

Chapter 11

European History

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While the “spatial turn” inspired whole historical subdisciplines such as medieval history, history of towns, and even regional history, it had no immediate impact on the field of European history, at least not on synthesizing works like single- or multivolume histories of Europe. Why is that so, and why at a time when other disciplines, such as, for example, historical sociology, display an intense interest in the regional dimensions of Europe, which they perceive as being constituent for Europeanness? The sociologist Johann P. Arnason (2005, 387) stated, “Regional divisions have probably been more salient and their meaning more contested in Europe than in any other part of the world. The debate on this subject is complementary to the ongoing dispute of European exceptionalism, seen as a macro-regional or civilizational feature, and it is not more likely to be settled in definitive terms.”

In Arnason’s view, in a historical perspective the mesoregional structure of Europe is one of the unique characteristics of the half-continent in comparison with other parts of Eurasia and the world—a view shared by other sociologists, such as Gerard Delanty (2013, 195–214), as well as by social anthropologists, such as Christian Giordano (2003). The latter perceives “Europe as a system of historical regions: Center, peripheries and external regions” (121) and lists, as does Delanty, “Northwestern Europe,” “Mediterranean Europe,” “Central-Eastern Europe,” “Southeastern Europe,” and “Eastern Europe” (Giordano 2003, 123–30; Delanty 2012, 9). The historicity of this mesoregional structure, according to Giordano, explains Europe’s “present socio-economic gradient” (Giordano 2003, 130). Accordingly, one would assume that historians in particular would pay attention to this specific feature of Europe’s past and present.

Regionalization Patterns in the Historiography on Europe

In post-1945 general histories of Europe, be they monographs or collective works in one or several volumes, a focus on the historicity of its mesoregional structure is rare. Here, the presumption that historians tend to be much more explicit about the periodization patterns they apply while adopting regionalization patterns either implicitly or even without giving the issue much thought proves to be true. Obviously, historians of Europe on the one hand have a disposition to perceive “Europe” as a self-defining macroregion, while on the other they traditionally subdivide it into political units, be they empires, nations, or states. Under certain conditions, the latter are subdivided further into subnational units—that is, microregions such as “Thrace” or “Silesia.” And sometimes “Europe” is put into the context of megaregions—that is, larger units of historical analysis, such as a “European World Economy,” an “Atlantic World,” even “*the World*.” Very rarely, however, is an intermediary level between “state” and “Europe” inserted, and accordingly explicit concepts of mesoregionalizing the half-continent in historical terms—grouping societies, nations, states, etc. together—are the exception in histories of Europe.

This does not, of course, mean that the authors of this type of historiography do not mesoregionalize at all. On the contrary, in defining their macroregion “Europe,” they also tend to delineate its external borders and thereby separate it from other regions. In this context, three main concepts of “Europe” are usually present: first, the nineteenth-century Rankean concept of “*Kulturkreise*”—Greek, Roman-Germanic, or Slavic (non)“civilizations”—is still applied in identifying a civilizational unit consisting in most instances of “Western,” “Southern,” “Northern,” and (East-)Central Europe,” yet without further distinguishing them. Second (and less frequently), a somewhat wider “Europe” is constructed, which includes the Balkans, yet excludes Russia, Turkey, and the Caucasus. And third, a geographical “Europe” “from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains” is configured. More often than not, the narrowing down applied in versions one and two is not indicated in book titles. Accordingly, the Austrian historian Gerald Stourzh, in his introduction to a seminal collection of articles on “approaches to a historiography of Europe,” criticizes “a fuzzily sliding terminology which on one occasion talks of ‘Europe’ and on another one of Western Europe” (Stourzh 2002, xvii).

An analytical tool that can function as the missing link between the levels of “state” and “Europe” is the concept of historical mesoregions. The German expert on Balkan history Holm Sundhaussen (2005, 16–17) has defined such a historical mesoregion (*Geschichtsregion*): “With regard to Europe, spaces or regions are concerned which are smaller than the continent, yet ex-

ceed in general the borders of contemporary states, i.e., spaces of a mid-level dimension, that is meso-regions. This sizing (smaller than the continent, yet larger than a contemporary state) may appear arbitrary, but has its explanation in the aim to structure Europe or its history in a readily comprehensible way along similarities and difference that have developed over long periods.” I myself have described the concept of historical mesoregions as “a historiographical method of transnational comparison with the potential for a middle range theory as well as a research strategy with built-in control mechanisms arising from a solid founding in the sources and comparison” (Troebst 2003; 2012). This method can be put in a nutshell in the following way:

The historical mesoregion is an investigative framework in the cultural sciences; it is a heuristic artifice that creates nonterritorialized units, connected by time, which cross the boundaries of state, society, nation, and civilization. Mesohistorical regions provide a working hypothesis for a comparative analysis that aims to identify and delineate specific clusters of structural characteristics over long periods. The various combinations of characteristics, rather than the individual characteristics themselves, are unique and thus cluster-specific. Thus, clusters that cover large areas during a specific epoch can be referred to as historical mesoregions. They are “fluctuating zones with fluid borders” (Strohmeyer 1999, 47), which can be structured into centers and peripheries accordingly. Here, too, the specific is unimaginable without the surroundings; one historical mesoregion can only be understood in the context of others. Correspondingly, relationism and the dependence on relationships complement the internal structure of a historical mesoregion (Troebst 2012). This approach has at least two advantages: it provides a framework for comparisons which tell us something about the specificity of Europe’s subdivisions—and thereby about Europe as such—and in didactic and mnemonic terms it reduces the complexity of a vast subject matter.

