

No.
04
2017

ASPEN Review

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CENTRAL
EUROPE

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Women in Power

Quo Vadis,
Central and Eastern
Europe?

Thinking
Architecture without
Buildings

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Cover © 2017; Neil Johnston (*Touch Branding*)

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PUBLISHED BY

Aspen Institute Central Europe
Palackého 1, CZ 110 00 Prague
Aspen.Review@AspenInstituteCE.org
AspenInstituteCE.org
Year VI
No. 04/2017
ISSN 1805-6806 (Print)
ISSN 2570-6217 (Online)

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Women
In Power

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Empowering Women

Dear Readers,

In his article, in remembrance of the 1917 revolution in Russia and temptations of communist ideology, Roman Joch mentioned an episode of an unsuccessful resistance against Bolsheviks by cadets and women volunteers. Communism—believed to liberate the oppressed and to emancipate women—started by killing just women and children.

What is the relationship between women and power? Some people tend to believe women are less inclined to hard power and violence. Yet already in Greek mythology power struggles involved female goddesses employing the whole scale of power arsenal from soft persuasion to hard force. In 1913, a feminist Helena Swanwick wrote: *“I wish to disclaim altogether the kind of assumption.... that men have been the barbarians who loved physical force, and that women alone were civilised and civilising. There are no signs of this in literature or history.”* (The Future of the Women’s Movement)

The best-known examples of women political leaders in recent history are Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi, or Benazir Bhutto. In Europe today, it is Angela Merkel who has just won her fourth term as German chancellor. As the Merkel phenomenon is remarkable and exceptional, we have asked Matthew Qyortrup, an author of her biography, to write about her leadership style.

power- men!

The fact is that women are underrepresented in traditional functions and institutions of power, in politics and business. During the second half of the 20th century there were less than 4 percent women at the helm of their countries. Although a number of women in managerial positions in the US (less in Europe) has increased in that period, an average ratio of women in national parliaments still appears around 15 percent. In this context, we are proud to feature a piece by Dita Příkladová, our Young Leaders Program Alumna, presenting Czechitas that she founded to break a gender barrier in IT education.

We keep our focus on Central Europe. Robert Schuster asks to what extent Central Europe presents a microcosm of the whole Europe. Ivan Mikloš claims that it is “fundamentally important for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to remain within the core of a multi-track European Union” and for Zsoltán Kiszely the EU is the best available framework for modernization for Visegrad countries.

During the upcoming international conference “The Shape of (Central) Europe” we will present expert findings regarding competitiveness, education, governance, security, and quality of life to facilitate more structured and fact-based debate about the role Central Europe could play in shaping Europe’s future.

JÍŘÍ SCHNEIDER
Executive Director

The Misfits

What is the classic European literature really about? According to Hans Mayer, author of the book *The Misfits* [*Außenseiter*], it is a disguised story about discrimination and exclusion told by homosexuals, women, and Jews.

Mayer, an outstanding German literary scholar (1907-2001), argued his claim using the example of the life and works of such diverse figures as Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud, Marcel Proust and Heinrich Heine, Jean Genet and Andre Gide, George Eliot, George Sand, Piotr Tchaikovsky, and many, many others. In his view, this 19th-century eruption of artistic talents was not associated with the growing emancipation of societies but on the contrary—with discrimination of individuals regarded as anti-social by the society endowed with ever-increasing rights.

This was the dialectics of the Enlightenment, which, as Mayer writes, “stumbled on misfits.” Although the 19th century was an age of a remarkable development of economic freedom and political liberties, in the area of implementing the ideal of “rooting out emotional prejudices against people of different races, religions, customs or moralities” promoted by the Enlightenment philosophers, “the bourgeois society in the 19th and 20th century regressed.”

It happened because “the demolished feudal hierarchy had to be replaced with a new one, of bourgeois nature. The new hierarchy transformed the woman into a parasitic slave, who does not and should not earn money. It was opposed to the emancipation of the Jews through education and wealth. Hostile to strangers from the very start, it was becoming more and more nationalist. A distinction was introduced between dignified and worthless life. Being different in any way became a provocation.”

Consequently, the people who could have expected to gain the most from the implementation of the libertarian Enlightenment causes (meaning women, whose aspirations went beyond becoming someone's wife and mother; homosexuals faithful to their preferences; and Jews who decided to stop being Jews) in the next 150 years fell victim to repressions incomparable to anything which had taken place before in the history of Western Europe.

The persecuted misfits had three life strategies to choose from: mimicry, rebellion, or suicide. Mayer convincingly shows, on the example of the lives of Hans Christian Andersen, Oscar Wilde, and Klaus Mann, how it ended in the case of homosexuals. As we know, for Jews it ended in Auschwitz.

Since 1975, when the book of the German literary scholar was published, Western European societies went a long way towards the implementation of the liberal model outlined by the author as one of the three possibilities. Out of the two remaining models, the Marxist one ceased to exist in 1989, but the fascist model, as defined by Mayer ("women are not equal to men, and a genuine man is only a male man, whatever that means") is going from strength to strength. In Mayer's perspective, fascism returns to Europe today in the shape of religious fundamentalism, Muslim or Christian.

Is this a valid diagnosis? It is definitely widespread in the West of Europe. Mayer's book explains in a fascinating way why it happened like that. And it also makes us aware how recently, during the lifetime of one generation (the '68 generation), this cultural change occurred. And, of course, he raises the question of its durability.

The most striking question among the ones coming to mind after reading *The Misfits* will obviously remain unanswered: what is the significance for the future of the European project of the fact that this liberal cultural transformation occurred neither in Poland, nor in the majority of the new EU member states (as well as in none of the countries aspiring for EU membership, such as Turkey)? And is there a chance that it will take place one day? The example of Western European societies shows that it is quite possible. Hans Mayer, writing his book in the early 1970s, underestimated the power of the market, which since that time has crushed one stronghold of tradition after another. In today's West, the misfits are those who cannot afford to or have no desire to participate in consumption. If you can afford it, people will no longer peer at your neckline or inside your trousers.

ALEKSANDER KACZOROWSKI

Editor in Chief Aspen Review Central Europe

Marching with Women: Then and Now

Women's demonstrations have become one of the most prominent ways of resisting the populist right and the attack on human rights. What are the origins of these protests? What do they mean, and how do they impact society and politics?



In the chilly morning of March 3, 1913, just one day before the inauguration of newly elected President, Woodrow Wilson, close to 8,000 women ascended on Washington DC. The women marched from the Capitol to the White House down Pennsylvania Avenue in a quiet, orderly, and dignified manner. They staged the march—or as they called it the Woman Suffrage Procession—to demand a constitutional amendment to grant women the right to vote. Half a million spectators gathered on the streets, mostly men. Some applauded the march, others ridiculed, harassed, or physically attacked the marchers. The Procession was organized by Alice Paul of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Paul learned the new tactic of public demonstrations from British suffragettes, when she studied at the London School of Economics a few years earlier. The most spectacular part of the event came shortly after the Procession, when more than a hundred women in elaborate costumes performed a Suffrage Pageant titled “Allegory” on the steps of the Treasury Building. The “Allegory” featured the figure of Columbia—the female version of Columbus, who is also the goddess of liberty and the personification of America—gradually joined by the figures of Justice, Charity, Liberty, Hope, and Peace. The performance was accompanied by live orchestra playing the national anthem “Star-Spangled Banner.”

Today, women are marching again in different parts of the world. Women’s demonstrations have become one of the most prominent ways of resisting the populist right and the attack on human rights. What are the origins of these protests? What do they mean, and how do they impact society and politics?

Today, women are marching again in different parts of the world. Women’s demonstrations have become one of the most prominent ways of resisting the populist right and the attack on human rights.

It is tempting to see women’s protests as unprecedented, related to the recent empowerment of women in professions and the political world, especially in developed nations. Headlines such as “The Future Belongs to Women” have appeared for more than a decade, citing women’s dominance among college graduates, the workforce, and the rising numbers of female CEOs, scientists, and political leaders. But women’s mobilization for public action is not new. Recent events such as the Black Protest in Poland, the

Women's March on Washington, or A Day without a Woman all have a history. Although women as a social group have historically occupied subordinate positions in society, this did not prevent them from acting as powerful agents of historical change.

The Feminist Revolution

At the threshold of the 21st century, feminist historian Estelle Freedman wrote about a two-century-long "revolution" that "transformed women's lives." This revolution was unlike any other as instead of "armed struggle it gradually sown seeds of change, infiltrating our consciousness with a simple premise that women are as capable and valuable as men."¹ There was much to celebrate in 2002, when Freedman published her book under the telling title *No Turning Back*. Legal changes in the status of women, educational and professional gains, reproductive rights, and the internationalization of women's movements seemed to become an entrenched part of the political and social landscape. Freedman recognized backlashes and reversals of rights, but believed in the resilience of women's movement. "In the past, feminism grew and thrived because of its flexibility and adaptability," she asserted. "By listening to the voices of all women, it will continue to redefine its politics and broaden its reach."²

Modern feminism grew out of two major developments: capitalist economy and political theories of individual rights. Both emerged in tandem and produced contradictory effects for women.

Feminism has been understood (and misunderstood) in different ways. The term was coined in the 1880s in France to denote supporters of the cause earlier known as the Woman Question. Not all women who participated (or participate) in public life, including female-dominated demonstrations, identify themselves as feminists. But they too have consumed the fruits of feminism by taking on roles outside the household. From a historical perspective, feminism, as Karen Offen suggests, "can be said to encompass both a system of ideas and a movement for sociopolitical change based on a refusal of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society."³ As feminism became a global movement in recent decades, it embraced diversity of women's interests and identities.

“The Separation of Spheres” Sparked Feminism

Modern feminism grew out of two major developments: capitalist economy and political theories of individual rights. Both emerged in tandem and produced contradictory effects for women. The Enlightenment and the French Revolution gave rise to new political discourses of rights and political participation that inspired many social actors, including women and slaves, to argue for inclusion in the definition of citizen. However, the dominant strands of the liberal political theory at the time defined women in terms of difference from men rather than equality. Jean Jacques Rousseau, in particular, argued that female reproductive functions made women incapable of rational thinking, and therefore women inherently could not exercise political rights. Instead, he and his followers chose to rely on the theory of sexual complementarity that assigned women distinct roles in democratic societies – as mothers and nurturers confined to the domestic sphere. Although Rousseau and others explained the exclusion of women from citizenship in medical and scientific terms, their ideas were influenced by the fear of social instability. If women were to be equal citizens—and many elite women in 18th-century Europe demanded just that—what would happen to the maternal and domestic duties that were believed to sustain the social and moral order of the nation?

Ironically, it was “the separation of spheres” based on sexual difference that sparked feminism. The same forces that generated the domestication of women—the Enlightenment and the French Revolution—provided women with tools to demand equality. Already in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft, English writer and philosopher, penned a powerful critique of Rousseau’s ideas she titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, using the same arguments about liberty and equality to include women in the notion and practice of citizenship. Wollstonecraft’s ideas inspired generations of feminists, but

The two world wars formed the backdrop for expanding women’s participation in the public sphere in the 20th century. Work on “the home front” meant entering jobs hitherto reserved for men and changes in sexual mores.

they failed to prevail at the time. Rather, the ideology of “separate spheres” defined the 19th-century societies, and was reinforced by legal codes that excluded women from suffrage, property rights, higher education, professions,

1) Freedman, E. 2002. *No Turning Back: The History of Women and the Future of Feminism*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1.

2) Ibid., 346.

3) Offen, K. 2000. *European Feminisms, 1700-1950*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 20.

4) Peto, A. and Grzebalska, W. “How Hungary and Poland Have Silenced Women and Stifled Human Rights,” 14 October 2016, <http://theconversation.com/how-hungary-and-poland-have-silenced-women-and-stifled-human-rights-66743>

5) Freedman, *No Turning Back*, 12.

6) https://www.women-shistory.org/education-resources/biographies/alice-paul?gclid=EA1a1-QobChMIy7Ot5JWZ1gIVh-Gd-Ch1BFAH9EAAAYASAAEgK_6vD_BwE accessed 9 September 2017

7) Barber, L. G. 2002. *Marching on Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

and custody of children. Of course, such gender division had its limits in practice. Although women were restricted to their supposedly “natural” duties of domesticity and childcare, in reality lower-class women engaged in both domestic work and paid employment outside the household. The industrial revolution that swept the continent during the same time relied on cheap female labor and their unpaid work at home.

The feminist agenda from now on included not only advocating for equal rights but also for cultural changes, and for more effective laws against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape.

Women Participation after the Two World Wars

Prior to the First World War, suffrage was the main goal of many women’s associations. Feminists believed that if women were granted the vote, they would change politics, because of their alleged higher morality and peaceful inclinations. When women in many European states and the US were finally granted the right to vote after the First World War, it soon became clear that suffrage did not create a major political overhaul, and women continued to occupy subordinate positions in society. Still, women’s suffrage eventually did change politics by expanding the participation of women in the public sphere from which all women, regardless of class or political views, benefited and continue to benefit.

The two world wars formed the backdrop for expanding women’s participation in the public sphere in the 20th century. Work on “the home front” meant entering jobs hitherto reserved for men, economic independence, and changes in sexual mores. Although when the war was over, governments usually encouraged women to return to domesticity, wartime gains proved enduring and generated more feminist demands.

Another powerful force that shaped women’s experiences was socialism. In the early 19th century, European socialists went further than any other political movement in insisting on the legal equality of the sexes. Almost a century later, after the Russian Revolution, the new Soviet state built on Marxist-Leninist brand of socialism introduced gender equality from above. The Soviet Union and later Eastern European states were the first to implement such legal equality in an effort to build a more egalitarian and non-capitalist society. In practice, however, gender difference remained an enduring

social distinction in communist states, attesting to some of the most glaring contradictions of the communist project. Despite official policies of equality, definitions of manhood and womanhood still relied on Enlightenment notion of “natural” gender characteristics, which were believed to be independent of political and social circumstances. The communist push for women to join the workforce and engage in public life coexisted with more traditional assumptions of female maternal and nurturing qualities. As a result, the emphasis on motherhood remained a strong feature of communist societies, and was reflected in the gender-segregated workplace and the official glorification of women’s maternal duties as a way to foster stable families and a new generation of socialist citizens.

The Changing Feminist Agenda

In contrast to Eastern Europe, women in Western Europe and the US faced legal restrictions on property rights, divorce, education, and professional work until the early 1970s. Second-wave feminism that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s grew from the social and political upheavals of the Long Sixties, and embraced a more diverse agenda. Feminists now argued that legal and political rights were not sufficient to achieve equality. Rather, they targeted deeply-rooted cultural prejudices and socialization patterns. The new term “sexism” encompassed a plethora of cultural and structural mechanisms that kept women in subordinate positions. The feminist agenda from now on included not only advocating for equal rights but also for cultural changes, and for more effective laws against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape.

So far there are few signs that women are ready to give up the gains of the feminist revolution. Quite the opposite.

As feminist movements grew in power, so did their different orientations. While liberal feminists, inspired by Betty Friedan’s famous book *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963, demanded legal changes and equal access to male-dominated institutions, including the government and the army, radical feminists rejected participation in what they saw as inherently patriarchal structures, and argued for a radical redefinition of the entire social order. Third-wave feminism, which arguably started in the early 1990s, recognized not only the diversity of women’s interests but also the need for an intercultural dialogue. Although modern feminism is rooted in the Western

tradition, resistance to male power had existed in other societies and women across the globe had questioned inequalities and social hierarchies in myriad ways. Since the 1990s, feminist strategies changed to account for cultural differences and local economic conditions. Overcoming poverty, for example, has become one of the foremost goals for many internationally-oriented feminist groups.

There are important new elements in women's protests today that set them apart from past events such as the Suffrage Procession or the female-dominated workers' strikes.

International institutions such as the United Nations proved instrumental to boosting gender perspective and feminism as a global phenomenon. In 1995, the Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the UN-sponsored Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, proclaimed that women's rights were human rights. As a result, watchdog agencies such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch expanded their definition of human rights from basic civic rights to issues such as sexual violence, forced sterilization, and female genital mutilation. The current feminist movements engage in intense international cooperation that also recognizes the intersection of gender identities with those of race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

What's Next?

The current attack on women's rights by right-wing populists is a reaction against the two hundred years of the feminist revolution. Understandably, the anti-feminist campaigns and policies have prompted many commentators, including feminists, to project apocalyptic visions that starkly contrast with Freedman's assessment of feminism 15 years ago. Recently, Andrea Peto and Weronika Grzebalska identified the anti-feminist agenda of right-wing populist governments in Hungary and Poland as part of a new type of illiberal politics that is deeper and more dangerous than the usual "backlash" experienced in the past: "Illiberalism is not a backlash, after which one can go back to business as usual," they write, "but a new form of governance."⁴ Nevertheless, the suppression of feminist movement can only happen if we assume that all-powerful states are possible and able to exercise control unmitigated by social forces from below. Such view is contradicted by the historical record. So far there are few signs that women are ready to give up the

gains of the feminist revolution. Quite the opposite. Just as the anti-feminist rhetoric and policies become stronger as in the case of the US under Trump, so does women's resistance.

Reproductive Rights Came to Stand for Human Rights

Women's protests today sometimes emerge in the most unexpected places and the high turnout astonishes protest organizers as in the case of the Black Protest (or Black Monday) in Poland in October 2016. When the Polish right-wing government moved to implement a near total ban on abortion and to limit other reproductive rights (such as IVF and contraception), hundreds of thousands of women (and men) came to the streets, most of them dressed in black, to protest the planned legislation. The demonstration mobilized women from all social backgrounds and political orientations, large cities and small towns. Many commentators saw the protest as "new," since Catholic-dominated Poland had not been well known for feminist mass organizing. But the country has a long tradition of women's strikes and demonstrations. Polish women often dominated workers' strikes starting in the early 1880s, through the revolution of 1905, the interwar period, and the communist era, including the massive strikes and hunger marches against the communist government in the early 1980s. These were not "women's strikes" per se, as women did not explicitly organize on behalf of their gender group, but gender identity—especially the appeal to the maternal or consumer role of women—was used as an effective strategy to gain concessions. What was unprecedented in the Black Protest was that women and men mobilized on behalf of women, and that reproductive rights came to stand for human rights. The assault on the right to have an abortion (already severely restricted in Poland) was a powerful symbol of the abuse of power by the state and Church. For many participants, the protest was primarily about human dignity and respect. And this was one of the reasons why it was possible for demonstrators to cross social and political lines.

The Future of Women Depends on Feminist Goals

The Black Protest in Poland achieved its immediate goal. The government withdrew the proposed legislation (at least for the time being). The protest, however, did not divert the Polish government from further strengthening its authoritarian rule in other areas. We do not know to what extent women's

demonstration will help democracies withstand the global populist assault. And even if they do, one can be certain of pitfalls, drawbacks, and conflicts before political changes can be achieved. Still, as Freedman reminds us, “the future of women depends on how we continue to redefine and implement feminist goals.”⁵

In 1913, women did not win the vote. The new president, inaugurated the day after, held congressional hearings on suffrage, but the proposed legislation was rejected. In January 1917, Alice Paul and a handful of other suffragists launched an 18-month picketing of the White House with signs such as “Mr. President: How long must women wait for liberty?”⁶ It took more determination from women and the calamity of the Great War to finally win the vote in 1920. The Suffrage Procession of 1913 contributed to that victory, but more importantly, the suffragists opened the way for other people to claim the space of the American capital (marches on Washington are now an integral part of politics), redefine the meaning of citizenship, and influence policies.⁷

There are important new elements in women’s protests today that set them apart from past events such as the Suffrage Procession or the female-dominated workers’ strikes. These include the use of technology, social media, and the extensive participation of men and families. Yet, the most powerful is the link between women’s protests and human rights. As traditionally “subjugated” people, women—in a personal and symbolic sense—have the power to speak against all inequalities. It is not unsurprising that, for many participants and observers regardless of their gender, women’s marches stand for a set of values and beliefs centered on human solidarity and openness. It is the commitment to these values that, if sustained, will make women’s marches effective in propelling political change.

MAŁGORZATA FIDELIS

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Women in Politics

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Women's representation in Slovak electoral politics, governance, and executive suites has been persistently low and currently displays a downward trend. The Slovak situation is fully comparable with the levels of female representation across all of the so-called transition countries.

