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The European Heartland Geographical Context of Central Europe



<http://dgl.salemstate.edu/geography/profs/young/Imaging%20Earth/Biosphere%20Web/europe.gif>

The European Heartland Geographical Context of Central Europe

Tózsá István¹

Summary

The textbook contains two introductory chapters to get to know the geopolitical and economic environment of Central Europe: **Chapter 1** ‘The Global Heartland’ deals with Eurasia, the mainland of the world and the American, Russian and Chinese competition for it; while **Chapter 2** ‘The Third World War’ describes the American economic campaign against Germany, the western part of Central Europe. **Chapter 3** deals with ‘Central Europe’ and the countries forming it with their detailed geographic environment, economic output and development. **Chapter 4** is about the geostrategic evaluation of Central Europe, as the ‘Bridge between the European Union and Eastern Europe’ which latter is the gateway of the global Eurasian Heartland.

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Chapter 1

THE GLOBAL HEARTLAND

*Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;
Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island;
Who rules the World Island commands the World.²*

Russia is the world's richest country in natural resources, [raw materials](#), mineral deposits, fuels which are significant inputs for [economy](#). Russia accounts for around 20 % of the world's oil and gas production.

[Eurasia](#), engulfing the Heartland, has the world's most [potential](#) for [economy](#) and [energy](#). For understanding the current situation of Central Europe and the Third World War that has been already launched, it is essential first to survey the [geopolitics situation of the Heartland](#). Russia happens to be situated right around the world's most potential region named Heartland.

Eurasian Economic Union³

The Eurasian Union, initiated by the Russian president Putin, is to be grown into a powerful, supra-national union of sovereign states, uniting economies, legal systems, customs services, and military capabilities to form a bridge between Europe and Asia and be the main competitor of the [EU](#), [USA](#), China, and India by 2025.

Naturally, the western [power elite](#), led by the summation of their economic interests mainly based in the USA,⁴ wants to prevent Russia from becoming more powerful. Therefore they try to undermine Russia's economic interests in international context. [Anglo-American](#) economic hegemony has been challenged by the [BRICS](#) which was created in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The [Anglo-American power elite](#) seemingly regard [free trade](#) as their own sole right while obstructing others from that right. The most important stakeholder in the Eurasian region is China.

² Halford John Mackinder: Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction (1909) [Mackinder](#) was a strategist who influenced later strategists like [Nicholas J. Spykman](#) and [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#) who was an influential foreign policy advisor to the [Anglo-American](#) elite. Mackinder introduced [The Geographical Pivot of History](#) in which he outlined the importance of the regions of the world.

³ The EAU members: Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan; potential candidates: Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Mongolia, Ukraine (Fig.1)

⁴ Of course it is not manifested and stated openly in the official policies of governments like that of the USA, the UK, France, or any other western countries. It is the embodiment of the summation of economic interests of transnational companies – represented in this textbook as 'the Anglo-American' or 'western' power elite.



Figure 1. The Heartland is situated in between Asia and Europe: in the middle of the Eurasian mega-continent. It is controlled by Russia and some of the former Soviet Central Asian republics.

One Road One Belt

The New Silk Road strategy serves China's intention to take a significant role in global economy, and the demand to coordinate its manufacturing capacity with other countries.

One of China's key objectives for [supply security](#) in recent years has been to develop closer ties with Russia and Central Asian fuel producing countries, such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Chinese companies have invested heavily in Central Asian energy producing states, and built multiple oil and gas pipelines to the western part of China.

The western [power elite](#) wants to prevent China, too, from becoming more powerful. Projects like the OBOR [Initiative](#) and [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](#) are not supported by the Anglo-American economic power elite.

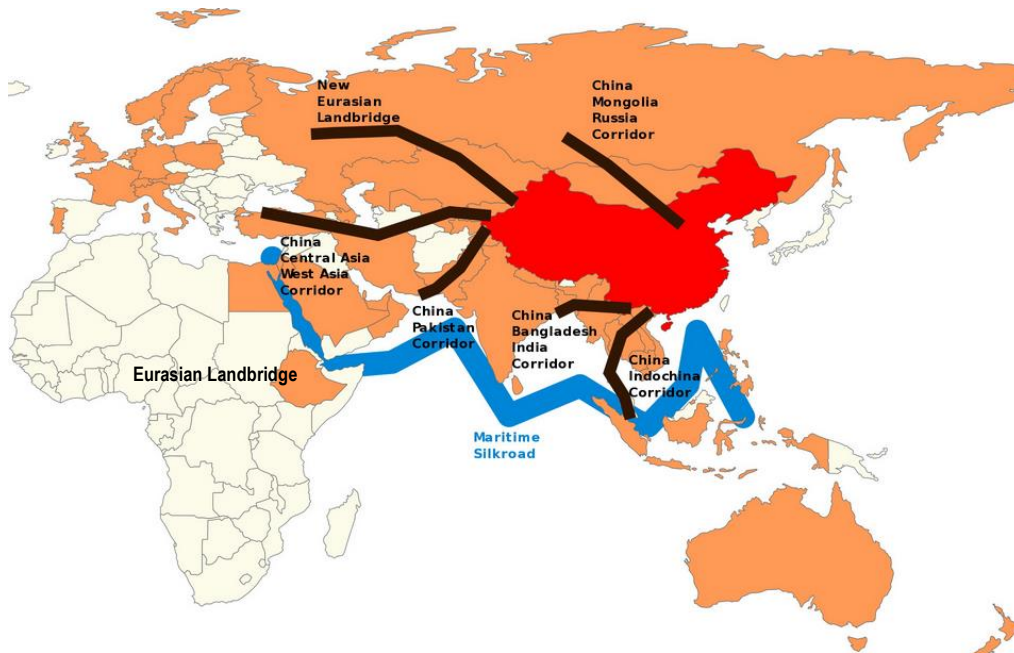


Figure 2. Routes of the New Silk Road Program initiated by China to link Asia and Europe again. The continental lines show land bridges of train and highway investment regions, while the Maritime Silk Road line indicates the world's busiest freight traffic.

The New Great Game

Getting control of the Heartland has been the central issue of global politics for centuries. This question may seem pointless, since the Russian economic power has been ruling most of the area from the Volga to Eastern Siberia for centuries. But throughout the 19th and 20th centuries the West European powers (Britain and France) had tried, usually successfully, to shape European and global policy in order to prevent Russian economic expansion out of the Heartland, and German expansion into it.

Recently, China, Russia, and the [United States](#) have started to compete for [influence](#) in Central Asia representing the south part of the Heartland.

Central Asia has emerged as a battlefield for big economic powers engaged in an old [geopolitical](#) game. Western powers think that the largely untapped [oil and natural gas reserves](#) of the Caspian Sea countries could make that region the new Persian Gulf of the following century. The object of their policy is to befriend the leaders of the Central Asian former Soviet republics controlling the oil, while neutralizing Russian suspicions and devising secure alternative pipeline routes to world markets.

Since the 19th century, the western [power elite](#) have been forming alliances in opposition to Russia. The [British Empire](#) fought against Russia in the so-called [Great Game](#). They still do so today. The [Anglo-American Empire](#) is of course known for many [aggressive wars](#) related to [geopolitics](#). Most countries they invaded were no match for the [dominant military power](#) of the [United States](#) and [their allies](#). Russia and China are of course not easy to be overpowered. Hence the so-called [New Great Game](#) which can be regarded as a [new Cold War](#), or the Third World War being fought with economic tools.

The Grand Chessboard

As the landmass of Eurasia has been regarded the centre of global power, Zbigniew Brzezinski formulated a Eurasian [geostrategy](#) for the [United States](#). In particular, he wrote, it was imperative that no Eurasian challenger would ever emerge capable of dominating Eurasia and thus challenging [America's global dominance](#).

How America manages Eurasia is critical. A power that dominates Eurasia, would control two of the world's three most advanced and economically productive regions: the EU and China. A single glance at the world map also suggests that control over Eurasia would almost automatically entail Africa's subordination to Eurasia, rendering the Western Hemisphere and Oceania [geopolitically](#) peripheral to the world's central continent. About 75 per cent of the world's people live in Eurasia, and most of the world's physical wealth is there as well, both in its enterprises and underneath its ground. Eurasia accounts for about three-fourths of the world's known [energy resources](#).

After the Cold War, [Brzezinski](#) opened his [Grand Chessboard](#) in 1997, with the attribution to Eurasia of crucial [geostrategic](#) significance. The formulation of a comprehensive and integrated Eurasian geostrategy is the purpose of the geostrategy of the USA. The geostrategic *Chessboard Doctrine* of Eurasia aims to prevent the unification of the mega-continent. According to this doctrine [Europe](#) (with the EU and Russia) and Asia (with China, Japan, India and Russia) are politically and economically powerful. [American foreign policy](#) must employ its influence in Eurasia in a manner that creates a stable continental equilibrium, with the [United States](#) as the political arbiter. Eurasia is thus the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played, and that struggle involves [geostrategy](#) i.e. the strategic management of [geopolitical](#) interests. In the meantime it is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus of challenging the USA. For the USA the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia and [America's global primacy](#) is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent can be sustained.

The [Anglo-American power elite](#) will do anything in their [power](#) to prevent Russia, or China, from making any kind of alliance while they themselves have of course set up all kinds of alliances against Russia and China. They have an economic and financial alliance in the form of a [global banking cartel](#) and a [military](#) alliance in the form of [NATO](#) by which they control much of the world. On top of that the [United States](#) has been [installing military bases all over the globe](#) particularly around Russia and China.

The EU – Russian Relation

In 2012, the EU accounted for 52% of Russia's exports, 68% of which consisted of [fuel and energy](#). Until the Russian – Ukrainian energy crisis in 2006, stable interdependence could ease political tensions. Russia is the largest exporter of natural gas to Europe. A disruption of gas supply from Russia can cause huge damage to the European economy. The Russian gas industry also depends on the European gas market, because it is the main source of cash for investments in Russia.

[Energy security](#) has become a vital part of state strategies, both in [consuming and producing countries](#). Based on the trade relations between consuming and producing actors, one of the dominant ideologies in the political sciences (neoliberal [interdependence theory](#)) argues that economic interdependence between actors leads to co-operation on the bases of mutual benefits which decreases the emergence of conflicts. This American thesis argues that the securitization of EU energy (gas) policy is experiencing serious challenges due to (increasing) European dependence on Russian gas resources which have not resulted in further co-operation, but rising tensions.

In general, it is a good practice to work towards a decent relationship with one's neighbours as the [EU](#) and Russia had been doing up to 2010. A good relationship was certainly desired and due to their interdependence. This was not good news for the [Anglo-American power elite](#) on the other side of the Atlantic who are known for their many interferences in other parts of the world. Since the early 2010s things started changing between the EU and Russia.

Anglo-American intervention

The transition of [Afghanistan](#) from a *barrier* separating rival powers to a *bridgehead* from which to further advance economic liberalization is a key to maintaining [US power](#) and influence. As [Brzezinski](#) said: 'the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to [America's global primacy](#).' This 'distribution of [power](#)' favours those who dominate trade on the Eurasian supercontinent. It is Afghanistan where both Cold War and the new

cold war created military conflicts to achieve Soviet-Russian then [US dominance](#). In reality it is the manifestation of the quest for [power](#). The reality is that the shortest routes between China and [Europe](#), as well as between India and Russia, are via [Afghanistan](#). As in previous [imperial](#) ages, the empire that achieves primacy is the one that establishes itself as arbiter, builder, and protector of [trade routes](#).

The US criticizes Russia, saying it is trying to re-Sovietize Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Crimean Peninsula, Transdnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia). The US also criticizes Russian efforts to create the [Eurasian Union](#), saying it is really an effort to re-assert Soviet-era controls on the region and it is necessary to slow down or prevent it.

It is about [power](#). Of course [Afghanistan](#) is one of the many countries [invaded](#) by the [Anglo-American](#) power elite under the umbrella of the so-called [war on terror](#). Facts are that the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 while the [Anglo-American Empire](#) has [expanded](#) since that time. The [United States](#) is the main driver behind illegal [NATO military expansion](#) towards the Russian border. Now Russia is trying to negotiate a [Eurasian Union](#) with its neighbours, in the likeness of the [European Union](#), which is openly done. But this is not to the liking of the [Anglo-American power elite](#).

When trying to seek for answers in global geostrategic processes, there is the reason hidden in the US managing the Heartland in three main instructions expressed with the words: block, keep, balance.

1. **Block** the Heartland's access to the oceans (Japan, Iran, and Turkey).
2. **Keep** the Heartland divided and small (Ukraine, Caucasus region).
3. **Balance** out the Heartland (India, China, Indonesia, Saud Arabia)

The consequences of these three actions are represented in the history and the geopolitical events including civil wars of the regions surrounding the Heartland.

Chapter 2

THE THIRD WORLD WAR

„Her Rich Hair Torn by the Wind⁵”

Since 2015, the European Union has been hit by a formidable biological weapon: millions of migrants are setting out to use the welfare and social system of the EU countries from Asia and Africa. This chapter tries to shed light upon the causes of this migration, other than global warming, because the German economy's collapse would destroy the Central European economies as well.

Europe.⁶ The meaning of this name in old Greek language: *eur ópé* ('wide face,' referring to the full moon, the symbol of maternal society); or *eu rópé* ('good for the willow'), referring to the European continent abundant in water – what is good for the willow tree – dissected with landlocked seas, bays, peninsulas, islands, lakes, rivers and high mountains. This geographic fragmentation, which was not characteristic of the first, huge, geographically homogeneous territories of human civilization,⁷ where god kings centralized the economy, made it possible to market the extra products not collected by any central empires, and thus it gave free way to the early development of civil societies and the formation of market economy. First in the world.



Figure 3. Paul Manship: Flight of Europe from Phoenicia to Crete.

⁵ A line from Mihály Varga: Europe (a Hungarian top hit from 1994, sung by Miklós Varga)

⁶ Europa was a Phoenician princess, whom Zeus (the king of the gods in Greek mythology) in the form of a white bull, took to Crete, to the cradle of European civilization, where they founded the Minoan empire, the historic and mythical home of the first high-level European culture.

⁷ Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India.

Europe is the smallest, most diverse and geographically the most dissected continent which due to its inhomogeneity, has colonized the world with its firstly developed market economy. The Spaniards, the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French and the English have for centuries, if not simply robbed, but used the resources of other continents in their capital accumulation. They gave in exchange European culture, Christianity, Spanish, French and English languages, and above all, a basic infrastructure that did not provide prosperity in the colonies, but at least halted the enormous infant mortality and extended life expectancy at birth. That is why, and because of the big family traditions, Asia, Africa and South America became overpopulated. When after World War II, the weakened colonizing European powers withdrew from South Asia and Africa they tried to maintain their economic influence in the former colonies with continued ethnic tensions in order to prevail the demand for their own economic products and, above all, the demand for their weapons. This requires drawing straight political boundaries and careful consideration of these boundaries to keep populations of different ethnicities sufficient to maintain conflict situations on both sides of the new political borders. The world's largest geostrategic forecasting institute, the US STATFORT, with its noble simplicity, characterizes Africa only – referring to the expected, nationalist civil wars in forming countries – in the coming period as ‘a place to be avoided.’⁸ We, Hungarians, know what the neglect of ethnicities means in the definition of political boundaries: 100 years after the Versailles Treaty concluding World War I, we still cannot maintain good neighbour relations with Romanians, Serbs, Slovaks and Ukrainians.⁹

Growth in population is now the limit of the Earth's bearing capability; these global problems are known. Population domination of Asia is also well-known, as shown in Figure 4, in the dimension of 100 million.

If we look at the population of African and Asian regions affected by food and water shortages, epidemics and civil wars, who have nothing to lose beyond their mere lives, it is clear that there are 650 million people (390 million in Africa and 260 million in Asia), who is ready to leave any time – because they have nothing to lose in their natural habitats. They are those whose daily earnings do not reach 2 (two) dollars, if the dollar is calculated in purchasing power parity, in "international" dollars, which eliminates the differences in food prices in different

⁸ George Friedman: The Next Decade 2012 (issued in Hungarian by the PAGEO Foundation, Budapest in 2015)

⁹ French and English geopolitics dictating the Trianon Treaty in Paris kept the isolation of Germans in mind; so that once again a new Austro-Hungarian Monarchy would not be established as a German ‘bridge’ towards the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and the Heartland. The Kingdom of Hungary, as the strongest link in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was geographically simply at the bad place at the wrong time, so it was cut off, with care being taken to neglect the ethnic boundaries of the Hungarian nationality.

countries. If we consider the amount of the European Union migrant aid in Germany, which is € 1,000 per month, then migrants can expect a 20-fold purchasing power parity increase in income if they get asylum in an EU country. This is the same as when a Hungarian employee earning HUF 300,000 is offered a salary of HUF 6 million a month – without work, in the form of support – in a remote country. It is natural, then, that as soon as this 650 million people becomes aware of such a possibility, sooner or later they will set off on a journey towards the European Union. This mass of people is not a ‘few million’ at all, but more than the total population of the EU.

