has kept the countries of Europe from fighting each other, but the fact that they did not want to do so. Nevertheless, the Coal and Steel Authority, the Common Market, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy (and so forth), have performed important reinforcing functions. They have introduced a new degree of openness hitherto unknown in Europe. And they have given rise to thousands of meetings of ministers and officials, so that all those

concerned with decisions over peace and war know each other well.

They may or may not agree; they may or may not like each other, but they do belong to the same organization and work together and make deals together over a wide and wonderful range of subjects: from the conditions under which battery hens are kept to the size of their budget deficits. By the standards of the past this represents an enormous degree of what might be called administrative integration. (This is neither complete political integration – which would require, *inter alia*, European political parties – nor economic integration, which takes place at the level of the firm, the investor and the workforce.) Compared with the past, it represents a quality of political relations and a stability in political relationships never known before. To create an international society, international socialization is required and one of the important functions of the Brussels institutions is to provide this.

A second important function is to provide a framework for settling disputes between member states. Since force is no longer an option, some mixture of law, bargaining and arbitration is required: the European Union provides this in most cases (not all, since, for example, territorial disputes remain outside its ambit). The same framework of bargaining and law also regulates a good deal of transnational co-operation. As one (disappointed) observer noted, the European Union is an organization not for pursuing a European interest, but for pursuing national interests more effectively. In the postmodern context 'more effectively' means without being obliged to resort to military means.

The European Union is the most developed example

of a postmodern system. It represents security through transparency and transparency through interdependence. It is more a transnational than a supranational system. Although there are still some who dream of a European state (which would be supranational), they are a minority today – if one takes account of non-élite opinion, a very small minority. The dream is one left over from a previous age. It rests on the assumption that nation states are fundamentally dangerous and that the only way to tame the anarchy of nations is to impose hegemony on them. It is curious that having created a structure that has transformed the nation state into something more civilized and better adapted to today's world, there are still enthusiasts who want to replace it with something more old-fashioned. If the nation state is a problem, then the super-state is certainly not a solution.

Nevertheless it is unlikely that the European Union, as it is at the start of the twenty-first century, has reached its final resting place. For the long run the most important question is whether integration can remain a largely apolitical process. It is striking that monetary integration has been achieved precisely by removing monetary policy from the hands of politicians and handing it over to the technocrats. This may be no bad thing but, in the deeply democratic culture of Europe, the development of the European Union as a continuation of diplomacy by other means rather than the continuation of politics by other means may in the end exact a price. International institutions need the loyalty of citizens just as state institutions do; and that can be achieved only by giving the citizen some more direct involvement in their management.

STATE INTERESTS

To say that the European Union (or for that matter the Council of Europe or the OSCE) is a forum in which states pursue their interests should not be misunderstood. 'Interests' means something different for the modern state and for its postmodern successor. The 'interests' that Palmerston referred to as eternal were essentially security interests. They included notions such as that the Russians should be kept out of the Mediterranean; that no single power should be allowed to dominate the continent of Europe; that the British Navy should be bigger than the next two largest navies combined and so forth. Even defined in these terms, interests are by no means eternal, though they can have a shelf-life measurable in decades at least. These interests are defined by the security problems in a world of fundamentally predatory states. It is the essential business of a state to protect its citizens from invasion: hence the absolute, if not eternal, nature of these interests. Security is, after all, a matter of life and death – which is why they are referred to as 'vital interests'.

Such interests still exist for the West today: for example, it is a vital Western interest that no single country should come to dominate world oil supplies, that nuclear weapons should not get into the hands of unstable, aggressive or irresponsible people, or that terrorist networks should never again be allowed to grow to the dimensions of al-Qaeda. If Japan, for example, should come under serious military threat, there would be a Western interest, probably a vital interest, in defending it. This is because Japanese industry is an integrated component of the global market, vital for many Western manufacturers and retailers, and because a failure to defend a fellow industrial democracy would signal the

beginning of the end for all of us.