Occupancy analysis of managing positions and public offices within major institutions and organizations has clearly shown that the national figures for the women's representation at the top level of public life are straightforwardly low. With the exception of social affairs departments and units as well as the so-called "minor" ministries, women are heavily under-represented in top executive positions.

Such female under-representation in the sites of power, decision-making, influence (and wealth) persisted over the 1990s. At that, the following pattern universally prevailed: the higher the place on the candidate list (with its higher electoral chances), the weaker female representation. The analysis

of partisan structures and their bodies has confirmed the claimed trend that the more significant the partisan job involved, the more modest proportion of women involved.

The Major Reasons for the Indicated Handicap in the Slovak Republic

Female occupancy of leading political positions is markedly disproportional relative to the real number of female members in individual political parties. (Political parties in Slovakia, it might be helpful to notice, are typically distinguished by small membership and as such basically rely for getting elected into the Parliament on their constituencies rather than on their partisan members). To put it metaphorically, the female political involvement in Slovakia follows the “political funnel” principle: women are reasonably well represented as the rank-and-file of their respective political parties with a deplorably dropping trend as one takes a look at the composition of partisan governing bodies and higher-level offices.

To put it metaphorically, the female political involvement in Slovakia follows the “political funnel” principle.

The said political leakage can be tracked down to a series of factors:

1. Differing and differentiating promotion/vertical mobility mechanisms operating inside political structures of separate political parties in Slovakia. It holds for all political parties in the Slovak Republic that “less significant positions (a party’s local organization chairperson, local parliaments – communal politics and public jobs at a district level) are filled through clear-cut and transparent mechanisms and according to definite rules (elections), whereas more prominent posts are occupied pursuant to political bargaining and decisions.” The key criterion for placing a candidate’s name on a party ticket is either his or her popularity with the general public or their high personal profile as a public figure or an outstanding professional. In politics, the publicly known figures, thanks to the media coverage, are, above all, people in senior executive positions. This, understandably enough, goes counter to the equal opportunity principle, putting potential female claimants for top public jobs at a disadvantage as being insufficiently known among the general public.

2. The factor of “dual status” (or personal “doubling” of top partisan positions and leading posts in public policymaking) may, in this perspective, be fairly essential. What is involved here is, in fact, a sort of a vicious circle: “winning” places on party tickets are preferentially reserved for the representatives of top echelons of public administration who are simultaneously wielders of leadership partisan offices, habitually attainable by prominent public figures (on the grounds of election preferences).

3. The regretful consequence of the realities delineated above is that natural, traditional, and social mobility from lower to higher posts (whether within political structures or through involvement in communal politics) stands considerably slimmer chances (at times even a zero chance) of success.

4. Female promotion opportunities in the Slovak Republic are not typically affected by ideological (left/right) bias of a respective political party. These, however, may be significantly cropped depending on the party’s influence, its membership size as well as whether this or that political alignment appears in the election on its own or as a part of a pre-election coalition. The more sizeable the coalition, the slighter are chances of fair female representation on ‘winning’ places of respective party tickets. In both cases, success chances for women through the classical promotion mechanism are also diminished, and so do their career opportunities and motivation to enter politics and shape the public agenda.

5. It is as good for politics as for other sectors of public life that women commonly can only aspire to and occupy financially less attractive posts (for the mere reason that males are less keen on getting them than better rewarded and more high-profile jobs). In other words, women have to remain content with jobs either at lower levels of office or involving responsibility for smaller financial transactions and much less handsomely rewarded ones, too.

Female promotion opportunities in the Slovak Republic are not typically affected by ideological (left/right) bias of a respective political party.

6. Women would be habitually most successful in securing a leadership position in the situations of emergence and formation of new political entities. Yet, once these come to be established political parties, there is hardly any other viable promotion avenue to follow for women than to attempt at a promotion leap, as it were. This lies in adopting the policy of “becoming a publicly known personality beyond political structures” (whether as an

SOURCE) Filadelfiová, J., Radičová, I., Puliš, P.: “Ženy v politike - dôsledok tranzície verejnej politiky?”, S.P.A.C.E., Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny, Bratislava, 2000.

outstanding woman-professional or an otherwise newsworthy figure) in addition to issuing clear-cut signals of your commitment to get involved and make a contribution in the area of public administration and community service. True, there is always another avenue to follow for a woman to gain her career ends. It is the so-called “social-relaxing” road, which amounts to the notoriously known “the right time, right place, and right person or people” recipe for success.

Women turn out to be less motivated in terms of entering electoral politics than men, displaying less will for gaining power, too. This weakened “political drive” may be blamed on a number of reasons:

7. The ways in which high politics is done and the quality of political culture. Many women would give up a significant elected office, because as often as not they perceive high politics in terms of “aggression, vulgarity, ignorance, deception, betrayal, envy, and careerism.” On these grounds, they would dismiss as untoward an environment where, instead of real politics of sorting out citizen’s problems, unbridled politicking reigns supreme. By way of negative examples of the “system’s power and the individual engulfed by it,” there are oftentimes cited women who, for the sake of their career, have chosen to conform to the tough rules of a “men’s world,” eventually metamorphosing into worse political hyenas than their male colleagues.

Women would be habitually most successful in securing a leadership position in the situations of emergence and formation of new political entities.

8. The risks and losses involved (which women tend to feel very strong about) are perceived by them as the price of success in joining electoral politics. These involve abandonment of their profession, profound changes to their lifestyles quite often accompanied by a necessity to move to another city or live separately from their family during workdays, being deprived of leisure and privacy and, most importantly, a loss of entitlement to many welfare benefits. The new, very peculiar environment of top politics is not particularly conducive, if at all, to forming new friendships or finding new social networks. The original social links would gradually get disrupted to leave a woman in a social void. In the Slovak context, informal relationships tend to be all the more important given the poorly functioning professional

structures supposed to assist a politician in his/her work – human resources management, logistics, information system, training and re-training programs, on-going further education with the emphasis on politics and political systems, operation of our public administration and performance of its individual institutions. Women who enter electoral politics and public policymaking can only get first knowledge of the new environment via the notoriously costly and painful trial-and-error method – learning from one’s own mistakes. Thus, dreams of a career in public administration would, with many a woman, fail to outweigh the dish with the listed costs incurred.

The new, very peculiar environment of top politics is not particularly conducive, if at all, to forming new friendships or finding new social networks.

9. The persisting traditionalism, prejudices, and stereotypes. Women in political employment themselves would confirm and perpetuate commonly held assumptions concerning the place and status of women in this country. They would confirm the traditional division of labor, starkly segregating male and female responsibilities as well as (stereo)typical female and male jobs not only in the household but also in the sphere of politics and leadership. Each woman will inevitably find herself between the horns of the dilemma “political career vs. the family and home.” Favoring the former is typically perceived as a deviance from the accepted norm, a benign one at best.

The family and young children remain the chief factor barring female political and public engagement.

10. The analysis of many interviews gives credit to the endurance of traditional gender-based role-types, which tend to be internalized and circulated even by the female politicians themselves. Slovakia being a tradition-abiding country with the prevalence of rural social structures shaping behavioral patterns of its population, it is small surprise that traditional role-oriented behavior is significantly encouraged and pursued. For most of Slovakia’s population, the family is of tremendous value; caring for its members and the home is still assumed to be a woman’s primary mission. Alternative models, naturally, are not to be easily asserted in the midst of such overwhelming support for the traditional values.

11. No major confirmation has been reported to the over-optimistic hypothesis that the increasing modernization of the most immediate environment

might raise rates of female representation in political offices and public administration. It used to be hoped that a more liberal environment would prove more generous to executive women. And yet, the monitoring of communities with women heads has unambiguously pointed to the fact that female leaders, paradoxically enough, have been elected in more traditional communities. The only differential criteria seems to be the community's size; women have been elected as leaders across smaller communities with a high percentage of elderly inhabitants and therefore with a considerably limited choice of candidates for the vacancy.

12. It seems at times that the mechanisms filtering female aspirants for political and executive posts are other than a competition of merits, abilities, and platforms. Very often, women would only be given the aspired post in the absence of any male claimant or when the male applicant demonstrates markedly inferior qualifications to those of his female co-runner.

13. Family responsibilities, which even women in politics regard as their top priority, tend to attenuate responsibilities following from political and public commitments. They are universally and commonly perceived as a major obstacle barring access to politics, irrespective of the woman's political position, partisan affiliations, or membership.

14. A woman cannot afford to enter politics without her spouse's consent, as well as that of other family members. Most often, she would be allowed to take this step on condition that "the family is not hurt." For these women, then, entering politics suggests adding further burdens to their many household chores and family responsibilities (and to their gainful employment imperatives on the local level). An unqualified support on the part of the male partner has been but rarely reported.

Each woman will inevitably find herself between the horns of the dilemma "political career vs. the family and home."

15. The partner's qualified consent to his wife's entering politics or public policymaking hides further plausible explanations shedding light on women's low engagement in these sectors of public life; they simply fear prospective family conflicts (the husband might get angry with her or refuse to tolerate her absence from the home) and, frankly speaking, are mistrustful of their spouses' capability of taking over and reliably shouldering part of the family and household responsibilities.

The monitoring of communities with women heads has unambiguously pointed to the fact that female leaders, paradoxically enough, have been elected in more traditional communities.

16. In Slovakia, politics is commonly perceived as a sphere of activities and commitments which are nothing for mothers with young children. This restricting condition has been, on the one hand, declared by executive women and women policymakers themselves, on the other, confirmed by the analysis of the composition of the group of women under consideration. Women to be found in Slovak politics and public policymaking are overwhelmingly single, without children, or with grown-up children. The proportion of women with young children, who are engaged in public affairs and politics on the local level, is somewhat higher.

17. The conflict “family vs. public activism” seems more resolvable on the local level owing to the possibility of staying in daily contact with the family and to the support and help extended by the usually extensive family networks (parents, parents-in-law, and other family relations).

Women to be found in Slovak politics and public policymaking are overwhelmingly single, without children, or with grown-up children.

18. Caring for the household would be quite often partly taken over by family members, though the bulk of the chores remains the wife’s weekend responsibility. This, understandably, piles on additional (and disproportional) strain on a publicly active woman.

19. Cases have been reported where women’s public activities have had very adversely affected her family members (gossip, verbal offences, disrupted communication with neighbors and former friends, etc.). As soon as a woman enters a public office, the life of her entire family is publicized (home visits of the constituency happening anytime and so on).

20. Women respondents reported minimal family tradition of political activism; the Slovak high politics boasts only one such instance, whereas the communal level has shown more instances of the “political bug” running in the family blood. (“My grandfather used to be the local leader.”) Women would seldom cite the political problems in the parents’ family as a plausible

trigger. (“Father’s problems with the Communist Party...”) Within the male sample, however, such negative family experience with politics would feature prominently and be declared immediately responsible for the man’s entering of politics.

A woman in political employment, therefore, has to cope with the responsibilities for the family and political career imperatives, which is easier said than done.

Responsibility for the Family and Political Career Imperatives

The problem of low female representation in politics is not, in the context of Slovakia, so much due to legislative gaps as to the commonly held perceptions (tenacity of deeply entrenched prejudices and stereotypes about male and female social roles).

There are no legal barriers in Slovak legislation that would prevent women from entering the decision-making and holding governing posts. The right of the Slovak woman to freely choose and have a political career has never been challenged. At the same time, however, it is expected of the woman in Slovakia that she should not neglect the family and the home. Moreover, women themselves are very reluctant to give up their exceptional place in the family. A woman in political employment, therefore, has to cope with the responsibilities for the family and political career imperatives, which is easier said than done.

The most typical and universal obstacle hampering women’s entry into electoral politics in Slovakia is the family and responsibilities associated with it, which are traditionally viewed as a primarily female domain and “mission.” Political women themselves view them as such. Particularly dismissive reactions condemned the entry of mothers with young children into politics.

By Way of Conclusion

Women’s full participation in public life and decision-making has been acknowledged as complicated, on the one hand by women themselves and by the representative sample of males on the other. The resolution of this democratic deficit is typically left for a woman herself to arrive at (at best, in co-operation with the rest of the family). The question, “How could things be made easier

for women?” ought to be asked not only by individual families but equally by political parties and society at large, because Slovakia has signed several international conventions covering this area, if not for any other reason.

Slovakia’s political parties are far from considering any supportive mechanisms, like adjusting timetables and plans of meetings, in order to integrate women in elective and non-elective positions in the same proportion and at the same levels as men.

Neither does any form of encouragement exist at the general level; no affirmative action measures have been taken so far, despite the fact that these are binding under the relevant ratified international instruments. Quotas to secure fair female representation in politics have not been adopted either. Such steps are typically frowned upon, even by women themselves.

This dismissive attitude to the quotas may be a consequence of the deeply-rooted gender-biased assumptions inherited from the former political regime, with its caricatured pursuit of gender equality and women’s artificial involvement in politics.

Slovakia’s political parties are far from considering any supportive mechanisms, like adjusting timetables in order to integrate women in the same proportion and at the same levels as men.

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COVER STORY
WOMEN
POLITICS
CENTRAL EUROPE
GENDER QUOTA

Women in Central European Politics. Seen but Not Heard?

Less than nineteen percent. Such striking underrepresentation of women in Central European national parliaments can be compared only to the Arab States.



Less than nineteen percent. That is, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union database, the proportion of women in V4 national parliaments, combined. It is less than the world's average of 22.8%. Interestingly enough, there are big differences among Visegrad Group countries: with over 27% of its MPs being women, Poland scores best. However, the average for the V4 is pulled down by Hungary, where women hold 9.6% of seats in the parliament. Such striking underrepresentation of women in Central European national parliaments can be compared only to... the Arab States, where 18.4% of MPs are women.¹

There are other disquieting illustrations of women's position in Central European politics. Since 1989, only three women (Hanna Suchocka, Ewa Kopacz, and Beata Szydło) have led the Polish government (out of the total of 15 prime ministers). In Slovakia, only one woman made it to the top post (Iveta Radičová). And no women have ever held the office of prime minister in Hungary or the Czech Republic. "There have never been any women presidents in the V4 countries, no matter the electoral system," adds Veronika Šprincová, a prominent Czech researcher.²

Let us state it clearly: underrepresentation of women in politics is unequivocally a bad thing. Any meaningful, functioning democracy should aim at achieving closest possible representation of the population in all political bodies. That is, after all, what liberal democracy is about.

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Decisions Made without Women

In most European countries (and Central Europe is not an exception), women constitute roughly half of the population. Of course, one can argue that men can represent women and their views. Theoretically, yes. But politics is not limited to the technical act of conveying the message. Politics is debate, politics is emotion and feelings. On many occasions, women instincts, different from men's instincts, bring added value to the debate. Take the extremely controversial subject of reproductive rights as an example: can anyone imagine a meaningful discussion on this topic without women being present? Well, that is exactly what happens in many Central European countries.

1) Šprincová, V. 2016. *Men in charge: V4 politics still a men's club*. V4Revue.

2) Ibidem.

3) Pavlík, P. *Rozhovory o ženách v politice*. Forum 50%, <http://padesatprocent.cz/cz/rozhovory-o-zenach-v-politice-petr-pavlik> accessed at 21 September 2017.

4) Mateja, A. 2017. *Przecież różową kredką to tylko dziewczyny*. "Instytut Idei", Winter/Spring 2017, nr 12, 28.

5) Davis, N. *Girls believe brilliance is a male trait, research into gender stereotypes shows*. "The Guardian", 27 January 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/jan/26/girls-believe-brilliance-is-a-male-trait-research-into-gender-stereotypes-shows>, accessed at 21 September 2016.

6) Gola, K. 2017. *Analogowy stereotyp kobiety*. „Instytut Idei”, Winter/Spring 2017, nr 12, 86.

Petr Pavlík, a Czech scholar at Charles University in Prague, pointed out that male politicians not only discuss the issues concerning women without women. Worse: they are making decisions “without their better knowledge.”³

Why is that? In the author’s view, it is predominantly because of the cultural DNA of the Central European countries, tradition built over generations. Although we live in the 21st century, in this part of Europe women are still discriminated against, only in more subtle ways – but nearly as efficient as the former, long-gone ways of physical discrimination. It starts in the early years of elementary education. “The differentiated treatment of girls and boys at every stage of their education is not accidental. It is a well-entrenched tradition, based on the social stereotypes reproduced over generations,”

Although we live in the 21st century, in this part of Europe women are still discriminated against, only in more subtle ways – but nearly as efficient as the former, long-gone ways of physical discrimination.

claims Anna Mateja, a publicist specialized in the matter.⁴ Even the smallest of gestures count, like the teacher’s disapproval for boys choosing the color pink while drawing. “Pink? That’s for girls,” Mateja quotes authentic reaction from a certain Polish school.

Cultural Reasons

In most pre-schools and kindergartens, girls are automatically given dolls and mini-kitchens, boys get cars and castles. The more important stuff. Surely, such phenomena is not only limited to Poland nor to the Central European countries. It happens everywhere - as a recent study published in the US proves.⁵ The study in question demonstrates that young children are particularly vulnerable to the psychological imprint, like the idea that brilliance is more common in men. The point is, Mateja and other scholars say, that this kind of brainwashing is particularly widespread in our region due to the cultural reasons.

Later in the educational and professional pipeline, the pink crayon ceases to be the problem. Other things are: even in the start-up environment of the IT industry, the most modern branch of the economy, young women suffer heavy patronizing. Kasia Gola, a young entrepreneur and graduate of the AGH (one of the best-known universities of technology in Poland), recalls her own experiences from the start-up she cofounded - her male colleagues

would find it appropriate to joke about the only programming skill women should possess: washing-machine programming.⁶ Such anecdotic situations recall a relatively unknown story from 1891, when a certain Maria Skłodowska, a young and ambitious Polish physicist, finally gave up applying for a research post at the University of Cracow. Her candidature was refused many times, obviously for no other reason than her gender. Fortunately for her (and for the science), she was accepted by the University of Paris - Sorbonne. 10 years later she won the Nobel Prize in Physics, followed by a 1911 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

7) Media bez kobiet. Ekspertki.org, <http://ekspertki.org/wiecej-o-ekspertki-org/> accessed at 21 September 2017.

8) 1 Cor 14: 34, 35 (see: http://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?bible_chapter=14&id=53 accessed at 21 September 2017.

9) Fuszara, M. 2017. *Wielkie nieobecne*. "Instytut Idei", Winter/Spring 2017, nr 12, 56.

The Absence of Women in Politics in Central Europe is Interlinked with Religion

The deeply entrenched discrimination of women is reflected in the Polish media too. A few years ago an activist group Ekspertki.org published the findings of a media study conducted between April 2014 and March 2015.⁷ In this study, all TV and radio opinion-making programs were analyzed. As it turned out, out of 644 guests invited to these programs, only 126 were women. Worse still, some men have been invited on multiple occasions. Authors of the study counted the number of appearances: all in all, 3206 for men, 493 for women. Only 13% of all TV appearances!

10) Šprincová, V. *Men in charge: V4 politics still a men's club*. *V4Review*, 2 August 2016, <http://visegradrevue.eu/men-in-charge-v4-politics-still-a-mens-club/> accessed at on 20 September 2017.

The cultural roots of the relative absence of women in politics in Central Europe are closely interlinked—to the point of being indistinguishable—with the context of religion, a powerful culture-creating factor in this part of the world. It is hard to overestimate the influence of Roman Catholicism on the formation of the Polish cultural DNA. In the living tradition of the Polish Catholic church (understood as the whole community of believers, not only

The cultural roots of the relative absence of women in politics in Central Europe are closely interlinked with the context of religion, a powerful culture-creating factor in this part of the world.

the hierarchy), women have been always idolized in a very specific way, illustrated by the admiration of Mary, the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. The Roman Catholic version of Christianity rather clearly defines the model role for women: mothers and wives, sometimes saints, achieving sanctity through utter subordination, sacrifice, fidelity, and acceptance of their role. Apparently, Roman Catholic Church takes the word of the Bible seriously: "Women

are to remain quiet in the assemblies, since they have no permission to speak: theirs is a subordinate part, as the Law itself says. If there is anything they want to know, they should ask their husbands at home: it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly.”⁸

An Obligatory Quota System Could Break a Trend

Because women are so strongly identified with motherhood and household-keeping, the general public instinctively expects them to focus on children and daily chores before engaging into any sort of public activity. This unspoken expectation is so strong that even ambitious women, those who try to enter the political arena, feel compelled to be good mothers and wives first, politicians second. “It is reflected in public opinion polls. Asked why women are underrepresented in politics, both Polish men and women point out to the fact that household chores are distributed unevenly and that the obligation to merge many different roles, put on women shoulders, is the biggest obstacle to the equality in politics,” says Professor Małgorzata Fuszara, renowned researcher in gender studies and Council of Europe expert.⁹

There is only one way to break this trend. Central European democracies need a top-down intervention in the form of changes in the electoral law: the introduction of the obligatory quota system.