The omission of a mesoregional level by historians of Europe contrasts with the practice of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, and even in natural sciences. This goes not only for sociologists such as Arnanon and Delanty or social anthropologists such as Giordano, but also for economists, demographers, or political scientists who frequently come up with ad hoc regionalizations like the “Blue Banana,” the “European Coal Belt,” the “Western Balkans,” or divisions of Europe according to marriage patterns, dietary habits, or types of welfare states. And weather reports feature not only West, North, East, Central, and South Europe, but also Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast Europe, as well as mesoregions such as Scandinavia, the Alpine region, or the British Isles. In doing so, meteorologists rely heavily on the concepts of geographers. In mesoregionalizing Europe, the latter operate, however, not only with geomorphological categories but

also with self-constructed and historically defined anthropomorphological “culture areas,” thereby making ample, though somewhat arbitrary, use of historiography. For example, the Austrian geographer Peter Jordan’s (2005, 167–70) “macro-division of Europe according to criteria of culture areas and without taking into account current state borders” highlights “Southern Europe,” “Western Europe,” “Northern Europe,” “Eastern Europe,” “Central Europe,” and “Southeastern Europe” as “Kulturräume Europas.” A more sophisticated example is the discussion of Europe’s internal divisions in a recent handbook by German geographers who emphasize the constructedness and ideological connotation of “culture areas” in Europe (Gebhardt, Glaser, and Lentz 2013, 17–24). In doing so, they refer to the work of Hans-Dietrich Schultz (2013), who is the author of the influential dictum “Räume sind nicht, Räume werden gemacht” (Spaces are not simply there, but constructed; 1997).

In their historicizing approach to a mesoregionalization of Europe, geographers rely not only on the concept of *Kulturkreise* or *Kulturräume*, but also on schools and traditions in European historiography that do indeed apply mesoregional concepts, but whose research results do not usually figure in general histories of Europe. Here, at least three lines of thought can be identified:

At the end of the nineteenth century, in imperial Germany and the Habsburg Empire a historical subdiscipline of *Osteuropäische Geschichte* (Eastern European History) was institutionalized for political reasons—that is, due to the rivalry with Tsarist Russia. “Osteuropa,” at the time identified with the European parts of the Russian Empire, was defined as a historical mesoregion of its own (Voigt 1994; Troebst 2013). In the interwar period, this new framing corresponded to an international discussion of historians from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany on the two competing concepts of “Slavdom” and “Eastern Europe.” The most visible participant was Oskar Halecki (Wandycz 1992). In Cold-War West Germany, adjacent mesoregions such as “East Central Europe,” “Southeastern Europe,” and “Baltic Sea Region”/“Northeastern Europe,” as well as a narrower “Eastern Europe” (meaning the East Slavic-speaking lands of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus under Soviet rule) were defined (Zernack 1977, 31–66).

While Braudel’s famous *La Méditerranée* is still considered by historians a classic work on the sixteenth century, as well as a new approach in writing the history of a European periphery, a specific “European” feature of the book is usually overlooked: in addition to defining “his” Mediterranean as a historical mesoregion *sui generis*, here Braudel also mesoregionalizes *all* of Europe. This goes not only for the two other maritime “worlds” or seascapes—the Baltic and the Black Sea—but also for what he calls the “isthmuses of Europe”—the “Russian,” “Polish,” “German,” and “French isthmus” (Braudel 1949; 1966,

188–224; see also chapter 4 in this volume). In doing so, Braudel comes up with a model of historical mesoregions of Europe that may not be of universal validity, but is apt for the whole modern period.

In 1950, Halecki published his seminal study, *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, the first attempt at a thorough mesoregionalization of Europe by historical, religious, and cultural criteria (Halecki 1950). Despite the notion of “limits” in his title, Halecki did not waste much time or energy on the perennial question of where Europe ends—on the ancient river Tanais (today’s Don), at the Ural mountain range, or elsewhere—but concentrated instead on its internal divisions, its historical mesoregions. Like others before him, he basically identified two such regions for the centuries prior to the year AD 1000—a Christian South and a pagan North. For the medieval and modern periods, however, he outlined three mesoregions: “Western,” “Central,” and “Eastern Europe,” with the “Central” one being subdivided into “West-Central” and “East-Central” halves. In 1983, following in the footsteps of Halecki and Braudel, the Hungarian historian Jenő Szűcs (1983a; 1983b) came up with a neo-Marxist mesoregional concept based on social and economic development and consisting of three core components—“Western Europe,” “East-Central Europe,” and “Eastern Europe” (plus Scandinavian and Mediterranean peripheries). It was no coincidence that the French translation of Szűcs’s essay appeared with a preface by Braudel (Braudel 1985). In contrast to Halecki, however, who stressed the similarities between his “West-Central” and “East-Central Europe,” Szűcs underlined the structural differences between his own “East-Central Europe” and both Western Europe and Russia, a.k.a. Eastern Europe. Similar tripartite models of European history were developed by Polish historians (Samsonowicz 2000; Kula 1983; Topolski 1977; Małowist 1973; see also Sosnowska 2004). Yet while at least the first two of these mesoregionalizing approaches resulted in a large number of studies carrying these concepts further, they were barely reflected in that part of international historiography which dealt with the history of Europe as a whole.