These are examples of the problems that flow from encounters between the postmodern and the modern world. Within the postmodern world there are no security threats in the traditional sense, because its members do not consider invading each other. The interests that are debated within the European Union are essentially matters of policy preference and burden sharing. There is no fundamental reason why in trade negotiations France should be ready to sacrifice the interests of its software companies in favour of its farmers. This is just a matter of the policy preferences and political affiliations of those who happen to be in power at the time. France's 'interests' are defined by political processes and may change with governments. In Britain, the Thatcher government brought with it a stronger commitment to open markets than its predecessors had shown. The 'interest' in free markets was born in 1979 – it was certainly not eternal. The vital national interests that are defended under the Luxembourg compromise (the mechanism by which some EU states reserve the possibility of exercising a veto when vital interests are at stake) are almost certainly neither vital nor national and they are not even 'interests' in the Palmerstonian sense – none of which is to say that they are unimportant.

If the second half of Palmerston's proposition, that interests are eternal, no longer applies in the postmodern world, the first half, that no country has permanent friends, is equally alien. Although friendship is hardly a concept that applies between states, institutions like the European Union and NATO constitute something analogous to a bond of marriage. In a world where nothing is absolute, permanent or irreversible, the relationships among the postmodern are at least more lasting than any state's interests. Perhaps they will even turn out to be

genuinely permanent. Indeed, if they do not then the postmodern experiment will probably have failed.

At all events we should beware of transferring the vocabulary of the modern world into the postmodern. Germany may (occasionally) exercise a dominant influence in the European Union or the USA may dominate NATO policy-making, but this kind of dominance, achieved by persuasion or bought in some other way, is quite different from domination by military invasion. (These two countries are not, of course, mentioned by accident – but the significant fact in each case is probably not their size, but the fact that they are the biggest financial contributors to these two institutions.)

WHO BELONGS TO THE POSTMODERN WORLD?

That there is a new European order based on openness and mutual interference is clear. The EU countries are evidently members; those on its expanding edges perhaps a little more nervously. Whatever happens to the European Union – whether it goes on to become some fuller kind of federation or gets stuck halfway – the state in Western Europe will never be the same again.

Although these postmodern characteristics apply among the states of the European Union they do not necessarily apply between them and other states: when Argentina chose to operate according to the rules of Clausewitz rather than those of Kant, Britain had to respond on the same level. Similarly, during the Cold War, all the European states had to operate on the old logic of power, deception and distrust with regard to the Warsaw Pact, although among themselves the postmodern logic increasingly applied.

Russia poses an important problem. Is it going to be a pre-modern, modern or postmodern state? It embodies all three possibilities. A collapse into pre-modernism is perhaps the least likely; the urbanized and industrialized landscape of Russia has a low tolerance for disorder. The risk is more of the state becoming too powerful than of it disappearing altogether. But there are also postmodern elements in Russia trying to get out. And Russian acceptance of the CFE Treaty and of OSCE observers in Chechnya during the first Chechen war (although not during the second) suggests that it is not wholly lost to the doctrine of openness. How Russia behaves in respect of its postmodern treaty commitments – notably those in the CFE Treaty, but also those it is acquiring through membership of the Council of Europe – will be a critical factor for the future; so will the behaviour of the rest of Europe as it decides how to build its security relationship with Russia.

Of non-European countries, Japan is by inclination a postmodern state. It has self-imposed limits on defence spending and capabilities. It is no longer interested in acquiring territory nor in using force. It would probably be willing to accept intrusive verification. It is an enthusiastic multilateralist. Were it not on the other side of the world, it would be a natural member of organizations such as the OSCE or the European Union. Unfortunately for Japan it is a postmodern country surrounded by states firmly locked into an earlier age: postmodernism in one country is possible only up to a point and only because its security treaty with the US enables it to live as though its neighbourhood were less threatening. If China develops in an unpromising fashion (either modern or pre-modern), Japan could be forced to revert to defensive modernism.

