

Central Europe's Limits in the North and the South*

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INTRODUCTION

For the past two decades, I have made modern Central Europe my main subject of inquiry and my interdisciplinary field of research. Both afford a versatile framework within which I have probed into the mechanisms, dynamics, and history of language politics. Now, the time has come for me to move on to other subjects of research. But it would be inappropriate if I took leave of Central Europe without a suitable valediction, which I hope this essay offers.

The entangled history of Central Europe and its often mutually contradictory national historiographies (or rather national master narratives) call into question the region itself. Hence, it is of methodological import to reflect on the history of the concept of Central Europe and its (ab)uses. Obviously, a thorough treatment would require at least a small monograph. Thus, I have decided to focus on an aspect that authors dealing with Central Europe tend to neglect, namely, the region's confines in the north and south.

Until now, most authorities on the subject have focused on Central Europe's western and eastern limits. It was the spatially east-west character of the Cold War that conditioned this discussion.¹ Yet, at present, the new postcommunist spatial axis of tensions and confrontation extends between the rich Global North and the poor Global South. Globalization has overridden the spatial character of the postwar confrontation between the West and the Soviet Bloc.² Furthermore, the concept of Central Europe or another region with no northern or southern boundaries defined strikes as being deficient. However, so as not to exclude uninitiated readers with an interest in the topic, I foreground

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1 Tamas Szentes, "East-West and North-South Relations," *IDS Bulletin* 16:4 (1985), pp. 39–43.

2 R. R. Daniel, "The North-South Divide and the Compulsions for the 21st Century," *Current Science* 77:6 (1999), pp. 770–774.

the discussion against a brief historical overview of how Europe and its main regional divisions were forged and morphed during the past three centuries.

FROM NORTHERN TO EASTERN EUROPE

In the early twenty-first century, the widely accepted convention is to construe Europe as consisting of Western Europe, Central Europe, and Eastern Europe. Some would add to this tripartite division the subdivisions of Northern Europe for Scandinavia and Southeastern Europe for the Balkans. Yet, in most cases, these two regions are seen as subsets of the three “basic areas” in the aforementioned tripartite division of the continent. However, prior to the fall of communism and the end of the Cold War, the bipartite division of the continent prevailed, namely, into Western Europe and Eastern Europe. The West-East standoff between the United States-led “Free World” and the Soviet Bloc underwrote this Manichean-like dualist split of Europe both in politics and conceptualizations.

Certainly, there is nothing “natural,” “predestined,” or “God-given” in how a certain territory is defined and subdivided for the sake of classification and spatial orientation. It is humans and their groups who invent such definitional and classificatory schemata,³ including the mathematicized one of “modern” (meaning, Western-style) cartography itself.⁴ They project this or that schema onto geographical space (territorium), or rather the ecumene, in other words, the inhabited world or land(mass). Geographers would say that, in this essentially language-based act of symbolical appropriation, which is what naming is, humans “domesticate” pre-human (natural) territorium and overhaul it into (civilized, de-naturalized) territory.⁵ Such human-inflected or even -dominated geographical space is construed, classified, and used by people in accordance with their needs and wishes. Different human groups may differ in their predilection for schemata of this kind that obtain in a given period, and such preferences change with time.⁶

3 Christian Grataloup, *L'invention des continents. Comment l'Europe a découpé le Monde* (Paris: Larousse, 2009).

4 Alfred W. Crosby, *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

5 Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 13–14, 231–232; Margaret Moore, *A Political Theory of Territory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 15.

6 Olga Krasnikova, “Osnovnye napravleniia razvitiia etnicheskogo kartografirovaniia v Rossii XIX – nachala XX vv.,” in Indrek Iats [Jääts] and Erki Tammiksaar, eds., *Proniknovenie i primenenie diskursa natsional'nosti v Rossii i SSSR v kontse XVIII – pervoi polovine XX vv.* (Tartu: Estonskii natsionalnyi muzei [Eesti Rahva Muuseum], 2011), pp. 29–60; Gerard Toal, “Geopolitical Culture, Ethnoschematization and Fantasy: Regarding Seegel’s Account of the Mapping of East Central European Lands,” *Nationalities Papers* 42:3 (2014), pp. 548–551.

Before 1989, the continent of Europe was seen as consisting of democratic and capitalist Western Europe and communist Eastern Europe, which was wed to centrally planned economy and totalitarian in governance. Yet, the “vertical” north-to-south line of division in these two—pre- and post-1989—schemata has been permanently present in the scholarly and political discourse since the turn of the nineteenth century.⁷ It was only then that the concept of Eastern Europe began to emerge, especially in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna (1815). The term “Eastern Europe” was most widely attested (as *Osteuropa*) in German-language works on history⁸ and geography.⁹ During the 1830s and 1840s, it began featuring in the titles of books and maps,¹⁰ and from German-language literature this term spread to books in other languages, for instance, Czech.¹¹

Increasingly, the new schema was endowed with a prejudiced view of Eastern Europe, as evidenced by the oft-repeated saying of various formulations that the “Orient” or “Asia” begins immediately outside Vienna on the route to Budapest. This saying entered public discourse in the 1860s and since then has been incorrectly attributed to Chancellor of the Austrian Empire Klemens von Metternich.¹² Subsequently, it became “normal” to speak of Western and Eastern Europe. But earlier, educated Europeans saw their continent in light of the classicist tradition of Claudius Ptolemy’s *Geography*. In this second-century work, composed in Greek in the Roman city of Alexandria located on northern Egypt’s Mediterranean coast, the scholar presented this continent as bisected by the Alps and the Carpathians into what was later construed as Southern Europe and Northern Europe.

Ptolemy gazed at Europe from the eastern Mediterranean, or in other words, from his hometown of Alexandria. For the geographer, the (Roman)

7 Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

8 Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Weltgeschichte* (Vol 2: Zweiter Theil: welcher die neuere Geschichte von der Völkerwanderung bis in das zweite Jahrzehend des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts enthält) (Reutlingen: J. J. Mäcken’schen Buchhandlung, 1819), p. 10.

9 Heinrich Berghaus, *Die ersten Elemente der Erdbeschreibung für den Gebrauch des Schülers in den untern Lehrklassen auf Gymnasien, polytechnischen und Kriegs-Schulen* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1830), p. 125.

10 Johann V. Kutscheit, Hermann Delius, and Traugott Trautwein, “Karte von Süd-Osteuropa im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert. (Map 13),” in Johann Valerius Kutscheit and Traugott Trautwein, eds., *Hand-Atlas der Geographie und Geschichte des Mittel-Alters in 14 Karten und 7 Kartons* (Berlin: T. Trautwein’sche Buch- und Musikalien-Handlung, 1847); Friedrich Stüwe, *Die Handelszüge der Araber unter den Abbassiden durch Afrika, Asien und Osteuropa* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1836).

11 Karel Wladislaw Zap, *Zrcadlo života na východní Evropě* (Prague: Jan Bohumír Calve, 1843).

12 Gerald Kriehhofer, “‘Der Balkan beginnt am Rennweg.’ Klemens Wenzel Fürst Metternich (angeblich),” *Zitatforschung* 16.08.2019, <https://falschzitate.blogspot.com/2019/08/der-balkan-beginnt-am-rennweg.html> (Accessed: Jun 22, 2022).

center of the (classical) world was then placed in this zone that extended between the old and declining capital of Rome and the new imperial capital of Constantinople (Istanbul). From the perspective of stereotypes and preconceptions, Northern Europe was more distant and only partly under Roman control. Hence, for Ptolemy and his epigones, it was a “land of barbarians.” In the early fourth century, when the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as its sole state religion, the “holy city” of Jerusalem was elevated to the status of the moral-cum-spatial center of the (Judeo-Graeco-Roman) world. By then, practically all of Southern Europe had been already Christian-ized, or, in modern supremacist vocabulary, “civilized.” At the same time, most of Northern Europe remained unconquered by Rome (and at times was lost or abandoned by the retreating Roman legions) and loyal to specific local (non-scriptural) religions. Hence, from the Christian-Roman point of view, Northern Europe’s inhabitants were “pagans.” It was a novel Christian label for “barbarians.”

The Ptolemaic division of the “Old Continent”¹³ (Europe) into Southern Europe and Northern Europe persisted through the eighteenth century, as amply illustrated by the name of the Great Northern War waged in 1700-1721. This protracted conflict was played out mainly between Muscovy (Russia) and Sweden on the territory of Poland-Lithuania, also with the participation of Britain, Denmark-Norway, Saxony, or the Crimean Khanate. All the main belligerents were located north of the Alps and the Carpathians, and the vast majority of military operations took place there, that is, in Northern Europe, as the participants saw it.¹⁴

Muscovy’s military success in this conflict officially remodeled the country into the Russian Empire in 1721. In quest to make his realm into a European power, in 1712, Tsar Peter moved the Muscovian capital from the “Asiatic” city of Moscow to “European” St Petersburg. In the terms of Ptolemy’s *Geography*, Moscow lay (almost) in Asia, because it was located directly north of the River Tanais (Don), traditionally seen as the dividing line between Europe and Asia. In the course of the Great Northern War, in 1709, Swedish officer Philip Johan von Strahlenberg fell into Muscovian captivity. As a prisoner of war, for long years, Strahlenberg researched Siberia before he was permitted to return to

13 The collocation “Old Continent” for referring to Europe is connected to the rise of the connected expressions “Old World” and “New World” that coalesced following the (Western) European invasion (“discovery”) of the two Americas (or the New World).

14 Cf. A. G. J. Hallstén, *Lärobok i geografi för elementar-läroverket* (Helsingfors / Helsinki: O`h-manska bokhandelns fo`rlag, 1853), p. 166; E[gor] Konstantinovich, *Uchebnaia kniga istorii Gosudarstva Rossiiskago* (Part 2: zakliuchaiushchaia sredniuu i novuiu istoriiu Gosudarstva Rossiiskago) (St Petersburg: V` tipografii I. Glazunova, 1820), p. 236; Henri Philippe de Limiers, *Histoire De Suede Sous Le Regne De Charles XII. O`u l`on voit aussi les Révolutions arrivées en differens tems dans ce Royaume; Toute La Guerre Du Nord* (Amsterdam: Chez les Jansons à Waesberge [Janssonius Van Waesberge Officina], 1721); James Roberts, *The Interest of England in the War of the North* (London: Printed for J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane, 1715).