Over the last two decades, the writing of the history of Europe has become the object of detailed historiographic analyses: Susan Rößner (2009) and Bernard Eric Jensen (2002) have surveyed twentieth-century German, British, Dutch, and Danish histories and historiographies of Europe, while Heinz Duchhardt and colleagues (2006–07) have presented a three-volume prosopographic study of what they call “historians of Europe.” On the other hand, the post-1945 part of the five-volume *Oxford History of Historical Writing* does not contain a chapter on European historical writing—despite the fact that it comprises detailed chapters on African and Arab historiographies (Schneider and Woolfe 2011). However, Wolfgang Schmale’s (2004; 2009;

2010; 2015) thorough reports on new publications on the history of Europe fill this gap to a large degree (see also Kroll 2007).

Multivolume Histories of Europe

In general, reference works on European history, here meaning, first of all, multivolume histories of Europe, mesoregionalize, if at all, only formally by using (usually undefined) mesoregional terms to bring national cases under one regional roof—for example, “Scandinavia”/“Scandinavian states” or “the Balkans”/“Balkan states.” A classic example is the authoritative six-volume “Handbook of European Economic and Social History,” whose volumes all have chapters on “Northern Europe,” “Western Europe,” “Southern Europe,” “Central Europe,” “Eastern Europe,” and “Southeastern Europe,” consisting, however, of subchapters dealing exclusively with national cases (Fischer et al. 1980–93). The same goes for Theodor Schieder’s (1968–87) seminal seven-volume “Handbook of European History,” even though in his preface the editor refers to Halecki’s *Limits and Divisions* (Schieder 1976, 15), and despite the fact that the volume on the Middle Ages contains a chapter on “große Räume” (large spaces) and “Regionen” of Europe (Seibt 1987, 6–38). It’s also true of a decidedly Eurocentric six-volume “Propyläen History of Europe” written by conservative German historians such as Hellmut Diwald, Ernst Walter Zeeden, and again Schieder (Mitte et al. 1975–78). But more recent multivolume German-language histories of Europe, such as a ten-volume “Handbook of the History of Europe” edited by Peter Blickle (2002–12; see also Schmale 2013), or a ten-volume “C. H. Beck History of Europe” (C. H. Beck 2010–13), also focus almost exclusively on empires and states as units of analysis. Even when mesoregions such as “the North of Europe” (Hippel and Stier 2012, 198–207), “Scandinavia,” “Eastern Europe” (Bernecker 2002, 215–65), “East-Central Europe,” or “Western Europe” are applied to structure chapters on national cases, they signify only groups of states (Schieffer 2013).

English-language multivolume general histories of Europe also follow this pattern, such as, for example, the *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600* (Brady 1994–95) or the new *Cambridge History of Europe* (Wiesner-Hanks 2006), as do multivolume histories of European economic history. While in some of the eight volumes of the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe* regional divisions such as “the Italian and Iberian Peninsulas,” “Northwestern Europe,” “the Baltic countries,” or “east-central and south-east Europe” are applied (The Cambridge History of Europe 1963–89), they are nowhere to be found in the recent two-volume *Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe* (Broadberry and O’Rourke 2010).

But there are also exceptions to the rule. In the first of the fourteen volumes of the authoritative *New Cambridge Modern History*, H. C. Darby came up with a geographical model. He distinguished between “eastern Europe,” divided according to him into three different parts, namely “coniferous forest, deciduous forest and steppe,” as well as “Scandinavia,” “the north-German plain” cum “Poland,” “the Mediterranean basin,” “the Iberian Peninsula” and “the Balkan Peninsula” (Darby 1957, 21–34). However, none of his co-authors adopted his pattern. Instead, almost all structured their chapters according to political units.

Another exception is to be found in the post-1989 four-volume “Siedler History of Europe” (Siedler Geschichte Europas 1997–2009) in the third volume, written by Heinz Schilling (1999) on the late medieval and early modern period. Its first chapter, on “Peoples, Empires and Early States: The Political Morphology of Europe,” deals with six European mesoregions: “The Mediterranean Region and the Atlantic Southwest,” “The Central European realm of states,” “The East and the North—the Scandinavian kingdoms and Russia,” and “The West—the Netherlands, the British Isles and France.” Schilling (1999, 94–129, 144–55) dwells extensively on the mesoregionalizing concept of “East-Central Europe” and even elaborates on Halecki’s innovation of “West-Central Europe.” Schilling’s volume did not, however, set a trend. On the contrary, in the most recent German-language book series *European History in the 20th Century*, edited by the contemporary historian Ulrich Herbert (2010), European history is written as the history of nation-states or federations. In his preface, which is part of each of the six volumes published in the series so far (on Spain, Great Britain, Poland, Italy, Yugoslavia, and Russia/Soviet Union), Herbert justifies this focus by stating that “Europe is our present, but our history remains rooted in the national” (7).