Such approach is often criticized, mostly by men (but not only). In the Czech Republic, the leader of the second biggest coalition party, Andrej Babiš, called gender quotas “nonsense.” Babiš’s fellow deputy prime minister added that any gender quotas would be “anti-constitutional.”¹⁰ The main argument of those who oppose the quota system is the following: women should not be artificially pushed into politics, all candidacies in any elections must be merit-based, not sex-based. Some women active in politics tend to say that their electoral success was their own, build on hard work and right ideas. Opponents of the quota system also note that quota system limits voters’ rights – their freedom of deciding whom they wish to vote for.

Central European democracies need a top-down intervention in the form of changes in the electoral law: the introduction of the obligatory quota system.

Poland Is a Leader in Women's Participation in Politics

However, these arguments cannot hide the simple truth: quota system works. Women, Fuszara says, should actively and relentlessly fight for it. "The belief that the equality of men and women in politics will happen naturally, by itself, is groundless," she writes.¹¹

Out of V4 countries, it has been introduced in Poland. Polish quota system requires that no less than 35% of female (or male) candidates have to be on the ballot paper. As a result, Poland stays above Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia in terms of women participation in politics (27% of all MPs are women). Some type of gender quota is used in 10 out of the 11 EU countries where women make up for more than 30% of their national parliaments.¹²

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One should note, though, that even the quota system can be circumvented if it is badly constructed. In many cases, the change in the electoral law (the one introducing the quotas) does not specify how the positions on the list should be filled in. In consequence, few women are given the top positions, resulting in weaker electoral results for women than for men. To prevent this, the quota system (the minimal number of female candidates) should be accompanied by some provisions specifying the rules related to the ballot list composition. Some parties, like the Civic Platform of Poland, introduced such "ZIP fastener" mechanism (as it is sometimes called) internally and on voluntary basis. In the 2015 parliamentary elections, 41% of all the top three positions on Civic Platform's ballot lists was given to women. A country record, so far. Still, it is not a reason to celebrate. According to the Polish Statistical Office, the population ratio of men to women was 100:107 in 2015.¹³ In plain language: there are noticeably more women than men in Poland. Not so in the parliament, nor even in the biggest liberal party. Again, one cannot help quoting the biblical: "Women are to be seen, not heard."

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11) Fuszara, M. 2017. *Wielkie nieobecne*. "Instytut Idei", Winter/Spring 2017, nr 12, 56.

12) Šprincová, V. *Men in charge: V4 politics still a men's club*. V4Revue, 2 August 2016, <http://visegradrevue.eu/men-in-charge-v4-politics-still-a-mens-club/> accessed at on 20 September 2017.

13) Central Statistical Office of Poland, Structure of the population by 2015, <http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/population/population/structure-of-the-population-by-2015,7,1.html> accessed at 20 September 2017.

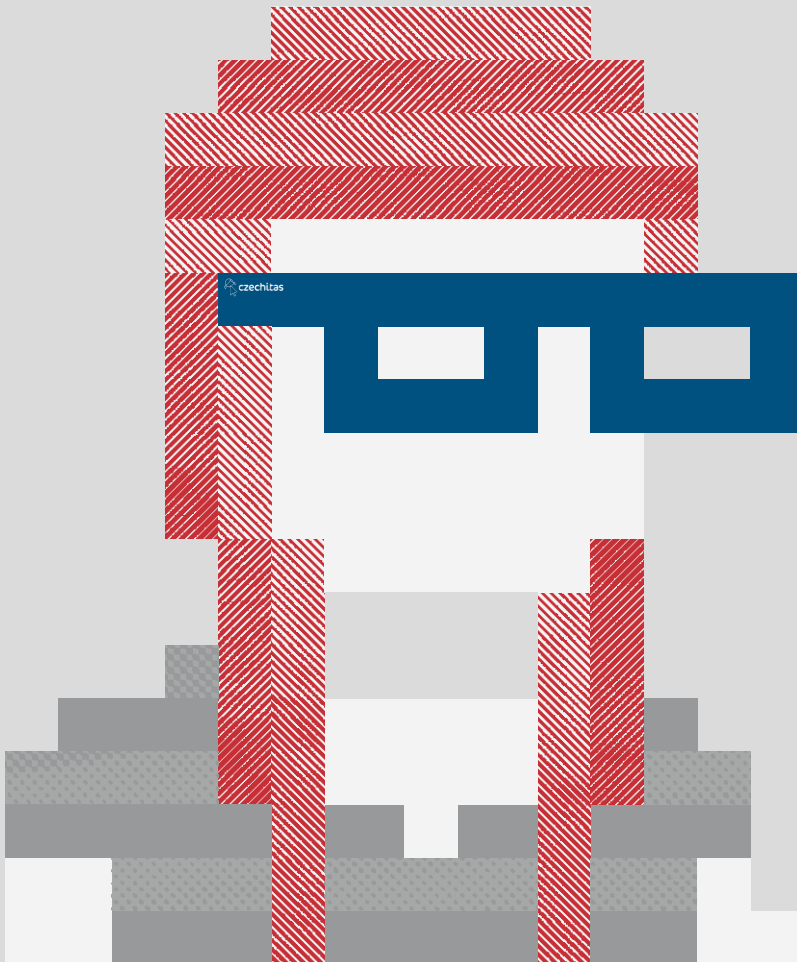


ASPEN.REVIEW
DITA PRIKRYLOVÁ

COVER STORY
WOMEN
IT
CZECHITAS
GENDER DIVERSITY



Czechitas, or Why There Is a Lack of IT in Women Rather Than of Women in IT



Women in IT, or rather, those missing from IT, have recently been at the center of global debate. Women find it difficult to break through the glass ceiling in politics and business, and since the 1980s their share in male-dominated fields such as information technology has actually been decreasing.

Debate has focused on the need to appeal to and cultivate new talent currently missing from IT, on the potential benefits of gender-diverse teams for increasing companies' competitiveness, as well as on the urgent need to increase digital literacy among the population as a whole. Those who appreciate the positive contribution women have made to information technology are examining the reasons why there are so few of them in the sector in order to identify the obstacles that may be preventing women from being involved in IT and to find ways of motivating women to seek training and careers in the sector.

Empirical studies carried out at Stanford University demonstrate that gender-diverse teams perform better in the long-term compared with single gender teams, and consistently generate better ideas.

Why Do We Need Women in IT?

Top managers in most companies, national and supranational institutions, and society as a whole agree on the vital need to empower women in top positions as well as in sectors where they are badly needed but currently constitute a minority.

— Women in business represent new potential for innovation since they bring a fresh perspective to problem-solving, product design, and user-friendliness. Empirical studies carried out at Stanford University demonstrate that gender-diverse teams perform better in the long-term compared with single gender teams, and consistently generate better ideas.¹

— Moreover, statistics from Deloitte² show that, on average, women make 85% of all purchasing decisions, and use apps³ more frequently than men. In terms of increased competitiveness it thus makes sense to involve women from the early stage of product development.

1) Burt, Ronald. 2000. "Structural Holes versus Network Closure as Social Capital" Stanford.edu. (<http://snap.stanford.edu/class/cs224w-readings/burt00capital.pdf>).

2) Deloitte Insights. 2011. "Diversity as an engine of innovation" Deloitte.com (<https://dupress.deloitte.com/dup-us-en/deloitte-review/issue-8/diversity-as-an-engine-of-innovation.html>).

3) Parks Associates. 2012. "Parks Associates research shows women dominate digital media usage in the connected home" Parksassociates.com. (<http://www.parksassociates.com/blog/article/park-spr2012-cdp-women>).

4) European Commission. 2013. "Digital Agenda: Bringing more women into EU digital sector would bring €9 billion annual GDP boost, EU study shows" Europa.eu. (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/bringing-more-women-eu-digital-sector-would-bring-€9-billion-annual-gdp-boost>).

5) As early as in the 19th century, Ada Lovelace wrote an algorithm for a computer (that did not exist at the time). The first computer "bug" and compiler was also invented by a woman—Grace Hopper—as early as 1945. One year later, six women did the programming on the first electronic computer, ENIAC.

What happened to women in computer science?

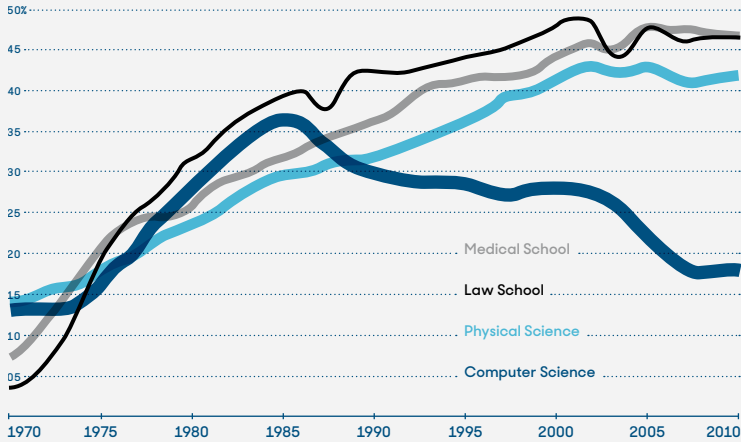


CHART 1: Percentage of women majors, by field.
Source: National Foundation, American Bar Association, American Association of Medical Colleges

Despite the fact that the first programmers were female, the female to male ratio in IT has declined rapidly since 1984 when personal computers became household items.

- In fact, a European Commission study⁴ has estimated the effect of greater involvement of women in the digital economy within the European Union in terms of GDP growth at 9 million EUR.
- There is increasingly widespread recognition of the fact that loyalty is a characteristic female trait, and therefore attracting female staff can reduce turnover and foster longer-term employer-employee relations.
- Women are regarded as having more empathy and being more communicative, which results in stereotyping both women and men in the education process. In team work, in turn, this results in a more seamless working environment.
- Last but not least, women represent a fresh source of new talent that is desperately needed in the IT labor market. The latest data show that the Czech Republic is currently short of over 30,000 IT specialists, forcing employers to recruit candidates from abroad and raising awareness that women constitute a huge source of new labor.

Why Are There No Women in IT (Yet)?

Despite the fact that the first programmers were female⁵ and that in the 1980s women comprised over 35% of computer science students, the female to male ratio in IT has declined rapidly since 1984 when personal computers became household items.

Nowadays there are 29 women⁶ for every 1,000 graduates with IT-related degrees, and only four of them work in programming. The main reason for this decrease is the way personal computers have been marketed. Like all toys, they were targeted at a single gender, with boys initially being the ones supposed to play with computers. TV adverts created the typical profile of an IT specialist, with the image of a nerd as the dominant stereotype in people's minds. As a logical consequence of this image, women fail to identify with this role and tend to aspire to other professions after completing their secondary education.

6) European Commission. 2013. "Digital Agenda: Bringing more women into EU digital sector would bring €9 billion annual GDP boost, EU study shows" Europa.eu. (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/bringing-more-women-eu-digital-sector-would-bring-€9-billion-annual-gdp-boost>).

7) This is known as the Queen Bee Effect - women who have reached a position of authority through their own efforts defend their territory, but then find have to defend their status vis a vis their female subordinates.

8) <https://www.czechitas.cz/cs/blog>

What Is the Society's Response to the Lack of Women in IT and Why Is It Inadequate?

Over the past decade, there has been a decline in interest in IT education and training and employment among women. There have been many attempts to identify the obstacles to women's entry into IT and several ways of removing them have been proposed. Attempts have been made to motivate women to aspire to an education and career in the sector, using both soft instruments such as public discussions aimed at changing the stereotypical view of women as well harder measures like the introduction of quotas and affirmative action favoring women in job interviews and support programs.

The enforcement of gender diversity breeds anxiety and the discussions in the Western world have turned into a game of political correctness.

Although many of these actions are well-intentioned, they often produce rather unfortunate results. The enforcement of gender diversity breeds anxiety and the discussions in the Western world have turned into a game of political correctness. The purpose of positive discrimination is to create opportunities for a particular group that would not be able to access them under normal circumstances. Admittedly, anyone—be they male or female—has equal access to an IT education or choice of career. However, women tend to make less use of these opportunities because of deep-seated prejudices,

stereotyping, and barriers of their own making. On the other hand, affirmative action has some negative impacts, too. It is an extremely delicate tool that must be used properly. It is justified, provided that it is seen as a short-term measure that aims to disrupt the routine of the single-sex cycle. In the long run, however, internal company programs targeting only women, quotas, and the privileging of female candidates in job interviews are unfair artificial constructs. They are harmful to women already employed by a company⁷ and can result in attracting a pool of weaker candidates. Ultimately, these are merely one-off policies that do nothing to change women's internal motivation, overcome the barriers preventing them from entering the sector, and they are mystifying IT and IT specialists.

Why Is Education the Only Possible Answer?

First of all, we have to be clear about what must be the focus of social change. All the policies listed above are responses to a structural inequality and they raise questions about the issue. That is a good thing. However, the question that really needs asking is not “Why do we need women in IT?” but rather “Why do women need IT?” Technological growth affects the way we live, communicate, and work. Over the coming decades, up to 60% of existing jobs will be lost to automation; indeed, even today the demands for a minimum of basic computer literacy in nearly all jobs are on the rise and becoming a necessity. Women working at post office counters, in marketing departments, and social services will have no option but to retrain. Women cannot afford to remain on the sidelines. And they should not want to, either. IT offers creative, highly flexible, and financially attractive work with long-term career prospects.

The question that really needs asking is not “Why do we need women in IT?” but rather “Why do women need IT?”

This is precisely the reason Czechitas, an organization that educates women and inspires them to seek IT careers, was established in 2014. It strives to demonstrate that IT is an interesting area of work that need not necessarily be difficult nor, more importantly, be limited to one gender. Initially established to provide female students in Brno with an opportunity to try their hand at programming, it now aims to achieve major social change. The first weekend courses for working women aged 20 to 40 already showed

that the concept of teaching IT skills targeting a single group, i.e. women, brings fruit. We created an environment in which women were not afraid to ask seemingly trivial questions, where women programmers were regarded as normal, indeed attractive, and where women had opportunities to design web pages and to discover that it is not as hard as they had imagined. We have removed the barrier of the fear of failure, demystified IT, and disproved false notions about the IT environment being limited to one gender. We have equipped women with the tools to enable them to pursue further education, and within a year or two we have trained brand-new candidates for IT jobs who have come from completely different fields. We have created stories of women who have regained their confidence after maternity leave, using their newly-gained qualifications to apply for part-time jobs in IT. We can share stories of women with degrees in social studies, who had worked as hair-dressers or as personal assistants to company directors, and who have been spurred by our course and their own studies into IT developer jobs. We have stories of women who had worked with tables in MS Word in marketing departments but now use data analytics and can reformat newsletter templates in HTML in their new jobs. Stories of women who have created their own webpages and have launched their own businesses using their new-found self-confidence. And stories of young women who, after leaving secondary school, have gone on to study IT to degree level.

How Was It Perceived in the Male-Dominated World?

In the four years of our existence we have come a long way, learning a great deal about education, women's motivations, and about ourselves. Our first programming courses were community-based. Many volunteers and IT specialists who are still committed to our shared vision have devoted their weekends to teaching women and children. What has surprised us was the hugely positive perception of our activities in the male-dominated world. Sharing skills, which is common in technical communities, has generated great motivation and social impact in educating women who are new to IT.

It has been clear from the start that there was a huge potential for growth in terms of themes, forms, location, and target groups for our courses, and many companies have understood the potential of new talent and have shown interest in the women who have graduated from our courses. In 2015, we received the Social Impact Award and started to focus more on

the long-term sustainability of our endeavor and on the independence of Czechitas. We have widened our portfolio of courses to include a whole range of technologies and IT areas and, jointly with Keboola, have developed data analytics courses, which are now in the public domain and are being organized in Asia, USA, Great Britain, Australia, and Africa. We have also realized that thinking about choosing a future profession should begin at an earlier age. That is why we have launched our Programming Academy project, which trains teachers and children in primary and secondary schools. We are introducing teachers to programming curricula for after-school clubs. After attending our summer school, a week-long camp where they could discover what IT is and what it is not, many girls who had previously not known what they wanted to study opted for IT. An admirable 80% of the participants have chosen IT-focused university degrees. Our endeavors have also been noted abroad. Our educational activities abroad have been supported by a German company which has also helped us set up local branches through the #czechitasglobal project. Our work has been recognized by the European Union awarding us the European Citizen Prize in 2016, and were the first organization in East-Central Europe that Google.org has given a grant to develop a Digital Academy, our first retraining course for women. We are known as far away as the other side of the Atlantic: in Texas in 2017 we received the SXSW Community Service Award.

An explanation for the insufficient interest in IT jobs among women is the stereotyping and mystifying of the sector.

What Have We Learned?

At the time of writing (late 2017), we are running 150 training seminars a year, 7,000 women have graduated from our courses with hundreds of them having already gained—and thousands coming close to gaining—new or better IT jobs. Czechitas now represents an educational ecosystem that involves a variety of forms of alternative education, from workshops, evening courses, hands-on work on real-life projects, lectures, to mentoring, internships in companies, online courses, as well as community study groups.

There is a whole range of biological, structural, and socio-cultural reasons why women pursue a variety of career choices and, as a result, do not end up in IT. An explanation for the insufficient interest in IT jobs among

women is the stereotyping and mystifying of the sector, the image of IT-professionals created by marketing, as well as a lack of self-confidence and information with regard to IT. It turns out that the mold of the stereotype can be broken by showing inspirational examples of women in IT and by training that overcomes knowledge barriers. Our study Women in IT[®] has revealed that women are often put off IT by the way they are brought up and educated, mostly by men.

Are We on the Threshold of an Ideal World?

Providing services such as education to a limited group of people does not constitute positive discrimination. All it does is make it possible to adjust the environment to a particular target group so that it can deliver demonstrably better results than the existing systems. After some time, once a woman has acquired the necessary skills to work as junior IT specialist, she can enter the labor market, empowered to compete with men in fair competition: without prejudice but also without any allowances having to be made, based only on the skills, knowledge, cultural fit, and values each individual can offer.

On our journey we have also become aware of the obstacles that remain: (1) impatient companies that expect an immediate supply of new talent and are not willing to invest time, energy, and money into training and educating new people; (2) prejudice *vis-à-vis* IT specialists, women in the IT sector in general; and, last but not least, (3) independence and sustainability of our non-profit, community based but financially self-sufficient organization. Nevertheless, these are not insurmountable obstacles. These are challenges that make our struggle for a growing number of women in IT even more exciting. We look forward to many more success stories.



We invite the alumni of Aspen Young Leader Programme to present their projects, thoughts and inspiration in Aspen Review. Aspn.me/AYLP

DITA PŘIKRYLOVÁ

is the founder of the non-profit organization Czechitas, which inspires and trains women in information technology. She is a graduate in systems engineering and applied information science and has worked as an IT risk specialist and data analyst. In 2016 she made the *Forbes* list of “30 below 30” and has been named as one of the 75 most influential women in the Czech Republic. In 2017 she was awarded the Community Service Award SXS.W.com in Texas. | Photo: Lukáš Cetera



Merkel's Mean Girls

Angela Merkel has built her career around female advisors and undermined the old boys' network in the process.

Matthew Qvortrup Having won her fourth consecutive election victory—albeit with a reduced number of votes—Merkel is set to govern Europe's largest economy for another term. How has this most unlikely of political leaders succeeded in transforming the once male dominated conservative and Christian CDU (Christian Democratic Union) into a centrist party? Answer: Largely in close co-operation with a close-knit group of predominantly female advisors.

German Media have talked about “Girls Camp” when describing the cabal surrounding Merkel. In some ways such reporting is always in danger of generating sensationalist hype without substance. Merkel is no traditional feminist. And yet, it is undeniable that *Die Kanzlerin*, as Merkel is called, relies more heavily on female advisors than even many other women politicians.