Stockholm in 1723. In his main geographic work published seven years later, the geographer proposed to move Europe's eastern boundary from the Don to the Volga and the Ural Mountains.¹⁵ Fifteen years later, the new tentative eastern border of Europe was adopted in an important Russian atlas of the empire.¹⁶ Thanks to this alteration, the historical and demographic core of the Russian Empire located in Moscow and its vicinity was placed squarely within a re-defined and enlarged Europe, though still in the continent's easternmost zone.

A century later, during the Napoleonic Wars, the most crucial military clashes took place along the west-to-east axis. In the west, France conquered the Iberian powers of Spain and Portugal, despite Britain's assistance. On the other hand, in the east, the French armies engaged in the bloodiest and most long-lasting military operations against the Austrian Empire, Prussia, and finally Russia. The defeat of Napoleon's invasion of Russia finally entailed, in 1814, the arrival of the Russian occupying troops in Paris. The politics of conducting continent-wide wars in Europe, alongside that of statehood destruction and creation, decisively changed in spatial terms from the north-south to the west-east axis between the Great Northern War and the Congress of Vienna. By 1815, the geopolitical division of the continent into Western Europe and Eastern Europe had become a political fact. In these very terms, European politicians and writers began to frame their analysis and thinking about politics and a host of other subjects pertaining to this continent, as long as they needed such "spatialization." With time, an ethnolinguistic-cum-racist prejudice came to underpin this new division, associating Western Europe with the "civilized" Romance and Germanic nations, while identifying Eastern Europe with the "backward" Slavic and Finno-Ugric nations.¹⁷

This emerging stereotype of "two radically opposed Europes" was further tinted with colonial-like prejudice, as observed in the widespread use of the term "Orient" for much of the southern half of Eastern Europe, or even for the entire region.¹⁸ This was so because, until the eighteenth century, the lands of

15 Philip Johan von Strahlenberg, *Das Nord- und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia* (Stockholm: In Verlegung des Autoris, 1730), pp. 105–106.

16 "Aziia" [map] in *Atlas'' Rossiiskoi* (St Petersburg: Imperatorska akademii nauk'', 1745). [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia_Map_1745_\(rus\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia_Map_1745_(rus).jpg) (Accessed: Jun 19, 2022).

17 Cf. Gustav Friedrich Klemm, *Allgemeine Cultur-Geschichte der Menschheit* (Vol 9: Das christliche Westeuropa, oder die germanisch-romanischen Völker) (Leipzig: Teubner, 1851); Gustav Friedrich Klemm, *Allgemeine Cultur-Geschichte der Menschheit* (Vol 2: Das christliche Osteuropa, oder die slawisch-finnischen Völker) (Leipzig: Teubner, 1852).

18 S. G. Goodrich, *A History of All Nations, from the Earliest Periods to the Present Time; or, Universal History: In which the History of Every Nation, Ancient and Modern, is Separately Given* (Auburn: J. C. Derby and N. C. Miller, 1851), p. 989; Henry Howe, *The Travels and Adventures of Celebrated Travelers in the Principal Countries of the Globe* (Cincinnati OH: Henry Howe, 1854), p. 691.

the Ottoman Empire extended to what today is Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, and southern Ukraine.¹⁹ During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Ottomans lost most of these areas to Russia, the Habsburgs, and the newly founded Christian nation-states in the Balkans. After the Congress of Berlin (1878), the erstwhile designation “Turkey-in-Europe” gave way to the new labels of “Balkans” and “Southeastern Europe.”²⁰ But the gaze of Western Europe remained fixated, Orient remained Orient, irrespective of which state—Christian or Muslim—actually took control of it.²¹ Obviously, Western Europeans in the old and new imperial capitals of Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris, or Rome saw themselves as more “civilized” than those “Oriental” Eastern Europeans.²²

With the territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire to Russia becoming increasingly more extensive than those to the Habsburgs, the concept of Eastern Europe, including its prejudiced connotations, was gradually equated with the Russian Empire. In the mid-nineteenth century, many Western European intellectuals and journalists saw Eastern Europe as the European section of the Russian Empire.²³ This predilection made Eastern Europe “unpleasantly Asiatic,” since the tsarist empire also included vast colonial possessions in (Northern and Central) Asia.²⁴

CENTRAL EUROPE: CONCEPT INVENTION

The geographical and cultural concept of Central Europe, or *Mittleuropa*, appeared at the turn of the nineteenth century, especially in German-language literature and cartography.²⁵ In the traditional division of the continent into

19 Martyn C. Rady, *The Middle Kingdoms: A New History of Central Europe* (New York: Basic Books, an imprint of Hachette, 2023), chapter 15.

20 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 27–28.

21 Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers* (London: Saqi in association with the Bosnian Institute, 2004).

22 Ana Foteva, *Do the Balkans Begin in Vienna? The Geopolitical and Imaginary Borders Between the Balkans and Europe* (Ser: Austrian Culture, vol. 47) (New York: Peter Lang, 2014); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

23 [Charles Frederick Henningsen], *Eastern Europe and the Emperor Nicholas* [translated from the German] (London: T. C. Newby, 1846).

24 Henry Arthur Tilley, *Eastern Europe and Western Asia: Political and Social Sketches on Russia, Greece, and Syria in 1861 - 2 - 3* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1864).

25 “Mittleuropa, Westeuropa, Osteuropa, Nordeuropa, Südeuropa: 1700–1950,” Ngram Viewer 21.07.2022, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Mittleuropa%2CWesteuropa%2COsteuropa%2CNordeuropa%2CSüdeuropa&year_start=1700&year_end=1950&corpus=31&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Jul 21, 2022).

Northern and Southern Europe,²⁶ Central Europe was at times defined as the Ottoman possessions in Europe (including the Crimean Khanate, then known as “Little Tartary”), Transylvania and Hungary (recently retaken by the Habsburgs from the Ottomans), “Germany” (that is, the Holy Roman Empire), the Low Countries, Switzerland, and France.²⁷ Subsequently, the dramatic political changes brought about by the Napoleonic Wars impacted on the German-language thinking on Central Europe. The geographical scope of this term was gradually limited to the Austrian Empire (founded in 1804), Prussia, and the other polities that emerged from the Holy Roman Empire, officially dissolved in 1806, and in 1815 replaced with the German Confederation. At the same time, what today is known as Eastern Europe was referred to as “Northern and Eastern Europe,” while the concomitant sobriquet “Western and Southern Europe” was later shortened to the present-day term “Western Europe.”²⁸ The shift from the northern-southern to a western-eastern division of Europe stabilized, with the additional central place tentatively reserved for the Holy Roman Empire and its successor states and territories. Meanwhile, *Mittleuropa* continued to be rendered in English as “Middle Europe.”²⁹

In the German-language public discourse, the occurrence of the term *Mittleuropa* spiked during the 1860s.³⁰ This decade was marked by dramatic changes in this region, namely, the “German-German” war between Prussia and Austria, the dissolution of the German Confederation, the overhauling of the Austrian Empire into Austria-Hungary, and the founding of the first-ever ethnolinguistic nation-states of Italy and Germany. The previously scholarly and geographic concept of Central Europe increasingly coalesced into a political concept. Journalists and politicians began to use it for commenting on the political, economic, and social issues in this region.

During the Great War, this political concept of Central Europe, which was still rather vague in spatial terms, was employed for underpinning the Central

26 “Mittleuropa, Westeuropa, Osteuropa, Nordeuropa, Südeuropa: 1770–1800,” Ngram Viewer 21.07.2022, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Mittleuropa%2CWesteuropa%2COsteuropa%2CNordeuropa%2CSüdeuropa&year_start=1770&year_end=1800&corpus=31&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Jul 21, 2022).

27 Johann Georg Hager, *Geographischer Büchersaal, zum Nutzen und Vergnügen eröffnet* (Vol. 3) (Chemnitz: Stöbel und Putscher, 1778), p. 220.

28 Georg Hassel, *Statistischer Umriss der sämtlichen Europäischen staaten. Hinsicht ihrer Grösse, Bevölkerung kulturverhältnisse, Handlung, Finanz und militärverfassung, und ihrer ausser-europäischen Besitzungen* (Braunschweig: F. Vieweg, 1805), p. V.

29 “Statistical View of All the States of Europe,” in *The Literary Panorama* (vol. 1) (London: Printed by Cox, Son, and Baylis, Great Queen-street, For C. Taylor, No. 108, Hatton Garden, Holborn, 1807), pp. 309–311.

30 “Mittleuropa, Westeuropa, Osteuropa, Nordeuropa, Südeuropa: 1815–1950,” Ngram Viewer 21.07.2022, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Mittleuropa%2CWesteuropa%2COsteuropa%2CNordeuropa%2CSüdeuropa&year_start=1815&year_end=1950&corpus=31&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Jul 21, 2022).