A multivolume history whose title does not contain the word “Europe,” but which in fact concentrates primarily on European history, is the nine-volume *Handbook of the History of International Relations* (Duchhardt and Knipping 1997–2016). Here, it is again Heinz Schilling who applies the most elaborate regionalization pattern. In his volume in the series, which focuses on the period from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, he dwells extensively on “European Powers and Zones of Power.” As such, he identifies “the Ottoman world empire;” “the South and West European Zone of Power,” dominated by Spain; “the Nordic-Baltic Zone of Power,” characterized by the battle for the *dominium maris Baltici*; and “the Central and Southeast European Zone of Power,” where the conflict between the sultan and the emperor took place (Schilling 2007). Alfred Kohler’s (2008, 81–206) mesoregionalizing concept in volume 1 of the same series is more pedestrian. He distinguishes between “Southern and Western Europe,” “Central Europe,”

“Northern and Eastern Europe,” and “Southeastern Europe,” but does not come up with an explanation of the specificity of his four mesoregions.

A particularly interesting case is a five-volume Russian-language *History of Europe from Ancient Times to Our Days*, conceptualized during the so-called stagnation period. This first-ever Soviet and Russian multivolume history of Europe started out under the general editorship of Zinaida V. Udal'tsova, a prominent Byzantinist and orthodox Communist (Udal'tsova and Chubar'ian 1988–2000). From volume 2 on, she was replaced by the historian and director of the academy's Institute of General History, Aleksandr O. Chubar'ian, another Brezhnevite, yet of a more liberal orientation. The detailed preface to the series in volume 1, published in 100,000 copies in 1988, is still strongly influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideology. Interestingly enough, it perceives “the history of Europe . . . not as the sum of the histories of individual countries but as a process of the development of a specific historical community with a complicated internal structure” (Udal'tsova 1988, 5). This assumes an elaborated regionalizing concept:

The history of Europe demonstrates how complicated and contradictory the process of world history is. Asynchronicity and asymmetry of historical development manifest themselves in the fact that phenomena and regularities which are common to the whole continent in its regions take place at different times and take on different forms. Therefore, this whole series is based on systematically regional and topical chronological principles. Thus, it is no coincidence that the team of authors pays great attention to Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Soviet Union. In many works on the history of Europe published in the West, the role of Eastern Europe in the history of the continent is underestimated and the peculiarities of the development of its Western part are depicted as its standard gauge. Some Western historians and political scientists try to use the asynchronicity and nonsimultaneity in the historical process as an argument in favor of the theory of an alleged “permanent backwardness” of Russia and all of Eastern Europe compared to the West. In this series the groundlessness of this concept is revealed. The twentieth century, which stands under the sign of revolutionary renewal, demonstrates convincingly the significance of the Great October Socialist Revolution and of the experience of the building up of socialism in the USSR and the other countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe for the history of the world and of Europe. (Udal'tsova 1988, 6)

In principle, the volumes in the series covering the centuries from the early Middle Ages to World War I follow this regionalization pattern, yet with different emphases. Volume 2, *Medieval Europe*, for example, is structured along the history of empires and states as well as that of mesoregions such as “Southeastern Europe,” “Eastern Europe,” “Central Europe,” “Western Europe,” “Northwestern Europe,” “Northern Europe,” and a “Slavo-Balkan

region” (Gutnova and Udal'tsova 1992). The same goes for volume 3, *From the Middle Ages to the Modern Era (Late Fifteenth to the First Half of the Seventeenth Centuries)*, where in addition to the abovementioned regions a “Balkan and Central European Region” also figures (Mil'skaia and Rutenburg 1993). In contrast, volume 4, *Europe in Modern Times (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries)*, focuses primarily on empires and states and applies regionalizing concepts such as a “Slavo-Balkan region” and “Western Europe” only in its chapters on economic history, as well as, in the chapter on church history, a common “Western and Central Europe” (Barg 1994). Finally, volume 5, *From the French Revolution at the End of the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, almost completely gives up the concept of European regions, with one exception: “The Balkans” (Pozharskaia and Namazova 2000). In general, the regionalizing concepts of the series represent a rather nonreflective mix of geographical, ethnocultural, economic, and religious categories applied in an unsystematic way. It can be assumed that this is due to the fact that various institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (and later of the Russian Academy of Sciences) were in charge of chapters on different regions. Thus, the term “Slavo-Balkan region” is most probably due to the existence of the academy's participating Institute of Slavic and Balkan Studies.