Merkel's Girls Look after Her

Since long before coming to power in 2005, Merkel—who is 63—has relied on Beate Baumann. The 54-year-old Cambridge graduate has been Merkel's Chief of Staff since 1995, the year she became Secretary of State for the Environment.

“I need someone who can look after me,” Merkel reportedly said. Her then staff of mostly male civil servants treated the new minister with ill-disguised condescension. Merkel's colleague Christian Wulff—who later



became president of Germany (2010-2012)—recommended Baumann. This was the beginning of the strongest partnership in modern German history.

Baumann, who has never given interviews, is Merkel's equal. Thus, when Merkel was reeling under pressure at one of her first international conferences, and seemed ready to shed a tear, Frau Baumann took her to task and applied her trademark tough love approach to her boss: "Get your act together woman," Baumann hissed. Merkel did as she was told. Yet, the two keep a professional distance, and address each other as using the formal *Sie* rather than the informal *Du* (you). Like Merkel, Baumann has no children.

Baumann is not the only "woman behind the woman." Since 2002, Merkel has relied on the advice of Eva Christiansen. The 47-year-old economist and mother of one has been Merkel's main speechwriter, spin doctor, and problem solver. The youthful-looking blonde is often credited with inventing the "Merkel Sound," the slightly mumbling and non-threatening style of talking that characterize the German chancellor.

Merkel is no traditional feminist. And yet, it is undeniable that *Die Kanzlerin*, as Merkel is called, relies more heavily on female advisors than even many other women politicians.



While Baumann and Christiansen belong to the innermost circle of the *Kanzleramt* (the Chancellery), there are other powerful women around Merkel. Defense Minister and mother-of-seven (!) Ursula von der Leyen (front-runner to be Merkel's successor) and the CDU Party's vice-president Julia Klöckner (a former beauty queen who is rumored to be Merkel's preferred crown princess) are among the most influential politicians in Germany.

Of course, Merkel also takes advice from male advisors, her foreign policy advisor, the diplomat Christoph Heusgen, and her economic advisor, Professor Lars-Hendrik Rölller, provide technical advice and expertise in difficult negotiations but they do not belong to the innermost circle of Merkel's trusted confidants.

The Demise of the Altar Boys

"Nah, she can't do it," was the late Helmut Kohl's dismissive remark when he heard that Angela Merkel wanted to become party leader and hence candidate for the chancellorship in 2000. A few weeks before, the woman whom the former *Bundeskanzler* called *mein Mädchen* (my girl) had undercut him and his successor Wolfgang Schäuble by writing an op-ed in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in which she distanced herself from Kohl and criticized her former mentor for having received illegal party donations.

Back then, the CDU was ruled mainly by white Catholic males from the southwest of Germany. For Kohl it was a natural state of affairs that the next leader would be found among one of the younger conservative Catholics. The names Friedrich Merz, Roland Koch, and Jürgen Rüttgers are unknown to most non-German readers. These old-fashioned conservatives were prominent members of what was known as the Altar Boy Generation [*Generation Messdiener*] and felt leading the CDU was their birthright.

The CDU was ruled mainly by white Catholic males from the southwest of Germany. For Kohl it was a natural state of affairs that the next leader would be found among one of the younger conservative Catholics.

These politicians held traditional view of women's role as *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* [church, kitchen, and children] - roughly the equivalent of English "barefoot and pregnant." In addition to these views, the Altar Boys were highly skeptical of immigration and were defenders of the superiority of German *Leitkultur*. Rüttgers infamously summed up his preferred policy as "more children and fewer Indians," or *Kinder statt Inder*, as the slogan runs in German.

These men were already successfully running some of the largest of Germany's sixteen states and everybody expected them to take over after Helmut Kohl. Back then, no woman had held more than a symbolic post. Indeed, Merkel herself was regarded as a token female when she became minister for children and women in 1990.

The Direct Effect on Public Policies

The rise to power of Angela Merkel, a Protestant female from the east of Germany, not only spelled the demise of *Die Messdiener*. One by one (and with a sub-

One by one, Merkel and her advisors outmaneuvered the Catholic old-boys network using means reminiscent of the movie *Mean Girls*.

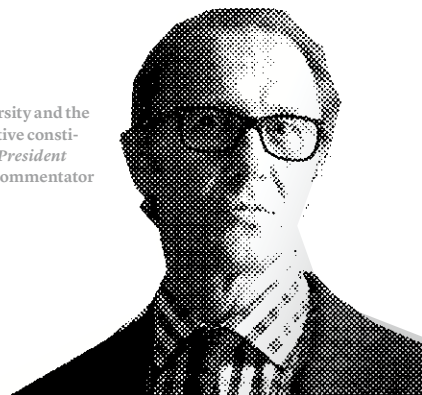
stantial amount of Machiavellian touch), Merkel and her advisors outmaneuvered the Catholic old-boys network using means reminiscent of the movie *Mean Girls*. While outwardly supportive and friendly, Merkel, Christiansen, and Baumann were able to use charm and contacts in the media to run stories that undermined the credibility of the self-appointed custodians of Catholicism.

The prominent position of women in Merkel's inner circle has a direct effect on a number of public policies, such as measures to help female-run start-ups, targets to get more female members of a company, free daycare places for children over 12 months. However, the main effect has not been reflected in concrete policies but in a greater place for women in German public life. This was unheard of before Merkel became Chancellor.

Having given Merkel another four years at the helm, German girl-power is set to continue. It is part of Merkel's style of governing to prepare meticulously; to understand how her opponents think. When preparing for her first meeting with Donald Trump she told her staff: "I've been reading *Playboy Magazine* lately – to understand Donald Trump." What that says about Merkel—and about Trump—is for the readers to decide.

MATTHEW QVORTRUP

is professor of applied political science and international relations at Coventry University and the author of *Angela Merkel: Europe's Most Influential Leader*. He is an expert on comparative constitutional engineering and European Politics. He has previously worked as member of *President Obama's Special Envoy Team* in Africa (2009-2010). Professor Qvortrup is a frequent commentator for the BBC and writes regularly for *Bloomberg*. | Photo: Michaela Danelová, Eonomia



At the Thought of Poland Leaving the EU I Get Shivers down My Spine

Recently there was a march of the National Movement in Warsaw. When I looked at the reports, I had an impression that history had come full circle. I'm terrified by the total lack of reflection on the part of the authorities and people identifying with the ideas which had led to terrible crimes—says Polish film director Agnieszka Holland in conversation with Łukasz Grzesiczak.

ŁUKASZ GRZESICZAK: In what circumstances did you decide to film Olga Tokarczuk's book? *Spoor* appeared on cinema screens already under the Law and Justice rule, where the Minister of the Environment is an avid hunter and despite warnings of the European Commission he is cutting down trees in the Białowieża Forest. Many viewers perceived your latest production as an anti-government manifesto.

AGNIESZKA HOLLAND: Actually, Minister Jan Szyszko is very much like a character from *Spoor*, but when we started making the film, we obviously couldn't know it. Tokarczuk's book *Spoor* was published eight years ago. Four years later, Berlin producer Dorota Paciarelli inspired me to

think about filming it. She had read the book, which made a very strong impression on her, and she was convinced that it was a good material for me. I had also read Tokarczuk's book and it did occur to me that I could film it, but I have a lot of ideas which come to nothing. I needed a stronger impulse to start seriously thinking about the text and reasons for taking it up. A number of things came together here: I was seeking a subject for a Polish film which would say something about the condition of our society, concerning some phenomena which were perhaps invisible at the first sight. It was also important for me to refresh my cinematic language, to take up a new challenge. I struggled for a long time with translating the book into

the language of film. It turned out to be more difficult than Tokarczuk and I had first thought. The novel resisted being transformed. I was afraid that this story would break into incoherent pieces.

Did it already occur to you when making the film that it was critical of the regime?

I did not put it this way. My criticism of the Law and Justice (PiS) regime is obvious, I often speak out publicly against it. I don't need cinema for that. At a certain stage I realized that my film could be a metaphor of a certain profound conflict between brutal power and helplessness of the weaker. The map of the weaker is of course changing. In *Spoor* they are represented by Janina Duszejko, a lonely old woman. Old women in Poland are treated contemptuously and rudely as second-category citizens. Their existence is often accepted only when they play specific social roles, like that of a grandmother. Duszejko has strong views, she is self-confident and aware of her own rights. Animals are also weaker, of course. In Poland things are only starting to change in this area, animal protection gradually stops to be perceived as an obsession of a few weirdos. It has not yet entered the mainstream, but it is already present in public discourse. But there are other people who are weaker – they represent various social or personality fringes. These are simply people who do not fit the triumphant mainstream.

They can be Law and Justice voters in the previous era or listeners of Radio Maryja. At some point they felt marginalized in Poland. When years later I watched my film *A Lonely Woman*, I wondered who my protagonist would be today and I decided that now she would be more happy, for she would find some community, for example that around Radio Maryja. For people like her, who due to cultural or social exclusion, to the inability to come to grips with modernity, felt lonely and marginalized, today don't have to feel like that. A separate question is how this community executes its rights and wants to deprive others of these rights. What I want to say is that it is not always the liberal-progressive side which is marginalized and deprived of its rights and feels helpless and disempowered. And helplessness generates an awful anger, a sense of hurt, a drive for revenge and retaliation. And this is what my film is about.

Old women in Poland are treated contemptuously and rudely as second-category citizens. Their existence is often accepted only when they play specific social roles, like that of a grandmother.

It appeared in extraordinary times...

When authoritarian populism wins in a growing number of countries, it will eventually become mainstream. There is a danger that it dominates our planet, and then it will be the people for whom

a sense of freedom and respect for truth is essential who will find themselves in a situation of hurt and helplessness. They will be the group to start rebelling. Even now we observe it in the public space. Recently there was a march of the National Movement in Warsaw. When I looked at the reports, I had an impression that history had come full circle. I'm terrified by the total lack of reflection on the part of the authorities and people identifying with the ideas which had led to terrible crimes. A group of citizens sat down in the street with white roses to stop the fascists and police removed them – which, of course, the law allowed them to do. I saw total helplessness – these white roses and passive resistance against a triumphant force.

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Can you still stop this force?

Someone would have to want to do it, not just a group of determined people with roses in their teeth. Some political force has to unambiguously declare itself and mobilize our society. In absence of that will have a repeat of history.

What do you mean?

It's down to what the hunters represent in my film: you can lawfully kill.

Is the reception of *Spoor* different in Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia?

I have had meetings with Polish, Czech, and Slovak journalists and viewers, and I think that the film is understood in pretty much the same way everywhere. In its poetics, *Spoor* is more Czech than Polish. I mean here a certain kind of humor, a mixture of drama and comedy – this is not typically Polish poetics. For Czechs it is not a difficult film to decipher. Likewise in Slovakia, where society is divided in two tendencies which slowly start to emerge everywhere, that is the hunters and the rest. Slovakia is a country where a fascist party has made it into the Parliament and is going up in the polls.

Is Czechia free from this bite?

No, but Czechia has a different kind of populism. I do not notice any fascist movements there, we should rather speak about populist and xenophobic movements. Their message is simple: "Leave us alone, we are coping very well on our own, we don't need anyone else." This is firmly rooted in the Czech national character. The Czechs adapt poorly – they do not like to leave the country, among economic emigrants there were many Poles, Slovaks, or Romanians, but relatively few Czechs. They love their Prague and their hospodas. And I don't hold it against them, for Prague is really lovable... The Czechs are not welcoming towards aliens and aliens do not assimilate very well there.

Have you personally felt it?

As a student in Prague I did not personally feel it, for I was younger and joined the artistic community, and also university is a different kettle of fish. I was open to this culture and I loved it with all its weaknesses and charm. Miloš Zeman is an unpleasant person and he also dangerously flirts with Putin, but at the same time he is not an ideologist but a populist cynic. He has no ideology. Just like Andrej Babiš, who—as the polls show—will probably become the future Czech prime minister. The danger for the Czechs is a spiritual and cultural marginalization – they will place themselves outside the mainstream debate. This, of course, is quite unproductive. When Václav Havel was president, a very strong message came from Czechia, and Czech literature, film, and culture were strongly present in the world. The otherness of the Czechs was inspiring. Now I do not see anything like that. Very few things coming from Czechia could inspire anyone today.

Talking about your studies in Prague, you mentioned weaknesses of Czech culture. What exactly did you have in mind?

I meant its provincialism, lack of ambition to go beyond your limitations, ostentatious acceptance of your weaknesses and lack of courage. These features can consequently lead to sterility and isolation. In this sense, due to these qualities, “normalization”

found fertile ground in Czechoslovakia and were it not for external pressures, it would last longer than these 20 years with minimal resistance of the Czechoslovak society. Numerically, Charter 77 was an initiative bordering on statistical error, perceived by the Czechs themselves as an unpleasant mirror which it would be best to cover. But this Czech weakness turned out to be the strength of many artists: filmmakers and writers. The Czech dislike of pathos opened the way for intimate humanism, painfully absent in most Polish works.

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Do you believe there is such a thing as a cinematic soul of the nation?

I think that there is something which could be defined in this way. At the same time, the best films, while preserving certain cultural uniqueness, are universal. It would be difficult to find a more Polish filmmaker than Andrzej Wajda, with all his romanticism, his almost obsessive references to Polish history, literature, symbols, signs, and experiences. And yet his films are universal, he managed to translate Polish experience into a universal language. This was also an achievement of Czechs and Slovaks in the era of the Czechoslovak New Wave. It turned out that films made by Věra Chytilová, Miloš Forman, or Jan

Němec were universal, as were the novels of Milan Kundera, Bohumil Hrabal, or Josef Škvorecký. Czech literature is much more universal than, for example, Polish one. Although many Polish writers are translated into foreign languages, besides Stanisław Lem, Witold Gombrowicz, and Bruno Schulz, I can't think of any other Polish writer who would be widely read abroad. But we also have the poets, Wisława Szymborska, Czesław Miłosz, or Adam Zagajewski, so it's not that bad. Of course, they are read only by an elite with literary interests.

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Do you follow Slovak cinema?

I am not an expert, I don't know the whole cinematography, I watch only selected films. I try to know the most interesting ones. So I don't want to play the smart guy here. In the last couple of years I have certainly seen some interesting Slovak films. For years the Slovak cinema was in decline and if Martin Šulík did not make a film, there was really nothing interesting to see. Recently a few commercial films have been made and of course many human interest documentaries created by young people, graduates of the Slovak

film school. It is a generation which enters the world of cinema with very interesting documentaries. Slovakia is a young society living in a young country, and documentaries undoubtedly help in understanding it. The question is how much these films are watched by Slovaks themselves, I don't know the statistics here. I recently watched an interesting film by Tereza Nvotová. The plot is set in Slovakia, showing a new feminist sensitivity. In the Polish, Czech, and Slovak cinema there is a growing number of women who tell the stories about the world from a perspective which previously, except for Věra Chytilová, was virtually absent. Here and there it appeared in documentaries. Polish cinema is the most muscular today among the three, it takes up the most difficult subjects and its language is the most developed, the most versatile. In Poland, thanks to the Act on Cinematography and the existence of the Polish Film Institute, more films are made than in Czechia and Slovakia, so the young and middle generation of Polish filmmakers has been able to make its presence felt. I hope that it does not occur to Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Gliński to introduce the PiS program of “good change” also to the Polish cinema.

What is going on with Czech cinema? Is it in crisis?

It has been in crisis for a long time. Two or three interesting Czech films appear each year, but even those are sort of timid.

Jan Svěrák or Jan Hřebejk regularly show new films, but they no longer have the power of their first works. Perhaps the features of Czech culture I spoke about earlier are to blame. There are also some interesting Czech filmmakers who live abroad, like Petr Václav, who has made his home in France. His films are only shown during festivals, but, in my opinion, they are fascinating. I have seen a few interesting films by young artists, but it is difficult to tell yet if these are personalities who will manage to build their own language and message. I think that today it is too easy to make films in Europe. This generates a kind of conformism: filmmakers try to predict what sort of movie it will be easiest to get money for.

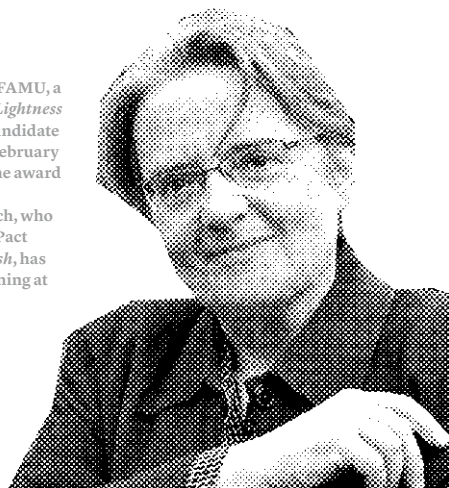
We are talking in Cieszyn. Is it your first visit to the Kino Na Hranici Festival?

No, but it is long since I last came here. Previously I still had to show my ID when I was crossing from Cieszyn to Český Těšín.

They kept inviting me to Cieszyn for a long time, but something always stood in my way. This town lies slightly out of the beaten track, although now it is easier to get here by car than before. I am thrilled with this possibility of free movement between Poland and Czechia, for a person from my generation it is particularly important. We were imprisoned for years, you were often unable to get a passport, we were locked in a cage, and on top of it there was the humiliation at the border. I will never forget how in 1981 I was travelling with my little Kasia from Prague to Wrocław. This was a time when you could buy nothing in Poland. She had a new schoolbag and shoes. Customs officers were frisking us at the border and they took the schoolbag and shoes from my child. She had to take them off, for she was wearing them. She stood and cried. When I hear the ideas of taking Poland out of the European Union, I get shivers down my spine.

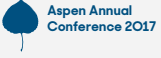
AGNIESZKA HOLLAND

is a Polish film and theater director and screenwriter. In 1971 she graduated from FAMU, a film school in Prague. She is the Polish translator of Milan Kundera's *Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Her last film *Spoor*, based on the novel by Olga Tokarczuk, is the Polish candidate for the Award of the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In February 2017, Agnieszka Holland received The Silver Bear Alfred Bauer Prize for *Spoor*. The award is given to the films that are perceived to open new perspectives in the art of film. Mrs. Holland accepted an offer to film a three-part drama for HBO about Jan Palach, who immolated himself in January 1969 to protest "normalization" after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The resulting miniseries, *Burning Bush*, has been shown in Poland and Germany and selected for a Special Presentation screening at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival. | Photo: Profimedia



ASPEN.REVIEW
ROBERT SCHUSTER

POLITICS
CENTRAL EUROPE
EU
TRANSITION
EDUCATION



How Will Central Europe Shape the European Union?

An undefined grey mush or the yeast that will give the entire European Union a new impetus? Once neglected Central Europe is again at the centre of attention. This time, however, not because of its collective resistance to refugee quotas but because its understanding of the European Union may provide a model for the future.

The European Union is again discussing what appears to be its favourite issue: what form should it take? How far should its geographical boundaries reach? How to achieve a consensus between the interests of a variety of regional groupings – South European, Scandinavian and Central - and East-European?

A year ago, there was a touch of existential angst about these discussions. Following the shocking decision of Great Britain to leave the EU after forty years, and Donald Trump's equally surprising victory in the US presidential elections, it seemed certain that the wind of populism blowing through Europe could not avoid the European Union. Given the potentially large number of hot spots of centrifugal and populist forces as well as the

problems that had been smouldering for a long time, the future of the Union seemed to hang in the balance, with pessimists warning that it might collapse altogether.

With hindsight, we can state that not only has the “super-election year” in Europe belied the original disaster scenarios but that it has actually opened up new prospects for the European Union.

In addition, several key member states, such as France and Germany, as well as some smaller ones, such as the Netherlands and Austria, with their specific and clearly defined traditions of political populism, were about to hold elections. Significant success for the populists or, indeed, their victory, would have been interpreted as a move away from the EU’s past direction. At the same time, the EU was involved in a conflict with the “Union’s trouble-makers”, Poland and Hungary, without prospect of a compromise acceptable by either side.

With hindsight, we can state that not only has the “super-election year” in Europe belied the original disaster scenarios but that it has actually opened up new prospects for the European Union. Although populist parties have increased their share of vote, it was the avowedly pro-European parties that won. As a result, the threat of further fragmentation of the EU in the form of fresh exit referenda has been averted for the foreseeable future. The European Union has thus gained some time for self-reflection, an opportunity it should not waste.