Powers' geopolitical project of *Mittleuropa*. The unofficial moniker "Central Powers" (*Mittelmächte*) for allied Germany and Austria-Hungary was derived at the war's beginning from the region's name.³¹ This geopolitical effort found its scholarly and political expression in Friedrich Naumann's 1915 monograph *Mittleuropa*.³² The work was swiftly translated into numerous languages, for instance into French,³³ Hungarian,³⁴ English,³⁵ Russian,³⁶ and Italian.³⁷ Later, Naumann added separately to the concept of Central Europe the idea of it being a block of political and economic cooperation with the Central Powers at its heart, also in relation to Berlin and Vienna's Balkan ally of Bulgaria.³⁸ In a separate publication, Naumann expounded his views on a future Poland in the context of *Mittleuropa*. The plan was to construct this state from some lands that the Central Powers had already seized from Russia.³⁹

The postwar settlement, as symbolized by the Versailles Treaty and the related minorities treaties system, dashed the prospects of such a Central European bloc led by Germany and Austria-Hungary. These Western impositions also fractured the region and infantilized it, making it dependent on Western Europe's good will and whims.⁴⁰ Yet, the Allies took note of *Mittleuropa*. For instance, in English-language publications, by the turn of the 1920s, the form "Central Europe" decisively replaced the earlier widespread alternative collocation "Middle Europe." At the same time, the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent rise of the anti-Western Soviet Union led to a spike in the use of the term "Eastern Europe." However, the wartime Allies' attention zoomed in on Germany and Austria, due to the rise of fascist and authoritarian regimes across Central Europe during the 1930s that threatened

31 Casimir Hermann Baer, *Der Völkerkrieg eine Chronik der Ereignisse seit dem 1. Juli 1914. Mit sämtlichen amtlichen Kundgebungen der Mittelmächte, ergänzt durch alle wichtigeren Meldungen der Entente-Staaten und die wertvollsten zeitgenössischen Berichte* (Vol. 1) (Stuttgart: Hoffmann, 1914); "Mittelmächte: 1900-2000," Ngram Viewer 09.08.2022, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Mittelm%C3%A4chte&year_start=1900&year_end=2000&corpus=31&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Aug 9, 2022).

32 Friedrich Naumann, *Mittleuropa* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1915).

33 Friedrich Naumann, *L'Europe centrale* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1916).

34 Frigyes [=Friedrich] Naumann, *Középeurópa* [translated by Andorne Kircz] (Budapest: Politzer Zsigmond és fia, 1916).

35 Friedrich Naumann, *Central Europe* [translated by Christabel Margaret Iles Meredith] (London: P. S. King, 1917).

36 Fridrikh Nauman [=Friedrich Naumann], *Sredinnaia Evropa (Mittleuropa)* [translated by V. Ia. von der Flita] (Petrograd [St Petersburg]: Ogni, 1918).

37 Friedrich Naumann, *Mittleuropa* [translated by Gino Luzzatto] (Bari: Laterza, 1918–1919).

38 Friedrich Naumann, *Bulgarien und Mittleuropa* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1916).

39 Friedrich Naumann, Eugen Schiffer, and Ernst Jäckh, *Mittleuropa und Polen. Denkschrift des Arbeitsausschusses für Mittleuropa, dem Herrn Reichskanzler überreicht am 27. Mai 1917* (Ser: Schriften Polen und Mittleuropa betreffend, vol. 1) (NP: NP, 1917).

40 Jennifer Jackson Preece, *National Minorities and the European Nation-States System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 67–94.

democracy in the region and Western Europe. Western Europe's focus shifted to "Eastern Europe," as equated with the Soviet Union's European section, only after the Kremlin contracted a fateful alliance with Berlin in 1939.

Both totalitarian powers split Central Europe between Germany and the Soviet Union. Two years later, in 1941, the period of nazi-communist friendship and cooperation between Berlin and Moscow came to an abrupt end, when Hitler's Third Reich attacked its staunch Soviet ally. Stalin had no choice but to throw Moscow's lot in with the anti-communist and anti-totalitarian Western Allies. Regarding the terminology under scrutiny, these events brought about a decline in the use of the term "Central Europe" in favor of the tightly related collocations Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Both became the staple expressions of politics, news, and scholarly discourse during the Cold War, due to the postwar Iron Curtain-style division of Europe, which underpinned the East-West confrontation.⁴¹ At the same time, the use of the term "Southeastern Europe" also declined,⁴² while Greece came to be seen as part of Western Europe.⁴³

SCHOLARS AND CENTRAL EUROPE

In the interwar period, apart from being used as a framework for political projects, the concept of Central Europe evolved into a reference for scholarly research, especially in the social sciences.⁴⁴ Following World War II, the Cold War division of the Old Continent into Eastern Europe and Western Europe

41 "Middle Europe,Central Europe,Eastern Europe,Western Europe: 1800-1990," Ngram Viewer 21.07.2022, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Middle+Europe%2CCentral+Europe%2CEastern+Europe%2C+Western+Europe&year_start=1800&year_end=1990&corpus=26&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2CMiddle%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CCentral%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CEastern%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CWestern%20Europe%3B%2Cc0#t1%3B%2CMiddle%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CCentral%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CEastern%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CWestern%20Europe%3B%2Cc0 (Accessed: Jul 21, 2022).

42 "Southeastern Europe: 1800-2019," Ngram Viewer 13.06.2023, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Southeastern+Europe&year_start=1800&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Jun 13, 2023).

43 Forouz Jowkar, *Social Change and the Transformation of Women's Roles in Crete: The Case of Ypseliotes Weavers* [PhD dissertation] (Davis CA: University of California, 1991), p. 67.

44 Victor Bauer, *Zentraleuropa, ein lebendiger Organismus* (Brünn [Brno, Czechoslovakia] and Leipzig: Verlag Friedrich Irrgang, 1936); Hans F. Helmolt, *Weltgeschichte* [edited by Armin Tille with the cooperation of Erwin von Baeklz] (Vol. 5: Italien, Mitteleuropa) (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1920); Geoffrey McKay Morant, *The Races of Central Europe: A Footnote to History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1939); *Selfhelp in Action: A Report on the Activities of the Selfhelp for German Emigres* (New York: Selfhelp of Emigres from Central Europe, 1938-1939).

mostly did away with the use of the concept of Central Europe for political, journalistic, or scholarly ends. Yet, in North America during the 1970s, émigré scholars (many of Jewish background, including Holocaust survivors) from Central Europe revived this concept for research in the form of “East-Central Europe” (also used without the hyphen), as most amply illustrated by the famous book series *A History of East Central Europe*.⁴⁵ They drew on the German neologism *Ostmitteleuropa*, which emerged during the last years of the Great War for denoting ethnically non-German(ic) parts of Central Europe.⁴⁶ Beginning in the 1930s, this term came to reference the subject matter of research for practitioners of the then-novel field of *Ostforschung* (“the study of the East”).⁴⁷ During World War II, this term also made its first early appearance in English.⁴⁸

The concept of Central Europe was back in the West, but now firmly qualified with the adjective “East.” This qualification signaled that after 1945 most of Central Europe found itself under Soviet control. In political terms, the region constituted then part of communist and totalitarian Eastern Europe. Central Europe became a sub-region of, or was actually “dissolved” into, communist Eastern Europe. According to Polish émigré historian of Austro-Hungarian extraction Oskar Halecki, neither Germany nor Austria could share the same Central Europe with the region’s Slavs and other non-Germans. Perhaps, his view on this matter was influenced by the fact that the former were the perpetrators, while the latter were victims during World War II. Halecki proposed to use the term “East Central Europe” for the non-German(ic) half of the region, while suggesting the appellation West Central Europe for the Germanic one.⁴⁹ In his argument, however, the historian did not take note of Central Europe’s Jews, or Yiddishland, defined through culture created in the Germanic language of Yiddish across East Central Europe. It was a sign of continuing, but rarely acknowledged, antisemitism in postwar Europe.

45 Peter F. Sugar and Donald Warren Treadgold, eds., *A History of East Central Europe* [NB: Book series, 8 volumes of the planned 10 published; the series was discontinued after the demise of the editors, Treadgold in 1994 and Sugar in 1999] (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 1974–2001).

46 Otto Hoetzsch, *Der Krieg und die große Politik* (Vol. 3: *Bis zum deutsch-russischen Waffenstillstand*) (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1918), p. 635.

47 “Ostmitteleuropa, Ostforschung: 1900–2019,” Ngram Viewer 14.06.2023, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Ostmitteleuropa%2COstforschung&year_start=1900&year_end=2019&corpus=de-2019&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Jun 14, 2023).

48 Oskar Halecki, “East Central Europe in Postwar Organization,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 228 (1943), pp. 52–59.

49 Oscar [=Oskar] Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1950), chapter 7.

Hungarian lawyer and politician István Bibó largely agreed with Halecki's schema in his own 1946 essay.⁵⁰ The text became better known across Europe only during the 1980s, thanks to a French translation.⁵¹ Bibó's main criticism of and simultaneously the working definition of Central Europe was his negative view of "small" ethnolinguistic nation-states that proliferated across this region, especially after 1918, in place of the former "large" empires.⁵² He associated the supposedly diminutive size of these national polities with economic problems and political instability that, among others, paved the way for authoritarianism and totalitarianism during the interwar period. In a way, his opinion stemmed from the nineteenth-century German-language pejorative *Kleinstaaterei* (literally "disease of small states") developed for excoriating the supposed "excess" of small states observed in the Holy Roman Empire and across the Apennine Peninsula.⁵³ Bibó's argument, however, did not explain why then the "big" state of Imperial Russia morphed into the totalitarian Soviet Union and the relatively "large" interwar Germany into the Third Reich.

Drawing on Bibó's views, Hungarian historian Jenő Szűcs researched a thorough essay on "three Europes." He discussed numerous phenomena and historical developments from antiquity to the modern period, and employed these for defining Western, Central, and Eastern Europe. The most convincing appears to be Szűcs's proposal to use the institution of serfdom for differentiating the continent's three sections. In the late Middle Ages, serfdom ended in Western Europe, but persisted in Central Europe until the mid-nineteenth century. On the other hand, it was only in the early modern period that serfdom was introduced to Eastern Europe (Russia), where some remnants of this system survived well until 1917.⁵⁴ Interestingly, these remnants, under new "modern" guises, were made into the socio-political foundations of Soviet totalitarianism and present-day Russian authoritarianism.⁵⁵ It must also be added that serfdom did not exist in the Ottoman Empire, which weakens

50 István Bibó, *A keleteurópai kisállamok nyomorúsága* (Ser: *Az Új Magyarország röpiratai*) (Budapest: Új Magyarország, 1946).