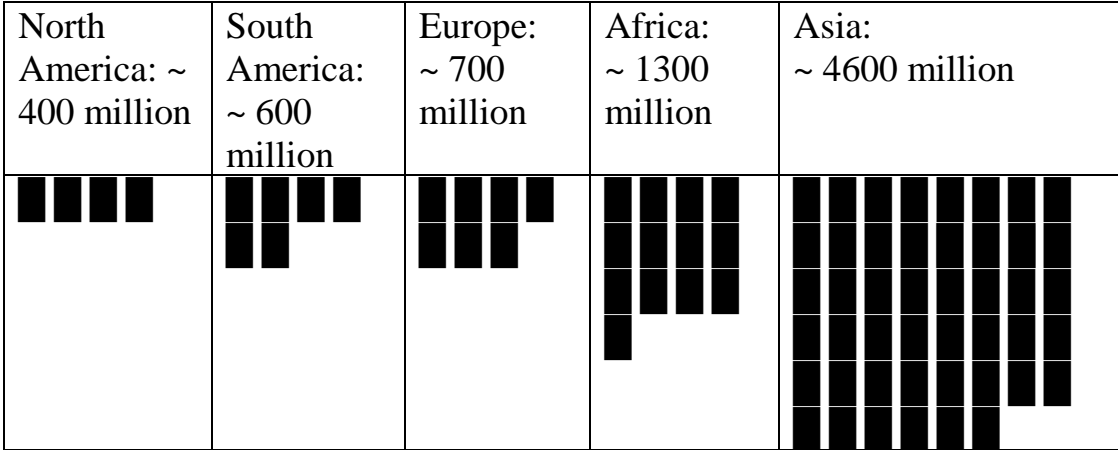


Figure 4. Distribution of global population in 100 millions in continental dimensions in 2018 (With Australia and Oceania included in South America). Source: Our World in Data 2018 Oxford University

The population of the whole European Union is around 500 million; less than the mass of the above mentioned 650 million people arriving in Europe¹⁰ would initiate an economic apocalypse that would turn into European civil wars, which would, in the next half a century, ensure the US as a global superpower, being still secure in a geographical distance and continuing to grow rich on weapon and security system dispersion to Europe among others. To this end, 2014 was the first year in which the total EU GDP of the 28 EU Member States (~ 18 trillion USD) exceeded that of the US (which was ‘only’ ~ 17 trillion USD).¹¹ Something had to happen, and what a miracle, the illegal migration of refugee seekers began in 2015, via the freeway Asian and African corridors having been opened by the US ‘democracy export’ under the name of ‘Arab Spring’ that destroyed not only the dictatorships, but the state administrations in Syria and Libya running into civil wars on end. The destination of migration is the economic motor of the EU: Germany. Again, like before World War I. And to make the British relatives

¹⁰ In this study, ‘migrant’ is understood as someone who conceals his or her personal data or attempts to tamper with the ‘green border’ or through the sea to the European Union without documents.

¹¹ Source: www.knomea.com (IMF, WB, CIA), 2014

somewhat miss out on the expected economic crisis, the Isles are given the opportunity to be rescued on an American and Commonwealth "life raft" named Brexit. Which seems incomprehensible is the attitude and geostrategic blindness of the EU and German political leaders.

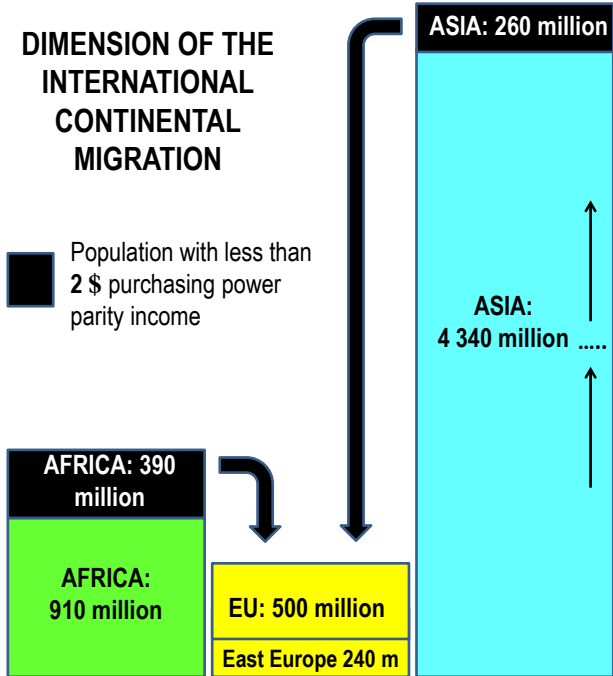


Figure 5. The number of economic refugees potentially headed towards Europe, including the European Union with a population of ~ 500 million people. The number of the African and Asian population with no (less than \$ 2) income a day, with nothing to lose, but their lives, is ~ 650 million! That is 150 million more than the total population of the European Union.

However, we, the Hungarians beaten by the Turanian Curse,¹² can understand it well. Early on the eve of the Mongol invasion in 1241, many of the Hungarian lords did not appear in the camp of the Hungarian King whom they hated for his centralization policy, and they hoped for the Mongolian victory. This led to the almost total extinction of the Hungarian people. Our greatest politician, King Matthias, who turned Hungary one of the richest, largest and strongest European kingdoms, was poisoned at the peak of his power in 1490 by the Hungarian nobles who preferred choosing a less "tyrant" ruler – for themselves. This self-ruining behaviour led the Hungarians to a fateful battle in 1526 at Mohács, to try to stop the Ottoman Turkish expansion threatening Europe again. Some of the nobles and

¹² When some ancient tribes of the Hungarians from the foothill region of the Ural Mountains, the Turanian Plains left, headed towards the Black Sea and the Carpathian Mountains, the priests who remained home cursed the people who were leaving the so called *Magna Hungaria*: ‘the people who leave the lands of their gods, will be abandoned by their gods, too, and will be punished by eternal domestic fight, strife and struggle.’

the king's fellow-members, according to contemporary reports, deliberately missed this battle with a powerful army, hoping that the ruler would fall, die and they could choose a king, easier to control from among themselves. Their hopes came true, and three years later the new Hungarian national king, as a sworn man could kneel in the face of the conquering Turkish emperor, Suleiman as his subject. As a consequence of personal private ambitions, the Hungarian nation, the geopolitical and economic situation of the Hungarian state were ruined for several centuries, leading directly to the catastrophe of the Trianon Treaty in 1920, when the once powerful European Hungary became a tiny state both in territory and population. Contemporary politicians could not recognize the magnitude of the danger and the consequences of their own ambitions. The same is true of the 'migration' of our days. The individual, spreading-apart interests of the Germans were manifested in the same way in their history, too: German unity could occur only in the 20th century when it was too late for them from the point of view of colonialization, leading to the two world wars – to their loss and to Europe's loss.

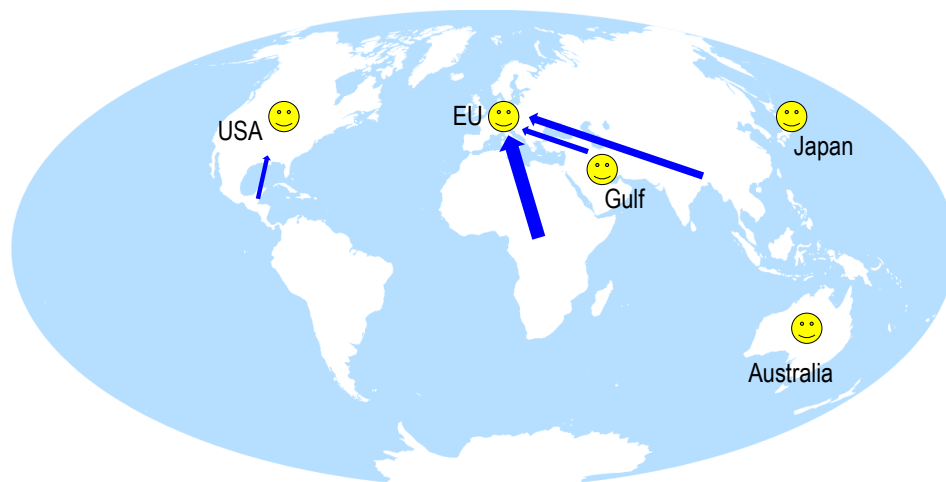


Figure 6. The directions and possible destinations of global migration, to which only the welfare states of the European Union prove to be open and unprotected

The question arises why the hundreds of millions of African and Asian refugees fleeing from poverty, drought, hunger, epidemics and civil wars endanger only the European Union? Why do they not try to get into other regions of the world and countries where wealthy societies have strong social networks? The target of the Asians could be three regions. One is Japan, which practically does not accept immigrants. The other is Australia, which protects the continent's coastline from the immigrants with the navy. The third prosperous destination is the region of the rich oil producers in the Persian Gulf. They do accept guest workers and pay them very well, provided these workers have the expertise and are able to work 12 hours a day – otherwise they will be immediately subjects to expulsion, or not accepted. Obviously, these countries cannot be the destination of illegal migrant masses, as long as there is a region where they can get their current income level, without work, twenty-two times. Hundreds of millions of people in Africa are

about to head towards the geographically close European Union. The US-Canada region, not mentioning the army, is geographically protected by two huge oceans, and migrants from Latin America through the narrow Central America, Mexico or mainly from Mexico can easily be stopped, if political leadership wants – as President Trump and his ‘Fence.’ In a geostrategic sense, therefore, for the migrants seeking the hope of a better life there is only one single welfare destination left: Europe, and in particular the European Union, which apart from one or two member states, does not seem to intend to prevent immigration.

Europe, with its rugged coastline – mainly Greece and Croatia with its archipelago – is virtually indefensible from a limiting point of view. Greece's Schengen membership is therefore geostrategically unintelligible: anyone entering here – in principle – has a free path anywhere within the Union. Greece was like an island as a Union member with no member neighbours, until Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, too. The insecurity of Greece is also hampered by the Turkish mainland neighbourhood, which can link the migrants' access and transit to Turkish political affiliation and ambitions. Turkey can do this all the more, because it is a columnist member of the NATO. This is in the interests of the US, so it is necessary to control the transit of the post-Soviet-Russian warships at the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. In terms of migration, however, Turkish NATO membership is a risk factor for – for the European Union. The Greek-Bulgarian, Greek-Macedonian border is a mountainous area, which is difficult to control from a border guard perspective. Greece unfortunately does not consider herself to be in a position to comply with its obligations under the Dublin Convention¹³ on the registration and transfer, readmission and deportation of migrants. As Romania and Bulgaria are not Schengen members, it is the duty of the Schengen member Hungary to stop and register migrants arriving without documents or passport, thus irregularly passing the borders of not only the Schengen member Greece, but the non-Schengen member Macedonia and Serbia, too. Under such conditions the Frontex¹⁴ is unfortunately not at the height of the situation. Spain and Italy can be reached on short sea trips – even on rescue rafts – from Africa. The dictatorial powers with close guard-of-custody characteristic of presidents Moammer Gaddafi and Bassar El-Assad in Libya and in Syria respectively, were put to an end by the ‘well-meaning’ US democracy export, having caused civil war confusion in these regions. Thus Libyan and Syrian ‘gateway houses’ were

¹³ Dublin Decree: Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 containing the responsibility of the Member States for examining the asylum seekers' applications lodged in any of the Member States in accordance with the relevant procedural rules.

¹⁴ Frontex: the short name of the European Border Protection Agency for the French *Frontières extérieures* (external borders), headquartered in Warsaw. It is responsible for border control in the European Schengen area, working together with the border and coastal guards of the Schengen area countries. It was established in 2004.

set up for the sub-Saharan and Central African refugees, as well as for migrants from Afghan, Pakistani, and Bangladesh regions.

According to the official German migration-based view, the holding of the German economic machinery in motion requires an estimated 200,000 entry-workers per year due to retirements and aging German society. Unfortunately, however, as it is, the Germans seem to be forced to rely on the work force of the Central and Eastern European region. Migrants happen to come from Asia and Africa in particular from the Muslim world. Different cultural habits everywhere, where the number of immigrants reaches a certain level, create parallel societies with quasi-own 'public administration' and judicial practice and no-go zones. Obviously, this is inadmissible in a modern society – whether open or multicultural – as it is threatening citizens' security. Apart from the cultural value system controversy that treats females as valuable household belongings, there is another problem, the lack of the diploma, expertise and German language skills of the 'labour force.' Does German political leadership think that if they receive 2 million migrants a year, they can sort them out the demanded 200,000 and distribute the rest in a proportionate public distribution quota-like system among other EU countries? The weaker EU member states thus will need to borrow more and more loans to meet the needs of migrants who enter their countries and who are legitimate in demanding and requiring EU social benefit levelling the one introduced in Germany. This benefit, especially in the Central European countries, exceeds the average level of the minimum income and pensions, too. Apart from creditors (international financial institutions) and large economic competitors (USA), in whose benefit is it?

Permitting, but not fully sustaining the socio-economic benefits of multiculturalism, it ought to be also clarified what the foundations of European culture mean. According to the author, there are three basic pillars of European culture: (1) the ancient Greek-Roman mythology, which was kept alive by the medieval Christian monasteries and schools up to the 20th century. (2) Celtic-Germanic traditions affecting the European way of life and customs even today. (3) Christian religion rooted in the Jewish culture.

One of the most important common denominators of the three pillars is a momentum that is totally lacking in Islamic culture and civilization: gender equality. Think of the most important, most powerful goddesses in Mediterranean Greek mythology (*Pallas Athena* or *Minerva* goddess of wisdom, *Hera* or *Juno*: goddess of family, *Aphrodite*, or *Venus*: goddess of beauty, etc.). The same can be observed in northern Celtic and German mythology; in fact, even among the unrestrained warrior Vikings, the leader of the first American colonies was *Freydis Ericdottir* – a female leader. In Christianity, too, there is the full equality of women, for example, the Hungarian King St. Stephen did not recommend

Hungary to Jesus Christ, but to *Virgin Mary* when introducing Christianity. 2015 was the first year in which, due to the goodwill of a prince, some of the women in the emblematic country of the Islamic world, Saudi Arabia, could participate in the elections, but – the news agencies noted – driver licenses were still unavailable for females. While European civilization going back to Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Persian and ancient Greek, Roman, Jewish, Christian roots, is 2-5 thousand years old; Islamic religion, tied to the life of its founder (Prophet Mohammed 570-632 A.D.) is a relatively young religion; and it is just 6 centuries younger than Christianity. Think about where the now 2000 year old Christianity lasted 600 years ago? It was the age of crusaders and the inquisition occupying the Holy Land and forcefully protecting Christianity. Islam is just 1400 years old.¹⁵

Ancient Greek-Roman mythology	Early Medieval Age Celtic-Germanic traditions	Christian-Jewish religion and morality
which left the trace of the Roman Empire, later mediated by the Latin language and is present in the art and performing arts of all European peoples, in the form of so-called ‘classical literacy’ and European culture.	which in the majority, but mainly in the Western and Northern European regions, overlapped folk tales and tales, set the European value systems.	which blended with Jewish traditions, transformed them into a cult of Jesus, having defined the morality, values, economy, and social consciousness of societies in almost all European countries. ¹⁶
		

Figure 7. The three pillars of European culture, of which unfortunately younger European generations are not aware (Note the presence of females in cultural landmarks that is characteristic of European national cultures.)

¹⁵ Islam should not be misunderstood. The Prophet Mohammed's faith originally just proclaimed the religion of peace as originally Christianity did, too. Modern ‘Jihad’ is a kind of reincarnation of the Christian Crusades, alien to the essence of Christianity.

¹⁶ Exceptions may be made to Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Albania, where the proportion of Muslims is high

Unfortunately, the fate of Europe seems to be sealed by the current (2019) EU and German political leadership. The historical parallel is offered by the decadent end of the Roman Empire, before burial of the former known and civilized world. When a bearded woman¹⁷ or homosexual couples in a society that is modern, democratic and liberal, deserve more social esteem than a ‘normal’ citizen that society has its days counted; with a biblical assertion: ‘*Mene Tekel Ufarszin.*’¹⁸ This is most evident, when European NGOs advise migrants to confess themselves emotionally labile, transvestite or homosexual, saying it will benefit them, when the officers of the host EU country consider their reception as refugees. European Christianity seems to be undermined in prosperity, and the 6 centuries younger Islam seems to be strengthened in poverty. How was Christianity some 600 years ago? It still wrangled into Crusaders’ wars to spread faith forcefully in the Holy Land. The English king, Richard the Lion Hearted, whose words are still present in the official coat of arms of England and the UK,¹⁹ did not earn his heroic adjective during perilous fights, but because he was capable of giving orders to slaughter 200 hostages: women and children – just like a terrorist today. But there are good examples from the warrior era of Christianity, too: in 1456 Giovanni Capistrano, the old, fanatic, Italian inquisitor, spoke in the Hungarian capital, in Buda, such a way that ten thousand Hungarian populist ‘crusaders’ demanded martyrdom, they wanted to die for their faith. And a couple of weeks later, at today’s Beograd, this unarmed mass of fanatic people initiated the Hungarian attack that the greatest Hungarian warlord, Hunyadi whom the Turks themselves called ‘the lightning of the war, the fear of the earth,’ turned into a world-wide victory over the Ottoman Turkish army that was about to invade Europe. We can hear the message of this victory throughout Europe even today: the noon bell rings of the churches – for the time being –, instead of the muezzin’s song.