And elsewhere? What in Europe has become a reality is in many other parts of the world an aspiration. ASEAN,⁸ NAFTA,⁹ MERCOSUR¹⁰ and even the AU,¹¹ suggest at least an aspiration towards a postmodern environment. Many of these organizations have programmes that follow the pattern developed in the European Union. The postmodern aspiration for a law-governed region is unlikely to be realized quickly. Most developing countries are too jealous of their hard-won independence and too unsure of their own identity to allow much interference in domestic affairs. Nevertheless, imitation is easier than invention and perhaps rapid postmodernization could follow the rapid industrialization that is already under way in many parts of the world. Europe's military power may have declined but the power of example remains. Perhaps that is one postmodern equivalent of imperialism.

THE HEGEMONY OF THE POSTMODERN?

The postmodern group is a powerful and growing collection of states. If we add to that the would-be postmodern Japan and the aspirant countries of Latin America it is a group which should be capable of exerting a strong influence on the way the world is organized, at least in economic terms. Even those who insist on sovereignty find themselves enmeshed in a range of co-operative institutions and agreements governing trade, transport, communications and so on. Sometimes – in order to gain access to financial markets – they may find themselves having to accept interference in their economic affairs from the IMF. Those who want trade agreements with the European Union find that there is a human rights clause attached.

The strongest of the modern states resist this. China has accepted relatively few binding international commitments. India is notoriously resistant to arrangements that might infringe her sovereignty. But most go along with – and all profit from – the multilateral organization of the world.

The multilateral system that has grown up in the post-war world could be seen as the hegemony of the postmodern. In fact it hardly runs so deep. Those parts of the system managed by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the IMF are vital to prosperity but, unlike the key treaties in Europe, they are not essential to security. For most non-European states the co-operative world system, though highly beneficial to them in many ways, is resented because it interferes with the full exercise of their sovereignty. In a security crisis, where state sovereignty was under real threat, the multilateral links would place little constraint on violent action; at worse they would simply be blown away.

Thus the image of domestic order and international anarchy is false on one level. The world is in fact a highly structured and orderly system (though without a central authority). On the other hand, anarchy remains the underlying reality in the security field for most parts of the world. When someone has decided to use force, the system returns to the law of the jungle, however many trade agreements there may be. This is what happened in Europe with the coming of the First World War, despite the open markets and the high levels of economic interdependence between European states at the time.

In contrast, the co-operative structures in Europe reinforce sovereignty by reinforcing security. If the postmodern system protects your security better than the balance of power did, then it strengthens your ability to exercise your sovereignty.

The point is that European states now define sovereignty differently from hitherto: the state monopoly on law-making no longer exists as far as EU members are concerned; and even for other European countries it is limited by treaties such as those in the Council of Europe framework (e.g. on the jurisdiction of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg). The state monopoly on force is also constrained by alliances, by the CFE and other arms control treaties. In some cases, the monopoly on force has been modified by EU agreements about policing (police are the domestic arm of the monopoly of legitimate force), permitting police to operate in limited ways in each other's territory. All of this means that the state of the olden days, sovereign master on its own territory, able to do what it chose when it chose without any kind of outside interference has undergone substantial modification. What in these circumstances does sovereignty amount to for the postmodern state? The answer is probably a mixture of elements: at its core remains domestic control, especially the legal monopoly on force, the ability to make and enforce laws, but internationally the emphasis has shifted from the control of territory and armies to the capacity to join international bodies and to make international agreements. Making peace is as much a part of sovereignty as making war. For the postmodern state, sovereignty is a seat at the table.

THE UNITED STATES

Where does America belong in this world? It would not be too much to say that America invented it. If Europeans have been able to develop security through transparency it is because at the back of this there stands America – and

security through armed force. In a sense the United States has stood outside the system, and above it as its guardian.

The central fact of geopolitics today is US military power. America accounts for 38 per cent of all military expenditure in the world and a much higher proportion of military capabilities. There is no conventional force in the world that could fight an all-out war against America and win. Indeed, to put it in wholly unrealistic terms, were all the rest of the world to mount a combined attack on the United States they would be defeated.

Questions about how the world is organized are at least partly questions about US policy. The United States is the only power with a global strategy – in some sense it is the only power with an independent strategy at all. The rest of the world reacts to America, fears America, lives under American protection, envies, resents, plots against, depends on America. Every other country defines its strategy in relation to the United States.