51 István Bibó, *Misère des petits Etats d'Europe de l'Est* [translated from the Hungarian by György Kassa] (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1986).

52 Alice Teichova, *Kleinstaaterei im Spannungsfeld der Großmächte. Wirtschaft und Politik in Mittel- und Südosteuropa in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Ser: *Sozial- und wirtschaftshistorische Studien*) (Munich: Oldenbourg-Verlag, 1988); Peter Vodopivec, "Srednja Evropa: mit ali (tudi) stvarnost?" *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 43:2 (2003), pp. 7–28.

53 Joachim Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire (1493–1806)* (Vol. 2: *From the Peace of Westphalia to the Dissolution of the Reich 1648–1806*) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 653.

54 Jenő Szűcs, "The Three Historical Regions of Europe: An Outline" [translated from the Hungarian by Julianna Parti], *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29:2–4 (1983), pp. 131–184.

55 Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London: Routledge, 1944).

Szűcs's argument, or allows us to talk about Southeastern Europe as a region in its own right.⁵⁶

When the Soviet Bloc was on its last legs during the 1980s, Czech (or Slovak) and French writer Milan Kundera (directly or indirectly referring to Friedrich Naumann's *Mitteleuropa*) gave the fullest and most widely known expression to the popular intimation of many intellectuals from the region that an unwilling Central Europe was forced into Soviet captivity, or even "raped." In his famous 1984 essay, published in the influential *New York Review of Books*, Kundera proposed that Central Europe was this part of the West (or Western Europe), which the East (that is, the Soviets) had kidnapped at the close of the Second World War.⁵⁷ This view and Kundera's politicized opinions on Russian literature led to an ill-tempered spat with Soviet émigré and US writer Joseph Brodsky. The latter ridiculed Kundera by propounding, in truly Russian imperial fashion and in line with the Russian-inflected imperial ideology of Eurasianism, that this rather insignificant and tiny region of Central Europe had irrevocably become part of Moscow's Eastern Europe, which in turn was none other than "Western Asia."⁵⁸

POSTCOMMUNISM

Be it in public or scholarly discourse, the term "West Central Europe" was practically never attested,⁵⁹ which made the qualification "East" in the collocation East Central Europe entirely superfluous.⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, following

56 Cf. Henry Graham Crocker, *The Situation in Southeastern Europe* (Washington DC: Byron S. Adams, 1909).

57 Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe" [translated from the French by Edmund White], *The New York Review of Books*, 26 Apr (1984), <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1984/04/26/the-tragedy-of-central-europe/> (Accessed: Jul 21, 2022).

58 Joseph Brodsky, "Why Milan Kundera is Wrong about Dostoyevsky," *The New York Times*, 17 Feb. (1985), <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/05/17/specials/kundera-brodsky.html> (Accessed: Jul 21, 2022).

59 Cf. Irwin Scollar, "Regional Groups in the Michelsberg Culture: A Study in the Middle Neolithic of West Central Europe," *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 25:12 (1959), pp. 52–134; "West Central Europe: Selected Coal, Iron and Steel Centers" 1944 [map] (Washington DC: United States Office of Strategic Services. Research and Analysis Branch, 1944), <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/oss-maps/catalog/hc141yf3093> (Accessed: Aug 8, 2022).

60 "Middle Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Western Europe: 1800–1990," Ngram Viewer 21.07.2022, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Middle+Europe%2CCentral+Europe%2CEastern+Europe%2C+Western+Europe&year_start=1800&year_end=1990&corpus=26&smoothing=3&direct_url=t1%3B%2CMiddle%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CCentral%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CEastern%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CWestern%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CMiddle%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CCentral%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CEastern%20Europe%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CWestern%20Europe%3B%2Cc0 (Accessed: Jul 21, 2022).

the fall of communism, alongside the breakups of the Soviet Bloc and the Soviet Union, the new period of postcommunist systemic transition in the region now freed from Soviet dominance heralded the universal adoption of the unqualified term "Central Europe." Quite symbolically, this process is illustrated by a small, yet significant, change in the title of the arguably now most popular reference on Central European history, namely, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* by Canadian historian of Rusyn origin Paul Robert Magocsi.

When this atlas came off the press for the first time in 1993, it was hailed as the long overdue Volume 1 of Sugar and Treadgold's *A History of East Central Europe*. Hence, the atlas's title informed the reader that the book covered East Central Europe.⁶¹ But, soon enough, the atlas's second and third editions⁶² dropped this qualification and its association with the book series. It became simply *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*. Although the term "East Central Europe" survives in some specialist usages and contexts,⁶³ it definitely lost the competition with "Central Europe."⁶⁴

In the 1990s, the freshly postcommunist member states of the defunct Soviet Bloc aspired to "return to Europe," that is, to Western Europe, and in other words, to the West. At the same time, this revived Central Europe that finally reemerged from Soviet captivity, strove to move away from Eastern Europe and the East in general, as irrevocably tainted by Soviet-style totalitarianism. At that time, in the well-established manner of disparaging orientalism, "Eastness" became associated with economic collapse, political volatility, and authoritarianism that spread across the post-Soviet area.⁶⁵

In the face of these momentous changes, Western Europe was not sure whether there was any appropriate institutional space ready for the quick acceptance of Central Europe in the West's fold. Western leaders applauded but did not yet trust their counterparts in Central Europe's postcommunist states. The latter took offence, then led by the towering figure of Poland's main dissident leader-turned-President Lech Wałęsa. In 1992, he proposed that, if no quick path to NATO and the European Union (EU) were offered to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, the three countries should consider

61 Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (Ser: *A History of East Central Europe*, vol. 1) (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 1993).

62 Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 2002); Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

63 "East Central Europe: 1900–2019," Ngram Viewer 13.06.2023 https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=East+Central+Europe&year_start=1900&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Jun 13, 2023).

64 "East Central Europe, Central Europe: 1900–2019," Ngram Viewer 13.06.2023 https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=East+Central+Europe%2CCentral+Europe&year_start=1900&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Jun 13, 2023).

65 Elsa Tulmets, *East Central European Foreign Policy Identity in Perspective: Back to Europe and the EU's Neighbourhood* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

founding their own parallel NATO (B) and EU (B).⁶⁶ In December 1992, the three signed a treaty that two years later founded a Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), when this document was ratified in 1994 (Dörr 2018). In this way, Central Europe was back onto the map of Europe as a political concept. But the region's geographic extent was pared down to Hungary and Poland, alongside Czechia (Czech Republic) and Slovakia, or the two successor states that emerged in 1993 when Czechoslovakia was peacefully split.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, this new Central Europe, construed as a free trade area, began morphing rapidly. First, the 1999 and 2004 enlargements of NATO allowed Czechia, Hungary, and Poland to join this military club of Western Europe in the first round, and in the second they were followed by the indubitably Central European polity of Slovakia, the postcommunist ones of Bulgaria and Romania, alongside the post-Soviet Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the post-Yugoslav state of Slovenia. On this institutional platform of security and stability, Western Europe agreed to a parallel enlargement of the EU. In the 2004 "big bang" enlargement, the Central European polities of Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia joined the EU, together with the post-Soviet Baltic republics and Slovenia. (In this round also did the two Mediterranean states of Cyprus and Malta become EU members.) The process was rounded up with the 2007 accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

However, joining the EU's common market necessitated leaving CEFTA. Not only did Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia leave this economic-style Central Europe, but also Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria, which had recently acceded to CEFTA in 1996, 1997, and 1999, respectively. Such an economic-style Central Europe became a moving feast, which rapidly shifted southward, because at the same time Albania (2007) joined this free trade area, alongside the post-Yugoslav states of Croatia (2003) and (North) Macedonia (2006), which in 2007 were followed by Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia, together with the post-Soviet polity of Moldova. Croatia left CEFTA in 2013, when the country became an EU member. At present, all these aforementioned Balkan polities and Moldova are in the process of membership negotiations with Brussels. When they finally join the EU, CEFTA may disappear for good, and with it this (semi-)political and economic embodiment of the concept of Central Europe.

CEFTA anointed its member states as rightfully belonging to Central Europe, while the subsequent NATO and especially EU enlargements allowed some of them to join the so-much-desired Western Europe. This is the root of the now-observed vanishing of Central Europe as an attractive idea and political reality on the ground. Being part of the West is even more attractive, though in the eyes of the old EU (post-Brexit Britain included), all the new EU

66 Paulina Polko, "Security Policy of the Presidents of Poland (1989–2017)," *Security Forum* (2019), p. 149, <https://wsb.edu.pl/files/pages/634/12-1.pdf> (Accessed: Jul 22, 2022).

member states are still predominantly perceived as part of Eastern Europe.⁶⁷ The Cold War dies hard in the West's thinking about Europe, and the brief postcommunist flowering of Central Europe did not really register in Western Europe, not even in Austria or Germany.⁶⁸

The task falls largely to Central Europeans, even if already turned into (honorary?) Westerners by joining the EU, to comment on where Eastern Europe or the (Asiatic?) East begins. It is now coterminous with Russia and its sphere of influence in the form of allied Belarus and the de facto states, which during the past three decades the Kremlin carved out from Moldova and Ukraine. In 2014, the Ukrainians rejected Moscow's imposition that their country must become a Russian vassal. In reprisals, Russia annexed the country's Crimea and began a localized war in eastern Ukraine.⁶⁹ In 2022, Moscow ramped the simmering conflict up to a full-scale invasion of all Ukraine. For better or worse, nowadays, the Ukrainian-Russian front constitutes the thin red line of division between Western and Eastern Europe with no area of ambiguity where *Mittleuropa* could flourish again. Any Central Europe outside Western Europe's institutional framework would now become prey to resurgent Russia's neoimperial ambitions.