Single-Volume Histories of Europe

Single-volume histories of Europe, like their multivolume counterparts, only rarely use mesoregionalizing concepts. They either apply a dichotomous West-East model or simply focus on states in structuring their narrative, even when they claim to write the history of Europe as a history of its “peoples” (Duroselle 1990). An example for the first approach is a recent French-language *Histoire de l'Europe* where “l'Europe occidentale” is strictly separated from “l'Europe de l'Est.” Here, chapter titles convey the perception of a cultural gradient: “l'Europe ‘barbare’” versus “l'Europe de la chrétienté,” “l'Occident émietté” versus “l'Orient restructuré,” “A l'ouest, le grand essor de l'Europe féodale” versus “A l'est, un monde éclaté,” “Les permanences de la civilisation byzantine” versus “Les apports de la civilisation occidentale,” “Les états de l'Europe du nord-ouest” versus “Les problèmes de l'Europe orientale” and “l'Europe libérale du nord et du nord ouest” versus “Europe centrale et orientale” (Carpentier and Lebrun 1992; see also Carbonell 1999).

Other examples of the state fixation in structuring one-volume histories of Europe include Michael Salewski's (2000) tellingly titled *History of Europe: States and Nations from Antiquity to the Present*, in which the prominent legal historian exclusively defines “states and nations” as units of analysis. Also, Hans Hattenhauer's (2004) voluminous European legal history is struc-

tured according to the legal cultures of empires and (nation-)states. A similar approach characterizes a one-volume Finnish history of Europe (Zetterberg 1993) as well as a Polish one, where empires, states and dynasties form the frame, but for the sake of convenience smaller states are lumped together under regionalizing terms such as “Scandinavia” or “the Balkans.” Only in chapters on *Beziehungsgeschichte* are explicit regionalizing concepts applied. This goes for “Central Europe” in the context of German-Polish relations and the rivalry of regional dynasties, and for “Eastern Europe” when it comes to the relationship with the Islamic World and the Mongols (Maćzak 1997, 137–42, 161–76, 199–207).

Even stronger is the fixation on states in monographs that have a focus on or deal exclusively with the twentieth century or, still narrower, with the Cold-War period. Here, “West” and “East” are used primarily in the context of oppositions of the type “democracy versus totalitarianism” or “Eastern Bloc versus the Free World.” For example, Dan Stone (2014) in his (subtitled) *Story of Europe since 1945*, pessimistically titled *Goodbye to All That?*, has subdivided those three of the four parts of his book which cover the period 1944 to 1989 strictly into separate sections on Western and Eastern Europe. However, notwithstanding ideological, political, military, economic, and other differences, he sees pre-1989 communist Eastern Europe and “welfare-capitalist” Western Europe united in the “postwar consensus” of a “broad rejection of the fascist past,” based on the joint perception that World War II was a just war. Accordingly, in his view, “1989” has brought about “the fall of the postwar consensus” resulting in an opening of Pandora’s box in the form of “memory wars” (Stone 2014, 231–94). Also, William I. Hitchcock (2003, 2) perceives the East-West conflict prior to 1989 as a factor unifying Western and Eastern Europe, although he distinguishes between a “good Cold War” in the West and a not so good one in the East.

Several authoritative one-volume histories of the whole European twentieth century also place emphasis on ideologies. Eric Hobsbawm (1994), in his history of the *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*, structures his narrative along a trilateral model consisting of capitalism, fascism, and communism. His units of analysis, next to ideologies, also include empires and unhistorical mesoregions—despite obvious coincidences of both categories. Similarities can be seen in the approaches of Konrad H. Jarausch (2015) in his recent and decidedly optimistic history of Europe from 1900 to 2000, and of the Czech satirical writer Pavel Ouředník (2005) in his ostensibly humorous, yet in terms of content rather serious and even bitter book, *Europeana. A Brief History of the Twentieth Century*. Ouředník writes,

Before the fall of Communism, the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe were called the EASTERN GLACIER, because life in those countries was rigid as if frozen stiff, and in 1989 lots of people in Western Europe thought that the eastern countries should join the European Union as soon as possible, and they said that it would enrich the European identity. . . . But in time it became plain that the people in the former Communist countries were not much interested in a European identity, and people in Eastern Europe had no confidence in European history. Some West European historians said that the people of Eastern Europe should be given time because they lacked an awareness of the dynamic of history because forty years of Communism had created a historyless void. But people from the Eastern European countries saw things differently and felt that they could provide the people in Western Europe with lots of interesting experiences, and they felt abandoned and neglected. (87–88)

Again, “Eastern Europe” and “Western Europe” are defined by ideologies, not only for the Cold War era but also with regard to the post-1989 period. Harold James (2003, 6), in his book *Europe Reborn*, conceives Europe “traditionally,” that is, “from Ireland to the Urals, including Turkey, while excluding North Africa and the Middle East, although there is much to be said for a treatment that makes the Mediterranean a center of European life and of political and social innovation.”