¹⁷ In 2014, Conchita Wurst, an Austrian singer, won the 59th Eurovision Song Contest in Copenhagen with her song ‘Rise *Like the Phoenix.*’ Related to this, see one of the good advices and opinions by the greatest Hungarian King Matthias: ‘I do not believe in three things: in a warmed up soup, in a reconciled friend, and in a *bearded woman.*’

¹⁸ According to the Bible, in the banquet of King Balthazar, King of Babylon, a hand without body wrote these words on the wall, which the Jewish prophet Daniel finally explained: ‘This is the meaning of these words: *Mene*, that is, God counted your kingdom and put an end to it. *Tekel*, you were measured and you were found light. *Ufarsin*, that is, your country is to be distributed and given to the Medes and Persians ‘(Daniel’s Book 5)

¹⁹ *Dieu et mon droit!* = by God’s and my right! The motto of the UK said by Richard the Lion Hearted in the Holy Land when the European crusader kings and dukes could not agree on who would be their leader, and Richard, being physically the strongest of them all, forcefully seized the emblem, thus declaring himself the leader of the crusader army.

Chapter 3 CENTRAL EUROPE

*Tell me where Central Europe is,
and I can tell you who you are.*²⁰

Central Europe is rather difficult to define as an exact geographical unit. Throughout history it has continuously been the battleground of the great powers like the early medieval Romans, Huns, Bulgarians, Byzantines, Czechs, Hungarians, then the Ottoman Turkish, the Polish and Lithuanians, the Germans, the Austrians and finally the Russians. The Central European region cannot be fitted on the map to answer political borders of certain countries in most cases.



Figure 8. The Central European region is uncertain to define

The quotation below shows the mixed identity of a classical Central European citizen: ‘If you ask me what my native country is, I answer: I was born in [Fiume](#) /Rijeka/, grew up in [Belgrade](#), [Budapest](#), [Pressburg](#) /Bratislava/, [Bécs](#) /[Vienna](#)/ and [Munich](#), and I have a Hungarian passport; but I have no fatherland. I am a very typical mix of old Austria-Hungary: at once Magyar /Hungarian/, Croatian, German and Czech; my country is Hungary, my mother tongue is German.’²¹

First let us try to outline the geographical borders of the region. From East to west on the north, it is bordered by the Baltic Sea, the Canal of Kiel and the North Sea. Then the border of Central Europe turns south by the River Ems between the German and the Dutch regions. In the Ruhr Land the River Rhine forms the border between Western and Central Europe, and from the Saarland it runs between

²⁰ Quotation from Jacques Rupnik in: Lonnie Johnson: Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends – Oxford University Press, 1996.

²¹ Quoted from Ödön von Horváth in Michael Kort: The Handbook of the New Eastern Europe – Twenty-First Century Books, 2001.

France and Germany. So the Ruhr Land region, the Eifel Mountains the Mosel region and Saarland belongs to Western Europe within Germany. In Switzerland the Central European boundary is defined by the social geographical distribution of the French, Italian and German speaking cantons, the latter ones belonging to Central Europe.

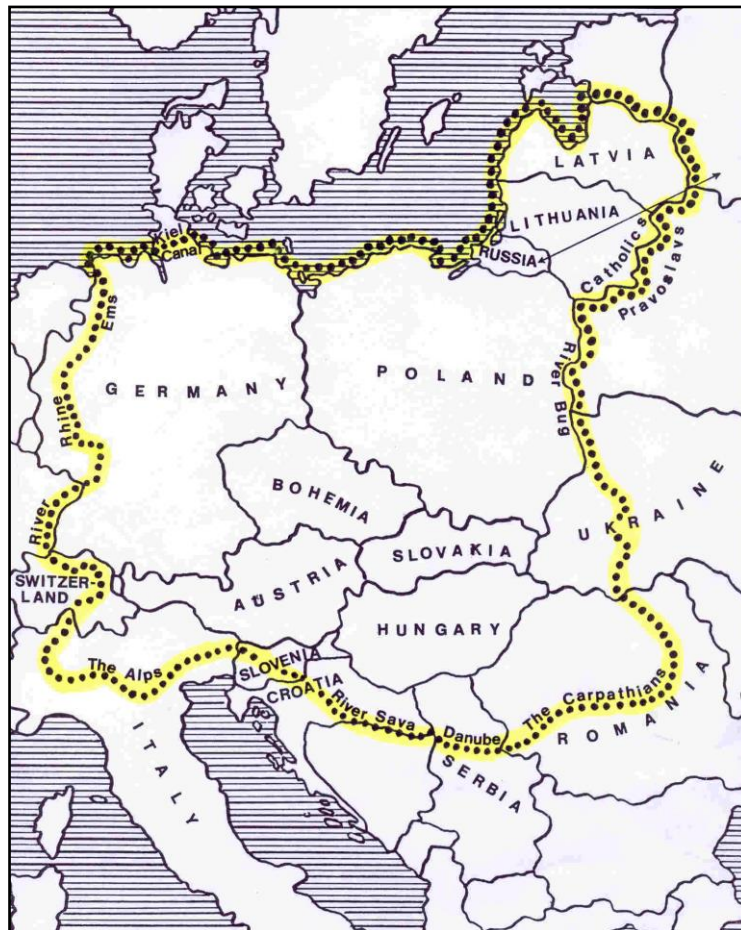


Figure 9. An approach showing the physical geographical boundaries of Central Europe

At around the spring of the River Rhine, from the Simplon Pass southwards the border follows the foothill regions of the Alps that used to be under Austrian political and cultural influence. Such cities as Locarno, Como, Bergamo, Brescia, Verona and the Vicenza – Udine – Trieste line represent the border between Southern and Central Europe. Much of Slovenia also belongs to Central Europe, and the border is marked by the River Sava via Slovenia and Croatia. The northern part of Croatia is the Central European Slavonia. Then the border between Central and Southern Europe is marked by the River Sava between Croatia and Bosnia – Herzegovina. The northern part of Serbia is the Vojvodina province, north of the River Sava. From Belgrade, the Serbian capital city where the Sava enters the River Danube, it is the Danube that is representing the geographical division line between Southern and Central Europe, as long as the Iron Gate, where the Danube

forces its way through the Carpathian Mountains. From there in Romania, in a huge semi-circle (the historical region of Transylvania), it is the water divide line of the Carpathian Mountains that forms the border between Central and Eastern Europe. Going northward, it is the region of the historic Galicia (once belonging to Poland, Lithuania and to the Austrian Hungarian Monarchy) in today's western Ukraine that can be taken as Central European land. The division is represented by a religious border between the Catholic (Central European) and the Orthodox Christian (Eastern European) population in western Ukraine. Then, there is a sharp social geographic border all the way northward between the Catholic and Orthodox Christian population between Poland and Ukraine, Poland and Belarus, between Lithuania and Belarus, Latvia and Belarus respectively. The political borders answer the religious borders everywhere: Poland being completely Central European, while Belarus being an Eastern European country. Estonians consider themselves as being affiliated to Northern Europe rather than Central Europe. The status of the Russian federal subject, the Kaliningrad enclave, between Poland and Lithuania is Central European, since it bears the architectural and cultural traces of the German Knight Order (the Königsberg region).

Table 1. Countries, some of the territories of which lie in Central Europe in physical geographical aspect.

Partly Central European 16 countries Central European 16 countries	Partly Central European 8 countries	Fully Central European 8 countries	Visegrad Four (V4) 4 countries
1. Austria		Austria	
2. Croatia (except: South)	Croatia		
3. Czech Republic		Czech	Czech
4. Germany (except: West)	Germany		
5. Hungary		Hungary	Hungary
6. Italy (only the North)	Italy		
7. Latvia		Latvia	
8. Lichtenstein		Lichtenstein	
9. Lithuania		Lithuania	
10. Poland		Poland	Poland
11. Romania (except: South, East)	Romania		
12. Serbia (except: South)	Serbia		
13. Slovakia		Slovakia	Slovakia

14.Slovenia (except: South)	Slovenia		
15.Switzerland (except: West)	Switzerland		
16.Ukraine (only the West)	Ukraine		

(Note: the Kaliningrad territory – a Russian federal oblast – is not considered here as a country, though the district lies entirely in Central Europe as an enclave.)

So in political geographical context there are 16 independent states that share the territory of Central Europe. 8 of them are totally located in the Central European region, while 8 of them are only partially situated in Central Europe.

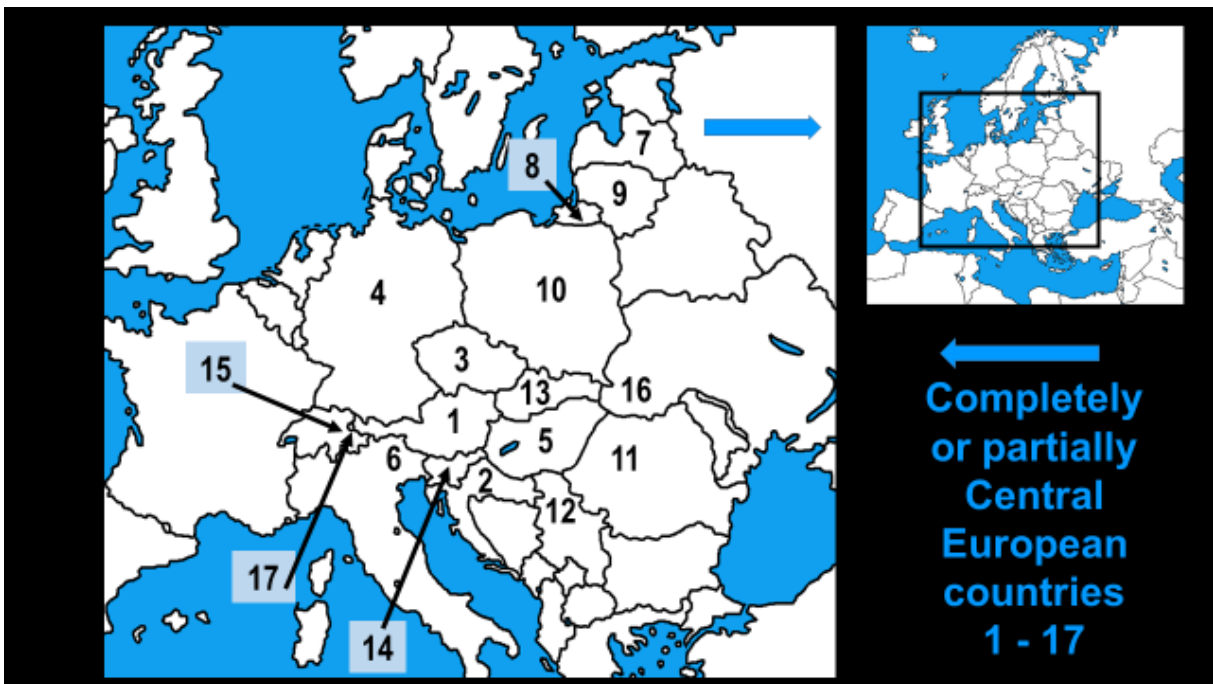
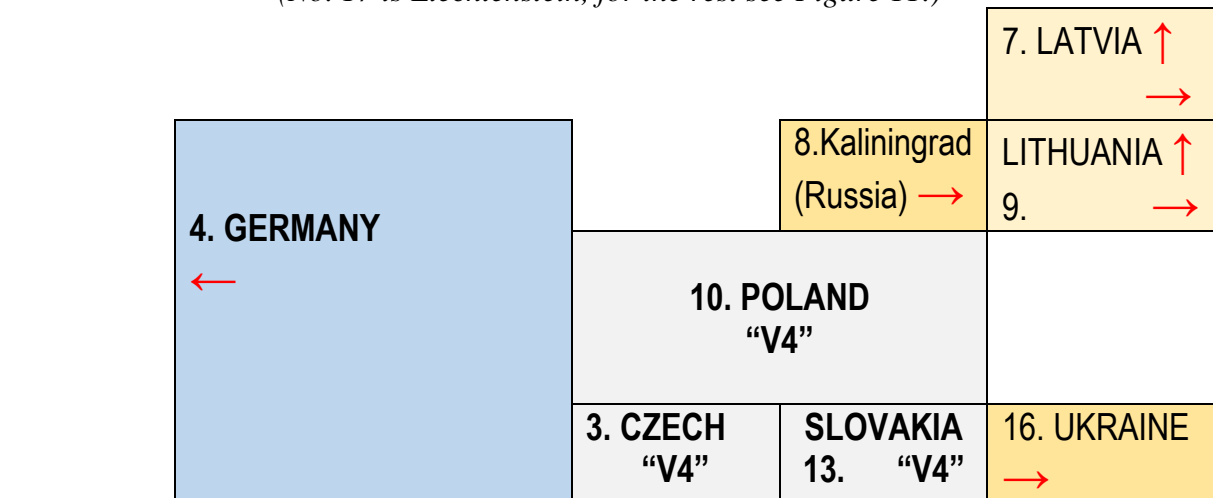


Figure 10. The 17 territories (states or parts of states) which presently comprise Central Europe in political-geographical aspect.
(No. 17 is Liechtenstein, for the rest see Figure 11.)



SWITZERLAND ↑ ← 15.	1. AUSTRIA ↑ ←	5. HUNGARY "V4"		ROMANIA ↓ 11. →
↓ ITALY 6.	SLOVENIA ↓ ← 14.	CROATIA ↓ 2.	SERBIA ↓ 12.	

Figure 11. The political geographical basic structure of Central Europe; with the core countries (the V4) that are not affiliated elsewhere. Arrows show the cultural affiliation of other fully, or partly Central European countries to other (← = western, ↑ = northern, → = eastern, ↓ = southern) regions of Europe.

The partially Central European provinces include certain parts of the following 8 countries. Central European history, traditions and culture affected the German speaking northern and eastern parts of Switzerland; only the northern, Alpine parts of Italy; the northern and western parts of Slovenia that used to be Austrian provinces; the northern half of Croatia (Slavonia that used to be Hungarian province); the northern part of Serbia (Vojvodina that used to be part of the Hungarian Kingdom, too); the western part of Romania (Transylvania that also used to be a Hungarian region); and the westernmost part of Ukraine (Galicia that used to be under Polish-Lithuanian and Austrian-Hungarian effect).

Although the majority of Germany belongs to Central European culture, Germany ought to be considered a rather Western European country because it does not share the common historical fate of Central Europe. Germany was and is even today the great power trying to dominate Central Europe either in economic, or in the past, in military sense. Austria lies in Central Europe totally, but its historical and economic role and impact exercised on Central Europe is very similar to that of Germany. Lichtenstein is a mini state between Switzerland and Austria. Lithuania, Latvia, and the Kaliningrad Russian federal territory are located in Central Europe's northern, peripheral region. Consequently the 4 'true' Central European, core countries can be: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. They are the so called V4 (Visegrad 4) countries.

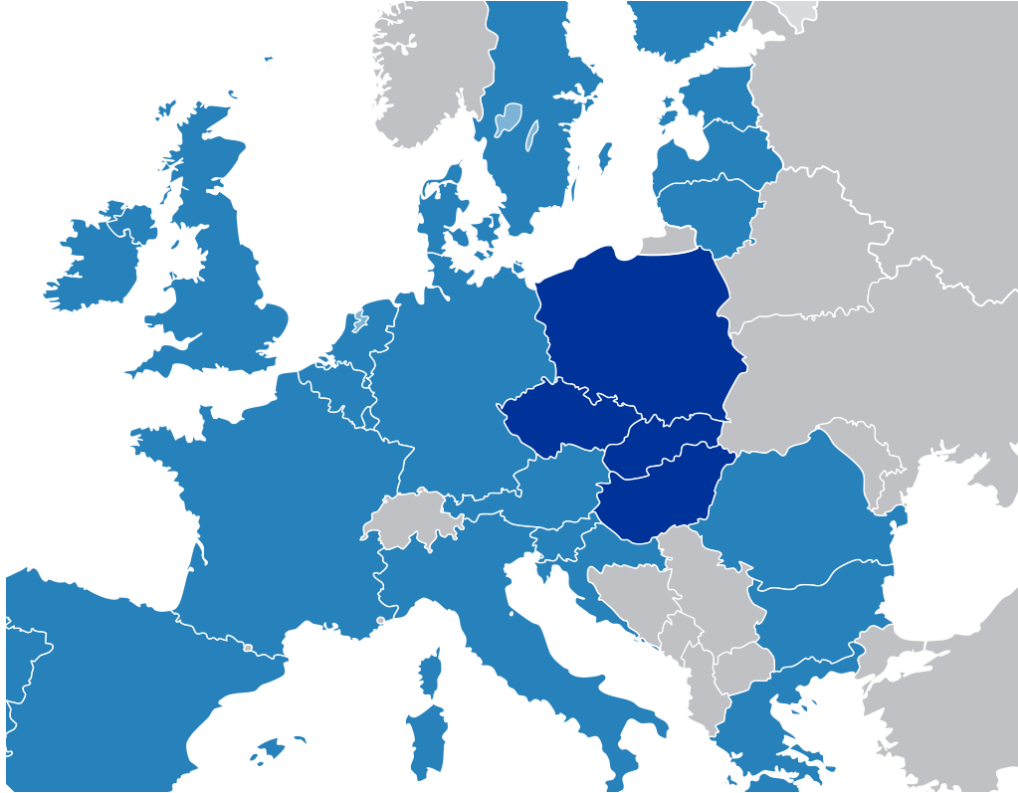


Figure 12. The V4 Countries (in dark) within the European Union countries – representing the political core of Central Europe, or the Central European ‘Heartland’ between West and East.