CULTURE AND SCHOLARSHIP

For the time being, in a truly Kunderian fashion, Central Europe fared much better in the sphere of culture and education. In 1991, the English-medium Central European University (CEU) was founded with its campuses located

67 The fact that human imagination does not need to follow the mathematicized logic of cartography and geography can be illustrated with the examples of Austria and Greece, which are commonly considered part of Western Europe (*UNAIDS Governance Handbook* (UNAIDS/09.15E / JC1682E) (Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), 2010), p. 31). The former polity's capital of Vienna is located 300 kilometers more to the east than the Czech capital of Prague, though at the same time Czechia is seen as belonging to Central or Eastern Europe. Even more curiously, Greece is located east of many Central European states and Albania. It even borders on Western Asia, namely on Turkey. Yet, for political and cultural reasons Greece is *not* classified as part of Eastern Europe.

68 "Eastern Europeans in the United Kingdom," *Wikipedia* 22.07.2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Europeans_in_the_United_Kingdom (Accessed: Jul 22, 2022); "On the Causes of Brexit: How Migration from Eastern Europe Contributed to the Rise of UK Euroscepticism," Royal Economic Society 09.04.2017, <https://www.res.org.uk/resources-page/on-the-causes-of-brex-it-how-migration-from-eastern-europe-contributed-to-the-rise-of-uk-euroscepticism.html> (Accessed: Jul 22, 2022).

69 *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia hidnosti, ahresiia RF i mizhnarodne pravo*, ed. Oleksandr Zadorozhnii (Kyiv: Ukrains'ka asotsiatsiia mizhnarodnoho prava, 2014).

in Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw.⁷⁰ The publishing house associated with this university, CEU Press, put Central Europe back onto the intellectual and research map of Europe and the globe. Across the region, other institutions, mainly of culture, also proudly adopted the moniker Central Europe in their names, for instance, the renowned Croatian publishing house Srednja Europa (Central Europe) that was founded in 2001,⁷¹ the Instytut Europy Środkowej (Institute of Central Europe) that has been active in the Polish city of Lublin since 2002,⁷² the Közép-európai Mediációs Intézet (Central European Mediation Institute) founded in 2016 in Budapest,⁷³ and the Inštitút pre strednú Európu (Institute for Central Europe) established in 2018 in the Slovak capital of Bratislava.⁷⁴

In 1994, French historian Jacques Le Rider published his reflections on Central Europe (unabashedly referred to with the German term *Mittleuropa*) and an overview of the region's history,⁷⁵ which was quickly translated into other languages,⁷⁶ but tellingly, not into Czech, Hungarian, Polish, or Slovak. The oeuvre of the post-Austro-Hungarian and quintessentially Central European German-language writer of Jewish origin Joseph Roth from Galicia⁷⁷

70 Cynthia Durcanin, "Central European University to Leave Prague," *The Prague Post* 20.01.1993, <https://web.archive.org/web/20141225155451/http://www.praguepost.cz/archivescontent/13126-central-european-university-to-leave-prague.html> (Accessed: Jul 22, 2022).

71 "Predstavljamo nakladnike: Srednja Europa," *Moderne vremena* 20.03.2008, <https://mvinfo.hr/clanak/predstavljamo-nakladnike-srednja-europa> (Accessed: Jul 22, 2022).

72 "Institute of Central Europe: About the Institute," Institute of Central Europe 24.07.2022, <https://ies.lublin.pl/en/instytut/about-the-institute/> (Accessed: Jul 24, 2022).

73 "Közép-Európai Mediációs Intézet," 24.07.2022, <https://www.kemi.hu> (Accessed: Jul 24, 2022).

74 "Uvod," Inštitút pre strednú Európu 24.07. 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220630043456/http://www.icesk.eu/> (Accessed: Nov 25, 2023).

75 Jacques Le Rider, *La Mittleuropa* (Ser: *Que sais-je?* vol. 2846) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994).

76 Jacques Le Rider, *Mittleuropa. Auf den Spuren eines Begriffes* [translated by Robert Fleck] (Vienna: Deuticke, 1994); Jacques, Le Rider, *Mittleuropa. Storia di un mito* [translated by Maria Cristina Marinelli] (Ser: Universale paperback Il mulino, vol. 300) (Bologna: Il mulino, 1995); Jacques Le Rider, *Mittleuropa* [translated by Anca Opric] (Ser: A treia Europă, vol. 2) (Iași: Polirom, 1997); Jacques Le Rider, *Mittleuropa* [translated by Vesna Pavković] (Zagreb: Barbat, 1998); Jacques Le Rider, *Churoron. Teikoku kara EU e* [literally, *Central Europe: From Empire to EU*; translated by Akira Taguchi] (Ser: Bunko kuseju, vol. 877) (Tokyo: Hakususha, 2004).

77 Christine Lecerc, "On a longtemps voulu voir en Joseph Roth le chantre d'une Mittleuropa idéalisée," *Le Monde* 17.09.2020, https://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2020/09/17/stephane-pesnel-on-a-longtemps-voulu-voir-en-joseph-roth-le-chantre-d-une-mittleuropa-idealisee_6052534_3260.html (Accessed: Jul 24, 2022).

was rediscovered both in Central Europe and the West.⁷⁸ Likewise, the literary and symbolic legacy of similarly Jewish writer Franz Kafka was made into a veritable logo of Prague and Central Europe.⁷⁹

But this formerly widespread attraction of Central Europe⁸⁰ in culture and education is fading because of EU enlargement, and recently especially due to the rise of pro-authoritarian (including antisemitic) and anti-EU tendencies across Central Europe from Poland to Slovenia and from Austria to Bulgaria.⁸¹ The turning point in this respect was the Hungarian government's unsubtle pressure that in 2018 compelled CEU to move its seat and operations from Budapest to Vienna.⁸² Hence, for the time being, Central Europe remains a concept of comparative research in the region's history, politics, literature, or culture. Because of the shared pasts, languages, and cultures, it does not really make sense to research, for instance, Romania without referring to Hungarian history, Bulgaria without consulting Ottoman ("Turkish") archival documents, or Poland without reaching out to the Austrian, Belarusian, German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, Swedish, or Ukrainian kindred past(s).

This methodological conclusion informed the aforementioned book series *A History of East Central Europe* and Magocsi's *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*. Luckily, despite the waning of Central Europe as a political concept, these pioneering references help other scholars see beyond the parochial limits of national historiographies and schools of thought. As a result, they keep producing methodologically novel research on this region's history and politics.⁸³

78 J. M. Coetzee, "Emperor of Nostalgia," *The New York Review of Books* 28.02.2002, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2002/02/28/emperor-of-nostalgia/> (Accessed: Jul 24, 2022); "Joseph Roth," Cracow: Austeria 24.07.2022, <https://austeria.pl/kategoria-produktu/joseph-roth/> (Accessed: Jul 24, 2022).

79 "Mini Guide to Kafka's Prague," BBC Travel 29.08.2012, <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20120828-mini-guide-to-kafkas-prague> (Accessed: Jul 24, 2022).

80 Cf. Tomasz Kamusella, "Central Europe in the Distorting Mirror of Maps, Languages and Ideas," *The Polish Review* 57:1 (2012), pp. 33–94.

81 Gabriela Baczyńska, "Poland, Hungary Turning More Authoritarian, Rights Group Says," Reuters 15.02.2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-hungary-turning-more-authoritarian-rights-group-says-2022-02-15/> (Accessed: Jul 22, 2022).

82 Shaun Walker, "'Dark Day for Freedom:' Soros-Affiliated University Quits Hungary," *The Guardian* 03.12.2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/03/dark-day-freedom-george-soros-affiliated-central-european-university-quits-hungary>. Accessed: Jul 27, 2022.

83 Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Tomasz Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Jan Křen, *Dvě století střední Evropy* (Ser: *Edice de jiny Evropy*, vol. 8) (Prague: Argo, 2006); Timothy Snyder, *Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Balázs Trencsényi et al., eds., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* (2 vols) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016–2018); Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1992).

DEFINING CENTRAL EUROPE

Depending on the period, country, discipline, and specific needs, politicians and researchers have defined Central Europe in a variety of ways. The largely established consensus is that Central Europe is a region placed between the ethnic areas of the Germans (German-speakers) in the west and the Russians (Orthodox Russian-speakers) in the east. This rather clear-cut ethno-spatial configuration prompted US historian Timothy Snyder to propose the term “Bloodlands” for Central Europe. During World War II, the Germans (including Austrians) and Russians were oppressing, killing, and exterminating a variety of populations of different ethnicities across the region. Ethnic Germans and Russians were the perpetrators, while Central Europeans, their victims.⁸⁴

Yet, the eastern half of the German ethnic area (as coterminous especially with Austria, Saxony, and former Prussia) is often seen to be part of Central Europe. In the first edition of his atlas, Magocsi defined Central Europe as the equidistant “vertical,” that is, meridional north-to-south midsection of Europe’s “geographical territorium.”⁸⁵ It should be borne in mind, as mentioned above, that Europe itself is more of a concept than a continent in any geographic sense, or in terms of territorium that could be photographed as a recognizable entity from the planet’s orbit. From a purely geographic vantage of observation, Europe is none other than a large peninsula or subcontinent in the west of Eurasia, like India is in the south.

In Magocsi’s schema, similar equidistant vertical sections of the same size to the west and east of Central Europe correspond to Western and Eastern Europe, respectively. Such a “mechanical,” or cartographically driven, delimitation allows Magocsi to distance his atlas from typical definitions of the region that are steeped in historical or other human-level phenomena, which sooner or later lead to unhelpful paradoxes. On the other hand, a cold mathematic imposition on the equally imagined continent of Europe necessitates the inclusion of the Apennine Peninsula (“Italy”) within the atlas’s base map. Yet, Magocsi arbitrarily excluded Scandinavia from this base map, which otherwise is clearly part of the region in light of the definition of Central Europe that he adopted.

But, when it comes to discussing the northern and southern limits of Central Europe, authorities vary widely. Austrian and Hungarian scholars propose that this region terminates along the Carpathians in the north and roughly along the Danube in the south. Obviously, this definition is an echo of the Dual Monarchy that collapsed and split in 1918.⁸⁶ Their counterparts from Poland prefer to push the northern terminus of Central Europe to the

84 Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

85 Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (1993), p. xi.