A particularly intriguing experiment in writing Europe’s twentieth century history with a special focus on the Cold War is Dan Diner’s (2008) monograph *Cataclysm. A History of the Twentieth Century from Europe’s Edge*, in which he views “the totality of world history evolving from an Eastern and Southeastern angle.” According to the cover’s back flap, which elaborates on the viewpoint: “Approaching twentieth-century history from the periphery rather than the centers of decision-making, the virtual narrator sits perched on the legendary stairs of Odessa and watches as events between the Baltic and the Aegean pass in review, unfolding in space and time between 1917 and 1989, while evoking the nineteenth century as an interpretative backdrop.” Instead of focusing on Western Europe and taking the eastern half of the continent as a mere appendix, Diner (2008, 69) reverses the perspective and portrays East Central and Southeastern Europe—in Mackinder’s “succession”—as the “pivot” not only of European but of Transatlantic and Eurasian modern history (see also Mackinder 1904).

In general, however, in histories of post-1945 Europe the equation “Europe = Western Europe + appendices” prevails. The most recent example is the *Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, whose editor Dan Stone (2012, 7–8) states, “‘Europe’ in this *Handbook* is understood to mean all of Europe, including notable emphasis on Eastern Europe as well as on the cre-

ation of ‘neo-Europes’ overseas and ‘reverse colonialism’ in Europe itself.” “Notable emphasis” on Western Europe seems unnecessary, since it comes as a matter of course. The same goes for the implicit assumption that “Southern,” “Central,” and “Northern Europe” are part of “the West.”

There are, however, also syntheses which focus exclusively on “the West” (in terms of the German *Abendland*) and exclude Eastern Europe altogether. This is true, for example, of Peter Rietbergen’s (2006) overview *Europe: A Cultural History*, although the author is well aware of Europe’s “many internal divisions”:

As a result of many geoeconomic, geopolitical and cultural-religious developments, some of which can be traced far back into past millennia, while others are of more recent origin, many internal divisions have come into existence, creating a multiplicity and diversity of culture(s) in the Europe geographically defined above [i.e., “from the North Cape to Gibraltar, from the west coast of Ireland to the Urals”]. Perceptibly the most obvious is the “dividing line” separating western Europe from what, geographically at least, is called eastern Europe. This “line,” actually a wide transitional zone sometimes referred to as central or even central-eastern Europe, stretches from the Baltic to the Balkans and roughly coincides with the Baltic states, Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Hungary. (xxx)

Nevertheless, Rietbergen decides to focus on Europe’s western half: “Although there are sound scholarly reasons, besides considerations of a politically correct nature, to induce an author to fully include the cultures of eastern Europe, I have chosen not to do so” (xxx).

An even more extreme case in this regard is Hagen Schulze’s (1996) monograph *State, Nations and Nationalism* in the Europe-spanning, multi-language Building Europe book series. In the preface the author explains why, in writing the history of post-medieval Europe, its eastern half is of only minor importance in his view:

Some readers may take exception to the fact that Eastern Europe does not play a more prominent part in our account. To me it seems plausible that, since the division of the continent into a Western and an Eastern Roman Empire about the year 330 AD, two European spheres of civilization have emerged and developed over the two thousand years down to the present day, not without influencing each other, but certainly without merging. The tale I have to tell unfolded unequivocally in the western cultural sphere and describes a civilization which, as opposed to the Byzantine and Russian Orthodox East, was marked by the early divorce of the secular from the spiritual authorities and by a process of intellectual secularization featuring concepts like the Renaissance and Enlightenment and, as result of such movements, sovereignty of the people

and democracy. This is the history of the “Westernization of the Occident,” and for that reason I have concentrated mainly on France, England, Germany, Italy and Spain. I have, however, permitted myself, for purposes of comparison, occasional brief glances at Northern and Eastern Europe. (xiii)

Although it is not quite clear what “Eastern Europe” actually means in Schulze’s definition, he does occasionally include the history of Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians in his narrative. He applies the criterion of Latinity and thus mesoregionalizes Europe into a Roman Catholic and Protestant part and an Orthodox rest

Hartmut Kaelble, another prominent German historian of Europe and author of a (1990) seminal treatment of Western Europe’s social history up to 1980, in contrast expands his notion of “Europe” after 1989. “During the 1990s,” wrote Kaelble (2006, 6), “it became clear to me that a European history can be written only by including the Eastern part of Europe.” This is what he did in his (2013) book *A Social History of Europe, 1945–2000*:

This book is based on a pragmatic definition of Europe. It will cover Europe as a whole, including Eastern, East Central, and Southeastern Europe, and will attempt to transcend overconcentration on the western part of Europe, to the extent that the state of research allows. At the same time, the book will address two decidedly controversial geographical constraints. The USSR and Russia are not completely incorporated, as this region’s stronger contribution to the European and Atlantic region after 1989–91 cannot negate the historical fact that before then, the USSR was only ever a half-European power, alongside also being a half-Asian and a global power, and also viewed itself as something special. The USSR and Russia can therefore not be indiscriminately included in Europe. With the inclusion of the USSR and Russia, Europe would look fundamentally different in many social fields, such as birthrate, family, standard of living, social conflict, and inequalities as well as state intervention. Yet because fully excluding Russia and the USSR is also problematic, I have to the best of my ability as a non-expert, comparatively included the USSR and Russia in this overview in such a manner that not just the region’s differences but also its similarities with Europe remain identifiable. Turkey, the second point of contention with regard to the spatial definition of Europe, is also not simply included in Europe in what follows. (6)