Things can’t go on as before

The gravest mistake the Europeans could still commit would be to believe that the European project is now “forever safe” and to regard the election results in key EU states as a mandate for carrying on business as usual. For example, despite the victory of the pro-European candidate Emmanuel Macron in the French presidential election, the fact that his anti-European rival Marine Le Pen was able to garner 34 per cent of the vote cannot be ignored. The same goes for Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel may have won a substantial majority over the other candidates, nevertheless, riding the euro-critical wave, the protest party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has shown a strength suggesting that it has become a fixture on the political scene.

Nevertheless, the EU leaders don't seem to have drawn the appropriate conclusions. A typical example is the European Commission's president Jean-Claude Juncker. Although in response to the British referendum on EU membership he outlined five possible scenarios of the EU's future development—which included further integration; a multi-speed model; focusing exclusively on developing the internal market, or limiting the Union to a handful of joint activities—this September he came out strongly for increased integration.

Moreover, he did so in a manner that will have ruffled some feathers: he demanded, for example, that all EU countries without exception should join the Schengen system and abolish internal borders. He would also like to see all member states introduce the euro, with Brussels providing financial support to those states that aren't financially up to it.

Risks within and outside the Union

However, the challenges the European Union is facing relate not only to its internal make-up. In recent years the situation in the world at large as well as on Europe's doorstep has worsened considerably. The war in Ukraine continues and a change in Russia's assertive policy is not in sight, just as there is little chance that things will calm down in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, easing the migration pressure. And ultimately, the global security system could be further destabilized by an escalation on the Korean peninsula.¹

These prospects lend some weight to the idea that EU member states should strengthen their collaboration in the field of defence and security policy. This might take the form of increased cooperation in certain sectors of defence policy or even a kind of European defence union or, indeed, a "European army".

In the past, the main opponent of this kind of idea was Great Britain, out of concern that tighter military cooperation between EU states would necessarily come at the expense of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO), tested over decades and headed by the United States, thus weakening the transatlantic bond. However, what could be read between the lines of the negative British attitude was the concern that any firmly established EU military structure would result in strengthening the role of Germany. The country's potential dominance could be prevented only by its lack of preparedness

1) Tomáš Pojar, Aspen Institute Central Europe annual conference, 29.11. 2017

2) *ibid.*

3) *ibid.*

4) Bohumil Kartous, Aspen Institute Central Europe annual conference, 29.11. 2017

5) *ibid.*

6) *ibid.*

in terms of adequate military capacity and the social climate in the country, which is opposed to greater military engagement. The role of being the driving force in the EU's military cooperation would thus logically fall to France, a country which not only has such aspirations but also possesses the requisite military capacity, including a nuclear arsenal.

However, the question remains how smaller EU member states might respond to these ideas. This is illustrated by the attitudes in Czech society which has consistently shown a positive view of NATO as the basic pillar of its external security.²

The Czech Republic has so far shown no appetite for projects of this kind, let alone making them part of its official political agenda. Prague continues to bet exclusively on the tried and tested Alliance.

The key task is defending the EU's external borders

In spite of this, the Czech Republic currently allocates less than one per cent of its GDP to defence and the Ministry of Defence spends a mere seven per cent of budget on investments. The Czech Republic is by no means the only EU country displaying such a half-hearted attitude: its lack of enthusiasm is shared by most European NATO members, undermining the Alliance's relevance and the United States' willingness to guarantee security on the European continent. At the same time, European countries are not able to guarantee their own safety.³

Calls for an EU military or defence force have been growing in recent years, particularly following the wave of migration that swept the European Union in the course of 2015. It is thus not surprising that Hungary's voice has been the most powerful among them. Viktor Orbán believes that protecting the external borders from illegal migration ought to be the EU's primary task.

This attitude, though initially regarded as a result of the specific Hungarian situation and a reaction to the surge of refugees that the country experienced in 2015, has gradually turned into political consensus at the EU level. Virtually all documents adopted in the period following the refugee crisis give high priority to the protection of the Union's external borders.

Even before that, Central and Eastern Europe, after having long been relegated to the margins of the EU political mainstream, had become a focus of attention because of the region's response to the refugee crisis, more precisely, to the setting of strict quotas for redistribution of the refugees. As

a result of their resistance – which in the case of Slovakia and Hungary went as far as lodging a complaint with the European Court of Justice – Brussels shelved the compulsory quotas. Instead, it has come up with new proposals based on the principle of voluntariness.

Neither black nor white. Central Europe is not just euro-sceptic

Two Central European countries, Czech Republic and Austria, have coincidentally held general elections recently, while in Hungary, which will be holding them in the near future, a kind of “pre-campaign” already began several months ago. It is directed against “Brussels” or those who are alleged to be behind the European Commission’s decision (George Soros). Viktor Orbán’s current government needs not just a victory but a resounding one that would secure it a constitutional majority to enable him to continue transforming the political system of the country and cementing the changes that have been wrought.

The challenges the European Union is facing relate not only to its internal make-up. In recent years the situation in the world at large as well as on Europe’s doorstep has worsened considerably.

In Brussels and in Western Europe in general the results of the Austrian and Czech elections, held within a week of each other, were interpreted as a confirmation of an “anti-European” or anti-integration trend, since the victorious parties reject the EU’s refugee policy.

This is especially true of Austria. The winner of that country’s election and probable future chancellor Sebastian Kurz never tires of emphasizing that both he personally and his conservative people’s party (ÖVP), are pro-European. Nevertheless, he was planning a coalition with the Freedom Party (FPÖ), which has rejected the “Brussels diktat” and promoted a change in the country’s foreign relations. This is typified by the FPÖ’s position on Russia: not only has the party condemned the sanctions imposed by Brussels in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea, but it has actually signed a cooperation agreement with Russia’s current ruling party United Russia, President Vladimir Putin’s main instrument. Kurz and his People’s party have supported the sanctions but they are also aware of their negative impact on Austria’s economy, particularly because of the ÖVP’s traditionally close ties to business circles. On the other hand, it is quite unlikely that this would be sufficient to make the

Austrian People's party willing to risk the country's close economic relations with Germany. Or, indeed, their political relations, which have recently improved and intensified after years of the two countries ignoring each other.

However, from time to time a Central European country sets out in a different direction, as has been the case with Slovakia. Not long ago its government was the most vocal opponent of refugee quotas, joining Hungary in its complaint to the European Court of Justice.

Lately, however, in the context of discussions about the future direction and make-up of the EU, Slovakia has declared its desire to be a part of the "European core". President Andrej Kiska, Prime Minister Robert Fico and Speaker of the Slovak Parliament Andrej Danko have recently signed a joint declaration to this effect, which is all the more remarkable given that, until now, the country's three highest officials have been the fiercest of political rivals and expended much effort on emphasizing the differences between them. Only the future will show whether this consensus will survive in the long term or if it is just a tactical manoeuvre and, most importantly, whether it will have any practical impact on Brussels.

The results of the Austrian and Czech elections, held within a week of each other, were interpreted as a confirmation of an "anti-European" or anti-integration trend.

However, it seems to lend credence to the notion that Central Europe cannot be regarded as some homogenous, a priori negativist, entity but rather as one with a potential to evolve.

Central Europe is the European Union in a nutshell

Another reason why these countries are worth keeping an eye on is because here, in a relatively small space, we find a concentration of problems that Europe has already been grappling with, or is about to face. Apart from the demographic crisis, which will increase the demand for new solutions in the field of social security, what is particularly at stake is the transformation the local industries will have to undergo in the space of the next 15 years. The question is whether Central Europe will remain primarily an assembly line for the West European automobile industry, or whether it will achieve the transition to modern industrial strategies.

For example, an OECD study suggests that the Czech Republic is a country whose labour market will be most affected by these changes. In

particular, this concerns the structure of the education system and its capacity to prepare graduates for the economic situation that is likely to arise.⁴

The predicted changes are linked to the major role of the automobile industry in the Czech economy at a time when the entire sector is expected to undergo dramatic changes over the next few years, which will also be reflected in the labour market.

This necessitates a major injection of funding into the education system, especially into teachers' salaries. The Czech Republic has neglected its education system. Along with Hungary and Slovakia it ranks lowest among the developed OECD and EU countries in terms of the percentage of GDP invested in education.⁵

This is also connected to the transformation of the secondary education system in particular. For example, vocational schools in the Czech Republic are insufficiently attuned to current economic developments, which reduces their graduates' chances of employment. The generally low literacy level of these graduates also limits their chances of further education and of adapting to the changing labour market.⁶

Undoubtedly, a number of "old" European Union member states face similar challenges. Central Europeans have the advantage of having already weathered the often brutal and demanding transformation processes that accompanied the transition from the planned to the market economy, without much help from either their government or any other higher institution. Similarly, they don't expect a body like the European Commission to be their cat's paw. Nevertheless, the allure of seemingly bottomless multi-million euro funds is strong. Should they manage this future transformation without European Union funding, that might also inspire some old EU member states.



The text is based on the outputs of the 2017 Aspen Annual Conference – The Shape We're In: Czech Republic & (Central) Europe. [Aspen.me/Annual2017](https://aspen.me/Annual2017)

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Defending a Europe Whole and Free

A disunited, politically paralyzed, and anti-democratic Europe would erode the ability of NATO to defend and uphold transatlantic norms, values, and institutions, seriously undermining and ultimately questioning the future of the alliance.

Russia has put Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in its crosshairs, launching disinformation and cyber-attacks, issuing threats, and securing political allies and economic partners – through whom deeper penetration of the region is enabled via corruption. Lurking behind it all is the fear of an outright military strike, or a covert invasion, as happened in Georgia and Ukraine. CEE countries and their peoples have begun to push back, and the United States and its allies have started to enhance NATO preparedness. Yet these modest efforts are consistently undermined by the European Union (EU), whose elite continues to push policies more suitable for Paris than Bratislava. What NATO and the EU need to appreciate is that CEE countries seek prosperity over and above security because they can control the first more easily than the second. Russia remains influential through trade, energy resources, and investments and the EU is likewise a lure for the economic benefits it offers. Fear of Russian aggression may nudge NATO members to increase defense spending, but CEE countries will continue to balance their economic relationships with both Russia and the EU, often playing one off the other. The difference is that Russia entices CEE countries with economic benefits while the EU threatens and punishes them.

NATO

Although Russia actively meddles in the politics of CEE nations, it flexes its military muscles mostly at the Baltics and Poland. The energy windfall Russia experienced in the 2000s allowed Moscow to modernize its conventional and nuclear forces. Acutely aware of its conventional inferiority to the United States, Moscow has become increasingly reliant on its nuclear arsenal and has prioritized its modernization. This has allowed Russia to hold an advantage in stockpiles of non-strategic nuclear weapons, which would likely be used for deterrence; these weapons are frequently deployed in military exercises. Russia's military doctrine stresses a preference to "escalate to de-escalate," meaning it will escalate a regional conflict with the threat of nuclear weapons and subsequently de-escalate to prevail. Putin demonstrated this in threatening the use of nuclear weapons over the Ukraine crisis in 2014. Moreover, Moscow has intentionally misled and remained ambiguous over when and where the use of nuclear weapons—strategic or tactical—is appropriate or justified. This ambiguity, combined with Putin's sabre rattling, makes it hard for NATO to gauge Russia's intentions.

Russia has also overhauled its conventional forces, yielding fewer but more professionalized units, swapping conscripts in favor of noncommissioned officers, streamlining command-and-control systems, cutting top-heavy officer ranks and increasing education and training. It has made great strides in mobilization, the success of which was seen in the Ukraine crisis, where it took Russia a matter of days to mobilize 40,000 troops, a feat that took three weeks in 1999 during the Chechnya conflict. Russia's

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largest expenditures, however, have been for rearmament. Instead of trying to achieve conventional parity with the United States, Russia has smartly invested in strategic capabilities that undermine NATO's traditional military edge. These reforms, combined with Russia's maturing anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) bubble covering much of the Baltics and Poland, compound the advantage Russia enjoys due to the absence of a meaningful NATO forward presence in these areas.

Russian Force

In the past, NATO was able to justify a lower presence due to assurances through combat readiness, but European nations no longer have the same readiness as before and Russia's long-range anti-air missile systems and highly mobile, short-range air-defense assets would make it extremely difficult—if not impossible—for NATO forces to enter a theater once a conflict has started. This imbalance of forces would favor a Russian victory. Indeed, NATO needs to prepare for a situation in which it is unable to access nations on Russia's border, allowing Moscow to create facts on the ground that would be extremely difficult and costly to reverse.

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Russia has continued to demonstrate a willingness to use force to achieve its objectives, which necessitates a significantly strengthened US posture on the European continent, complemented by prepositioned equipment, and a counter to Russia's integrated air-defense systems. The United States' European Reassurance Initiative (ERI)—providing a rotational brigade in Eastern Europe among other supports—is the most substantial force increase since the end of the Cold War, but does not fix the imbalance of forces and will not deter Russian aggression. Ultimately, maintaining a Europe “whole and free” will require much more in resources and attention.

Russia has proven it has little desire to comply with international norms, and it will continue to be a perennially challenging actor to incorporate into the world order. A sober realization that the United States and Russia are in a competition is the first step. The United States must remain consistently and firmly committed, demonstrating rhetorically and tangibly its commitment to defend its NATO allies. While CEE is where Russia exerts the most influence, Moscow's ultimate objective is to undermine European unity, which means it will continually probe for weaknesses, and the scope of where it will interfere will not be confined.

To constrain Moscow, there is no substitute for an enhanced forward presence backed by military power. The United States must pursue capabilities that counter Russia's A2/AD capability, as well as ensure its nuclear deterrence is viable. While Russia has recapitalized its nuclear forces, the US

has reduced both its deployed launchers and warhead count. The US should broaden the participation of European allies in the nuclear mission and develop additional capabilities to strengthen the credibility of the alliance's ability to respond to a limited Russian nuclear strike. The US should also consider how it intends to demonstrate resolve in the face of a nuclear threat.

Energy

Most if not all of the CEE countries are highly dependent on Russia for energy. Latvia gets all of its natural gas from Russian sources, for example, and Slovakia gets 97 percent of its gas and 98 percent of its oil from Russia. The phenomenon is actually understated. Russia controls about 22 percent of Bulgaria's GDP, for example, but the Netherlands is listed as Bulgaria's single largest investor – because Russia's LukOil is registered there. There has been some push-back. Estonia, which has a border dispute with Russia and hosts one of the largest Russian minorities in the EU, has reduced reliance on Russian energy, establishing a link with Finland and investing in shale energy. Lithuania opened a maritime liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in 2014, helping the Baltic region reduce its reliance on Russian gas. Lithuania and Poland both began receiving LNG shipments from the United States in 2017, but Russian gas from pipelines remains cheaper, and Moscow is moving ahead with plans for another gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea. Much more needs to be done to diversify CEE energy sources, but there is hope that former ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson, the US secretary of state, is qualified to tackle this.

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Russian economic and political influence extends far beyond the energy industry and deeply into the economies of CEE countries through graft, bribery, sweet-heart contracts, and government procurement scandals, all of which buys the Kremlin high-level political influence. The offices designed to fight corruption can be compromised. If the host country resists, its government can be brought down by the exposure of the corruption and malfeasance it is trying to resist. All of this is designed to “capture” all or parts of CEE governments, politically or economically, making it difficult if not impossible for the government in question to resist Moscow's designs.

The leaders of a growing number of CEE governments are said to fall into the pro-Russian category. At least some of these political leaders may be strategically playing one side off the other, but they are playing with fire, eroding democracy, and undermining Western models of governance.

Disinformation

Russian disinformation operations have been characterized in one Rand Corporation study as a “firehose of falsehood” designed to entertain, confuse, and overwhelm audiences. Yet even this aspect of Russia’s approach to Europe has extended its tentacles deeper into the region. In Hungary, for example, most mainstream media outlets are under the direct control of the government, which prefers Russian narratives and often cite Russian government news sources, and a Hungarian website connected to Russian intelligence has 13,000 Facebook fans. The President of Slovakia, Andrej Kiska, publicly complained this past March: “Slovakia is a target of information war and propaganda, and Slovak security services are doing next to nothing to counter it.” Pro-Russian views in Slovakia are also expressed by the Slovak-Russian Association, led by a former Slovak prime minister. There are some efforts at pushing back.

The leaders of a growing number of CEE governments are said to fall into the pro-Russian category.

Against about 40 websites with thousands of followers spreading Russian propaganda in the Czech Republic, the government opened a Center against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats in January 2017 and more recently created the National Cyber and Information Security Office. A Czech think

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tank, European Values, produces reports on Russian disinformation, and the Czech Association for International Affairs launched a Czech version of the Ukrainian website StopFake. There are several NGOs in Poland debunking Russian disinformation, and one of them, “Russian Fifth Column in Poland,” has a Facebook page. Warsaw cancelled the license of a radio station that was rebroadcasting Polish-language news created by the Russian government.

In Slovakia, four Facebook pages expose and ridicule Russian disinformation efforts, an annual Forum against Propaganda is held, and the Slovak daily newspaper, *Dennik N*, prepared an educational manual about disinformation and fake news for teachers and students. Despite having a population that is 26 percent ethnic Russian, Latvia in 2016 shut down the pro-Kremlin news website Sputnik for being a “propaganda tool.” After Slovak state media outlet TASR announced a “content sharing” agreement with Moscow’s media platform Sputnik, public exposure and scrutiny of the deal prompted Bratislava to pull out. In Ukraine, authorities recently began to block or restrict access to leading Russian social networks and search engines.

Ways to Combat Danger

Overall, according to a Kremlin Watch Report (April 22, 2017) from the European Values think tank, six countries “are at the forefront” in resisting Russian aggression (Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the United Kingdom), five have “significantly shifted their policies” in regards to Russia (the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden), and three (Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria) are called “below-radar supporters of countering Russian aggression.” Hungary and Slovakia, the report claims, are “using the Russian-card for domestic reasons,” and Cyprus, Greece, and Italy are “Kremlin-friendly.” The people, too, have begun to protest Moscow’s behavior and its apparent allies in CEE countries. Large anti-government protests aimed at corruption and Russian influence, and supportive of the EU, occurred in 2017 in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovak Republic.

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There are many ways to combat both CEE energy dependence and Russian disinformation: (1) task financial intelligence units of NATO and EU members to track illicit Russian transactions, and share this financial intelligence, (2) prioritize anti-corruption efforts, (3) strengthen the independence of courts and prosecutors, (4) reorient US and EU assistance to CEE countries toward combating Russian influence, (5) monitor diversification in strategic economic sectors, as well as regulatory compliance and transparency, (6) expose the misinformation and Russian ties of disinformation campaigns,

1) Zeit. 2014. “Erdogan Rede Berlin Tuerkischer Wahlkampf” zeit.de. February 2014 (<http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2014-02/erdogan-rede-berlin-tuerkischer-wahlkampf>).

2) Spiegel. 2015. “Türken in Deutschland wählten Erdogan-Partei” spiegel.de. 2nd November 2015 (<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/tuerken-in-deutschland-waelhten-erdogan-partei-akp-a-1060661.html>).

3) Die Welt. 2016. “Erdogans Agenten bedrohen Deutschtürken” 21st August 2016.

4) RP Online. 2016. “Türken in Deutschland: Die Doppelmoral beim Doppelpass” rp-online.de. 7th August 2016 (<http://www.rp-online.de/politik/deutschland/tuerken-in-deutschland-die-doppelmoral-beim-doppelpass-aid-1.6166430>).

(7) ensure the independence of private and public media, and (8) develop and strengthen civic education and media-literacy skills in school curricula.

European Union

It would help, as well, for the bureaucrats in Brussels to extend some latitude to EU and NATO member countries based on an understanding of their different cultures and histories. EU policies are increasingly either very unpopular with voters or are antagonistic to government leaders in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovak Republic. This creates an opening for Russian influence. Poland is the poster-child for EU alienation. Despite a public opinion strongly supportive of membership in the EU, a 2017 report from Globsec Policy Institute says “the consensus on membership alone is no longer of great significance. In the last two years, Polish society has shown that it is profoundly divided about the future of Poland in the EU.”