86 *Egy közép-európai birodalom – Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia 1867–1918*, ed. Zsuzsa Gáspár and András Gerő (Budapest: Officina ’96 Kiadó, 2008).

Baltic littoral (including Lithuania and Belarus, and at times, also Estonia and Latvia), which is a tacit reference to Poland-Lithuania, which was erased from the political map of Europe in the late eighteenth century.⁸⁷ On the other hand, colleagues from Romania and the post-Yugoslav countries see the Balkans as part of Central Europe,⁸⁸ which allows for the ideological distancing of their countries from the unwanted “Turkish” heritage of the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁹ Yet, Greek and Turkish scholars and politicians may disagree, the former proposing that Greece is an inalienable part of Western Europe,⁹⁰ while the latter may deem Turkey and the Ottomans’ former Balkan possession to “properly” belong to the Middle East.⁹¹

In his atlas, Magocsi⁹² poses the Balkans (alongside western Anatolia and southern Italy) as the southern terminus of Central Europe, while the southern Baltic littoral (with Lithuania, but without Estonia and Latvia) as the region’s northern limit. Yet, in the subsequent editions of this atlas, the scholar included in the purview Belarus and Ukraine, though technically speaking, in light of his definition of Central Europe, both are located in Eastern Europe.⁹³ Tomasz Kamusella in his 2021 atlas *Words in Space and Time: Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe* pushes the southern limit of the adopted base map to cover most of the Black Sea littoral (including Crimea) and most of Anatolia (including Cyprus). Likewise, in the north—following the logic of Magocsi’s own definition of Central Europe—this new atlas takes in Scandinavia, alongside Estonia and Latvia, and also including Russia’s ethnically (or historically) non-Russian regions of Karelia and Ingria.⁹⁴ In this new schema, Eastern Europe is practically limited to the European section of the Russian Federation.

87 Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom* (1992).

88 Stoyan Pribichevich, “Yugoslavia in the Balkans and Central Europe,” *International Affairs* 21:4 (1945), pp. 448–458; František Šístek, ed., *Imagining Bosnian Muslims in Central Europe: Representations, Transfers and Exchanges* (New York: Berghahn, 2021).

89 Tomasz Kamusella, “Albania: A Denial of the Ottoman Past: School Textbooks and Politics of Memory,” *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie* 20:2 (2016), pp. 96–105.

90 Markos Renieris, “What is Greece? West or East?” [1842, translated from the Greek by Mary Kitroef] in Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeastern Europe (1770–1945)* (Vol. 2: National Romanticism) (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), pp. 202–214.

91 Ömer Taspınar, *Turkey’s Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism* (Ser: Carnegie Paper, vol. 10) (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008).

92 Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (1993).

93 Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (2002); Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (2019).

94 Tomasz Kamusella, *Words in Space and Time: Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021).

NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN LIMITS

Rarely do authors who use the concept of Central Europe for research reflect on where and why they place the region's northern and southern limits. The issue has become largely "transparent" to researchers, because in the prevailing discourse the "horizontal" west-east spatial axis has dominated the accepted thinking on the region during the past two centuries. Yet, historians and mapmakers of Central Europe must address this practical question of Central Europe's northern and southern confines, before commencing their work. Remaining silent on this point is methodologically unhelpful, and at times leaves readers suspicious that the region's northern and southern limits on a map of Central Europe are arbitrarily dictated by the page format adopted for a given publication. They may be right.

As mentioned above, the "narrow" equation of Central Europe with Austria-Hungary, as preferred by Hungarian researchers—and at times also by their colleagues from Austria, Czechia, and Slovakia—places the region's northern border along the (western) Carpathians and the Sudeten mountains, or roughly alongside today's boundary of Czechia and Slovakia with Poland. In this schema, the concept's southern limit meanders with the flow of the Danube or a little south of it for the sake of taking in Bosnia and Croatia, which used to belong to the Dual Monarchy.

In contrast, the once-dominant Prusso-German take on Central Europe stemmed from the territorial tradition of the Holy Roman Empire. In the north, the region terminated along the southern shores of the North Sea and the Baltic. There was some confusion about Denmark, namely, whether it should be included in this concept or not. After all, Denmark did not belong to the Holy Roman Empire. But, in the wake of the 1864 war that Prussia and Austria waged against this country, the frontier between the German Confederation and Denmark was pushed northward at the latter country's expense. On the other hand, in the south, such a *Mittleuropa* grounded in the shadow of the former Holy Roman Empire was bounded by the Alps, with the mountains deemed as belonging to Central Europe. As a result, Switzerland and some northernmost areas of present-day Italy were included in this Germanic type of Central Europe.

During the Great War, under the influence of Friedrich Naumann's project of a Central Europe that would equate the Central Powers and their contiguous allies and dependencies, the Austro-Hungarian and Prusso-German concepts of Central Europe were merged into an even bigger *Mittleuropa*. Military victories over Russia on the Eastern Front brought into the Central Power's sphere of control most areas of the former Poland-Lithuania. This development resulted in expanding *Mittleuropa* eastward. In the case of the region's northern terminus, this meant pushing it along the southern Baltic littoral eastward and "up" north to include Latvia and Estonia. Germany's involvement in the

Finnish Civil War in 1918 and Berlin's effective control over the country came too late in the day to translate into another addition to Berlin and Vienna's shared *Mitteleuropa*.

On the other hand, in the south, the wartime politics, with Naumann's approval, added allied Bulgaria to the Central Power's steadily enlarging Central Europe. Sofia and Vienna conquered together Serbia, while Austro-Hungarian occupation extended over Italy's Veneto, Montenegro, and most of Albania. As a result, the southern limit of wartime *Mitteleuropa* rested on the northern frontier of Greece, which sided with the Allies. The Central Powers occupied Romania and extended control over a then-already-independent Ukraine, meaning that, in the east, the southern limit of Central Europe reached the Black Sea's northern shores, including Crimea. Although the Ottoman Empire was officially allied with Berlin and Vienna, this fact somehow did not impact on the Central Power's concept of Central Europe. Perhaps, in line with the Western stereotypes of these times, the Ottoman lands were seen as being part of the "Orient," that is the Middle East. Also, from the Ottoman imperial perspective, a Germanic *Mitteleuropa* with its political and economic center removed far away to the north from Constantinople was not of much interest to the Ottoman elite. After all, their political and economic interests lay in the Balkans, Anatolia, the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, the Arabic Peninsula, and North Africa.

In the interwar period, during World War II and the subsequent Cold War, the changing political and scholarly concept of Central Europe largely stuck to the northern and southern limits established during the Great War. Non-German scholars only moved their pet form of Central Europe eastward, distancing it from the two postwar Germanies and Austria. To my knowledge, however, no one has yet openly commented on the irony of how well the space entailed corresponds to Yiddishland,⁹⁵ or the distribution of Yiddish-speaking communities from today's Baltic states in the north to the line of the Danube and Drava in the south.⁹⁶ Scholars and the public at large are similarly silent on the total erasure of Central Europe's modern Yiddish language and culture, which prior to World War II boasted 12 million speakers in the region and in diaspora. Tragically, not a single Yiddish-speaking locality or Yiddish-language

95 "Yiddishland" is an informal coinage for the Central Europe of the Ashkenazic Jews, or their immigrant settlements in the United States. This term appeared in the early twentieth century (Van Tassel Sutphen [=William Gilbert], *The Gates of Chance* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1904), p. 271) but gained a wider currency only at this century's end (Alain Brossat and Sylvia Klingberg, *Le Yiddishland révolutionnaire* (Paris: Balland, 1983); "Yiddishland: 1900–2019," Ngram Viewer 09.08.2022 https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Yiddishland&year_start=1900&year_end=2019&corpus=26&smoothing=3 (Accessed: Aug 9, 2022).

96 Kamusella, *Words in Space and Time*, pp. 72–73; Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, p. 108.

publisher or library remains in today's Europe. The situation is not only a result of the Holocaust, but also of unacknowledged antisemitism that to this day prevents the embracing of Yiddish language and culture as Central Europe's own.⁹⁷

Émigré scholars based in North America readily accepted the aforementioned non-Germanic ("de-Germanized"?) concept of *Mitteleuropa*, which opened the stage for the novel term "East Central Europe." Although some chapters in certain volumes of Sugar and Treadgold's book series *A History of East Central Europe* focus on Greece, not a dedicated volume was devoted to this country.⁹⁸ Likewise, after the fall of communism, the authors of the authoritative work *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* excluded Greece from their purview.⁹⁹ Another point of contention was the Baltic states of Latvia and Lithuania, whose postcommunist elites prefer to style their homelands as part of Scandinavia rather than Central Europe.¹⁰⁰ Sugar and Treadgold did not cover them in their book series, either.

Yet, nowadays, Magocsi's widely used atlas established that for a variety of pragmatic and historical reasons Greece should be treated as part of Central Europe, alongside western Turkey (Anatolia).¹⁰¹ Likewise, some authors include Crimea and Cyprus within such a heuristic concept of Central Europe. The former does not impact on its southern terminus, but the latter decisively pushes it southward to the northern littoral of the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰² This not fully acknowledged development deftly complements Magocsi's decision to include Italy in his atlas's concept of Central Europe. Historiographically, the move can be easily substantiated by observing that for a millennium the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea were, to degree, an "internal lake" of Venice's commercial and military empire. In turn, the towering significance of Venice made this republic with its extensive Balkan possessions into a key player in the politics of the Apennine Peninsula. The Habsburgs rivaled, annexed (in 1798), and succeeded Venice in this role. Before and after Venice's demise, different lines of this imperial dynasty ruled most of the peninsula's territory. From this perspective, Central Europe's southern limit in the Mediterranean

97 Tomasz Kamusella "Yiddish, or Jewish German? The Holocaust, the Goethe-Institut, and Germany's Neglected Obligation to Peace and the Common European Cultural Heritage," *Śląskie Studia Polonistyczne* 18:2 (2021), pp. 1–18.