Compared to Kaelble, the Hungarian historian Béla Tomka (2013) is less explicit in his social history of twentieth-century Europe. His book is structured along topics such as “families and households,” “the welfare state,” or “urbanization,” since in his view “geographical definitions and boundaries are of little help” (4). Tomka’s Europe is—in Szűcs’s footsteps—“Western Europe, in a wider sense, together with East Central Europe, but Southern

Europe and the Balkans are also included in the analysis as much as possible” (4). The author explains what he understands by these mesoregional concepts: “As a general rule, Western Europe includes North Western Europe (United Kingdom/Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland), Central Europe (Germany/FRG, Switzerland, and Austria) and Scandinavia (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland). Southern Europe refers to Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece; East Central Europe involves Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and South-Eastern Europe coincides with the Balkan region without Greece” (4). Yet Tomka does not apply Szűcs’s term “Eastern Europe,” but instead “Russia/the Soviet Union and the Baltic States,” and thus deviates from Szűcs’s model, in which the region between the Gulf of Finland and river Nemunas/Memel is part of “East-Central Europe,” not lumped together with Russia and the USSR. Tomka (2013, 4) explains this as follows:

The inclusion of Russia/the Soviet Union and the Baltic States would definitely be justified as well. However, Russia/the Soviet Union constituted a world of its own, with sizeable internal diversity throughout the twentieth century, the analysis of which would require a lot of space and would further increase the complexity of the argumentation and would strain the structure of the work. In addition, for these regions we simply do not have sufficient and reliable comparative data and other information in several social areas. Thus the Baltic States, the Soviet Union and its successor states are not covered. This self-constraint is not unique: neither of the major social histories of Europe considers Russia/the Soviet Union and often even more general histories of Eastern Europe fully neglect Russia/the Soviet Union and the Baltic States. Nevertheless, we obviously do not intend to deny that the past of these regions constitutes an integral part of the history of Europe.

Despite this caveat and its justification, in a review of Tomka’s book, Göran Therborn (2014) criticized “the author’s narrow definition of ‘Europe’”: “Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union are left out, and the Balkans are excluded from most, though not all, comparisons. The outcome, then, is yet another book on ‘Europe’ as Western Europe, with the Visegrád countries (Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary and Poland) now included in the West.”

A particular case of an English-language one-volume general history of Europe is Norman Davies’s (1996) widely read *Europe: A History*. Davies dwells intensively on questions such as the limits of Europe, “East-West fault lines in Europe” and “the division of Europe into “natural” or “historic” regions,” the latter being in his view “an intellectual exercise that is as entertaining as it is inconclusive” (51; see also map 3 on page 18). Accordingly, Davies dismisses mesoregionalizing concepts based on historical criteria such as “Western,”

“Eastern,” “Northern,” “Southern,” “Central,” and “East Central Europe” by arguing that “one stands on safer ground dividing Europe into regions based on physical and geographical features” (51). In a Braudelian approach he identifies “five natural components” of “the European Peninsula”: “The Great European Plain,” “the Mountains,” “the Mediterranean,” “several large sub-peninsulas” as well as islands, plus “three sub-regions . . . of particular importance: the Midi, the Danube Basin, and the Volga corridor” (51–65; see also map 4, Europe: Physical Regions, on page 48). In the actual narrative, however, this regionalization concept does not figure. What Davies, the prolific historian of Poland, actually does is bringing the often neglected history of Halecki’s and Szűcs’s “East-Central Europe”—without naming them—into what he calls on the back flap “a total history of Europe in every period.”

In 1996, when Davies’s massive monograph was published, another British historian was busy writing a book on the history of Europe, though “only” on the post-1945 period: Tony Judt, whose equally weighty tome *Postwar* was eventually published in 2005. For various reasons, Judt did not like the book by his colleague, among others due to Davies’s “polemic about the neglected importance of Eastern Europe” (Judt 2012, 256). With hindsight, this harsh judgment seems somewhat premature, since in his own book Judt set out to do the same thing—that is, to bring together “the separate and non-communicating stories of prosperous western Europe and the Soviet bloc satellites to its east” (Judt 2005, 1–2). What he meant was, on the one hand, the story of “the slightly self-satisfied attitudes of postwar Western Europe: capitalist prosperity underpinned by a richly-endowed welfare state” (plus social peace and external security), and on the other, that of “the ‘other’ Europe of bleak poverty and secret policemen” (Judt 2005, 2). “The history of the two halves of post-war Europe,” writes Judt (2005, 5–6), “cannot be told in isolation from one another.” The actual innovation of Judt’s narrative was, however, something different: the identification and analysis of processes and phenomena that affected *all* of postwar Europe alike, such as, for a few examples, the common urge for retribution after 1945, a genuinely European anti-Americanism, a Europe-wide fascination with Stalin and his “thought,” an explosion of university education on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and consumerism as a capitalist *and* communist strategy. While Judt’s (2005, 327, 523–26) most important mesoregional categories were “Eastern Europe” and “Western Europe,” he also identified a “Mediterranean Europe” as well as “Scandinavia,” yet did not elaborate on them. The same goes for Mark Mazower (1998), who in his history of twentieth-century Europe depicts the boundaries of Europe as “porous and adaptable,” yet does not subdivide the continent. He also uses regionalizing concepts such as “the West,” “eastern

Europe,” “central Europe,” “the Balkans,” and “Scandinavia,” as well as “Eurasia,” again without defining them.