The Visegrad 4 Countries

The **Visegrad Group (V4)** is a cultural and political cooperation of the four core Central European states (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), all of them being members of the European Union and the NATO. The purposes of the alliance is military, economic, cultural and energy management cooperation which was initiated at the summit of the leaders of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, in the Hungarian town, Visegrad, on 15th February in 1991. Visegrad was chosen in memory of the medieval Congress of Visegrad in 1335 between John I of Czechia, Charles I of Hungary and Casimir III of Poland. After the separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, there were 4 members of the Visegrad Group that is referred to as V4.

The V4

The ***Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia*** comprise the core area of Central Europe. Therefore their geographical and economic introduction are detailed in this textbook.

Czechia (Česko)

National Flag		Official name	Coat of arms				
		Czech Republic Native name: Česká republika					
Capital city and population (million): Prague 1.267			Language: Czech				
Country's population (million) 10.6		Currency: Koruna	Territory (sq kms): 78 864				
Administrative division							
Region: kraj		Seat		Region: kraj		Seat	
Jihočeský kraj		České Budějovice		Plzeňský kraj		Plzeň	
Jihomoravský kraj		Brno		Hlavní město Praha		Praha	
Karlovarský kraj		Karlovy Vary		Středočeský kraj		Praha	
Královéhradecký kraj		Hradec Králové		Ústecký kraj		Ústí nad Labem	
Liberecký kraj		Liberec		Kraj Vysočina		Jihlava	
Moravskoslezský kraj		Ostrava		Zlínský kraj		Zlín	
Olomoucký kraj		Olomouc		Pardubický kraj		Pardubice	

Geography

The country is situated in the geographical centre of Europe. It is surrounded by mountains and hills in every direction. The territory is occupied by two large basins: the Czech (west) and the Moravian (east). There are two main rivers crossing the country: the Vltava and the Morava. The mountains are rich in minerals. This is the reason why industry started to develop in Czechia in the early middle ages. The territory used to be independent kingdoms of the Moravians in the early Middle Ages, then of the Czech, and then it became part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire up to the end of World War I when it became an independent country again, together with Slovakia (the Hungarian Uplands) under the name of Czechoslovakia. However, Czechia (or Bohemia) used to be the industrial workshop of the Habsburg Empire; it was the province with the strongest economy. In 1993 Slovakia seceded and Czechoslovakia was split into two: the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In 2004 both of them joined the EU.

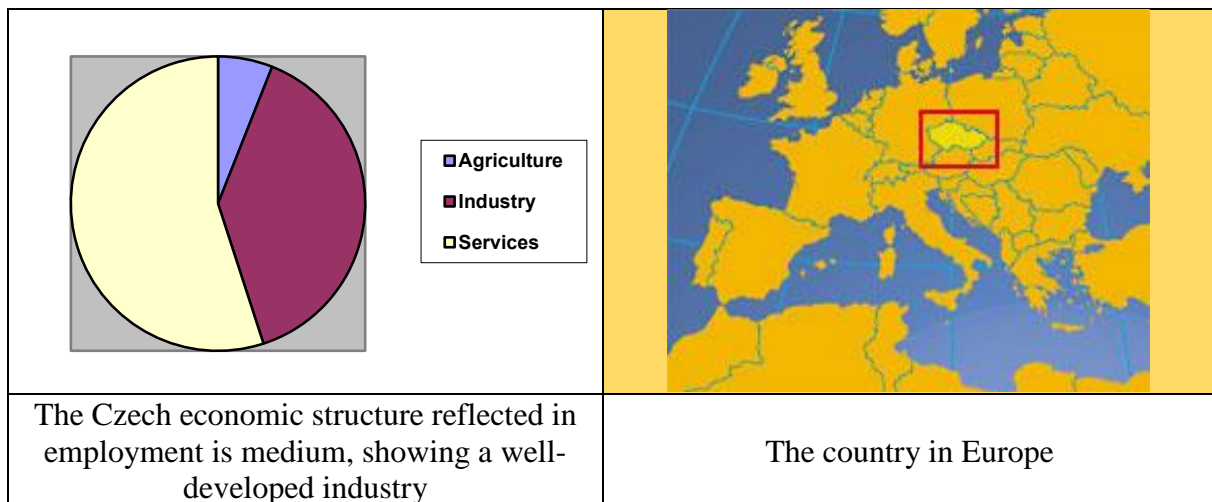
Economy

The most important branch of the Czech economy is engineering, producing vehicles (like **Skoda** automobiles and railway engines) and weapons, **military equipment**. The most significant centres are: **Praque** (the capital), **Brno** (seat of the Moravian region), **Plzen** (best known for its beer) and **Ostrava** (the centre of the Silesian industrial region). **Black coal** is mined in Silesia (in the north east), in Moravia, and in the Sudety Mts (in the north), and in the Czech Forest (in the south). Heavy industry was based on this resource.

In light industry **glass** and **furniture** production, the **textile** industry and **footwear leather** are notable. Based on very fine clay mineral, (**kaolin**) mined in the hills, the Czech **chinaware** (porcelain) is very famous. In the food industry the most well-known product is beer (Plsener).

The main plants grown include **potato**, malting **barley** and **hop** (for brewing beer), **rye** and **sugar beet**. However, food has to be imported; the domestic cereals cannot meet the demand.

Tourists are best attracted to **Prague** because of its many mediaeval monuments and urban quarters. **Karlovy Vary** is a famous resort place with hot medicinal waters. The Czech Basin is rich in **mineral water** springs as well.



Administration

There are 14 regions (krajs) in the country, however, the country being a unitary type of state, the regions do not have elected members and legislative functions, they have but a statistical role.

Society

The largest national minority is represented by the Moravians (13 %). There are some Gypsies (2 %). As for religion, the Roman Catholic Church has some 40 %, while another 40 % of the population are atheists. This is due to the long decades of the communist rule.

Landmarks

- *Karluv Most (Charles Bridge) in Prague* is a famous, and richly ornamented bridge in the city of Prague, part of the cultural world heritage.
- *Knedlo – zelo – vepro* is a typical Czech national meal (potato pastry with cabbage and pork).

- *Pilsen beer* is the best known Czech beer.
- *Toy Museum of Prague* is the second largest toy collection in the world, located in the Castle.
- *Vaclav Square, Hradzin Castle* is the central square and the royal castle in the City of Prague.



Figure 13. Czechian landmarks

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Czechia:

- *Český Krumlov* the historic centre of this Bohemian small city is the best known for the fine architecture and art of the historic old town and castle. World Heritage Site.
- *The Historic Centre of Prague* has been the political, cultural and economic centre of the Czech state for more than 1,100 years. Since 1992, the extensive historic centre of Prague has been included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, making the city one of the most popular touristic destinations in Europe, receiving more than 4.1 million international visitors annually.
- *The Historic Centre of Telč* with a monumental 17th century Renaissance chateau and an English-style park is an original Gothic castle, the most significant sight is the town square, a unique complex of long urban plaza with well-conserved Renaissance and Baroque houses with high gables and arcades.
- *Historical Town Centre of Kutná Hora* with the Cathedral of Our Lady, St. Barbara Church, Sedlec Ossuary, Church of St. James, Church of St. John Nepomuk, Church of Ursuline Convent, Jesuit College, Italian Court, Marian column. World Heritage Site.
- *The Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape* with ponds, castles, chateaus, galleries, lodges, chapels. World Heritage Site.
- *Gardens and Castle at Kroměříž* comprise a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- *Villa Tugendhat* = is considered an icon of modern architectural masterpiece in Brno, and a paradigmatic example of functionalism. World Heritage Site.
- *St. Procopius' Basilica and Jewish Quarter* World Heritage Site in Třebíč.
- *Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk at Zelená Hora (Gruneberg)* is the final masterpiece of Bohemian architecture combining Baroque with Gothic elements in both construction and decoration.
- *Holašovice Historical Village Reservation (Holaschowitz)* is a small historic village near the protected landscape area of *Blansky Forest*. The village was deserted after the



Second World War, allowing its medieval plan and vernacular buildings in the South Bohemian Folk or Rural Baroque style to remain intact. It was restored and repopulated from 1990.

- *Litomyšl Castle* = a chateau complex with a monumental Renaissance castle. World Heritage Site.
- *The Holy Trinity Column in Olomouc* is the biggest Baroque sculptural group in Czechia. World Heritage Site.



Figure 14. Czechian World Heritage Sites

Hungary (Magyarország)

National flag	Official name	Coat of arms	
	Republic of Hungary Native name: Magyar Köztársaság		
Capital city and population (million): Budapest 1,750		Language: Hungarian	
Country's population (million): 9.8	Currency: Forint	Territory (sq kms): 93 000	
Administrative division			
Region: megye	Seat	Region: megye	Seat
Bács-Kiskun	Kecskemét	Komárom-Esztergom	Tatabánya
Baranya	Pécs	Nógrád	Salgótarján
Békés	Békéscsaba	Pest	Budapest
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	Miskolc	Somogy	Kaposvár
Csongrád	Szeged	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	Nyíregyháza
Fejér	Székesfehérvár	Tolna	Szekszárd
Győr-Moson-Sopron	Győr	Vas	Szombathely
Hajdú-Bihar	Debrecen	Veszprém	Veszprém
Heves	Eger	Zala	Zalaegerszeg
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	Szolnok	--	--

Geography

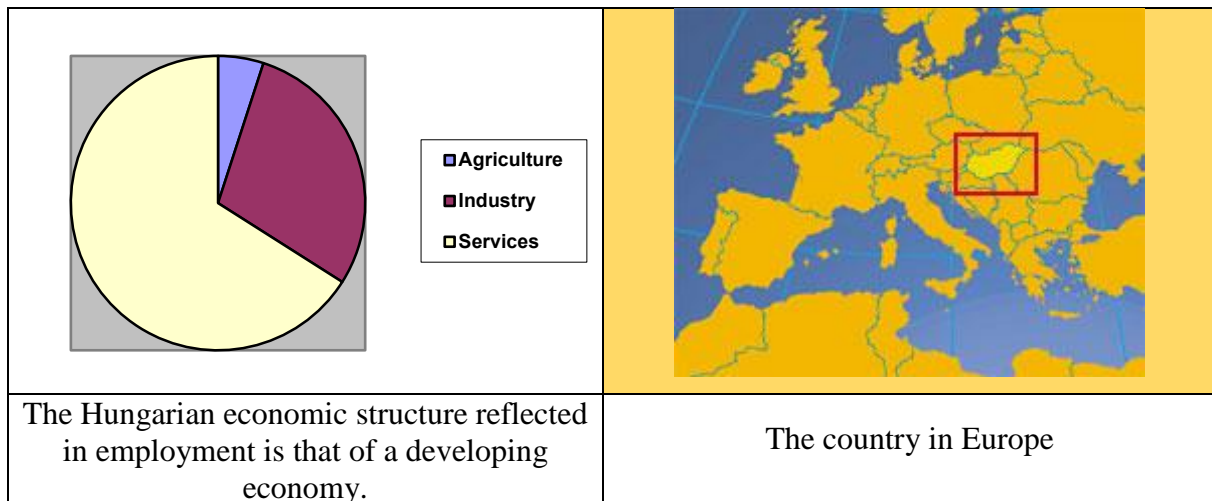
Hungary is situated in the middle of the Carpathian Basin. This is a place protected from climatic extremities, because it is surrounded by high mountains on every side: the Carpathians (N, E), the Alps (W) and the Dinarides (S). There are two big rivers crossing the central plain: the Danube and the Tisza. The soils are fertile, favourable for crop cultivation. The western and the northern parts of Hungary are hilly, while the central and eastern parts are completely flat. The earth's crust is rather thin below the Carpathian Basin and the geothermal gradient is high, therefore the area is extremely rich in geothermal waters. Indeed, they with soils represent the main natural resource of Hungary.

Economy

The country is very poor in minerals and raw materials, therefore heavy industry which was developed during the Soviet period collapsed, causing unemployment when the market economy was introduced after 1990. Engineering of multinational companies is present (e.g. **car manufacturing**). Though agriculture has the most favourable natural conditions in Hungary, the large scale cooperatives were privatized and sold, so food industry and much of the previously well-developed agricultural production was put to an end, too. Western

companies purchased all units of economy, then closed them down as they only wanted to buy market and cheap labour power.

Agriculture grows **wheat, maize, sunflower**, but the most outstanding product is **wine** of very fine qualities. **Hot mineral medicinal waters** are present everywhere and they make the country a health and wellness world power. There are lots of hotels and medicinal baths.



Administration

The country as a former communist country is still a unitary type of state, starting to change into a decentralized type. There are 8 NUTS-2 regions, but the regional councils do not have any legislative power, nor are they elected. The only administrative function they have is to redistribute development funds given by the EU. There are 19 counties as well, with little administrative functions. The local governments' responsibility is regional and local development, administration is centralized. Hungary joined the EU in 2004.

Society

90 % of the population is Hungarian, and the largest ethnic minority is Gypsy/Roma (10 %). The rest is mainly composed of Germans and Slovaks. The greatest social problem and tension is caused by the inability of the Roma population to integrate. While during the communist regime this social problem was resolved by oppression, in the democratic country the governments cannot handle it. Most of the uneducated and unemployed come from the rising number of Gypsy minority. Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania are facing the same problem among the new EU members. As for religion 64 % are Roman Catholic and 21 % of the population are Protestant Christians.

After World War I most of the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom²² was given to the Czechoslovakian, Romanian and Yugoslavian states, leaving a huge number of Hungarians as national minorities in these countries. They have become the subjects of forceful assimilation. This political act, carried out by the French and the English was meant to prevent the reintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the Carpathian Basin, lest the Germans could use it once again as a 'spring board' towards Eastern Europe and then to the Heartland.

Landmarks

- *House of Parliament; Chain Bridge; Gellért Hill; Royal Castle; Margaret Island; Heroes' Square* = places of interest in Budapest. The house of the parliament is considered to be the most beautiful building in Europe. The Chain Bridge was the first over the Danube in the Carpathian Basin. Gellért Hill in the middle of the city offers a nice view from its top. The Royal Castle is a district and palace on the hilly Buda side of the Danube. Margaret Island is also situated in the heart of Budapest; the Heroes' Square is a central one with monuments and the first subway train of continental Europe, still operating.
- *Hévíz* = the most famous hot mineral medicinal water spa, being the world's largest hot water lake at the same time.
- *Balaton* = the largest lake in Central Europe, ideal for summer holidaying because of its shallow waters.
- *Danube Bend* = a nice landscape where the River Danube breaks its way through the hills.
- *Cave Bath of Tapolca* = the world's unique natural cave with geothermal water spring in it at Miskolc.
- *Tshikosh* = traditional Hungarian horse-herder or cowboy: 'csikós.'
- *Goulash* = traditional Hungarian stew soup with red pepper: 'gulyás.'

²² Hungary has a handicap in its name associated with the Huns. Hungarians are relatives of the Turkish, Finnish and Estonian in Europe belonging to the Ural-Altai language family, not to the long before extinct Huns. The relationship with the Huns, stressed in the manuscripts of the chronicle writers, used to be encouraged by Hungarian kings in the Middle Ages. They wished to legitimize the Hungarian conquest, i.e. they as the legal descendants, came for the heritage of the Huns who once (600 years before the Hungarians came) dwelled in the Carpathian Basin for a while. By the way, Hungarians never call themselves Huns, but Magyars.



Figure 15. Hungarian landmarks

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Hungary:

- *Budapest* = the palaces on the Pest bank of the Danube and the Buda Castle medieval district. The *Andrássy Avenue* lined with spectacular Neo-renaissance mansions; and the *Millennium Underground* (the 2nd oldest underground railway in the world and the 1st one in the continental Europe).
- *Hollókő* = an ethnographic village museum.
- *Caves of Aggtelek Karst* = a transboundary property with Slovakia with 712 caves, the most famous of which the Baradla (Hungarian) and Domica (Slovakia) dripstone cave complex is the largest. The Slovakian caves include Gombasek, Silica, Dobšiná, Ochtina and Jasov.
- *Pannonhalma* = it is the Millenary Benedictine Monastery with its natural environments. This is the second largest territorial abbey in the world, after the one in Monte Casino.
- *Hortobágy* = national park, a large alkali grassland named 'pusta' with traditional breed of sheep and grey cattle, and horses. It is the largest natural grassland in Europe.
- *Necropolis of Pécs* (Sopianae) = early Christian tombs.
- *Fertő* (Lake Neusiedl) = cultural landscape around a large alkali grassland lake shared between Austria and Hungary. It also enjoys protection through the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

- *Tokaj – Hegyalja* = cultural landscape, the growing area of the world’s best quality sweet white wine, named in Latin: *’Vinum Regum, Rex Vinorum’* (wine of the kings and king of the wines).