98 Sugar and Treadgold, *A History of East Central Europe*.

99 Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*.

100 "Kersti Kaljulaid: Let's Talk About the Nordic Benelux," LSM: Public Broadcasting of Latvia 25.10.2016, <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/politics/politics/kersti-kaljulaid-lets-talk-about-the-nordic-benelux.a207078/> (Accessed: Aug 8, 2022); Mauri Vidović, "How Nordic is Estonia?: An Overview Since 1991," *nordics info* 28.12.2021, <https://nordics.info/show/artikel/how-nordic-is-estonia-an-overview-since-1991> (Accessed: Aug 8, 2022).

101 Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (1993); Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (2002); Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (2019).

102 Kamusella, *Words in Space and Time*.

can be construed as a line extending from Cyprus in the east to Crete and Sicily in the west.

Meanwhile, in the second edition of his atlas, Magocsi added a map of the medieval monastic state of the Teutonic Order (officially, the Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem), which used to extend along the Baltic Sea's southeastern littoral.¹⁰³ In this manner, at least notionally, today's Latvia and Estonia were included in Magocsi's concept of Central Europe, though these two countries do not feature anywhere else in this work. Executing this inclusion through the vehicle of the monastic order of the Teutonic Knights opens a tantalizing question of whether the same ploy should be extended to Malta, which used to be ruled by the monastic Order of Malta (officially, the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem) until 1798. Following the Reformation and subsequent secularization, the "German Langue" – mainly associated with the Habsburgs' hereditary lands – grew in significance among the order's eight langues, or branches of knights who shared the same language of day-to-day communication. Otherwise, (Austrian or imperial) German served as the order's sole official (secular) language.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Malta was a vassal polity of the Kingdom of Sicily until the mid-eighteenth century. So, if Sicily can be part of Central Europe, then why not Malta? I hope that in the future scholars of Central Europe may delve deeper into this interesting issue.

POTENTIAL NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN LIMITS

In this section, a brief overview is offered of several options of how the northern and southern limits of Central Europe may be defined, as dictated by a variety of research needs. Obviously, the concept of Central Europe is analyzed here in regard to scholarly uses, because its political or economic employment in the future cannot be known.

From the perspective of early modern European history, regarding the southern Baltic littoral as the northern boundary of Central Europe is rather counterintuitive. For the commercial-cum-military Hanseatic League, all of the Baltic was its area of operation. In its dealings, this league firmly straddled the Holy Roman Empire and Poland-Lithuania on the one hand, while on the other, Scandinavia (especially Denmark and Sweden) and even Britain.¹⁰⁵ Between 1566 and 1672, three kings from the Swedish House of Vasa (Wazowie in Polish) ruled Poland-Lithuania. The first of these monarchs, Sigismund/Zygmunt, even created a personal union of Sweden and Poland-Lithuania (1592-1599).

103 Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (2002), p. 19.

104 Thomas Freller, *The German Langue of the Order of Malta: A Concise History* (Santa Venera: Midsea Books, 2010).

105 Philippe Dollinger, *La Hanse (XII -XVII siècles)* (Paris: Aubier, 1964).

But this union was a short-lived affair. Sweden's nobility feared that the king would reintroduce Catholicism from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and deposed him in a civil war. Already in the 1520s had Lutheranism gained ground in Sweden before becoming the state's official religion in 1544. Yet, Poland-Lithuania's Catholic Vasa monarchs retained their claim to the Swedish throne. So, to a degree, for over a century, the Baltic was turned into an internal lake of the Vasas' two realms. At that time, Finland was also part of Sweden.¹⁰⁶

Subsequently, in the early seventeenth century, Sweden embarked on building an empire at the expense of Denmark, the Holy Roman Empire, Poland-Lithuania, and Muscovy. As a result, the Baltic was made into an internal Swedish lake (or *dominium maris baltici*, as the geopolitical aim was then officially known in Latin) until the Great Northern War. This conflict's theater extended across the territory of Poland-Lithuania (then in a personal union with Saxony in the Holy Roman Empire) and involved the Ottomans. The main battles were fought out in what is now Ukraine. Following Muscovy's victory in this war, the Swedish empire largely vanished. Muscovy-turned-Russia seized what today is Russia's Karelia and the region of St Petersburg (Ingria), Estonia, and Latvia. Yet, Stockholm retained some southern Baltic littoral possessions until the Congress of Vienna in 1815.¹⁰⁷

During the Napoleonic Wars, in 1807, the anti-Napoleonic Sweden lost Finland to Russia, then in an alliance with France. Seven years later, following Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia, in 1814, Norway was detached from pro-Napoleonic Denmark and passed as compensation to Sweden. Commercial links, alongside territorial and dynastic changes, time and again tightly bound Scandinavia to Central Europe. Kamusella in his atlas *Words in Time and Space* proposes that the occurrence of ethnolinguistic nation-states in Central Europe may also serve as a sound functional definition of Central Europe.¹⁰⁸ On today's globe, there are only two clusters of ethnolinguistic nation-states. The first one emerged in Central Europe after the Great War, while the latter, in Southeast Asia following the Second World War.¹⁰⁹

From this perspective, after gaining independence in 1905, Norway has been a typical Central European nation-state, established for all the speakers of a single language (Norwegian), who are believed to constitute a nation. Ideally, the nation's national language should be not shared with another state

106 Kazimierz Tyszkowski, *Z dziejów wyprawy Zygmunta III do Szwecji w roku 1598 (relacje i diariusze)* (Lwów [Lviv]: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1927); Zygmunt Wdowiszewski, *Genealogia Jagiellonów i Domu Wazów w Polsce* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Awalon, 2005).

107 Michael Roberts, *The Swedish Imperial Experience 1560–1718* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

108 Kamusella, *Words in Space and Time*, pp. 64–67, 90–92, 109–111, 128–131, 147–150.

109 Kamusella, *Words in Space and Time*, pp. 173–176.

or nation, which is Norway's case.¹¹⁰ Yet, the country's official and national language is de facto a legal construct and a political compromise. Norwegian is construed as consisting of two largely mutually comprehensible varieties, Bokmål ("Book Language") and Nynorsk ("New Norwegian or Norse"). Under different political conditions, they would be seen as two separate languages in their own right, as indicated by the existence of two Norwegian Wikipedias in these two varieties. On top of that, apart from some slight differences in pronunciation and spelling, Bokmål is identical to Danish. In the interwar period, this Norwegian solution of "two in one" became a model for the similar official-cum-national composite languages of Czechoslovak and Serbocroatoslovenian, respectively, in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (or the Kingdom Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes prior to 1929). Hence, Norway also contributed significantly to the practices of ethnolinguistic nationalism as a significant phenomenon for defining Central Europe. The Norwegians, like any other typical Central European nation, have bitterly argued about language to this day.¹¹¹

Should then Norway be considered part of Central Europe, this addition pushes the region's northern limit significantly farther to the north. It is sufficient only to ponder on where Norway's own northern border is placed. The country's Arctic archipelago of Svalbard is located midway between the Norwegian mainland and the North Pole. Oslo also claims a sizable chunk of the Arctic north of Svalbard. Hence, ethnolinguistic nationalism as a yardstick for defining Central Europe pushes the region's northern terminus almost up to the North Pole.¹¹²

Having scoured the north for typically Central European uses of ethnolinguistic nationalism for building languages and nations as the main basis for state construction and statehood legitimization, let us now peer southward. Israel is widely hailed to be the sole democracy in the present-

110 Tomasz Kamusella, "The Normative Isomorphism of Language, Nation and State," in Marcin Moskalewicz and Wojciech Przybylski, eds., *Understanding Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 144–150.

111 Oddmund Løkenstøl, *Nasjonalisme i norsk målstrid, 1848-1865* (Ser: KULTSs skriftserie, vol. 51) (Oslo: Noregs Forskningsråd, 1996); Ernst Håkon Jahr, *Perspectives on Two Centuries of Norwegian Language Planning and Policy: Theoretical Implications and Lessons Learnt* (Ser: Acta Academiae Regiae Gustavi Adolphi, vol. 152) (Uppsala: Kungliga Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, 2018).

112 "Norway: Arctic Territory: Nordland, Troms and Finnmark, Svalbard and Jan Mayen," Organization: Arctic States 09.08.2022, <https://www.arctic-council.org/about/states/norway/> (Accessed: Aug 9, 2022); Michael Zimmerman, "High North and High Stakes: The Svalbard Archipelago Could be the Epicenter of Rising Tension in the Arctic," *PRISM* 7:4 (2018), <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/1983502/high-north-and-high-stakes-the-svalbard-archipelago-could-be-the-epicenter-of-r/> (Accessed: Nov 25, 2023).

day Middle East.¹¹³ Yet, few observers note that it is also a typically Central European nation-state built for the ethnolinguistically defined nation of the Hebrew-speaking Israelis. Obviously, this polity as a concept was proposed at the turn of the twentieth century in reply to increasing antisemitism in Europe, which during the previous two millennia had become the homeland of the world's Jews.¹¹⁴ But already in the eighteenth century had a link developed between Ottoman Palestine (then part of the Damascus Eyalet) and Central Europe. Since the middle of this century, instead of just wishing each other "Next year in Jerusalem!" during Passover, Hassidic Jews from Poland-Lithuania (or more exactly from what today is Belarus) began settling in Jerusalem and the vicinity, or what they saw as the biblical Eretz Yisrael ("Land of Israel"). The journey was long and arduous but not overly complicated, given the fact that at this time Poland-Lithuania bordered on the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁵

The Holocaust ended the long history of Europe as the Jewish homeland and erased the modern culture and community of Yiddishland from Central Europe. Holocaust survivors did their best to reach the relative safety of Yishuv (Jewish settlement area) in Mandatory Palestine under British administration. A stream of (Central) European Jews (that is, Ashkenazim) had already settled there since the turn of the twentieth century. In 1948, Israel was founded as the world's only Jewish polity. In a cultural, social, and political sense, the people who predominantly created and populated this nation-state were typical Central Europeans, namely, Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazic Jews. In the interwar period, proponents of the freshly standardized Ivrit (Modern Hebrew) aggressively stood for making it into the sole national language of the Jewish nation, despite the fact that the vast majority of the world's Jews and Jewish immigrants then arriving in Palestine spoke Yiddish. Supporters of Ivrit won this curiously Central European "language war."¹¹⁶

Can any other Central European-style nation-state wedded to ethno-linguistic nationalism be found south of Israel? At the first glance, practically no one would associate Ethiopia with Central Europe, though the Habsburg silver coin, popularly known as the Maria Theresa thaler, remained the country's

113 Yadin Yinon, *The Only Democracy in the Middle East* (Huguenot NY: Bear Mountain Press, 2012).

114 Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat. Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage* (Vienna: Breitenstein's Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1896).