America's aim, like everyone else, is to preserve its national security. Sometimes commentators refer, slightly incredulously, to America's wish to be invulnerable – and indicate with a tinge of European superiority that Europeans, being more experienced, have got used to living with risk over the years. But, were it attainable, being invulnerable is precisely the security policy every country would want. And over the years, out of their geographical good fortune, Americans have indeed become used to invulnerability and are unwilling to compromise on their national security.

Since there is no conventional force in the world that could fight a successful war against the United States, the threats that concern it are both above and below the range of

conventional warfare: on the one hand, weapons of mass destruction (WMD); on the other, terrorism. Against WMD held by states deterrence can still provide some protection. Even so, the spread of such weapons remains dangerous and potentially life-threatening, for the United States as well as other countries. First, deterrence cuts both ways. Countries with WMD would achieve a degree of invulnerability *vis-à-vis* the United States – especially if they had nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them on New York. That means that a part of the world, possibly a hostile one, would escape US control; and therein lie many potential dangers. Second, the wider such weapons spread the greater the chance of terrorist groups getting their hands on them. It seems unlikely that deterrence could ever apply to people who have no fixed address and are prepared to die for their cause.

Hence the twin security focus of the United States: the war on terrorism and the campaign to prevent the proliferation of WMD. Those who support and assist the United States in this will gain its protection. Those who seek WMD for themselves or who help terrorists are its enemies. Given the opportunity they will be subject to 'regime change' to a government that has no ambitions for WMD or which is friendly to the United States, preferably both.

In the categories of this essay that makes America a robustly modern state. It is in any case clear that neither the US government nor Congress accepts the necessity or the desirability of interdependence, nor its corollaries of openness, mutual surveillance and mutual interference to the extent that most European governments now do. The United States' unwillingness to accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and its relative reluctance concerning challenge inspections in the CWC are examples

of US caution about postmodern concepts. Since it is the guarantor of the whole system, this is perhaps just as well for the time being.

Besides, as the most powerful country in the world, the United States has no reason to fear any other country and therefore has less reason to accept the idea of security based on mutual vulnerability, except of course in the nuclear field. Here the United States is unavoidably vulnerable. Hence, one very emphatic piece of postmodern diplomacy in an otherwise rather uncompromising insistence on sovereignty: START¹² and all the other nuclear treaties with Russia. At one time one could have pointed to the ABM¹³ Treaty, which is designed to preserve mutual vulnerability as the centre-piece of this nuclear postmodernism. The fact that it has gone is an expression of US concerns about emerging threats rather than the mark of a change in its relationship with Russia.

In keeping with its modernist vocation America's approach to international relations is framed by the use of force and by military alliances. In spite of the vast amount of trade and investment that flows across both oceans, the bedrock of the United States' relationships with Europe and Japan is military: NATO and the Security Treaty with Japan.

Is America an imperial power? Not in the usual sense of seeking territory abroad. For much of its history the United States has been consciously anti-imperial, from its own struggle for colonial liberation through to the Monroe doctrine. True, it has interfered relentlessly in Central America, acquired territory by force (as well as purchase) and it was caught up in the imperial frenzy at the end of the nineteenth century; but it was also one of the first to give up its colonies. It then did its best to ensure that the British and French empires were dismantled. The United States is a state

founded on ideas and its vocation is the spread of those ideas. European countries are based on nation and history. For Americans history is bunk. They aim, as the Mexican author Octavio Paz says, at the colonization not of space but of time: that is, of the future.

Although the United States has more troops deployed abroad than Britain at the height of its imperial glory, they are not used for the same purpose. Typically, they are there to defend America's allies – Germany during the Cold War, South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia (until the removal of Saddam Hussein). An alternative – geopolitical – way of looking at this is to say that US forces are deployed as an outer defensive ring on the periphery of the Eurasian landmass: a rather distant form of forward defence. In most cases they stay in barracks and do little to interfere in the running of the country. Usually they arrive at a time of conflict, but stay on to ensure security and perhaps to strengthen the forces for good government – the two are sometimes related – thereafter. This often turns out to be a long business.