Figure 16. Hungarian World Heritage Sites

Poland (Polska)

National Flag		Official name		Coat of arms			
		Republic of Poland Native name: Rzeczpospolita Polska					
Capital city and population (million): Warsaw 1,735				Language: Polish			
Country’s population (million): 38		Currency: Złoty		Territory (sq kms): 312 683			
Administrative division							
Region: provinces / województwa:		Seat		Region: provinces / województwa:			
Dolnośląskie (Lower Silesia) Kujawsko-Pomorskie Lubelskie Lubuskie Łódzkie Małopolskie (Little Poland) Mazowieckie Opolskie		Wrocław Bydgoszcz Lublin Gorzów Wielkopolski Łódź Kraków (Cracow) Warszawa (Warsaw) Opole		Podkarpackie (Subcarpathian) Podlaskie Pomorskie (Sea coastland) Śląskie (Silesia) Świętokrzyskie Warmińsko-Mazurskie (Mazur) Wielkopolskie Zachodniopomorskie		Rzeszów Białystok Gdańsk Katowice Kielce Olsztyn Poznań Szczecin	

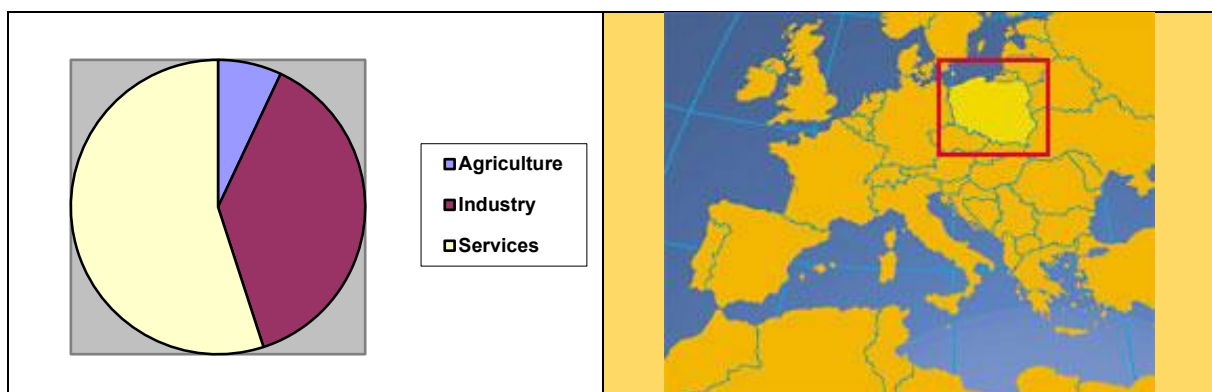
Geography

Most of Poland lies on the Polish Plain. The central part of the country is covered by low hills, and on the south it is bordered by the ranges of the Carpathian Mts. (Beskids, Tatra) and the Sudety Mts. The climate is continental with cold winters and cool summers. The soils are poor not providing good conditions for agriculture. However, the Sudety Mts are very rich in black coal and copper ore which was favourable for industrial development. The largest Polish river is the Vistula, crossing the capital city. Poland has a long history of constant wars between two world powers: Germany and Russia. After World War II it became a socialist country. In the 1980s there was a strong political movement of the Solidarity Trade Union to undermine the Soviet rule. Finally Poland could join the EU in 2004.

Economy

Heavy industry, **metallurgy** was based on abundant deposits of local **black coal** mainly situated in Upper **Silesia** (at the foothills of the Beskids Mts) and Lower Silesia (at the foothills of the Sudety Mts). Silesia, the workshop of Central-Europe always used to be a '*casus belli*' in the eyes of German, Austrian, Czech and Russian political powers. The Silesian **steel industry** is concentrated in and around **Katowice, Wroclaw** and **Nova Huta** (at Cracow) in the south of Poland. Energy production relies on coal heated **power plants**, too, and it induces **air pollution** damaging the forests and public health. **Engineering** is also well developed. **Textile** industry is a traditional branch of economy. The towns on the Baltic Sea in the north specialize in **ship building**, with **Gdansk**, being the largest.

Agriculture grows **potato**, wheat, sugar beet, malting barley and hops (for beer brewery) and **rye** as a cereal. Food production is insufficient, Poland has to **import food**. **Salt** used to be an important mineral, too, though today salt mines are closed down due to the cheap marine salt produced everywhere by the seas. The largest salt mine is a touristic attraction in South Poland today. **Tourism** is important in the **Polish Tatry** in the north part of the Carpathians (in the vicinity of Cracow). A domestic touristic destination is the **Mazur Lakeland** in the north east of the country.



The employment structure shows a very strong industry in Poland and a not too favourable tertiary sector	The country in Europe
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Administration

The 16 Polish NUTS-2 regions correspond to the boundaries of the historical voivodeships, the voivodes being the governors of these regions. The historic capital of the country used to be Cracow, the most beautiful Polish town in the Sub-Carpathian land. Warsaw was unfortunately destroyed completely during World War II by the German troops. Because the historic and traditional roots, the voivodeships have more administrative functions than regions do in a unitary type of state. Poland can therefore be considered as a decentralized state tending to change into a regionalized one, unlike most former socialist countries that are unitary and changing towards a decentralized type of state.

Society

National minorities are rather insignificant in Poland (German, Ukrainian, Belarussian make up 2 % together). This is due to the post-war forceful migrations of both German and 'Russian' ethnic groups. Poland suffered most during World War II. The 98 % Polish population are in a social union as far as religion is concerned: 94 % are Roman Catholic believers. Poland is the East European stronghold of Catholicism. Polish people are fond of travelling and migrating abroad. There are many guest employees in West European countries and the USA. There is also a strong international fellow feeling towards Hungarians, for historical reasons.

Landmarks

- *Masurian Lakeland* is north east part of Poland with nature conservation parks, lots of lakes, marshland and woods.
- *Makowiec, bigos, barszcz* are national traditional meals: crescent filled with poppy seed; stew with cabbage; red beet soup.
- *Wawel* is the former royal castle in Cracow.



Masurian Lakeland



Bigos, barszcz: meals



Wawel (Cracow)

Figure 17. Polish landmarks

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Poland:

- *Kraków Old Town* is the most prominent example of an old town in Poland, because for many centuries, Kraków (Cracow) used to be the royal capital of Poland.
- *The Wieliczka Salt Mine* is located in the town of Wieliczka within the Kraków metropolitan area. The mine continuously produced table salt from the 13th century until 2007 as one of the world's oldest operating salt mines (the oldest is Bochnia Salt Mine in Poland, closed down after World War I and turned into a museum in 1981). Wieliczka is also a gigantic museum now.
- *Auschwitz - Birkenau Camp* (at Oświęcim and Brzezinka) = is shocking museum in memory of the former German (Nazi) concentration camp during World War II. The camp of Auschwitz was restored and turned into a museum honouring the victims of Nazism.
- *Białowieża Forest* (Belavezhskaya Pushcha National Park in Belarus) = is one of the last and largest remaining parts of the immense primeval forest which once spread across the Eastern European Plain. This transboundary property shared with Belarus is a wildlife reservation area, for the last specimens of the European buffalo, as well.
- *Warsaw's Old Town* (Stare Miasto, or: Starówka) is the oldest historic district of the Polish capital city. It is bounded by Wyrbrzeże Gdańskie, along the bank of the Vistula River, and by Grodzka, Mostowa and Podwale Streets. It is one of Warsaw's most prominent tourist attractions. The heart of the area is the Old Town Market Place, with its restaurants, cafés and shops. Surrounding streets feature medieval architecture such as the city walls, the Barbican and St. John's Cathedral.
- *Old City of Zamość* is a perfect example of a Renaissance town of the late 16th century, which retains its original layout and fortifications, and a large number of buildings blending Italian and central European architectural traditions.
- *Malbork Castle of the Teutonic Order* was founded in the 13th century by the Teutonic Knights and is noted for its Gothic Marienburg Castle, one of the most striking one in Europe.
- *Medieval Town of Toruń* is on the Vistula River is one of the oldest and most beautiful cities in Poland. The medieval old town of Toruń is the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus. The old town market and the gothic town hall are said to be one of the 30 most beautiful places in the world.
- *Kalwaria Zebrzydowska* is an Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park.
- *The Churches of Peace* (Kościoły Pokoju) is in Jawor (Jauer) and Świdnica (Schweidnitz) in Silesia. They were erected after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 which permitted the Lutherans in the Roman Catholic parts of Silesia to build 3 Evangelical churches from wood, loam and straw outside the city walls, without steeples and church bells.

- *Wooden Churches of Southern Lesser Poland (Małopolskie) and Sub-Carpathia* is the wooden churches of southern Lesser Poland and Sub-Carpathia represent outstanding examples of the different aspects of medieval church-building traditions in Roman Catholic culture. Built using the horizontal log technique, common in eastern and northern Europe since the Middle Ages.
- *The Muskau Park (Muskauer Park, or Park Mużakowski)* is the largest and one of the most famous English Gardens of Germany and Poland, covering 3.5 km² of land in Poland and 2.1 km² in Germany. The park extends on both sides of the Neisse River, which constitutes the border between the countries. *Muskau* Castle is situated west of the river, the heart of the park are the partially wooded raised areas on the east bank called The Park on Terraces. In 2003 a pedestrian bridge spanning the Neisse was rebuilt to connect both parts.
- *The Centennial Hall in Wrocław (Jahrhunderthalle, or Hala Stulecia)* is an early landmark of reinforced concrete architecture, constructed in 1911-1913, when the city was part of the German Empire.



Figure 18. Polish World Heritage Sites

Slovakia (Slovensko)

National Flag	Official name	Coat of arms
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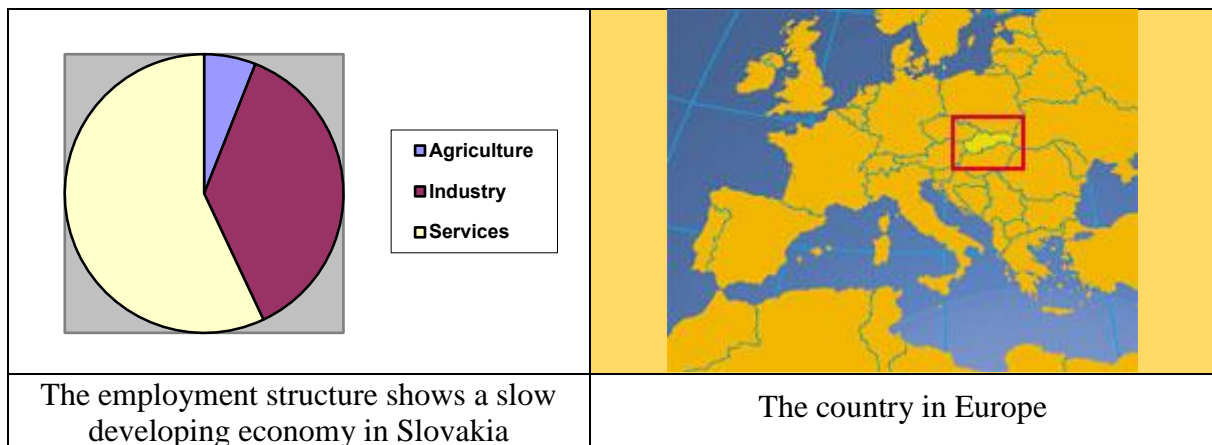
		Slovak Republic Native name: Slovenská republika		
Capital city and population (million): Bratislava 0.430			Language: Slovak	
Country's population (million): 5.4		Currency: Euro		Territory (sq kms): 49 036
Administrative division				
Region: kraj:	Seat	Region: kraj:	Seat	
Banskobystrický	Banská Bystrica (Besztercebánya)	Prešovský	Prešov (Eperjes)	
Bratislavský	Bratislava (Pozsony)	Trenčiansky	Trenčín (Trencsén)	
Košický	Košice (Kassa)	Trnavský	Trnava (Nagyszombat)	
Nitriansky	Nitra (Nyitra)	Žilinský	Žilina (Zsolna)	

Geography

Slovakia is situated in Central Europe, in the region of the Carpathian Mountain range, and on the highland of the Carpathian Basin. The highest part of the Carpathians (Tatras) is situated mainly in Slovakia, partly in Poland. The hilly country has but a little plain land on the south-west by the River Danube, and in the easternmost part, in the lower catchment area of the River Bodrog. The climate is continental. In history the land of Slovakia used to belong to the Hungarian Kingdom up to the end of World War I (1920), then it was a union with the Czech (Czechoslovakia) up to 1993, when it became an independent country.

Economy

In recent history, in the Czechoslovakian times, it was the Czech part of the country that could develop economy. **Heavy industry** was developed only in the east (**Košice**) based on some local iron ore (previously on Russian import). The country is poor in natural reserves, especially energy, and food has to be imported. There is some traditional **textile** and **engineering** industry in the west part of the country (**Žilina, Bratislava**). The building of large scale hydropower plant on the Danube in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in political tension with Hungary because of the diversion of the waters of the Danube. There is some **precious metal ore** deposits that have been mined since the Middle Ages on. Because of the abundancy of forests, **wood processing** and the **paper** industry has long traditions. Both summer and winter **tourism** is an important branch of economy, relying on the beautiful landscapes of the High and Low Tatras and the other mountain ranges.



Administration

The country is divided into 8 districts (**krajs**) named after their main cities. They are further divided into 79 boroughs (**okres**) standing for the economic gravity zones of minor towns. Slovakia joined the EU in 2004.

Society

Some 78 % of the population are Slovakian. The largest national minority is represented by Hungarians (11 %), then Gypsies (9 %) and some 1 % Czech and 1 % Ukrainian respectively. Because of debates rooted in history (the integrity of the Hungarian Kingdom, the Hungarian invasion during World War II and in 1968 together with the Russians), the Slovakian Government and the Hungarian one cannot agree on the issues of national minority policy in Slovakia, like using mother tongues, and national symbols in offices and schools.

60 % of the country's population are Roman Catholic, the rest, some 10 % is Protestant and the rest is atheist, due to the long decade reign of socialism. The long centuries when Slovaks were being subordinated in the political and economic senses to either Hungary then to the Czech state, resulted in a lack of regional identity. It is now being built causing **political tension between with Hungary and Slovakia**, despite the common EU membership. Also, the rising number of the **Gypsy population** being unable to integrate in both economic and social aspects is an unsolved social problem.

Landmarks

- *High Tatras* = the highest range of the Carpathians, with peaks well over 2000 metres.
- *Banská Bystrica* (Besztercebánya) is an old (originally Hungarian) historical town with gold and silver mines.
- *Bojnice Ghost Festival* is organized in the first week of May, in a mediaeval castle.

- *Bryndzové halusy* is a traditional meal: potato pastry with ewe's cheese and bacon.
- *Dobsina Ice Cave* is a unique cave of ice formations.
- *Lomnic Peak* is the second highest peak of the High Tatras that can be visited by cable cabin.
- *Strbske Pleso* is a tourist centre around a lake (pleso) at the foothill of the High Tatra.
- *Kosice* (Kassa) the only large (originally Hungarian) city in Eastern Slovakia, with the St. Elizabeth cathedral and the Opera House.



Figure 19. Slovakian landmarks

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Slovakia:

- *Banská Štiavnica* (Selmecebánya) is a completely preserved (originally Hungarian) medieval town with historical value.
- *Levoča* (Hungarian: Lőcse), *Spišský Hrad* (Hungarian: Szepesvár) and the *Associated Cultural Monuments* = the ruins of Spišský Castle is one of the largest castle sites in Central Europe. The castle is situated above the town of Spišské and the village of Žehra (Zsigra) that with adjacent ecclesiastical town Spišská Kapitula, (Szepesi Káptalan) (both meaning the Spiš Chapterhouse) is an exceptionally well-preserved ecclesiastical town. The historic centre of Levoča has many well preserved Renaissance buildings.
- *Vlkolínec* is a picturesque village of rural architecture under the administration of the town of Ružomberok (Rózsahegy). Vlkolínec is one of ten Slovak settlements that have been given the status of a folk architecture reservation in the region of the Northern Carpathians.
- *Caves of Aggtelek and the Slovak Karst* is a transboundary property with Hungary including 7 components: the Aggtelek Karst, the Szendrő-Rudabánya Hill, the Esztramos Hill in Hungary, and the Dobšinská (Dobsina) Ice Cave, the Koniar plateau,

the Plešivec (Pelsőc) plateau, and the Silica (Szilice) and Jasov plateau in Slovakia with many dripstone caves.

- *Bardejov* (Bártfa) is an old town (originally Hungarian) exhibiting numerous cultural monuments in its completely intact medieval town centre.
- *The Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathian* is an outstanding example of undisturbed, complex temperate forests, constitute a transnational serial property of ten separate components (6 in Ukraine and 4 in Slovakia) along a 185 km axis from the Rakhiv Mountains and the Chornohirskyi Range in Ukraine, west along the Polonynian Ridge, to the Bukovské vrchy and Vihorlat Mts in Slovakia. They contain an invaluable genetic reservoir of beech and many species associated with it.
- *Carpathian Wooden Churches* = consists of 9 wooden religious buildings constructed between the 16th and 18th centuries in eight different locations. They include two Roman Catholic (Hervartov, Tvrdošín), three Protestant (Hronsek - Garamszeg, Leštiny, Kežmarok - Késmárk) and three Greek Catholic churches (Bodružal, Ruská Bystrá, Ladomirová - Ladomérvágása) plus one belfry in Hronsek. In addition to these churches there are about 50 more wooden churches in the territory of present-day Slovakia mainly in the northern and eastern part of the Prešov (Eperjes) region.



Figure 20. Slovakian World Heritage Sites

The Small Ones and the Big Ones

Austria, Latvia, Lithuania, Kaliningrad, Liechtenstein are countries that lie entirely in Central Europe in physical geographical context, but they are affiliated to other major regions (either the German, the Russian, or the Baltic ones) from cultural and mainly from economic points of view.

Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Ukraine are countries, some regions of which can be considered as Central European, but their chief economic and partially cultural profiles connect them to either Western

Southern, or Eastern Europe. In Germany some regions west of River Rhine are definitely West Europeans, and in Switzerland the French cantons in the Alps and in Italy the northernmost provinces also belong to the West, to France and to Austria-Germany respectively. In case of Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia their northern regions have some Central European cultural roots in history, however, today it is reflected only in some old monuments dating back to the time of the Austro—Hungarian Monarchy before World War I. The Yugoslavian period's forceful national assimilation, though it failed and ended up in a civil war between the Croats and Serbians, was successful to redefine these countries as belonging either to the West (Slovenia) or to the South (Croatia and Serbia) of Europe. In case of Romania, it is Transylvania that used to belong to the Hungarian Kingdom for one thousand years, therefore it could rightly be considered as a true Central European region. But again the forceful national assimilation policy of the Romanian governments in the past one hundred years led to the sorrowful consequence of the German minority's complete disappearance and the Hungarian minority's shrinking to a great degree and being 'homeless in their homeland.' Compared to the Roman majority in Transylvania their fate seems to be doomed in spite of the European Union's sonorous national minority policy. Their hopes to stay and get along in their native land could be supported with cultural autonomy. Owing to their relatively little number and representation in Transylvania, the remaining Hungarian national minority's economic and political force is not enough to consider Transylvania as a special Euro region among the V4 core countries of Eastern Central Europe. Finally, the part of Ukraine that could be considered as Central European had undergone such violent and horrible holocaust before and during World War II that it lost its Central European profile completely. Only some of the old buildings and monuments are representing the historical Central European status.

Chapter 4

BRIDGE BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE

- *The Russians went out.*
- *And who came in?*
- *No one.*
- *I don't believe.*²³

The Central European Mentality and Existence

The Central European feeling can be the best characterized with the thoughts of a semi Hungarian, semi German, man of letters, living in Slovakia. Lajos Grendel describes the Central European existence as below:

My Slovakian classmate happened to tell me once he would jump out of the window in despair, if he had been born Hungarian. When I asked him why, he told me it had to be a horrible feeling to be Hungarian. After I calmed down and began to consider what he had told me, I had to admit he was right. It is really a horrible feeling to be Hungarian. It is at least as desperate feeling as being Czech, Slovak, Romanian, German, Jewish, Russian, or Gypsy, not to mention the Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians or the Chechens, Azerbaijanis and Armenians.

I amused myself with the thought for a while, what if I were a Slovak? If I were a Slovakian, I could never forgive the Hungarians, nor the Czech that the Slovaks could only found a state of their own for the first time in history in 1993, hence, it was not a favour given by a European great power. If I were a Czech, I would stand in fear of the revenge of the three million Germans or their descendants whom our fathers and grandfathers chased away from their homeland with disgusting atrocities. If I were Polish, I could not forget the two mighty neighbours, the Germans and the Russians having divided and occupied my country several times. If I were Jewish, I could never forgive the German contribution in having taken the majority of my ascending relatives and friends into the gas chambers. If I were Romani, the colour of my skin would betray me even if I denied my nationality every day. And I could go on with similar examples.

²³ Quotation from Lajos Grendel: *Közép-Európa kísértetei /Ghosts of Central Europe/ = Historical Magazine 2019.02. pp 52-56) describing the Central European mentality. An old German – Hungarian nationality couple's dialogue in Kassa /Košice/ in Slovakia in 1993.*

The native Central European citizens keep on wondering how the Western European type of citizens, the WEIRD²⁴ cannot understand them. When they are lamenting about historical injustice or their cruel fate, the WEIRDs regard them as quarrelling and fighting against one another like infantile, uneducated children. The Central European citizens cannot understand the WEIRDs either, having been unable to travel there freely, and having had their most intimate feelings nationalized in communism. They all consider their lands as the middle of the world, which is really; where they live, that is the middle of the world for them. Though they would like to be elsewhere, too, to have a wider horizon. There are things to be seen only from Central Europe, however. These are the real definitions of Central European existence:

1. Central Europe is the land and region of all the continents which is the easiest to conquer from any directions.
2. Though Central Europe is inhabited by Central Europeans, it has been too many times, if not all the time in history the garrison of foreign troops.
3. Central Europeans are extremely sensitive of their origin and nationality.
4. According to a strange historical algorithm, Central Europeans have always been regularly conquered or in other words raped.
5. Central Europeans are more likely to be filled with anguish, distress and to suffer from paranoia more than others in Western, Northern, Eastern or Southern Europe.
6. Central Europe has recently been composed of small states, and there is a political claustrophobia to be experienced there.
7. These small countries are relatively poor.
8. The identity feeling of the Central European natives has been hurt all the time in the past 70-80 years.
9. Central Europeans, like all the people, would also like to be successful, rich, happy and appreciated, but their chances to realize it are the slightest in Central Europe.

As a demonstrative example let us examine the story of the Schmidt family, one of the many Schmidt families living in the Eastern Slovakian major town, Košice. When in 1991 the last Soviet soldier had left the territory of the then Czechoslovakia, the very old Mr. Schmidt told the old Mrs. Schmidt: ‘the Russians went out.’ ‘And who came in?’ asked old Mrs. Schmidt who had almost never read the newspaper or watched the news on TV. ‘Nobody came in’ said old Mr. Schmidt. ‘It’s not possible, I don’t believe it’ said Mrs. Schmidt categorically. When they were newlywed, and they were proud of the town Košice, because it was one of the most beautiful town of the old Hungary under the name of Kassa;

²⁴ Yuval Noah Harari describes the Western Europeans and the USA citizens this way: Western, Educated, Industrialized, and Rich, Democratic (WEIRD) individuals – in his book, titled *Homo Deus* 2015.

one day the young Mrs. Schmidt told her husband in alarm: 'Imagine, the Czech came in!' Mr. Schmidt was young then and was not afraid of anything, especially of the Czech. 'Well, if they came in, they will leave' he said and history verified his words. 'The Hungarians came in, our people' he said twenty years later. Then World War the II broke out and as the frontline it was approaching the Carpathian Mountains, one day the Germans came in. The German occupation made the Schmidt indignant, because the then Hungary was in alliance with Germany and to occupy the territory of an ally was dishonourable they thought. But the Germans had left the town quickly westward, from where they came. So the Germans went out and the Russians came in. Then the Russians went out, but only the soldiers and the Czech came back. After 23 years, in 1968 the Russian soldiers came back and stayed for another 23 years.

The Schmidts are trueborn Central European people. During their long life they were twice Hungarian, twice Czechoslovakian citizens for shorter longer periods and they died as Slovakian citizens. They had a taste of democracy, fascism and communism. Their ancestors were Germans who were invited to settle down by one of the Hungarian kings in the Middle Ages. They considered themselves Hungarians, however, they were proud of their German origin. During the communism they had to forget and conceal both of their identities. In the communist Czechoslovakia it was the possible worst reputation to be a German origin Hungarian bourgeois. Every tenth year census-taking officials asked them about their nationality. 'Decide at last, whether you are Hungarian or Slovakian' urged one of them. Mr. Schmidt got fed up with it: 'none of them' he said 'I'm a Kassa-dweller.' He soon lost his job and was almost imprisoned, as a consequence.

Central Europeans could be 'raped' in the 20th century almost for anything; for being rich, or poor, for being Hungarian, Slovak, Polish, Czech, or Jew, or Christian. Whom for what reason; it changed in every decade or so. There is no Central European citizen who has not been 'raped' at least once in a lifetime. When after World War I the Czechoslovakian Republic had been established, there was a land distribution in the southern regions of the Uplands inhabited with Hungarians. However, land was not given to the local, poverty-stricken and landless Hungarians, but to the Slovaks coming from the northern parts of the Uplands in order to settle down there and reduce the Hungarian demographic dominance. Native Hungarians called the Slovakian newcomers colonists therefore, and when the Hungarian state reoccupied the southern parts of the Uplands in 1938, the Slovak newcomers were driven away. Then in 1945 the colonist newcomers came back again and chased away the Hungarians from their native lands. The Schmidt family foresaw the consequences of the change of the regimes and tried to compensate them. Mr. Schmidt declared himself Slovakian in the office where he worked. After the working hours he stayed at home as a

Hungarian. To be prepared for all possible emergencies, he had his elder son educated as a Slovak in school, and his younger son as a Hungarian.

The boy having attended the Slovakian school married a Slovak girl; the other boy with Hungarian schooling married a Hungarian girl. In a short time the two sons of Mr. Schmidt hated each other. The elder boy escaped over the new border to Slovakia, changed his name from Schmidt to the Slovakian sounding Kovalsky, and became a guerrilla fighter, because he thought if he had to choose between fascism and communism, the latter is the lesser evil. The younger boy stayed at Kassa and changed his name from Schmidt to the Hungarian sounding Kovács and became the member of a Hungarian fascist party because he thought fascism was the lesser evil compared to communism. The older boy thought that even so the Russians are communists, they have share common Slavic hearts with the Slovaks. The younger boy considered the Russians not only evil communists, but pan-Slavic imperialists, too. The two brothers agreed only upon one thing: democracies were weak, corrupt, and immoral.

When Kassa in 1945 was annexed to Czechoslovakia again under the name Košice, the younger boy escaped to Hungary with his family. There he had to choose between either to be accounted for his fascist past, or to collaborate with the communist secret agency. He chose the latter. After the Hungarian revolution against communism was defeated in 1956, he joined the communist party and by the mid-1970s he became a reform-economist of great reputation. His past was forgiven by the communist party, but when the 1968 reforms were neglected he was neglected, too. He came into conflict with himself and died of a heart attack at a relatively young age.

The career of the older boy, who stayed in Czechoslovakia, was rising until the early 1950s when he was excluded from the communist party under false pretences, and imprisoned. Ten years later he was readmitted into the communist party, but in 1968 he protested against the new Russian military presence, so he was again expelled from the party, lost his job, and his children were not admitted to the university. He was disillusioned both from communism and nationalism. He spoke Slovakian with his wife and children and Hungarian with his old parents, the Schmidt's. He did not live to see the change of the regime in 1989 either. He also died early like his younger brother.

The children of the two brothers met for the first time at the funeral of old Mr. Schmidt at Košice. They agreed that their parents had weak characters and were immoral, miserable and wretched figures. They agreed they would have done everything in a different way. This conversation went on with the help of interpretation, because neither of them spoke the native language of the other. They were not good at speaking English fluently enough to have a common

language to talk either. They were not proud of their being Central European, What is more, they were ashamed to live in such countries where after the many occupations and reoccupations there were no money or career possibilities left.

Earlier, the son of the younger Schmidt boy who lived in Hungary, in Budapest, married a Jewish girl. When old Mrs. Schmidt, the grandmother in Košice learned this, she got upset, because in her family everybody has always been Lutheran, back to the 16th century. 'Don't worry' old Mr Schmidt comforted her 'perhaps this Jewish relation will be useful for them some time. Instead of lamenting, be happy that we are free at last.' Old Mrs. Schmidt replied: 'what can we gain with this freedom, when we are going to die soon.'

When one of their grandchildren flew over the Atlantic Ocean to America he was shocked to realize the Central Europe is one of the most insignificant peripheries of the Earth, with several small countries that are unviable on their own. Their natural resources are too few, most of them do not have seacoast, or if yes, they are unfavourable for navigation. Their unfavourable geographical situation, far from the Atlantic gateways has deprived them of the opportunity to rob the natural resources of faraway continents. They could not have the opportunity to colonize faraway lands, to exterminate the Native Americans, and drive the rest into reservations. They could not have the opportunity to carry off black men into slavery and to delight in their abolition. They could be strong and big some of the times, but only at the expenses of one another. The grandson of old Mr. Schmidt harboured suspicions that the reason why the neighbouring nations hate his nation is not that his nation once oppressed them, but because the oppressive role was not gained by their nations, the neighbours. It occurred to him that maybe Central Europeans would have to forget their languages and use English instead. It is a global language after all, and it is neither Russian, nor German. Or is it worth speaking at all in this region? No one can be expected to understand the others.

Of course in Central Europe we can meet not only the Schmidt family type. There are many Hungarian origin Hungarians, Slovakian origin Slovaks, Czech origin Czech people and Polish Origin Poles as well. Their fate was not easier a bit, either. 'I would also jump out of the window, if I were Slovakian' I told my classmate a long ago. 'Then let's jump together' he said 'but not from the tenth level, but from the ground floor, from where it is not worth doing.' So now, 25 years later when all our occupiers got bored with us, we cannot find our places nor inside the building, nor outside of the window. By now we have completely lost our identity or we have several identities what is not normal. Robert Musil, Franz Kafka, Witold Gombrowitz, Danilo Kiš, Endre Ady and other writers knew this weird Central European feeling well.

We are always late for everything

*From faraway we must be coming
(Ady)*

Lord, who made the lion and the lamb, you decreed I should be what I am²⁵

The homeless at home

The real suffering having formed the Central European generations' feeling lost and blue could be experienced on the eastern borders of Central Europe, however. Let us examine Lemberg,²⁶ the capital of Galicia in today's Ukraine.

Lemberg is the city of 'vanished borders'²⁷ lying in between the Byzantine Constantinople, the German Nurnberg, the Italian Bologna and the Lithuanian Vilnius, bearing the cultural effects of the Central European land in between. Its intercultural character reflected the best of art, handicraft, science, architecture of the mixed Central European impacts. Through its stormy history, this beautiful and rich European city had been ruled by Polish and Hungarian kings, Austrian emperors, Ukrainian hetmans, Moldavian voivodes

The flourishing multiculturalism, however, came to a shameful end with the dawn of the 20th century. From 1914 to 1945 all Galicia including Lemberg, was turned into a battlefield of destruction, the 'Thirty Year Long War' of Central Europe. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918 it came under the rule of a so called Western Ukrainian People's Republic, then from 1919 to 1939 it was under Polish rule. Following the German – Soviet Treaty before World War II in 1939 Soviet troops occupied it in accordance with the German conquest of Poland. Again, in 1941 the Germans took Lemberg when they attacked the Soviet Union. In 1944 the Soviet Red Army reoccupied it. Lemberg was renamed as Lvov²⁸ and the rest of Galicia remained under Soviet control as part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) until 1993 when Ukraine became independent.

²⁵ From the musical Fiddler on the Roof: If I were a Rich Man

²⁶ Lemberg = Lamburg, Leopoldis, Lvov, Lwów, Lviv (today in Ukrainian).

²⁷ Karl Schlögel: Europe Archipelago

²⁸ In 1977 the Author of this textbook, as a university student, had to spend a month in the Ukrainian SSR at the University of Odessa, the twin city of the Hungarian Szeged. On their way home, the students had to spend half a day in Lvov (Lemberg) waiting to change trains. Some Gypsy children came up to them begging for alms, cigarette or some change as usual at that time. Of course they did not know the students were Hungarians. As the Gypsy children were leaving empty handed, the students heard something what made them give all their money left to the little beggars. One of the little children said half loud to himself 'Éhes vagyok' (I'm hungry) – in Hungarian at a site where Hungarian was officially spoken the last time six decades earlier, so it must have been one of the last traces of multiculturalism.

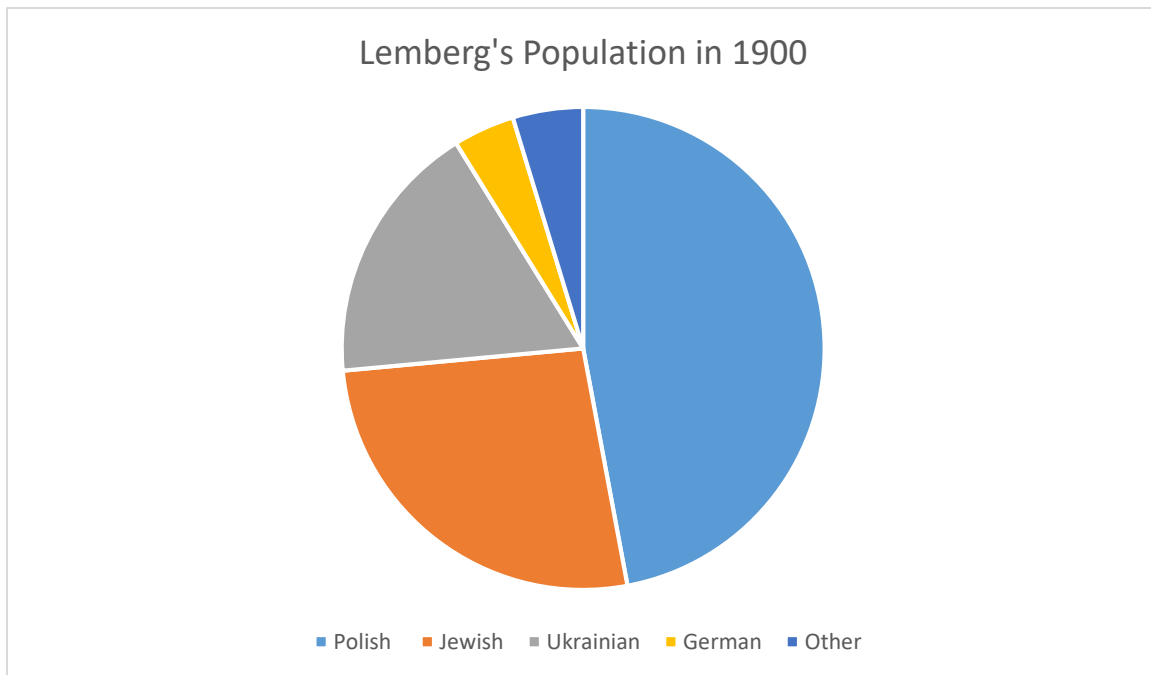


Figure 21. The population of Galicia's capital at the beginning of the 20th century. Besides the 80 000 Poles, there were 45 000 Jews, 30 000 Ukrainians, 7000 Germans and the 8000 others included: Armenians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Italians, Moldavians and Romanians.