115 Marcin Wodziński and Waldemar Spallek, *Historical Atlas of Hasidism* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), pp. 24–25.

116 Aleksandr Kriukov, "Ivrit, idish i 'iazykovoe vojny'," *Lekhaim* 26.10.2020, <https://lechaim.ru/academy/ivrit-idish-i-yazykovye-voyny/> (Accessed: Aug 10, 2022); "The War of the Languages," The National Library of Israel 10.08.2022, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/history/zionism/language-war> (Accessed: Aug 10, 2022).

preferred legal tender until shortly after World War II.¹¹⁷ In the mid-nineteenth century, Ethiopia amounted just to the northern quarter of the present-day country. Yet, by the turn of the twentieth century, though disastrous for the inhabitants and precipitating genocidal-scale invasions, Ethiopia's original territory had quadrupled. Interestingly, Russian advisors helped the Ethiopian emperor with military technology and tactics. St Petersburg hoped for an alliance with this rising "Orthodox" power in the Horn of Africa to outflank the British in Egypt.¹¹⁸

In 1931, the Ethiopian emperor granted the first-ever constitution to his country. It was modeled on the Meiji Constitution of Imperial Japan (1890). In turn, Tokyo had earlier borrowed much of this document from Germany, alongside the model of the centralized ethnolinguistic nation-state, so typical across Central Europe to this day. In 1974, the revolution ended the Ethiopian Empire. Yet, it took a long time for the revolutionary leadership to draft another constitution, which was promulgated only in 1985. Military and other aid flowing from Moscow convinced the revolutionaries to emulate the Soviet Constitution, including the renaming of their country as the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. This new constitution introduced ethnoterritorial federalism as the preferred model of statehood for communist Ethiopia, which was also dutifully copied from the Soviet Union. After the end of communism in 1991, the country's third constitution of 1995 keeps this model and additionally announces it in the polity's updated official name, which is now the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Of course, the Soviets had originally borrowed the model of ethnoterritorial federation from Austria-Hungary.¹¹⁹

Hence, both models of statehood as practiced in modern Ethiopia stem from Central Europe. As a result, much of the country's politics during the past century has been a history of conflicts between supporters of these two Central European models, ethnolinguistic in their character, of statehood. The recent war in Tigray (2020–2022) between the Amhara-dominated central government and the Tigrayans in their autonomous region clearly exemplifies this tendency. In accordance with the 1995 Constitution, the Tigrayans want wider autonomy within a future confederal Ethiopia or even independence for Tigray, which they see as their own ethnolinguistically defined nation-state. It was this route, which the successor nation-states followed when the communist ethnoterritorial federations of Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union,

117 Adrian E. Tschoegl, "Maria Theresa's Thaler: A Case of International Money," *Eastern Economic Journal* 27:4 (2001), pp. 445–464.

118 Aleksander Bułatowicz, *Z wojskami Menelika II. Zapiski z podróży do Etiopii* [translated from the Russian and edited by Grażyna Podeszwa] (Warsaw: Dialog, 2000).

119 Asnake Kefale, Tomasz Kamusella, and Christophe Van der Beken, *Eurasian Empires as Blueprints for Ethiopia: From Ethnolinguistic Nation-State to Multiethnic Federation* (London: Routledge, 2021).

and Yugoslavia broke up in the early 1990s. On the other hand, Addis Ababa intends to curtail the autonomy of Ethiopia's regions to produce a more centralized and ethnolinguistically homogenous nation-state.¹²⁰ The Kremlin has followed a similar path during the past two decades, so that the Russian Federation remains a federation only in its name.

Another relevant historical precedent that pushes southward Central Europe's southern terminus is Muhammed Ali's Egyptian empire. In the wake of Napoleon's invasion of the richest Ottoman province of Egypt (1798-1801), the sultan entrusted the reconquest of this land to the ambitious and ethnically Albanian commander Muhammed Ali and his likewise ethnically Albanian irregulars. They were so successful at this task that, short of declaring independence, these Albanian mercenaries seized effective control of Egypt and made Muhammed Ali into the province's effective ruler. He modestly claimed the title of khedive (viceroy) but established a dynasty that ruled Egypt for a century and half, until the 1952 Revolution. Muhammed Ali's descendants as Egypt's successive rulers officially demurred to the Ottoman sultan.

They declared the independence of Egypt as a kingdom only in 1922, following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, between the 1810s and 1880s, Egypt under the Alawiyya (Muhammed Ali) dynasty gained (and at times lost) a variety of territories from what today is southern Greece and Crete in the north, historical Syria and the western half of the Arabian Peninsula (the Muslim "holy cities" of Mecca and Medina, included) in the east, and from present-day southern Turkey to western Yemen. Meanwhile, in the south, Egypt conquered what today is Sudan, Eritrea, and parts of Somalia.¹²¹ The Egyptian Empire's southernmost reaches touched upon present-day northern Uganda and the northeastern corner of the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹²²

The Albanian dynasty effectively controlled and modernized Egypt through the ethnically Albanian elite that was imposed on this country.¹²³ Certainly, with time, they switched to Arabic and French, the latter being the language of the European (including Mediterranean) aristocracy. Yet, through the early 1940s, this kingdom kept recruiting ethnic Albanians for key civil service positions from the Balkans. What mattered, apart from required

120 Tomasz Kamusella, "Tigray: A Very Central European War," *New Eastern Europe* 31.03.2021, <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2021/03/31/tigray-a-very-central-european-war/> (Accessed: Aug 10, 2022).

121 Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad 'Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931).

122 Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Ser: Cambridge Middle East Studies, vol. 8) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

123 Faruk Borova, *The Albanian Ruling Dynasty in Egypt (1805–1952)* [translated from the Albanian by Jona Borova] (Tirana: Albanian Institute of Islamic Thought & Civilization, 2016); Aleksandër Xhuvani, *Jeta e Mehmet Aliut Pashës së Misirit* (Tirana: Luarasi, 1921).

qualifications, was Albanian language and ethnicity, not religion.¹²⁴ The Albanians as a nation were and still are polyconfessional. The majority are Muslims, but significant groups profess Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, too. In 1813, in recognition of his services, the sultan gave Muhammed Ali his home island of Thasos (today in northern Greece) as a personal fiefdom. Until 1912, when Greece seized it in the First Balkan War, the island had functioned as the main recruitment channel for Albanians who entered the Egyptian civil service. And, even later, the Egyptian state property (land and real estate) on this island has remained in Cairo's hands to this day.¹²⁵

In the interwar period, Egypt recruited Albanian specialists from both Albania and Yugoslavia (that is, today's Kosovo and North Macedonia). Unfortunately, not much research has been done on this story.¹²⁶ It came to an end with the 1952 Revolution and declaration of republic in Egypt, which entailed the emigration-cum-expulsion of the former kingdom's Albanian elite. Some twenty to thirty thousand people left mainly for Western Europe and North America.¹²⁷ Neither Albania nor Yugoslavia could be an option, since after World War II both countries had turned communist.

Yet, there is another issue, which still needs probing. How did it occur that Yugoslavia in tandem with revolutionary Egypt become leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement, formally established in Belgrade in 1961?¹²⁸ Were the Egyptian links earlier forged by (Kosovan) Albanians instrumental to this end? Hopefully, future scholars interested in Central Europe may also investigate this issue, which appears to bind (entangle) the region directly with global history.

CONCLUSION

Historical, political, and cultural ties allow for establishing a variety of limits of Central Europe in the north and south. Traditionally, the smallest kind of Central Europe pegged on Austria-Hungary is proposed to extend along the north-south axis from the Carpathians to the Danube. The current consensus is that the region's northern terminus reaches the Baltic, while the southern—the Mediterranean. In the follow-up discussion, some examples were analyzed,

124 Harry Thirlwall Norris, *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society Between Europe and the Arab World* (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 209–210.

125 Dina Ezzat, "The Full Story of Egyptian State Property on the Greek Island of Thassos," *ahramonline* 4.10.2016, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/244732.aspx> (Accessed: Aug 10, 2022).

126 Uran Asllani, "Shqiptarët e egjiptit dhe veprimtaria atdhetare e tyre," *Albeu* 08.06.2006, <https://archive.ph/fhtg3> (Accessed: Aug 12, 2022).

127 Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Lanham MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), p. 126.

128 Momir M. Stojković, *Tito - Nehru - Naser. Nastanak i razvoj politike i pokreta nesvrstanosti* (Belgrade: Zaječar, 1983).

the dynamics and nature of which require pushing Central Europe's northern boundary to Scandinavia and even the North Pole, on the one hand, and to Egypt, Ethiopia, and even the Equator, on the other.

Of course, I am not postulating that Central Europe extends from the North Pole to the Equator. Subdivisions of Europe, like the definition of Europe as a continent, are arbitrary decisions of humans and their groups. In the past, the concept of Central Europe was employed for certain political and economic ends. Nowadays, no projects of this kind appear to be married to the region. Hence, it is up to scholars, mainly social scientists, to decide whether from a methodological perspective the concept of Central Europe is of any use as a spatial framework for presenting and discussing a phenomenon or development under analysis. It is research needs and a given subject matter that should dictate a spatial framework, not the other way around.