If America is not imperial in the usual sense it is certainly hegemonic: it does not want to rule, but it does aim to control foreign policy. The hegemony is essentially voluntary, part of a bargain in which America provides protection and allies offer bases and support. From an American point of view, countries can choose to be allies or they can be irrelevant, in which case they can be left alone. If they begin to be a threat then they become, potentially at least, a target.

In one respect, however, the United States diverges from the norm of the modern state. There is an imperial tinge to American policy in its desire to promote democracy. This is a

cause that attracts both Left and Right, Wilsonians and neo-conservatives. And yet if this is imperial it is also anti-imperial: on the one hand, it tells countries how they should be run; on the other, it tells them they should do the running themselves. It is a typically postmodern approach but it may also have solid modern motivations. On the one hand, it is diametrically opposed to the modern logic of 'He might be a sonovabitch but he's our sonovabitch'; but on the other, there is probably some convergence between making the world safe for democracy and making it safe for America. Like parallel lines, in America the modern and the postmodern may eventually meet.

Pax Romana was an empire, its borders guarded by increasingly forgotten legions. Pax Britannica was an empire also, joined by seas that the British Navy patrolled. But neither was worldwide. In the age of globalization, any sort of Pax Americana has to cover the globe. It cannot do that: even America is not strong enough to manage the whole globe on its own. A global American hegemony is therefore not going to be peaceful, but will be interrupted from time to time by conflicts when a new threat or potential threat is identified. A global alliance, perhaps, but not a global empire: Sparta rather than Athens.

Finally, it is always wise in thinking about America to remember that it is at least as unpredictable as any other country. This is, after all, the country that twice in the twentieth century elected a president on an anti-war ticket, who then took them into a world war; the country that, having declared Korea outside its security perimeter, fought a war there; the country that, following this experience, determined it would never again fight a war on the Asian continent, but then proceeded to do so in Vietnam; and the

country that surprised the world by a sudden and fundamental reversal of policy when Nixon visited China (and shortly afterwards abandoned the fixed dollar parity). Today we find an administration, that arrived in office rejecting 'nation building', engaged in a great nation-building project in Iraq. Domestically, too, there have been sharp swings of mood: prohibition, isolationism, McCarthyism and later the anti-war movement all provide illustrations. In this perhaps the United States is no different from any other country – except that with its immense power, changes in US policy will have consequences for the world as a whole.

THE POSTMODERN STATE

The postmodern state defines itself by its security policy. It does so as a matter of political choice. There is no iron law of history that compels states to take the risk of trusting transparency rather than armed force as the best way of preserving its security. Nevertheless only certain kinds of states and societies are likely to make such a choice. Lying behind the postmodern international order is the postmodern state – more pluralist, more complex, less centralized than the bureaucratic modern state, but not at all chaotic, unlike the pre-modern.

As the state itself becomes less dominating, state interest becomes less of a determining factor in foreign policy: the media, popular emotion, the interests of particular groups or regions (including transnational groups) all come into play. The deconstruction of the modern state is not yet complete, but it proceeds rapidly; in their different ways the European

Union, the movement in many countries towards greater regional autonomy, and the more or less universal movement towards privatization, are all part of a process which is creating more pluralistic states in which power is diffused more widely. This development of state structures is matched by a society that is more sceptical of state power, less nationalistic, in which multiple identities thrive and personal development and personal consumption have become the central goals of most people's lives. Army recruitment becomes difficult – consumerism is the one cause for which it makes no sense to die – though fortunately technology means that fewer recruits are required. Where once recruitment posters proclaimed YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!, they now carry slogans such as JOIN THE ARMY: BE ALL THAT YOU CAN; self-realization has replaced patriotism as a motive for serving in the armed forces. And while soldiers still die bravely for their countries, today they may also sue them for injuries sustained in war.