Until 1918 all the peoples coming to Lemberg added to its cultural richness. But during the 20th century, all the peoples (and armies) coming to Lemberg took something away. They took away human lives, fates and identities. All the Jewish population was exterminated both by the Germans and the Russians. The Poles and the Germans were also either killed or deported, like the other nationalities. In the Soviet times Lemberg was turned into a regular Soviet metropolis with one, Soviet culture, and the shadows of the past. Owing to the genocides having taken place in this once beautiful city the Ukrainian Russian Soviet citizens of Lvov have always felt the ghosts of the bloody history of the 20th century over Lemberg. This city unified at the highest level what it meant to be a Central European native who is homeless at home.

The anticipation of the bloody fate of Eastern Central Europe in the 20th century is best depicted by a piece of art, a world famous musical and a film titled 'Fiddler on the Roof.' The story takes place in 1905 at the dawn of the 20th century and characterizes the peoples living at that time on the eastern border of Central Europe. They are the real Central Europeans: Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, Russians, Armenians, Italians, Gypsies, Austrians, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Romanians, Moldavians, Belarusians, Bulgarians – once living together in one city.



Figure 22. Norma Crane and Topol in the film Fiddler on the Roof by Metro Goldwyn Meyer (1971). The film and the musical show how the Galician Jewish in the imperial Russia in 1905, tried to stay on the surface – in the close neighbourhood of Central Europe.

The events in *The Fiddler on the Roof* take place in Anatevka, a fictional town in the Pale,²⁹ during the year 1905. From the 1880s to the 1920s, when there was a permanent political and social crisis in Russia, the government would incite the Russian nationality population against the Jews, trying to divert their attention from the problems. These anti-Jewish movements were the *pogroms* (attacks, accompanied by destruction, looting of property, murder, and rape, committed by one section of population against another, first of all against the Jewish, then sometimes against the Hungarian, German, Polish, Moldavian, Romanian, Belarussian, Lithuanian, or Russian nationalities) in the Eastern Central European region.

However, Ukraine's independence in 1993 had not brought back the memories of multiculturalism. Ukrainian nationalist efforts try to integrate the whole country into one true, united Ukrainian state with a national identity strong enough to withstand the Russian influence from the East. It includes the discouragement of any multicultural movements, events and traditions not only in Lemberg, but in the whole of Galicia. Thus Galicia, the last frontier of Central Europe in the East

²⁹ The Pale = the territory annexed to Russia from Poland where the Polish Jews were permitted to settle down, or remain in between 1835 – 1917. Its administrative area was situated in the gravity zones of Minsk (today's Belarussian capital) and Kiev (today's Ukrainian capital).

has been lost for ever. Today’s population have already been educated as Ukrainians solemnly. When in the modern Lemberg there are events, cultural programs trying to remember or renew Jewish or Polish traditions, these are not initiated by the late descendants and successors of the once Lemberg citizens who come to visit the cemeteries, but by the liberal minded, intellectuals of the young Ukrainian generation who wish to express their commitment to join Western Europe via the European Union instead of the Eurasian Union.

The Economic Bridge (V4) between Western and Eastern Europe

If we consider the European countries the territories of which lie fully or partially in Central Europe from physical geographical aspect, there are 18 such countries. Taking the IMF data (2017-2018) in thousand USD, the average GDP/capita is 31 in these countries (leaving out Liechtenstein). See Figure XX.

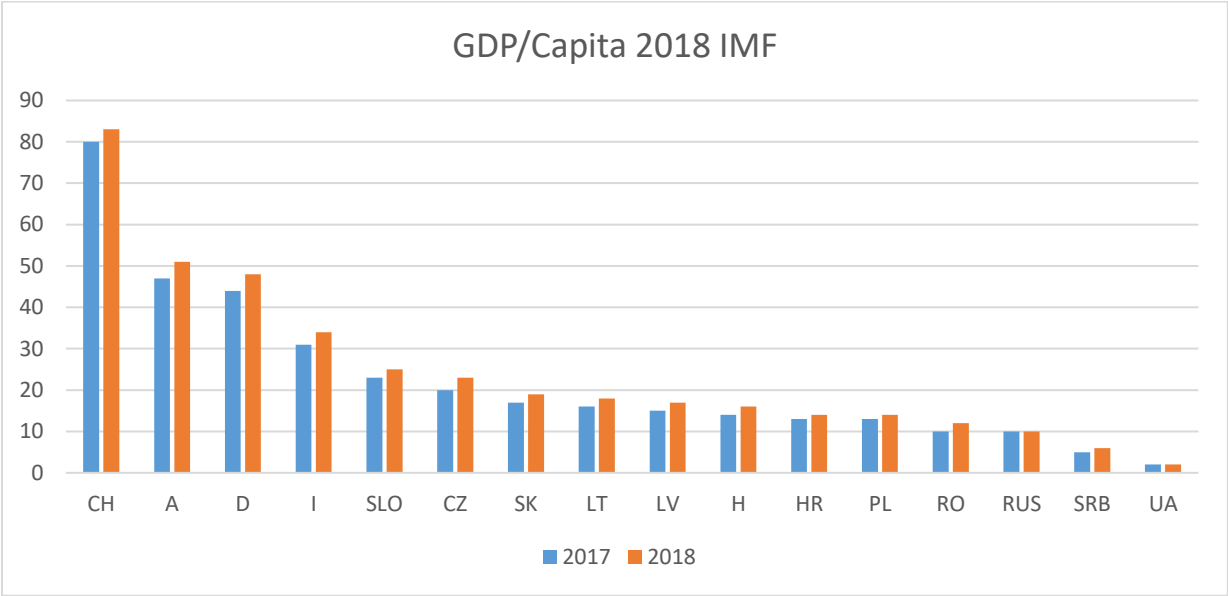


Figure 23. The GDP per person in thousand USD in the Central European countries.

We can see a tremendous (24 times) difference between Switzerland and Ukraine for example, but Germany, Austria and even Italy ought not to be considered to be in the same region with Serbia and Ukraine, or even with most of the countries from Slovenia to Romania or the Russian Kaliningrad district. Therefore when we mention Central Europe it had to be divided into two halves both in economic and in cultural aspects. The western part of Central Europe has to be related to Western Europe. The average GDP/Capita (2018) for the total physical geographical land of Central Europe is **31** thousand USD.

If we take the average GDP/Capita (2018) of Slovenia, Italy, Germany, Austria and Switzerland it is **48** thousand USD. But if we leave out Slovenia and Italy – being partially rather Southern European states – this value is **60** thousand USD. It cannot even be compared to that of the rest of the Central European countries. If we add this to the data of Western Europe, the average is **55** thousand USD.

The GDP/Capita (2018) of the Western European countries (Luxembourg /113/, Ireland /75/, the Netherlands /52/, Belgium /46/, the United Kingdom /42/ and France /42/) is **62** thousand USD. Therefore the western half of Central Europe with either 48 or 60 thousand USD can be verified as belonging to Western Europe rather than Central Europe.

The GDP/Capita of the remaining fully or partially Central European countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Croatia, Poland, Romania, Russian Kaliningrad, Serbia and Ukraine), it is **14** thousand USD.

Finally if we consider the living standard expressed in GDP/Capita of Eastern Europe, the average of the countries (Russia /10/, Romania /12/, Belarus /6/, Azerbaijan /4/, Georgia /4/, Armenia /4/, Moldova /3/ and Ukraine /2/) is **6** thousand USD. See Table 2.

Table 2. The regional averages of GDP/Capita expressed in USD in 2018 (IMF) shows that the real transmission zone, or ‘bridge’ between Western and Eastern Europe is Eastern Central Europe, while the western half of Central Europe has to be considered as part of Western Europe from economic geographical aspect.

Western Europe	Central Europe		Eastern Europe
	Western Central Europe	Eastern Central Europe	
Luxembourg, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, France	German Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Northern Italy, Northern Slovenia	Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Croatian Slavonia, Poland, Romanian Transylvania, Russian Kaliningrad, Serbian Vojvodina, Ukrainian Galicia.	Russia, Belarus, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia
62 000	48 000	14 000	6000
55 000 USD			

When it comes to comparison of data on national level, the fully Central European countries have to be mentioned in the first place among the Eastern Central European ones and those without cultural affiliation to either northern, eastern or southern European regions, i.e. the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, that is the V4 countries.

When considering Central Europe, in spite of the common historical and cultural links the economic network of the western half of Central Europe proves to be in an overwhelming advantage compared to the eastern half (see Figure 23) The largest hubs of the total economic connections, showing the spatial structure of Central European economy are the following:

- | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Frankfurt (D) | 6. Düsseldorf (D) | 11. Cologne (D) | 16. Gdansk (PL) |
| 2. Vienna (A) | 7. Hamburg (D) | 12. Genève (CH) | 17. Nurnberg (D) |
| 3. Munich (D) | 8. Warsaw (PL) | 13. Budapest (H) | 18. Cracow (PL) |
| 4. Berlin (D) | 9. Prague (CZ) | 14. Basel (CH) | 19. Graz (A) |
| 5. Zurich (CH) | 10. Stuttgart (D) | 15. Salzburg (A) | 20. Ljubljana (SLO) |

Was it not for Vienna, intruding deep into the Eastern Central European structure, the Warsaw – Prague – Budapest triangle, with the addition of Bratislava (which is presently in the economic shade of Vienna) could make up a perfect medium size transit zone structure between the very strong Western Central European region and Eastern Europe. This way the Eastern Central European region defined by Warsaw, Prague, Budapest and Bratislava could really be regarded as the Heartland of Europe.

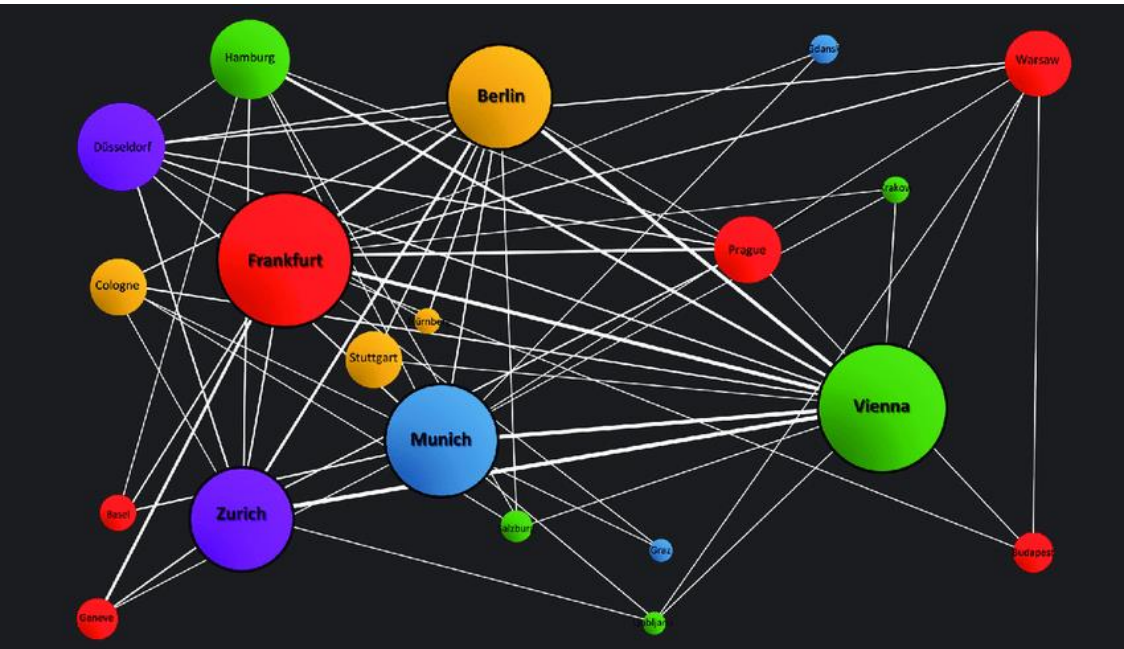


Figure 23. The major spatial economic network reflected in air traffic of Central Europe showing the absolute dominance of Germany, Switzerland and Austria. (Source: Kraft 2018)

Investment Capacities and Competiveness of the V4

In the global geostrategic chessboard game China, being the chief competitor of the USA tries to engulf the Heartland either with or without Russia via the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative. It includes the economic conquest of Eurasia by connecting China to the Western European ports Rotterdam, Antwerp and Hamburg. However, the OBOR has two main routes: the continental and the maritime. In both cases the Central European ‘Heartland’ plays an important role from Chinese Outbound Direct Investment strategy. Chinese economic strategy considers 16 countries as Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries as being of strategic importance and key partners to the establishment of the European sections of the continental and maritime OBORs.

In 2011, China started its co-operation with the 16 CEE countries, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia (EU), the Czech Republic (EU), Estonia (EU), Hungary (EU), Latvia (EU), Lithuania (EU), Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland (EU), Romania (EU), Serbia, Slovakia (EU) and Slovenia (EU) See Figure 24. In 2012, the first government level meeting was held in Warsaw, marking the official launch of the program in which China provides preferential financing to support government to government (G2G) infrastructural investment projects using Chinese inputs and capital investment in start-ups to initiate valuable impetus to rejuvenate the CEE economy and restore its industrial and commercial potential.

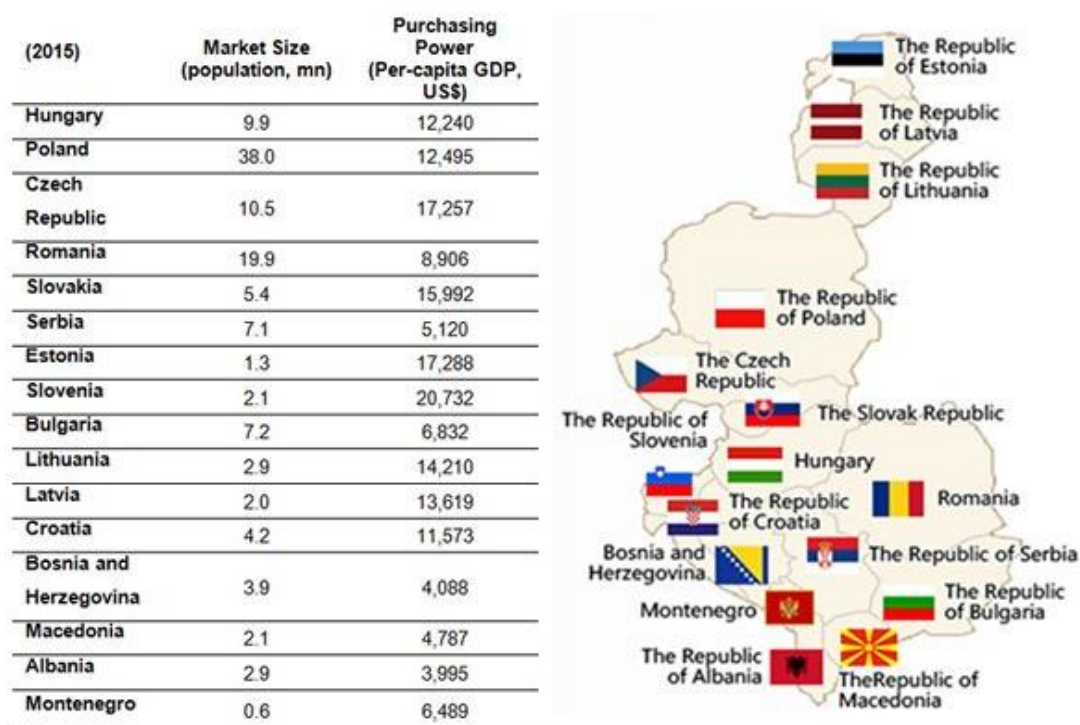


Figure 24. Ranking the economic market sizes of the CEE countries from Chinese aspect with considering the population and the purchasing power per capita in each one (Source: IMF 2015)

Between 2011-2014 China's ODI grew almost 100% to CEE countries from US \$ 853 million to US \$ 1.7 billion. Among the 16 CEECs, 3 countries, namely Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, accounted for more than two-thirds of the total, followed by Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, which together accounted for another 30% (See Table 3).