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Poland is not the only CEE country to eschew the EU. For example, the Czechs are highly euroskeptic (only 32 percent viewed the EU positively in 2016) yet they reject a pro-Russian orientation despite their President Miloš Zeman, who is openly pro-Russian. Still, the EU is currently pushing a gun-control measure that is highly unpopular in the Czech Republic and Poland. The EU Commission, whose members are not elected, is also pursuing legal or political battles against the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and the Slovak Republic to force them to comply with EU refugee quotas, which are necessitated because the chancellor of Germany unilaterally decided to allow more than 1,000,000 refugees to enter Europe last year, without submitting the issue to member parliaments or a popular vote. The EU is pursuing additional separate cases against Poland over logging in a protected forest and over a proposed law to reform the country’s own judiciary, which the EU claims, without any sense of irony, would threaten the judiciary’s independence – from Warsaw. The independence of Polish courts from Brussels, of course, is not an option. Meanwhile, the benefits of economic integration are scarcely visible in Slovakia, the only one of the Visegrad Four countries to

adopt the euro (eight years ago), which still suffers from high unemployment, high food prices, and sluggish wage growth, thus discouraging the Czechs, Hungarians, and Poles from adopting the euro.

What these countries seek is a little more control of their own sovereignty in regards not to the purely economic issues which concern the EU, or the security issues that concern NATO, but in regards to those domestic social and political issues which each member of the EU and NATO should be able to address independently, such as immigration or their own judiciaries.

Why does the behavior of the EU matter in the defense of Europe from Russia? Because, as stated in *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe*, an October 2016 study from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, “A disunited, politically paralyzed, and anti-democratic Europe would erode the ability of NATO to defend and uphold transatlantic norms, values, and institutions, seriously undermining and ultimately questioning the future of the alliance. The stakes are enormous.”

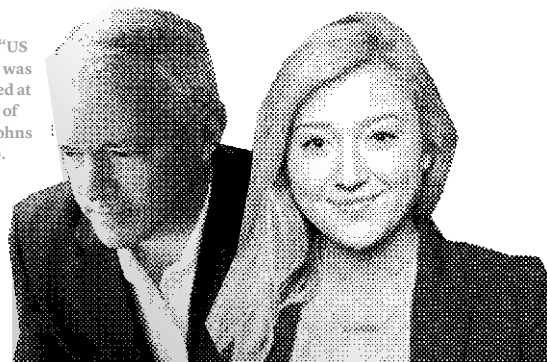
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| Photo: Whitney Morgan McNamara Archive



“De-Communization” and Legislating History in Post-Maidan Ukraine¹

Both advocates and critics of the Ukrainian “de-communization” tend to present it as exceptionally important or even crucial for the future of Ukrainian society and state. Their arguments usually imply “identity” and “memory” to be central for the Ukrainian public opinion.

At the same time, polls show that public opinion remains rather skeptical or even indifferent to the re-naming of streets and the removal of Lenin monuments. This article strives to propose a concise contextual analysis of political, legal, and historical aspects of present-day Ukraine’s politics of memory.

The political sense of the adopted laws seems to be in a search to draw a new symbolic division line between post-Maidan Ukraine and Putin’s Russia.

The “Historical” Laws of April 9

On April 9, 2015, the Verkhovna Rada voted, without any discussion, for four laws:

1. On recognizing members of various Ukrainian political organizations (including members of the wartime and postwar nationalist underground) as “fighters for Ukrainian independence”;
2. on celebrating victory over Nazism in the Second World War, establishing May 8 as Day of Memory and Reconciliation and maintaining May 9 as Victory Day;
3. on creating open access to the archives of the communist regime (1917–1991) and the transfer of all relevant documents to a new archive based at the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory;

4. on condemning the communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes, banning the “propaganda” of their symbols (with provisions for criminal prosecution for preparing and use of these symbols; re-naming of towns and streets carrying the names of high-ranking Soviet officials).

The political sense of the adopted laws seems to be in a search to *draw a new symbolic division line between post-Maidan Ukraine and Putin’s Russia*. This division is supposed to be constructed not according to language or religious identification but alongside the attitude to the Soviet past: largely glorified in Russia and condemned in Ukraine.

In Eastern Galicia Lenin monuments and street names were replaced with the figures from national canon already in the early 1990s. The rest of Ukraine experienced much less change.

Aside from political consideration and historiographic battles, it is hard to overlook numerous legal problems with the adopted laws. One of them is the lack of clarity over the concept of “propaganda” and its openness to abuse; the absence of a clear list of symbols which should be banned; the unjustified harsh punishment for preparation and use of the banned symbols (up to five years in prison). It should be noted that so far there were no criminal cases opened on such basis, but one could not guarantee that at some point such a persecution may not start.

Legal experts claimed that “historical” laws could lead to serious limitations on the freedom of expression and to violating the Constitution of Ukraine and the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Despite that, President Petro Poroshenko signed all the laws, and then announced their further improvement (which never happened until September 2017 when this article was written).

Ukraine without Lenin

In post-Soviet Ukraine since 1991, the questions of memorials or the renaming of the streets belonged to the competence of the local elected councils. It caused serious differences in country’s symbolic landscape: in Eastern Galicia (often mistakenly identified with the entire “West Ukraine”), Lenin monuments and street names were replaced with the figures from national and nationalistic canon already in the early 1990s. The rest of Ukraine experienced much less change. In the center of Kyiv, one Lenin monument on

1) The article is written under research project “Modernisation of Identity?: Challenges of ‘Europeanisation’, Nationalism and Post-Sovietism for Memory Cultures” (Nr. MOD-17006, supported by the Research Council of Lithuania).

the present-day Maidan was dismantled in the early 1990s, the other one (in front of the Bessarabs'kyj market) survived until December 8, 2013.

This Lenin monument in Kyiv, destroyed during the Euromaidan by the supporters of the far-right “Svoboda” party, became the first victim of the “Leninopad” movement – the destruction of the Lenin monuments all around Ukraine. The cases of two big East Ukrainian cities—Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv—were especially important. The Lenin monuments there were destroyed in 2014 at night time by unidentified people using radical right-wing symbols, on February 22 and September 28 respectively. The April laws legalized the ongoing process of dismantling Lenin monuments. Till the end of summer 2017, 1320 monuments to the founder of the Soviet State were removed all around Ukraine.

Who Will Replace Lenin?

The Institute of National Memory reported that until the end of 2016 the names of 32 cities, 955 villages, and 51 493 streets were “de-communized.” The names of Soviet officials were mostly replaced by the figures from Ukrainian political and literary canon. One should note that not every Soviet name was supposed to be changed. “De-communization” does not include Soviet Ukrainian artists and writers, Soviet heroes of the World War II, or astronauts (even if they were high-ranked party or military officials in the USSR).

In some cases the local political elites tried to preserve the Soviet name by re-inventing its non-Soviet meaning. The most telling example was the case of the city of Dnipropetrovsk named in 1926 after Grigory Petrovsky, an old Bolshevik and the head of the Soviet Ukraine’s government. Newly elected after the Maidan, the mayor and city council proposed to preserve the name “Dnipropetrovsk” by “re-thinking” *-Petrovsk* as a reference to St. Peter instead of the old Bolshevik. Their logic was predominantly non-ideological, based on the citizens’ fears of the potential costs of renaming. Still, the Ukrainian parliament voted for renaming Dnipropetrovsk into Dnipro on May 19, 2016.

“De-communization” does not include Soviet Ukrainian artists and writers, Soviet heroes of the World War II, or astronauts.

Bandera Crossed the Borders of Western Ukraine

The name of one of the biggest Ukrainian cities just became shorter, but who will replace Lenin on the pedestals? His place in the very centers of the cities and villages now usually remains empty. To respond to the anxious claims that Lenin will be replaced by Stepan Bandera—the symbol of radical Ukrainian nationalism—the Institute for National Memory claimed that in

The Ukrainian public sphere is still acutely lacking criticism of integral nationalism and its symbolism from democratic, pluralistic viewpoints, rather than from the perspective of the “Russian world.”

Ukraine there are only 40 Bandera monuments and 34 streets named after him. Even more, all of them are located in two historical regions of Western Ukraine – East Galicia and Volhynia. However, on July 7, 2016, something exceptional happened – Moskovsky Avenue in Kyiv was renamed into Bandera Avenue. By this decision of the Kyiv city council the commemoration of the highly disputable nationalistic figure crossed the geographical borders of Western Ukraine.

Still, the problem of the legal status of the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) underground remains unresolved. The history of the UPA contains the anti-Jewish violence and the organized mass murder of the Polish population of Volhynia region in 1943, but the local memory of East Galicia and the national history narrative concentrate on the anti-Soviet struggle of the UPA (pretty strong till the beginning of the 1950s) and the severe Soviet repressions in response. The Ukrainian parliament has more than once failed to grant the status of war veterans to the nationalistic combatants (the last unsuccessful attempt was made already after the Euromaidan). One could even argue that the newly-adopted law proposes a kind of “compromise” by granting the UPA veterans a special status of “fighters for Ukrainian independence” but refusing to give them the same social privileges as the Soviet veterans of war.

How to Deal with Ukraine’s Complex Past?

War, even the “hybrid” one, is not suitable for sophisticated debates. Both the proponents and the opponents of “de-communization” usually see it in the context of national security, social stability, and memory conflicts. Both sides quite often simplify the unique post-Soviet pluralism of contemporary

Ukraine, asserting, for example, that all supporters of “rehabilitating UPA” or “preserving Lenin monuments” share the ideology of integral nationalism or Marxism-Leninism (or at least have a notion of what they are).

At the same time, the Ukrainian public sphere is still acutely lacking criticism of integral nationalism and its symbolism from democratic, pluralistic viewpoints, rather than from the perspective of the “Russian world” or the “Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people.” Likewise, Ukraine lacks a critique of the communist narrative which does not elicit suspicion of the author’s narrowly nationalist outlook. It is crucial for such criticism to refrain from totalitarian ideological connotations.

Discussing the “de-communization” presents us with a truly difficult question: How should we deal with the Soviet past? As a historian, I would argue for the importance to fully understand its heterogeneity and inconsistencies, which in no way calls the criminal character of the numerous decisions made by the Soviet regime into question. Here, it is also important to think about the problem of present-day ignorance and incomprehension.

To Think about Ukraine Beyond “Identity”

The controversy over renaming of Dnipropetrovsk was already mentioned above. Much less is being said about Dnipro(petrovsk) residents’ almost complete ignorance of who Petrovsky was. Is it important to know about Petrovsky in order to condemn communist crimes? How important is it to know

Maidan, among other things, became a way for society as a whole to reject the constructed “divisions” that had been presented to us as insurmountable and primordial.

that, by contrast, it was the *Soviet* authorities who erected a monument to the Ukrainian poet Ivan Franko in Lviv and popularized his works, while on the other hand they actually censored Franko and adapted him to the demands of “building communism”? The interconnection of (not) knowing and condemning, the means and methods of disseminating knowledge, the phenomenon of aestheticizing political evil and the “forbidden fruit” – this is far from an exhaustive list of subjects that are practically absent from the current discussion in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, in the international discussion, there is much being written about whether or not history, memory, and identity are the main causes

Ukraine needs a new analytical language to describe itself and to be described. The existing schemes are too narrow for such a complex society.

of Maidan, the annexation of Crimea, and the war in Donbas. “Identity” and “history” are brought up much more frequently than the desire for political freedoms, corruption, economic problems, group pressure, the behavior of local elites, or the makeup of subversive groups.

Are we capable of thinking about Ukraine beyond essentialized “identity,” “historical memory,” and the “clash of civilizations”? Maidan, among other things, became a way for society as a whole to reject the constructed “divisions” that had been presented to us as insurmountable and primordial. Maidan emphasized something that really was not that sensational anymore: in contemporary Ukraine, the language used for everyday communication does not automatically equal ethnic identification and political loyalty.

Nevertheless, instead of looking for adequate and dynamic methods of analyzing the realities of the Maidan and the post-Maidan era, a significant number of analysts remained loyal to the familiar, stereotypical paradigms of “two Ukraines” or even “ethnic zones.” The annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas are still more frequently described using the categories of “identity” and “historical rights” than through a careful contextual analysis of the behavior of key actors (above all, the local elites, the Kyiv government, and the Russian involvement).

Ukraine needs a new analytical language to describe itself and to be described. The existing schemes are too narrow for such a complex society. We also need rather to analyze “identity-talk” by various social actors than to impose the existence of “identity” as the main reason for social action. And proper contextualization as well as cross-regional and transnational perspectives could bring a lot of important insights.

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Between Immanence and Rupture. Reformism as a Source of European Culture

The identity of Western civilization—if one may use such a shorthand formula—is closely intertwined with the Reformation. To ask about this 16th-century protest movement is to reach towards the foundations of the spiritual transformations of modern Europe.

Status Quaestionis

Great historical events are usually described by investigating causes and effects. This classroom approach has its limitations, but it would not be easy to entirely abandon it. So when we ask about the power of religious rebellions, about the intellectual and cultural roots of this enormous work, we ask the right question. We are also right when we want to investigate the consequences, that is, the impact of the Reformation on the evolution of modern Western culture.

However, defining the matter in this way betrays itself, reveals an excess of desire, a cognitive appetite exceeding the possibilities of verbal formulation. Asking about everything—almost everything—is futile. And speaking too. On the other hand, looking from a different perspective, voracious, euphoric, hysterical, or even ridiculously optimistic questions put you in a combative mood, open the door to the impossible, exposing what is unseen to normal analytical work, which will never muster a similar impudence, for it is embedded in a methodological modesty and proud of the reliability of its piecemeal perspective.

The easy availability of a handy answer is not the right criterion for the importance of a question. On the contrary, it is the lack of answers which wakes the human mind from its everyday slumber.

So it is difficult to exclude the question about the whole from a rational discourse. Its absence would have been an irreplaceable loss, a stifling of this part of the human mind which wants everything. The mind, as Aristotle wrote in the third book of his *Peri psyche*, “is in a sense everything.” “What is it all about?” – this is how Alfred N. Whitehead defined the fundamental question of philosophy. The question about everything—impossible, ridiculous—also reveals its other, deadly serious face. Like an archaic deity, it combines lack of seriousness with its excess.

One thing is certain: the easy availability of a handy answer is not the right criterion for the importance of a question. On the contrary, it is the lack of answers which wakes the human mind from its everyday slumber.

Inventing Life

A social project, a comprehensive idea, re-establishing the rules, laws, and duties of life regardless of the tradition to date, and if necessary, against this tradition; social constructivism, dependence on ideas, i.e. a concept for organizing everything and at the same time liberation from natural, conservative dependencies, invoking notions about an eternal tradition, inviolable laws, sacred habits present since times immemorial – reformism rises against the existing practice, wants to invent a new organization of life according to its own rules and laws; according to its own notion of what is right.

It is impossible to mention all the historical exemplifications of this idea of a new beginning. The Greek tradition undoubtedly is a point reference for our civilization. The myth of the Platonic state is the most significant in this respect. I say “myth,” for the way it is present (received) in the European awareness, especially this part which experienced a break with tradition, as Hannah Arendt described it, that is, this part which experienced the emergence of the mass society, generating the possibility of a totalitarian state, deviates significantly from the author’s intentions. I will come to that in a moment.

No creator, even the greatest one, acts in a vacuum: he collects and processes the existing tradition. So it was with Plato’s political project, too. When we ask where he got the idea to create a plan of the functioning of the *polis* from scratch and impose it from above, it will be relatively easy to find the answer. Reformism had been present in the Greek tradition, Plato was a continuator of the reformist constructivism of Athens. The creator of this peculiar practice, significant for Western culture, was Solon (638-558 B.C.), the great Greek poet and Athens’ lawmaker. He created the foundations of the democratic system. “The revolutionary nature of changes introduced by Solon consisted in a complete negation of the existing divisions,” writes Włodzimierz Lengauer (*Starożytna Grecja okresu archaicznego i klasycznego*, p. 72). From that moment on, the laws and duties of the citizen do not depend on his belonging to castes or factions, but on his wealth. Solon divided the citizens into four income-based classes, assigning specific powers to each.

This is an ideal example of social constructivism; an enforced division

The Greek tradition undoubtedly is a point reference for our civilization. The myth of the Platonic state is the most significant in this respect.

of citizens into groups according to arbitrary rules. The arbitrary and conventional nature of the division means a kind of leap into the abyss of the new. There is no evolutionary maturing, adaptation, renovating things which already exist and are sanctified by tradition; what we get is breaking the existing bonds and establishing entirely new ones. So a similar spirit of “central planning” perceptible in the Platonic project should not be surprising to us.

Solon’s project collapsed repeatedly during numerous political turbulences in the history of Athens. The flourishing of the city under Pericles after the Persian Wars (fifth century) ended in the disaster of the internecine battle with Sparta, that is, the Peloponnesian War towards the end of the

century. “It is difficult to overestimate the shock generated in Athens by the lost Peloponnesian War. The consequences of the defeat were catastrophic, Athens entirely lost its position [...], it suddenly became a weak, minor state dependent on Sparta.” (Lengauer, op. cit., p. 183) And it was in the face of the disasters, chaos, and instability that Plato started his reflections on the conditions necessary to create a just constitution of the *polis*.

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The School

The point of departure for his enquiries is the assumption that there will be no just state without just citizens. And since it is impossible to educate everyone into nobility, selection is necessary, creating an elite which will both defend and administer the state.

The Platonic project is essentially an educational one. It describes the necessary conditions for selecting and raising a group of administrators who will act justly, for the good of the *polis*. There is no room here for a detailed description of this concept. Let us just say that in its reformist approach it surpasses Solon’s plan.

The administrators, chosen from among the brightest, are to live in a separate district. In order to act justly, they need to have a deep understanding of what justice is (it is a necessary and sufficient condition), so what is required is a process of education lasting several dozen years, so that these people achieve the ability to capture pure ideas of good, beauty, courage, and so on. The structure of dependence within the group of administrators was conceived in such a way that the members would care more about the good of the whole community rather than their own offspring. This is where the constructivist project has its culmination. Plato envisaged having children in common by the administrators and he formulated the idea of equal rights for women and men, deciding that there were no strong arguments for inequality. Participation of women in wars requires training, and both sexes train naked. Plato observes that the new custom will bother old people, but children, ignorant of the earlier practice, will see it as normal. Tradition or habit is an arbitrary matter, it can be changed within one generation.

Such an active attitude to tradition, recognizing it as subject to transformation, which also means its de-socialization, is an essential element of reformism. And the secondary socialization of the new social order reveals the usefulness of religious worship meant to support the current model of social relations.

The 16th-Century Revolution

In its days of glory after the Persian Wars, the city of Athens undoubtedly was the largest monument dedicated to Athena. The functioning of the state in the Greek antiquity was inextricably linked with the worship of gods (*therapeia ton theon*). Therefore, when speaking about reforming the state we are also speaking about religious reform.

The Platonic project is essentially an educational one. It describes the necessary conditions for selecting and raising a group of administrators who will act justly, for the good of the *polis*.

Likewise, the Reformation was a political movement, which by no means diminished its religious dimension. Religion and politics were not treated as separate domains then. On the contrary. Protest movements within Christianity had generated irreversible political, social, cultural, and civilizational changes. A division of Europe, based on new and—as it later turned out—unquestionable principles, had emerged. A definitive ideological polycentrism had been established, with all its positive and negative consequences. The former probably include the pluralism of cultural dynamism, and the latter are a series of wars which haunted Europe for many centuries. Described on the example of Athens, the most general features of a project establishing a new type of society may serve as an illustrative (comparative) matrix for describing the essential components of the Reformation. The Reformation also meant transforming pre-existing intellectual and social trends. It was also a reaction to the status quo. In its intellectual aspect, it fulfilled the requirements of the nominalism of William Ockham (1285-1347), which was a kind of prophecy predicting the collapse of metaphysical theology – and this is what happened under the Protestant principle of *sola fides, sola scriptura*. By the way, Martin Luther studied philosophy in Erfurt under the representatives of *viae modernae*.

The essential feature of all reformist projects, as well as revolutionary ones, is their top-down nature. They are changes introduced by the “enlightened” in order to heal the body political. We are not dealing here with a confluence of grassroots movements. In the history of the Reformation, the comprehensive project was most successfully implemented by John Calvin in Geneva. His decades-long work was a milestone in establishing stable religious institutions serving as an alternative to Catholicism, and it created a model of the Calvinist Church both in its internal aspects (education, theology, electing ecclesiastical authorities), and in its relations with secular power. The Reformation was an intra-ecclesiastical revolution, establishment of a new order of church functioning, custom, religious practice, dogma. It was the courage to demolish the old world and build a new one.