It is possible to identify (loosely) the three stages of state development with three types of economy: agricultural in the pre-modern; industrial mass production in the modern; and the post-industrial service and information economy with the postmodern state. The postmodern state is one that above all values the individual, which explains its unwarlike character. War is essentially a collective activity: the struggles of the twentieth century have been the struggles of liberalism – the doctrine of the individual – against different forms of collectivism: class, nation, race, community or state. On this basis the United States would also qualify as a postmodern state; and indeed its security policies to its immediate neighbours, Mexico and Canada, as well as towards Europe, are more or less in the postmodern mould. But the United

States is a global power and as such sees its neighbourhood as the world – one that contains too many dangers to rely on trust rather than on its own overwhelming military superiority. Moreover, following their experiences in the twentieth century, most European states have become less nationalist, while America has not. Perhaps this is partly because European nationalism has been associated with ethnicity, whereas American nationalism is defined by loyalty to the constitution, making it easier to preserve in a more diverse society.

All industrial or post-industrial states are potentially postmodern. In the 1930s, however, Germany and the Soviet Union took a different route. In their different ways both fascism and communism were systems designed for war. The ethos and rhetoric of fascism, the uniforms, parades, the glorification of military conflict, all made this plain. As far as fascist governments were concerned the state did not just have a monopoly on violence: violence was its *raison d'être*. Communism also seems, in retrospect, like an attempt to run a state as though it were an army and as if the country were continuously at war. Not for nothing was the term 'command economy' used.

Both communism and fascism were attempts to resist the effects of the modernization of society brought about by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the technology of the Industrial Revolution. This modernization meant that personal ties were replaced by anonymous commercial dealings and instead of the certainties of a life determined by birth and surrounded by family, people found themselves condemned to be free and having to struggle for life and status in a competitive society. Both communism and fascism tried to provide a collectivist refuge for the

individual against the loneliness and uncertainty of life in a modernizing society. Both tried to use the state to replace the sense of community that was lost as industrial cities replaced agricultural villages. Both thereby maintained, *inter alia*, the intrusiveness and conformity of the village too: the secret police were the industrial age's equivalent of the village gossip. 'Upper Volta with rockets' (a phrase sometimes used contemptuously to describe the Soviet Union) was in fact exactly what communism aimed at: village life plus state power; technical modernization in a politically primitive setting. Communism and fascism were thus, in this sense, the culmination of the modern, highly centralized state, which sought total control over the lives of its subjects. All the methods that modern states apply in foreign policy (force, spying, secrecy) were used domestically – *raison d'état* made into a system of domestic governance as well as foreign policy.

The postmodern state is the opposite. The individual has won¹⁴ and foreign policy is the continuation of domestic concerns beyond national boundaries and not vice versa. Individual consumption replaces collective glory as the dominant theme of national life. War is to be avoided: acquisition of territory by force is of no interest.

A postmodern order requires postmodern states and vice versa. To create a lasting postmodern security system in Europe it is crucial that all the most powerful European actors should fit into the same pattern. The Cold War could come to an end only through a domestic transformation in the Soviet Union. This is, as yet, neither complete nor certain, but in historical terms progress has been rapid. What has happened, though, probably irreversibly, is a foreign policy transformation.

THE BREAKING OF NATIONS

Russia has largely given up its empire, joining the rest of Europe as a post-imperial state. The last details of this transition remain to be settled – and this could take a long time. Nevertheless, Russia seems to have abandoned its imperialist gains and its imperialist ambitions. This is important for West European countries. No country could feel safe while their neighbour was under enemy occupation or a regime imposed from the outside. In this sense, insecurity is indivisible.

As long as the Soviet Union tried to maintain territorial control over Poland and other Central European states, the possibility of its ambitions stretching further to the West could not be ruled out. Nor need such ambitions be part of a quest for glory or for power: the logic of territorial-based defence is that you always need more territory to defend that which you have acquired. As the Soviet Union lost an empire, the West lost an enemy.

Thus for Western Europe the postmodern age began in 1989. Until then it was all very well for West European states to operate in the postmodern mode within their own circle, but the dominating theme of their foreign and defence policies for the post-war period was the Cold War. That compelled them to base their thinking ultimately on armed protection, secrecy and balance. The hard core of Western policy during this time was that of the modern state. That is now gone. The Europeans are postmodern states living on a postmodern continent.