Table 3. China's ODI (Outward Foreign Direct Investment) stock in the 16 CEECs

(US\$ Million)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Hungary	465.70	475.35	507.41	532.35	556.35
Poland	140.31	201.26	208.11	257.04	329.35
Czech Republic	52.33	66.83	202.45	204.68	242.69
Romania	124.95	125.83	161.09	145.13	191.37
Bulgaria	18.60	72.56	126.74	149.85	170.27
Slovakia	9.82	25.78	86.01	82.77	127.79
Serbia	4.84	5.05	6.47	18.54	29.71
Lithuania	3.93	3.93	6.97	12.48	12.48
Croatia	8.13	8.18	8.63	8.31	11.87
Albania	4.43	4.43	4.43	7.03	7.03
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5.98	6.01	6.07	6.13	6.13
Slovenia	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Estonia	7.50	7.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Macedonia	0.20	0.20	0.26	2.09	2.11
Latvia	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54
Montenegro	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32

Source: 2014 Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment

Foreign trade between China and the CEECs has become unbalanced, because in 2015, China's exports were nearly twice the size of its imports from the 16 CEECs. This trade imbalance has brought about a new development model featuring geographic connectivity with large scale investment in infrastructure such as railroads, highways, tunnels, bridges, power plants, industrial and logistic parks, seaports and airports. See Table 4.

Between 2011 and 2015, China's trade with the 16 CEECs grew 6.4% from US \$ 52.9 billion to US \$ 56.3 billion. See Table 4. Similar to the pattern seen in China's ODI to CEECs (see Table 3) Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were China's top three trading partners among the 16 CEECs, accounting for more than 64% of all trade in 2015.

The data in Tables 3-4 prove that the countries having been considered as the Central European 'Heartland' (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) are chosen the main trading partners by the global OBOR chess player China, too, from among the 16 so called CEECs.

Table 4. China's foreign trade with the 16 CEECs in 2015.

Country	Total Exports		Total Imports		Total Trade	
	US\$ Mn	% Share	US\$ Mn	% Share	US\$ Mn	% Share
Total	42,191	100.0	14,096	100.0	56,290	100.0
Poland	14,346	34.0	2,748	19.5	17,094	30.4
Czech Republic	8,227	19.5	2,784	19.8	11,011	19.6
Hungary	5,198	12.3	2,873	20.4	8,071	14.3
Slovakia	2,794	6.6	2,237	15.9	5,032	8.9
Romania	3,186	7.6	1,299	9.2	4,486	8.0
Slovenia	2,094	5.0	290	2.1	2,383	4.2
Bulgaria	1,044	2.5	756	5.4	1,800	3.2
Lithuania	1,211	2.9	140	1.0	1,351	2.4
Estonia	954	2.3	235	1.7	1,190	2.1
Latvia	1,023	2.4	144	1.0	1,168	2.1
Croatia	986	2.3	112	0.8	1,098	2.0
Albania	430	1.0	129	0.9	559	1.0
Serbia	416	1.0	134	1.0	550	1.0
Macedonia	86	0.2	137	1.0	223	0.4
Montenegro	134	0.3	24	0.2	159	0.3
Bosnia & Herzegovina	62	0.1	54	0.4	115	0.2

Source: China Customs

The OBOR program is expected to provide new opportunities to widen and deepen trade and investment co-operation between China and the CEECs, moving from being export destinations to becoming investment partners in production, technology, finance and infrastructure development.

The consequences of figures showing the highest OBOR related investments and initiatives very the fact that it is the V4 group that stands for Eastern Central Europe among the so called Central Eastern European Countries³⁰ chosen by the Chinese economic expansion.

³⁰ The phrase Central Eastern European countries is not correct, however, because in grammatical and geographical sense Central Eastern Europe means the central part of Eastern Europe somewhere between Moscow and Novgorod in the heart of the vast Eastern European Plain. The correct phrase is Eastern Central Europe if the eastern part of Central Europe is meant or mentioned.

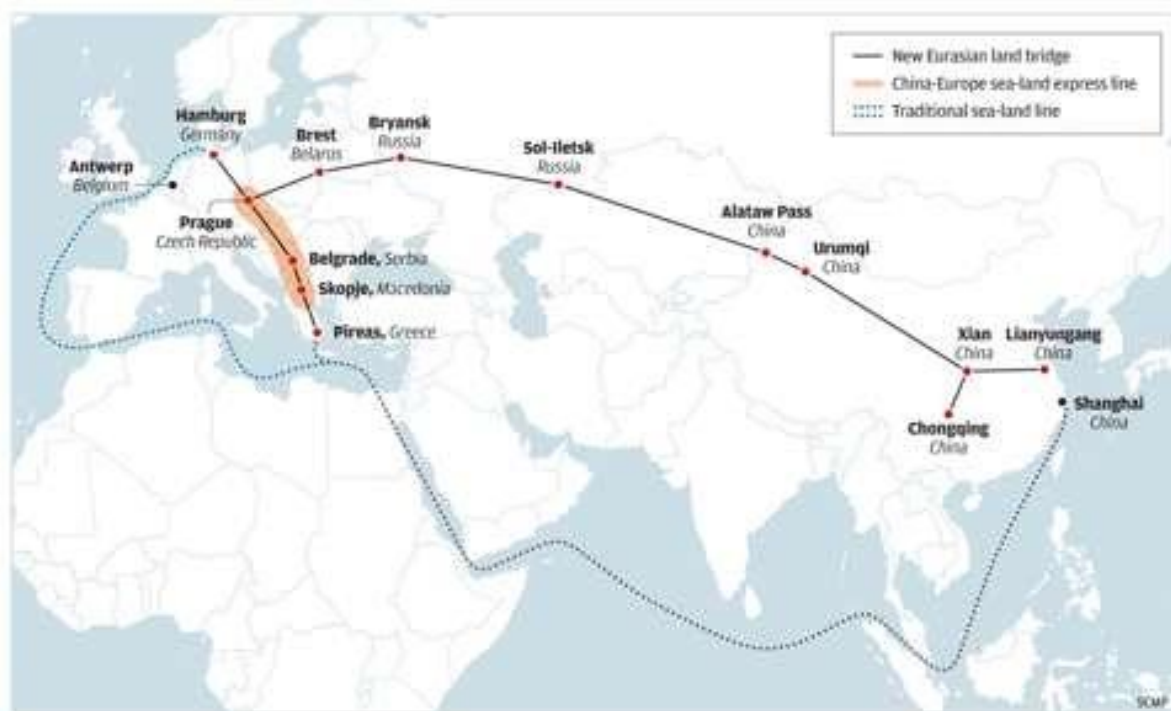


Figure 25. China's continental and maritime OBORs.
 (Source: www.scmp.com/business/global-economy)

Figure 25 shows the main directions of the OBOR. The one crossing Asia via Central Asia and Russia goes to Brest (Poland) when reaching Central Europe. The maritime one has its traditional way round Europe, but there is the so called 'Sea-Land Express' route from the South European port, Piraeus to Skopje (North Macedonia), Beograd (Serbia) and arriving to Central Europe in Budapest (Hungary) and going on towards Prague to reach Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium in Western Europe.

The nature of the Chinese OBOR investments and trade in Eastern Central Europe offers a good possibility to characterize Central European economy, too.

The most promising investments rely on electronics in which manufacturing outsourcing clusters are becoming increasingly prominent in the face of rising production costs in other farther away located production bases and in the light of a greater need for proximity to key markets and better inventory management.

To meet this demand, Hungary has been specialising in the production of transport vehicles since Soviet times, and boasts a long history of motor vehicle parts and electronics manufacturing. Hungary is the largest electronics producer among the CEECs, representing some 30% of the region's total electronics output. Meanwhile, the Czech Republic is often regarded as the most successful CEE country in terms of attracting foreign direct investment, thanks to its strong automotive cluster. Slovakia has also invested in motor manufacturing, while

Poland has the largest domestic market and ranks high in terms of manufacturing and automation.

While most, if not all, of the CEECs are supporters of the OBOR, some have shown greater participation than others. Poland, with its well-developed industrial market and logistical importance (an estimated 25% of all road transport in Europe is operated by Polish companies) has not only established a strategic partnership with China, but is also a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the only CEEC having joined the Bank so far.

As an important route linking Asia and Western Europe in the OBOR, in 2013 a high-speed railway started operating from Chengdu, in Southwest China, to Łódź, in Poland. The freight train takes only 10-12 days to ship products from China to Poland, twice as fast as sea transport. Goods arriving in Łódź can then be transported to warehouses or customers via Europe's rail and road networks. Railway lines for container trains have also opened up in 16 Chinese mainland cities, heading to 12 European CEE cities including Łódź in Poland, Pardubice in the Czech Republic and Košice in Slovakia.

Hungary was the first European country to sign a memorandum of understanding on OBOR co-operation with the Chinese mainland, and has also signed deals to build a high-speed rail line between Budapest, its capital, and Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. With the line expected to be completed in 2020, the 85% Chinese-financed project will shorten the travel time between the two capitals from 8 hours to 3. And its starting point will be in Piraeus, the Greek terminal port of the maritime New Silk Road.

In the Balkan Peninsula, Serbia became China's first strategic partner among the CEECs, in 2009. This relationship is also focused on economic co-operation under the OBOR. As it has been mentioned previously, the further extension of the Budapest-Belgrade high-speed rail line to Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, and to Athens, the capital of Greece, will give China-bound freight trains another alternative to gain access to the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. To achieve better synergy, China's state-owned shipping giant COSCO has recently acquired a majority stake in the Piraeus Port Authority, which complements the 35-year concession to operate piers at Piraeus port. As the closest port in the Northern Mediterranean to the Suez Canal, Piraeus is not only one of the largest ports in the Mediterranean, but a strategic trans-shipment hub for Asian exports to Europe. China's exports could reach Germany, for example, seven to 11 days earlier thanks to the above mentioned high-speed rail connection.

As it can be concluded from the above, the final integration of Eastern Central Europe to the highly developed western Central Europe and West Europe needed an impact produced by a global competitor of the European Union i.e. China. 15 years since the 10 mainly Central European countries joined the EU have not been

enough to achieve a catching up. German, French, English economic interests resulted in purchasing markets and cheap labour in Eastern Central Europe and the investments were lagging behind. Now, the geographic gateway potential of the Eastern Central European region is going to be evaluated by the Chinese economic expansion.

The Chinese plan to invest on the construction and upgrading of port facilities in the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas, with a focus on production capacity cooperation among ports and industrial and logistic parks along the coastal areas heading into the EU. Thus the core region of Central Europe is going to enjoy the benefits of the economic gateway position at last: Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic as first stage logistic distribution site.

Besides the economic geographical reasons given above, social geographical facts can also strengthen the V4 countries position as the ‘Heartland’ of Central Europe. The population coherence of these nation states holds them together in refusing the migration policy of the EU and the United Nations alike. See Figure 26 showing the result in their national composition.

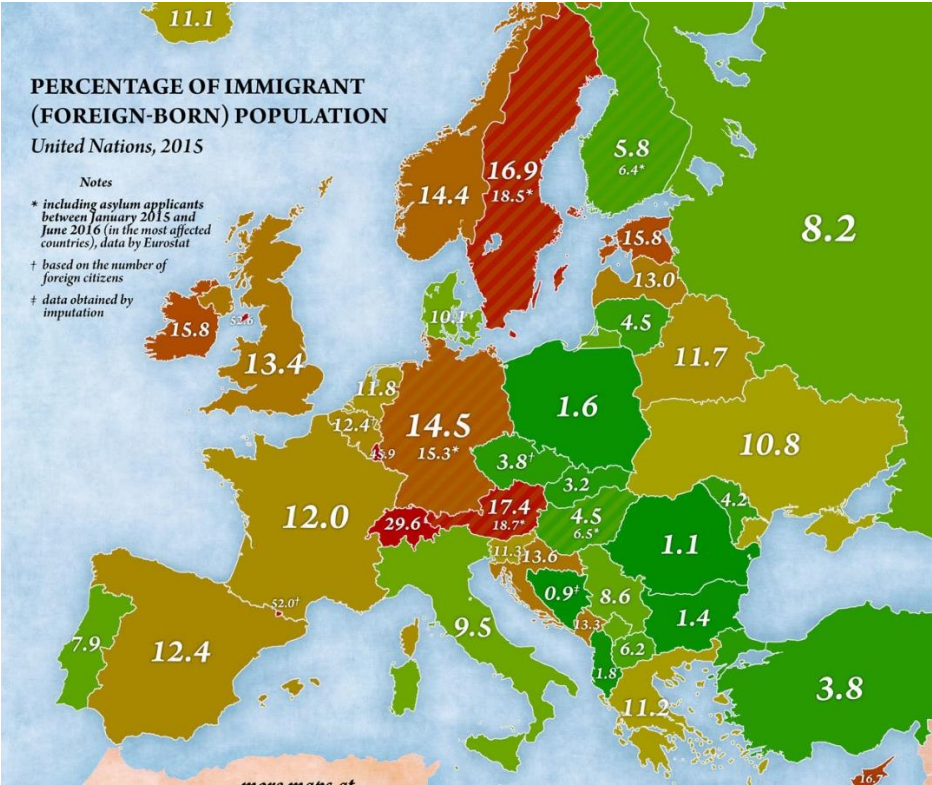
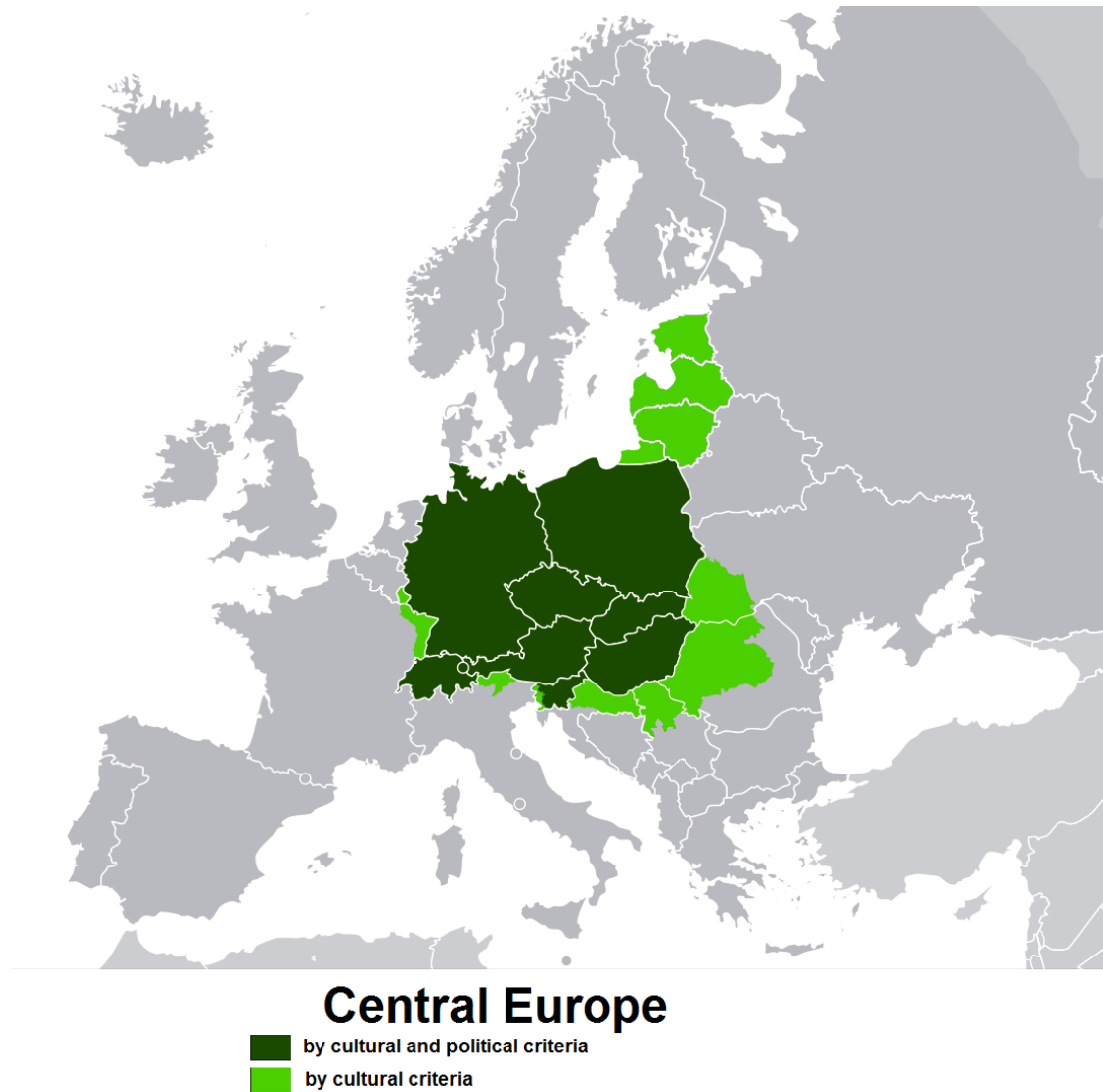


Figure 26. The percentage of the immigrant (foreign-born) population shows a strong coherence in Eastern Central European countries with 1.6 % in Poland, 3.2 % in Slovakia, 3.8 % in the Czech Republic and 4.5 % in Hungary, though this latter comes from Hungarian nationality immigrants from Romania, Serbia and Ukraine, so it does not affect national homogeneity in Hungary, like it does in Austria and Germany. (Source: World Economic Forum 2016)

The political geographical and cultural geographical status of the countries situated in the Central European physical geographical region also show the V4 countries as the original ‘trustees’ of Central Europe with their total territory (see Figure 27).³¹



*Figure 27. The cultural and political definition of Central Europe
(Source: Reddit 2018)*

³¹ Austria and Switzerland, though they can also be regarded as being situated in Western Central Europe, have to be ranked along with Germany as belonging rather to West Europe in economic geographic aspect.

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