There is also the spiritual aspect of the Reformation, at the same time being the spirit of the epoch. The human being “came to himself,” in one way or another, he decided to write the project of his own life himself. The individual starts to perceive himself as an entity separate from the social whole. The beginning of the process of establishing a strong individual agent, creating himself anew through the power of his own autonomous choices, is also an aftermath of the Reformation.

Ruptures and discontinuities in culture had never reached so far. They had never affected the space which had been a profound taboo, inaccessible to a lay person – the sphere of the sacred.

Likewise, the Reformation was a political movement, which by no means diminished its religious dimension. Religion and politics were not treated as separate domains then.

The Paralysis of Roman Expansionism

The Reformation was an example of reformism, because it established a new type of society, radicalizing political changes. It meant a definitive fiasco of the Catholic project, the collapse of the idea of Christianitas, that is, the unity of the world under the leadership of the papacy. In the ideological sphere, it meant the actual relativization of Christianity as a whole, since the claims of the Catholic system to infallibility, to being the depositary of potentially all possible truths, and thus to virtual ideological monopoly, were *ipso facto* challenged. The Catholic Counter-Reformation was only a cry of despair,

a hopeless defense, an expression of helplessness, with catastrophic consequences in the shape of ideological rigidity, intellectual collapse, proliferation of dogmatism unknown even in the Middle Ages.

The essential feature of all reformist projects, as well as revolutionary ones, is their top-down nature. They are changes introduced by the “enlightened” in order to heal the body political.

The split within the unipolar system raised impassable barriers, was a source of fundamental controversy, generated prejudice, and forced particular countries to choose their own distinct paths of religious, political, and economic development.

It all resulted in a peculiar diversity, tolerated and enforced, in the ideological landscape of modern Europe. Pluralism and impassable differences are a legacy of the Reformation. For good and for bad. Europe has never become an empire like the Chinese, Persian, Greek (after the conquests of Alexander the Great), or Roman one. It remained divided into smaller or larger states, none of which, despite the various attempts (from Napoleon to Hitler), has managed to dominate the rest. The Europeans pursued their imperial ambitions outside Europe. And they themselves tried to learn how to coexist despite differences, painfully and until World War II largely unsuccessfully.

The Reformation was an example of reformism, because it established a new type of society, radicalizing political changes. It meant a definitive fiasco of the Catholic project.

Religious differences generated ideological, cultural ones, which were rather cultivated than eradicated. As a result of the 500 years of the Reformation, Protestant countries became fundamentally Protestant. Permeated with a different type of Christianity than the Catholic one, they created a separate spiritual space. It means that Europe, the European culture, has two distinct faces of essentially Christian origin. Moreover, their “Protestant” face was pluralistic from the very start. This pluralism went so far that anyone who had the necessary inclination, talent, and passion could found his own Church, which was facilitated especially by the conditions in the new world of Northern America and perhaps also by the process of selection of those who wanted to leave the Old Europe or were forced to do it. But the high walls

of post-Trident Catholicism, the rigorous, restrictive separation, could not prevent the two worlds from influencing each other. Hence the gradual interpenetration of mentalities, comparisons, attempts at dialogue, exchange, successfully emboldened by the weakening of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism, and the growing impact of religious indifferentism.

The Catholic Counter-Reformation was only a cry of despair, a hopeless defense, an expression of helplessness, with catastrophic consequences in the shape of ideological rigidity.

Eschatological Consolation

Protestantism undoubtedly was a shock for the Catholic civilization, for its immanent expansionism. External borders, impassable walls erected in the process of political and social transformations, remain a painful thorn, an undigested insult for the essentially imperial mentality of the Roman Catholic civilization. Attempts at changing this paradigm during the Second Vatican Council have not taken root and may be interpreted more as a tactical maneuver, a pragmatic acknowledgement of the currently insurmountable situation, than a definitive acceptance of the plurality of Christian life, rite, and culture.

Division, understood in Roman Catholicism as evil, requires reparation, meaning the conversion of the rebels; even if this perspective becomes an eschatological horizon, when at the end of time the “whole creation” will return to unity with the Catholic Motherhood. The first among them will be the Jews, whose conversion, according to an interpretation of Chapter 11 of the Letter to the Romans, is to be a visible sign of the coming end. The descendants of the 16th-century reformers should also be there.

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A Hundred Years since the Birth of the Beast

Roman Joch On the night of 7 to 8 November, 1917, a military rule over St. Petersburg was seized by Dybenko, Krylenko, Antonov-Ovseyenko, and Trotsky. Red Guards surrounded the Winter Palace where Russia's Provisional Government was located, arresting its members. Lenin appointed himself head of the new revolutionary government. This was the start of Bolshevik, or communist, rule in Russia.

On 10 and 11 November, the cadets and volunteers of the Women's Battalion tried to recapture the palace. They were defeated by the Red Guards; the cadets were executed and the women raped. The last to defend the lawful government in Russia were women and near-children.

The CHEKA, or Emergency Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage, was founded as early as in December. This was the beginning of the Red Terror. It was the birth of the Beast, the first totalitarian regime of the twentieth century. Later, communism was to acquire a younger stepbrother, Nazism, and later still, their youngest step-cousin, Islamism. This completes the triad of totalitarian regimes of the last hundred years.

From the Birth of the Bolshevik Faction to the Collapse of the Soviet Union

In his book *The War We Are In*, published in 1967, on the 50th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, the philosopher and leading American anti-communist geopolitical strategist of the post-World War II era, James Brunham (1905-1987; President Reagan awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1983) outlined the following periodization of the communist struggle to monopolize world power:

1903 During the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party Congress Lenin establishes the Bolshevik faction.

1903–1917 Revolutionary army cadres formed and trained.

1917 Seizure of the first outpost, Russia.

1920 Failure of the first direct offensive against the West (defeat in the Battle of Vistula at the gates of Warsaw).

1920–1944 Defense and consolidation of the base.

1944–1949 Explosive expansion of the base.

1944 and the years that followed—the United States identified as the key enemy, hence attempts at weakening, isolating, and ultimately defeating the US; until that goal is realized, indirect attacks on the West through support for decolonization and anti-Western nationalism in the Third World; and what comes to be known as the Cold War.

Today we are in a position to complete Burnham's periodization:

1944–1981 The Cold War, which is defensive on the part of the West and offensive on the part of communism.

1981–1989 The Cold War, offensive on the part of the West (the Reagan doctrine) and defensive on the part of communism.

1989 The collapse of communist power in Central Europe, communism ceases to be a global threat to the West.

1991 Epilogue, collapse of the Soviet Union itself.

Communism as a messianic ideology that strives for world rule has been consigned to history. Admittedly, there are still countries ruled by a party that is communist in name (China, Cuba), but their regimes are closer to classic dictatorships than to communist totalitarian systems (only one country, North Korea, still fits this label).

What was the driving force behind communist ideology?

Communism was to acquire a younger stepbrother, Nazism, and later still, their youngest step-cousin, Islamism. This completes the triad of totalitarian regimes of the last hundred years.

Utopianism, Moral Relativism, and Radical Etatism

It was a combination of three ideological and philosophical beliefs based on a conscious rejection of the Judeo-Christian view of mankind and of classical political philosophy. These three worldviews are utopianism, moral relativism, and radical etatism.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, man is a being endowed with infinite value and inner dignity because he has been created by God and in the image of God. At the same time, he is a fallen, flawed being, morally and intellectually imperfect (that is why he is in need of God's mercy and forgiveness). This imperfect human nature is something constant, immutable, and unalterable. As a result there will never be Paradise on earth, as "God's Kingdom is not of this world." The state is not qualified to offer salvation. We cannot be redeemed by the state; the best it can do is to ensure security, inner peace, and law and order. An objective moral order, some objective norms of good and bad behavior do, however, exist - in the form of religious faith (the Jewish tradition), the proper application of philosophical reason (the Greek tradition), or a combination of faith and reason (the Christian synthesis of the two preceding traditions).

A Long and Gradual Genesis

The rejection of this viewpoint also has a long and gradual genesis. It can be traced back to the twelfth-century Joachim de Flora's speculations on history culminating in Utopia (a "third era" or "Third Reich"), and continues in the fourteenth century with William of Occam and his nominalism (lead-

Communism as a messianic ideology that strives for world rule has been consigned to history.

ing to relativism). Machiavelli comes next, at the dawn of the modern era (turn of the fifteenth century), with his notion of amoral government. In the seventeenth century Thomas Hobbes introduces the absolute state: Leviathan. Next comes Jean-Jacques Rousseau with his idea of the noble savage destroyed by civilization (i.e. if we change the circumstances, we can "cultivate" a better breed of humans), followed by Hegel and his "dialectic": the belief that truth varies in history and what was right (or wrong) yesterday does not necessarily have to be right (or wrong) today and vice versa. And last but not least, Karl Marx, with his conviction that man is just a chunk of matter devoid of any inner value; that, rather than being a source of human freedom

and independence from others, private ownership is exploitation; that the best political system is not a lawfully elected democratic government with limited state power but a “dictatorship of the proletariat” – the unconstrained tyranny of a state that practices revolutionary terror.

The Voice of the Serpent Proffering the Apple in the Paradise

These are the ideas on which the three basic beliefs of the communists—and totalitarians in general—are based. Utopianism: a monumental transformation of society can produce a more perfect human being and a better society and Paradise on earth will ensue. Moral relativism: the imperfect man of today possesses no absolute inner value, no innate dignity, no natural rights that must be unconditionally respected by the state and the revolution. In other words, there is nothing—no action or deed—that the state or the revolutionaries may not commit or inflict on another human being as they strive to build Paradise on earth. And, lastly, radical etatism: while building Paradise on earth the unconstrained state in the hands of revolutionaries can inflict anything on human beings – this is a state that is absolute, total, totalitarian.

Here we have totalitarianism, its theory and practice, in a nutshell.

These are the ideas on which the three basic beliefs of the communists—and totalitarians in general—are based. Utopianism, moral relativism, radical etatism.

However, we must not forget that totalitarianism need not necessarily be limited only to the twentieth century; that is merely when it reached its climax. It was a culmination of ideas and beliefs that have existed, flames that have smoldered throughout history and have yet to be completely put out. It represents a constant, eternal temptation to mankind and, as Whittaker Chambers says in his 1952 book *Witness*, it actually amounts to the second most ancient human faith. It was the voice of the serpent proffering the apple to the first man and woman, saying: “You will be like God.”

That serpent was Satan.

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ASPEN.REVIEW
IVAN MIKLOS

ECONOMY
CENTRAL EUROPE
LIBERAL DEMOCRACY
EU
HUNGARY
POLAND

Quo Vadis, Central and Eastern

When communism ended in 1989, the future of the region seemed clear-cut. Today the picture is much more varied but also more controversial than one would have imagined nearly three decades ago.

Europe?



When communist dictatorships with their centrally planned economies collapsed, triumphant liberal democracy and the free market economy seemed to offer an obvious and indisputable—indeed the only possible—alternative. The most successful of the post-communist countries (those in Central Europe and the Baltics) did embark on the path of liberal democracy and market economy, a step that was underscored by their accession to the EU, NATO, and, in some cases, the adoption of the euro. However, as the example of Hungary and also Poland more recently shows, these countries can also get diverted from this course.

The deviation of Hungary and Poland from the model of liberal democracy and the free market economy is a glaring example, but there are many more.

The most striking example of a departure from the model of liberal democracy and free market economy is the largest and most important post-communist and post-soviet country, Russia. Putin has turned Russia into a textbook model of illiberal democracy and corrupt state capitalism, which defies basic principles of liberal democracy and the free market economy. Moreover, Putin's regime is also very active beyond the domestic realm, using every available means to threaten and curtail the values and principles of political and economic freedom. In the developed countries it does so by backing those political parties and movements that oppose the system or by waging information wars, while in former Soviet republics (Georgia, Ukraine), it does not shrink from using aggression and military power.

There Are Not Just “Marginal Deviations”

What poses an even greater problem is that Russia is not the only country in Central and Eastern Europe pursuing this course. The Belarusian autocrat Alexander Lukashenko, who started introducing this kind of system in 1994 (with Putin joining him only some ten years later), has, historically, the pride of first place in building and maintaining illiberal democracy and state capitalism. In Hungary, Viktor Orbán has been developing a similar model during his last two terms of office and has recently acknowledged this fact publicly. And, of course, we must not forget another key country, Turkey. The developments over the past year allow not the slightest doubt about where the country is headed.

However, the greatest problem is that we are not talking of just a “marginal deviation” occurring in countries with weaker historic, cultural, and civilizational preconditions for building a system based on political and economic freedom, openness, solidarity, human rights, and the rule of law. The deviation of Hungary and Poland from the model of liberal democracy and the free market economy is a glaring example, but there are many more. Brexit and Trump’s election as president provide the most decisive proof of the fact that the threat can emanate from the very “core.” The year 2016 was a wake-up call when it became clear that the problem is much more acute.

The world is changing fast and many people are fearful of these changes, feel threatened by them, and will not accept them.

So What Has Happened?

What has happened is that the model of liberal democracy and (mixed) market economy that had worked for decades in developed and wealthy countries of (especially) North America and Western Europe, and was later also applied to countries of Central and Eastern Europe along with the expansion of the EU, has increasingly come under attack both internally and externally. However, the main problem consists in the fact that while this model is far from flawless or ideal, the majority of the alternatives is far worse, as Winston Churchill pointed out a long time ago.

The current crisis of liberal democracy is natural since it is the result of the conflict between the old politics and the new conditions, to which “old” politics failed to respond promptly.

It is a well-known fact that the economy matters, and the economy has also played an important role in the crisis of liberal democracy and, of course, the market economy. Although the global economy has recovered and has started to grow again following the deep global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009, the pace of growth is not as fast as it used to be. If we add to the mix the debt crisis, ageing populations and demographic crisis, plus growing income inequality, it becomes evident that contentedness and optimism are on the wane and that an increasing number of people in developed countries now face the future with worry and fear. Nowadays, the majority of the adult population in several developed countries is convinced that their children will be worse off in future than they themselves are today.

Many People Are Fearful of the Changing World

Fear of the future is exacerbated by the immigration crisis, the terrorist threat, and a growing sense that the state does not offer its citizens adequate protection against these dangers.

The world is changing fast and many people are fearful of these changes, feel threatened by them, and will not accept them. This is natural in principle and scientists have long shown that risk aversion (and thus also change aversion) is a natural human trait. However, a characteristic of the present state, apart from the faster pace of change, is also the vastly increased access to false, unverified, or intentionally manipulated and manipulating information that aims to exacerbate the existing fears and frustrations, or create new ones.

On the other hand, the world has never seen more wealth, prosperity, and stability than today, the level of poverty has never been as low as it is today, and never before have fewer people suffered violent deaths or died of hunger and illnesses. This is a paradox, since this progress has been achieved primarily due to globalization, which is based on economic and political freedom and openness, i.e. the values of liberal democracy and free market economy. That is, thanks to the very things that are under threat today.

Why Did This Happen and What Is the Way Out?

On the one hand, the current crisis of liberal democracy is natural since it is the result of the conflict between the old politics and the new conditions, to which “old” politics failed to respond promptly. This kind of conflict is inevitable, sooner or later.

However, the current crisis might not have been as acute if liberal democracy itself had not been subjected to certain deformations over the past few decades. Primary amongst them, in my view, are political correctness, unbounded multiculturalism, the challenging of tried and tested values, and, last but not least, a flawed and deformed understanding of the role of state in society.

Political correctness hampers free discussion, which in turn ultimately not only prevents us from defining the causes of challenges and problems but also from seeking the best solutions to them (see, for example, the misguided and biased way in which the German media reported the refugee crisis in 2016). Unbridled multiculturalism and political correctness undermine the foundations of liberal democracy and open society, since they render it weak

and vulnerable to such aggressive enemies of freedom as are radical Islam or Putin's regime. An example that illustrates the muddled understanding of the role of government is the fact that the state does not adequately carry out its basic functions (such as protecting its external borders or the lives, health, and property of its citizens) despite the fact that redistribution is growing and the sustainability of the current model is decreasing (growth of indebtedness, ageing population, demographic and environmental crisis). At the same time, overly generous, demotivating, inefficient, and unsustainable welfare systems act as a magnet for economic migration for people from poor countries. This immigration is not properly managed and regulated through the failure of the state (or states within the Schengen zone) to protect its external borders. And thus the circle closes.

CEE Countries Should Remain Within the Core of a Multi-Track EU

This situation quite naturally provides more space for populists and demagogues to propose solutions whose common denominator is the questioning of liberal democracy, open society, and free market economy. Fences on borders, barriers to free trade and free competition, strengthening of the role of government in the economy as well as a curtailment of free and fair political competition are but the logical consequence of all this.

What is the real solution? Fighting for freedom, fighting for liberal democracy, for a free market economy and open society – but fighting not only against open enemies of freedom (racists, xenophobes, fascists, communists, and isolationists) but also against those who render liberal democracy, open society, and the market economy weak and vulnerable to its enemies.

What is the real solution? Fighting for freedom, fighting for liberal democracy, not only against open enemies of freedom but also against those who render liberal democracy vulnerable.

The crisis demands a fresh approach in each country. However, the challenges faced by EU countries are especially acute and grave. This is because the coordination and flexibility required to introduce policy changes is slower within the EU but also because the degree of openness and mutual interlinking (integration) within the EU is much greater than anywhere else (this applies especially to countries that are in the Schengen area and the eurozone).

Now, in the wake of the German election, we can expect an acceleration of the process of drawing up and implementing changes and reforms aiming to sustain the previously achieved degree of integration in these changed conditions. Specifically, this will affect the sustainability of Schen-

In my view, what is fundamentally important for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is to remain within the core of a multi-track European Union.

gen and the euro. In terms of the former what is primarily required is a more rigorous protection of the common border and a stricter regulation of migration (including a joint asylum policy); in terms of the latter, it requires complementing the currency union with a closer fiscal union. A variety of instruments can be used in both areas and a lot depends on which ones will be chosen. For example, a fiscal union can be based primarily on the principle of redistribution from the more successful to the less successful members or, alternatively, on establishing rules that will force the less successful ones to introduce reforms necessary to increase their competitiveness and make them more successful.

In my view, what is fundamentally important for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is to remain within the core of a multi-track European Union. However, this will depend on the direction that further integration takes. And that is something nobody can be certain about.

One thing, however, is certain. There is no alternative to liberal democracy, the open society, and the free market economy. Certainly not one that would not be worse.

IVAN MIKLOŠ

was deputy prime minister and finance minister of Slovakia from 2002 to 2006 and again from 2010 to 2012. In 1991-1992 he served as privatization minister, and from 1998 to 2002 he served as deputy minister for economy in the first government of Mikuláš Dzurinda, with whom he had co-founded the economic think tank MESA10 in 1992. In 2014 he joined Vox Ukraine, the international group of advisors to the National Reform Council of Ukraine, and since April 2016 he has served as the chief economic advisor to Ukraine's prime minister. He heads the Strategic Advisory Group for the Support of Ukrainian Reforms. | Photo: Ivan Mikloš Archive



ASPEN REVIEW
FILIP SENK

INTERVIEW
ECONOMY
ARCHITECTURE
URBANISM
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TRUMP

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Teddy Cruz:



Thinking Architecture without Buildings

Right now a passionate discussion is going on in the architectural field. On one side there are more socially conscious architects trying to find ways how their profession can improve lives of people living in marginalized and poor areas. And on the other side are those architects who claim this is rather a social work and it does not move architecture as a specialized discipline forward. Teddy Cruz is one of the most prominent architects representing the more socially-oriented thinking line, and as he says in an interview with Filip Šenk: the future of our cities depends less on buildings and more on the reorganization of socio-economic relations. Teddy Cruz was co-invited by the Aspen Institute to Prague as one of the keynote speakers of reSITE Conference 2017.

FILIP ŠENK: In your lectures, you often stress that public space can educate people. Can you explain what sort of architecture or design, in general, can have such power?

TEDDY CRUZ: There might be some physical attributes of the space itself or even of the infrastructural frame of the space that may suggest a pedagogical dimension. But what I meant especially with the Medellin case is something else. The concept there was to turn the public space into a site for increasing capacities of communities. That means not only for political actions but also civic awareness, engagement, participation. It is not only the physical form but the

space needed to be programmed with very particular activities and performances. This content needed to be co-curated by the local communities, cultural institutions, government, civic philanthropy, and universities. Such cross-section coalition-supported and funded content emerged from the local community. This is what's beautiful about it. The local community is famous for recycling things, and many exhibitions and events were planned to bring relevant science to the level where it is easily accessible. The point is the relationship of physical space to strategically chosen program that assures the space will be used in a particular way.