Two Exceptions to the Rule: “Europe” and “the Balkans”/“Southeastern Europe”

While single- and multivolume histories of Europe either do not regionalize at all or apply regionalizing categories without explanation, two types of regionalizing concepts are in most instances defined or at least invoked. The first one is the macroregion “Europe”—that is, its “geographic, cultural and mental borders” (Heikkilä et al. 2012, back flap). Almost all authors give a short definition by referring to geographical markers such as the Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines, the North Cape, and the Ural mountain range. The fact that the Siberian parts of Russia are thus excluded is rarely discussed. While the Europeanness of Russia is frequently doubted, the Ural line as Europe’s eastern border is not—an inconsistency that again is commonly not addressed. Historians tend not to take notice of ongoing debates among geographers on where Europe “ends” (Fassmann 2002). Hans-Dietrich Schultz (2009) has pointed out the fact that, in the scholarly conceptualizations of geographers during the last two hundred years, “Europe’s eastern border fluctuated between the 25th and 100th latitude” depending on “whether one wanted to have Russia in or not.” Some geographers excluded those parts of Russia that lay east of a line running from the White Sea to the mouth of the Danube, while others identified the Yenisei river in central Siberia as Europe’s eastern borderline. According to Schultz, the Ural border is as arbitrary as all others—a fact that few historians seem to realize.

The second exception is “the Balkans” or “Southeastern Europe”—a mesoregional category applied by many authors, including those who do not apply any other mesoregional categories (Lang 2011, 392). Among historians of Europe, be they French, English, Polish, or Russian, the Balkans seem to have a reputation for being complicated, conflict-ridden, and thus confusing—a view that results in the urge to lock them away in a single category without going into their political and cultural divisions. Interestingly enough, the standard category of “state” applied by most historians of Europe seems to be inappropriate when it comes to the Balkans. As with “Russia,” the Europeanness of “the Balkans” is also frequently doubted. Whereas in geographic terms the Balkans are included in Europe, in cultural terms they often are not. Quite obviously, among historians of Europe, the “imagination” of the Balkans as an “Orient” within Europe is popular (Todorova 2009; see also chapter 7 in this volume).

Preliminary Résumé

Historians of Europe, like historians in general, do not usually give much consideration to the question of how to structure “Europe” and its history in regional terms. They either do not mesoregionalize at all, applying instead a holistic concept of “Europe” (which more often than not equates “Western Europe” with “Europe”), or they simply follow the beaten tracks of a “Western,” “Eastern,” “Northern,” “Southern,” “Central,” and other “Europes” without questioning or even defining these mesoregional terms. Explicit models of regionalizing the history of Europe are rare. Their authors are mostly general historians who adopt concepts from the subdiscipline of Russian and East European history as it has existed in German-speaking countries since the late nineteenth century, or refer to Halecki and Szűcs. Hartmut Kaelble (1990; 2006; 2013) and Heinz Schilling (1999; 2007) belong to this latter category. A double exception to the rule of not regionalizing is Norman Davies, who (a) is well aware of models of mesoregionalizing the history of Europe, but (b) rejects them by referring to physical and geographical features.

Yet recently one can identify a call in general historiography to pay more attention to mesoregionalizing concepts, even if it is still weak—and a markedly German and “East Central European” phenomenon (Kocka 2000; Osterhammel 2004, 167–68; Todorova 2005; Paulmann 2013, 666; Cornelißen 2012–13; Mishkova, Stráth, and Trencsényi 2013). On the other hand, in other historically-oriented disciplines, such as the history of literature, art history, and social anthropology, the interest in the model of historical mesoregions of Europe is visibly increasing. And a very recent phenomenon is the interest of historically-inclined sociologists such as Arnason and Delanty in “domains and divisions of European history” (Arnason and Doyle 2010) or in “the historical regions of Europe” (Delanty 2012). It seems as if historians of Europe are separated from each other to a much higher degree than historians in other fields, not only by national historiographic cultures, but also along dividing lines that closely resemble Halecki’s mesoregions of Europe—“Western Europe,” “West Central Europe” (i.e., the German-language region), “East Central Europe,” and “Eastern Europe” (i.e., the Russian Federation).

It is commonly accepted that the average time it takes for fresh research results and new interpretations in historiography to trickle into history textbooks is approximately ten years. The same time span, if not a longer one, can be assumed for single- and multivolume histories of Europe. Thus it may be expected that the analytical potential, as well as the didactic and mnemonic advantages, of the concept of historical mesoregions will lead to its wider acceptance in the near future. The first swallows are already in the air.

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