Can you give an example from your own studio?

I can mention one of the projects that Fiona Forman, my partner, and I developed on San Diego-Tijuana border - the Cross-Border Community Stations. It is planned as a

Art and architecture have the power to shift consciousness. In this case, we care more about civic awareness, about sensibility for coexisting, for people being accountable for each other's acts.

vertical public space dedicated to programs coming from the University of California San Diego, where we teach, in collaboration with local communities. It is built through time with different exposed layers and all of the composition is transparent. I believe this space should be transparent socially, culturally, economically. Thus the overall composition suggests the building could be pedagogical, because people can see how it is developed using methods they themselves are using in an informal architecture. Aesthetically and materially the space almost didactically shows a formal solution inspired by architecture without architects, but not in a folkloristic way. We reject the idea of developing identity through style which has been for a long time in the heart of architecture.

You stress that to change our cities you have to first change minds and

hearts of people. Can architecture help the change or does architecture come after the change? It seems to me it works both ways at the same time.

It definitively works both ways. Art and architecture have the power to shift consciousness. In this case, we care more about civic awareness, about sensibility for coexisting, for people being accountable for each other's acts. I'm talking about places that have been hugely alienated by violence and people retreated into their private spaces because of fear. The idea to change hearts and minds already presupposes a society that is willing to change.

The former mayor of Medellin decided all the resources should be redirected to most impoverished areas of the city. He was committed to building beautiful buildings in those areas. He used dramatic and powerful architecture as a way to restore the dignity of those people. It is not aesthetics for aesthetics itself. If you build something special as those public library parks in the previously violent, conflicted, and marginalized zones, people notice. Architecture can restore the dignity of a certain area but not on its own terms. These public library parks were planned as beautiful but above all open and accessible architecture.

You focus on public space and its openness. You work with the idea of socially conscious architecture. How does the current political situation with President Trump who got

elected with rhetoric based on walls and barriers affected your praxis?

At the end of the day, it consolidates the commitment in terms of local community.

And what is remarkable, that applies even for the conservative community.

One of the most important civic leaders in San Diego today is a Republican. He is a businessman and he wants to get rid of the existing wall between San Diego and Tijuana. He recognizes how it affects the economic flow and vibrancy. In a surprising way, the conservative community is linked with the progressive critique of the wall. In fact, a group of San Diego developers built a bridge that transgresses border wall for business purposes.

In the seventies, a famous urban planner, Kevin Lynch, was invited to the city by local civic leaders to draft a plan for the city. When he came, he realized Tijuana is next door and the first thing he said was: the future of San Diego depends on the future of Tijuana. I say we cannot think one city without the other because that would be regionally a suicide. Kevin Lynch suggested San Diego and Tijuana need to think how to collaborate, how to coexist. He didn't say it explicitly, but if the wall is going to be there the cooperation is almost impossible.

Did people listen?

Tijuana paid attention to the wall and built an international airport just behind it. San Diego never did anything about it, ignored it only. Now a group of

businessmen came up with the idea to use the proximity of the airport and build a parking lot on the San Diego side. They also built a bridge connecting the parking lot to the airport. You can park your car, check in, and you go straight to your gate, which avoids all the lines and crossing the official border. They just opened it recently. This is the only effective piece of infrastructure that crosses the border. It is a completely anti-Trump thing but it is driven by the business community. Many people supporting the wall are rural people living in the Midwest. They are far away from the border. People who live in close proximity to the wall understand the implications how the wall is undermining environmental tendencies as well as social relationships.

Architecture can restore the dignity of a certain area but not on its own terms.

Can you say a bit more about your survey on cross-border citizenship?

I work in collaboration with Fonna Forman, a political theorist. Both of us have been researching Latin American cities, places that have suffered from alienation, from a lot of violence, and that have restored civic dignity. Fonna Forman focuses also on human rights and for instance was part of a special United Nations commission to update and review the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A lot of our work has been focused

on social norms and normative aspects of current systems. We search for ways to intervene and shift systems to motivate will to cooperation. We co-direct the Center on Global Justice at UCSD inside which our cross-border initiative lives. And therefore we also met Antanas Mockus, former mayor of Bogota, because he is one of the leaders in advancing strategies for rethinking public policy. When he was a mayor of Bogota, he started to intervene in the city with artists and cultural producers. For instance, in one famous event he replaced the compromised traffic police with mimes. Very idiosyncratic interventions in cooperation with artists, curators, and cultural producers began to build the level of public awareness and civic engagement.

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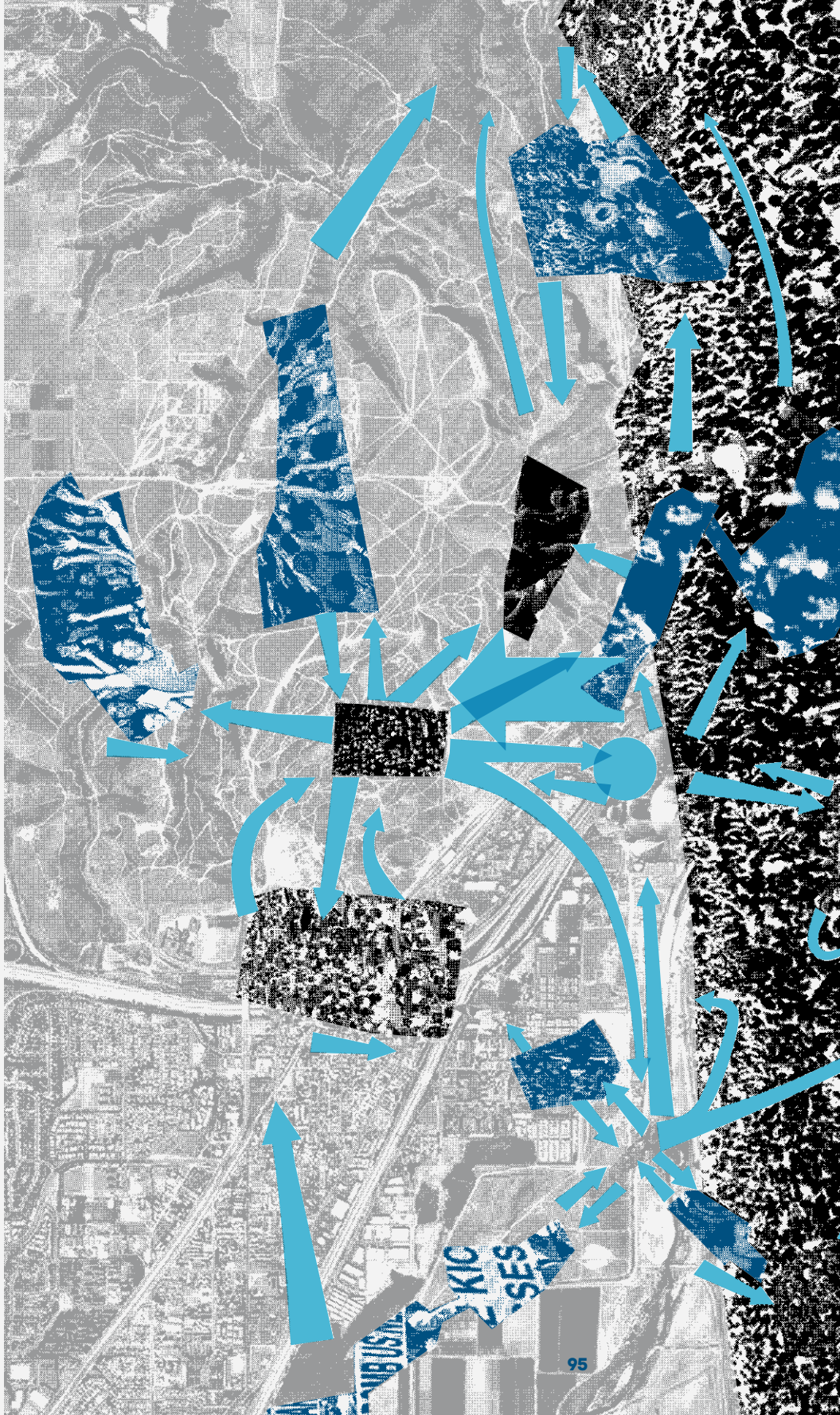
After his last term, after 8 years of being a mayor, he created a center, an NGO Corpovisionarios, where he documented and consolidated all his experience with public policy. They produced a citizenship cultural survey of 52 quirky questions, which is not your usual social sciences survey but rather a cultural instrument. He said citizenship is a cultural concept. And how do you construct it? He built the survey to help other municipalities in Latin America to rethink their public policy and reorient public spending. He worked with 15 cities in Latin America and the data gained through this survey

were very revealing. For instance, it revealed Tijuana had the largest index of domestic violence. Once it reveals zones of vulnerability the municipality can reorient their resources to tackle them. Artists would be now called to support very specific intervening scripts. In the end, the survey became a script for urban interventions. What precedes the programmatic is the change in public policy. We asked why not to make a survey not dedicated to one city but a survey on the border between two cities to see their interdependence? What are their myths, beliefs, and correspondences about each other? We performed it and it revealed these cities want to collaborate. There is an understanding of positive implications of regional public sensitivity that transcends the jurisdictional border. To achieve a change we now have to educate people on cross-border citizenship.

You want to learn from poor areas, gain useful knowledge from informal urbanism. What sort of knowledge is that?

We argue we can learn from the slums of Tijuana to reinvent the oil-hungry suburbia which is the DNA of Southern California. If we are able to translate many of their unconscious strategies of development, the way people self-organize, the way they correspond to topography, we can improve the future of our cities. There are many strategies we could extrapolate, but

PICTURE 1: San Diego — Tijuana Border Illustration; © Estudio Teddy Cruz+Forman



I said many times that informal urbanism is not just style or certain aesthetics, as many artists unfortunately believe, but urbanistic praxis.

we cannot see slums just as a façade of poverty. I said many times that informal urbanism is not just style or certain aesthetics, as many artists unfortunately believe, but urbanistic praxis.

In San Diego when you go to immigrant neighborhoods, usually these are postwar single-family residences, smaller houses. In the last 60 years, the American dream of a single-family house has completely transformed to more complex social economic dynamics that are from 80% nonconformist, I don't want to say illegal. People found their economy in a garage or a house and used it in a way that is not allowed or wasn't planned. If the first ring of suburbanization outside of city has transformed so radically already, can we anticipate how the subsequent rings of suburbanization will transform in next 100 years? From there emerges the idea that the future of South California depends on the transformation of the large to the small. Can large, big box economy development with huge houses adapt to the future by turning into smaller environments? Not only in terms of the size of its buildings but also in terms of programs.

But what sort of knowledge for such a transformation you have in mind?

The transformation of the city through informal economies and informal planning

contains intelligence. There is creativity in a way how people negotiate with space, boundaries, retrofit environments and provide them with program... there are social and spatial strategies that are off the radar of institutions of planning or even universities. In fact, the schools of architecture lack tools to methodologically measure and visualize those dynamics. Most of the students are educated how to do buildings as self-contained entities. Our architectural education is ignoring the complexity of this social-political dynamics. Part of the problem is people are afraid of these issues because what they see is messiness, an idiosyncratic montage of informal ways of living. Learning obviously doesn't mean reproducing it one to one. What you can take is, for instance, the different idea of density. The issue is how to socialize density? Density is not a sum of objects but of social interactions. How do buildings perform in those terms? How they create social frames?

What vision you have for the city of the future? You say Dubai or London is not the future... so what the city of future can be like?

A lot of people are seduced by the idea of self-driving cars and many such ideas. OK, but it is the same model of individual transport vehicle even though it is flying. Can we speculate the city of the future might completely shift this paradigm? Enrique Penalosa said a city of the future

is not where poor can buy a car but where the rich use mass transportation.

For the future of the city, I say something that is professional suicide: the future of the city depends less on buildings, glamorous dream castles architects tend to design, but more on the reorganization of socio-economic relations. As designers, we need to figure out how to re-engage public policy that is inclusive from the bottom up. Top-down welfare state might not be possible any longer. The big metropolitan global capitals of capitalism have become hugely mono-cultural and hugely mono-use. The explosion of urbanization in many Asian and Arab states taught us nothing. These are neoliberal models driven by architecture of icons, it is a culture of self-referential objects built by immigrant working force living in a marginalized periphery. We cannot afford such alienation anymore as downtown cities are emptied out. We have to make future cities more inclusive. This question must be tackled by designers. It is about democratizing the urban

planning and not having one huge developer building one big block or area but looking for ways how we can diversify that. In the past, Fonna and I admired the social democratic model of many European cities

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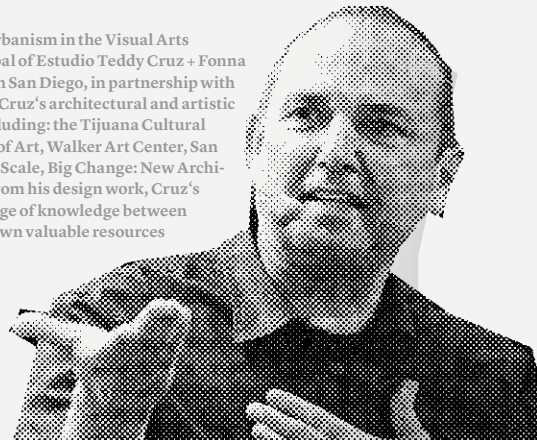
driven by public commitment, investment in infrastructure to create a frame, but in later years later we realized that such model was possible only because those societies were so homogenous. When immigrants enter the equation things start to break up. The future of the city depends also on progressive political leadership that is inclusive and enables a new public policy that accepts difference. I know these are very idealistic and romantic visions, however, in the immigrant areas we research, we see it is possible.



Teddy Cruz was co-invited by the Aspen Institute to Prague as one of the keynote speakers of reSITE Conference 2017. Aspn.me/TeddyCruz

TEDDY CRUZ

is an American architect, urbanist, Professor in Public Culture and Urbanism in the Visual Arts Department at the University of California, San Diego. Cruz is principal of Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman, a research-based political and architectural practice based in San Diego, in partnership with University of California, San Diego political theorist, Fonna Forman. Cruz's architectural and artistic projects have been exhibited at internationally renowned venues, including: the Tijuana Cultural Center, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Carnegie Museum of Art, Walker Art Center, San Francisco Art Institute, Casa de America in Madrid, Spain, and Small Scale, Big Change: New Architectures of Social Engagement at the Museum of Modern Art. Apart from his design work, Cruz's project at UCSD, Community Stations, champions the mutual exchange of knowledge between universities and communities, the latter of which he feels have their own valuable resources and assets that are often overlooked. | Photo: Tomáš Princ, reSITE



What If the V4 Countries Were Not Members of the European Union?

This question would not have gotten any attention a few years ago. During the first decade of membership, all expert or serious politicians, let alone the larger communities of the Visegrad Four countries, considered accession in 2004 as a qualitative cornerstone in their historical development from security, geopolitical, political, economic, and social point of view alike. All of them were aware of and repeatedly emphasized the unambiguous advantages of having joined the European Union based on various cost-benefit analyses.

At present, however, some developments in the V4 countries seem to justify this question and require reasonable answers in order to stop the dangerous and self-defeating populist wave. This paper aims at contributing to the expert debate expecting that a comprehensive and objective discussion can be started not only with populist politicians but, first of all, with broader circles of the population in all V4 countries.

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Why Did the Question of Non-Membership (Re)Emerge?

First, the political changes in the last years leading to the establishment of authoritarian systems (in Orbán's expression "illiberal democracy"), the special interpretation of the "rule of law," the demolition of basic democratic institutions became a basic challenge to European values cemented in EU treaties and signed by all V4 countries in 2002, when official negotiations were finished and the way became open to membership in 2004.

Second, and as an unprecedented development within the EU, one of the member countries, namely the Hungarian government, blamed and accused Brussels openly and on the highest political level. The poster campaign of "Let's stop Brussels" was, at least until today, the most manifest example.

Third, the migration plan with obligatory resettlement of a very modest number of asylum seekers (not "migrants"!) fostered the V4 cohesion and confronted the priority of "national identity" ("we are not an immigrant country") with the EU's migration plan. Just the opposite, it seems to be the most important element of demonstrating the (never existing) strong cohesion among the V4 countries.

With the potential Brexit, V4 countries are not only losing their ally but, at the same time, may be facing the revival of the deepening process of the EU.

Fourth, Brexit and its potential consequences fundamentally weakened the position of the V4 within the EU. Great Britain had always been considered as the basic ally by V4 politicians against any deepening of the integration. With the potential Brexit, V4 countries are not only losing their ally but, at the same time, may be facing the revival of the deepening process of the EU and the emerging institutional dividing lines between the "core" and the "periphery."

Fifth, the V4 countries, belonging to the main beneficiaries of the EU Cohesion Fund, are fully aware of the fact that the unprecedented modernization chance, financed over two budgetary periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020), is unlikely to be prolonged after 2020. The new multiannual budget (2021-2027, official negotiations starting these months) will look rather different from the previous ones. Partly due to structural changes in the new budget, and partly due to the consequence of Brexit, the EU cannot rely on payments coming from the second largest contributor anymore. The alternatives are either looking for additional contributions by the remaining members or seriously cutting the next budget.

Sixth, the emerging self-deceiving arguments by V4 politicians (part of demonstrating the “independence” and “maturity” of the four countries both in alliance and individually) have to be professionally criticized. Most recently, the Hungarian prime minister announced that Hungary does not need EU money anymore, because it stands on its feet and can generate high growth rates without the EU support. Polish politicians emphasize that EU funds have, to a large extent, served and enriched the net contributor countries, Germany first of all, and not Poland. The Czech scene is more modest, since the key argument is more about national maneuvering room and less about “interference” (or “dominance”) by Brussels.

Membership vs. Non-Membership: Some Basic Facts

It would be an ahistorical approach to imagine what would have happened with the V4 region and the individual countries had they not entered the EU.

The real issue is how did more than one decade of full-fledged EU membership shape the V4 countries in general, and their relations with(in) the EU.

Before an economic analysis, two basic pillars have to be underlined. First, all acceding countries have committed themselves to the EU rules, including the primacy/supremacy of EU law over national legislation in all areas where EU law prevails. Moreover, they accepted the “no opt-out” principle. Second, the V4 countries have clearly defined their interest in membership, including the four freedoms (trade, services, capital, and special emphasis on citizens and manpower), just access to EU funds, and full-fledged participation in EU institutions and decision-making bodies. In all areas, membership guaranteed these requirements.

2.1. Impact on Overall Growth

The V4 growth over the entire period (2004-2016) was substantially higher than that of the EU-28 (and even more than that of the EU-15). Although the 2008-2009 crisis interrupted this process, most countries recovered quite soon, Hungary being the exception.

Prospects for the period of 2017-2018 indicate that an EU-28 average growth of 3.6% will be accompanied by much higher growth in all V4 countries (6.6 percent for Poland, 6.5 percent for Slovakia, 5.1 percent for Hungary, and 5 percent for the Czech Republic). These figures confirm that EU membership substantially contributed to higher than average growth and, accordingly, to the successful catching-up process to EU average.

Foreign Trade Developments

Foreign trade proved to be the key driver of growth, structural change, and unprecedented and successful geographic reorientation for all V4 countries. In contrast to the opinion of many experts, high dependence on the ex-Soviet market could be changed within a few years, partly due to the collapse of the Soviet market and partly to the opening of EU markets, including first large-scale investments of foreign companies with trade-generating impacts. Definitely, this process, both due to its dramatic speed and the lack of institutional preparedness, did involve high costs and not only benefits. However, all other (imagined) options would have entailed much more costs and much less benefits.

It has to be underlined that the V4 countries, due to their historical heritage and their geopolitical situation, are relying much more heavily on the EU trade than most of the other member countries. On V4 level, 83 percent of their total exports was located in other EU member countries in 2005 and almost the same share (81.7 percent) in 2015. At the same time, the EU-28 average declined from 68 to 63 percent in a decade.

It would be an ahistorical approach to imagine what would have happened with the V4 region and the individual countries had they not entered the EU.

2.3. Foreign Direct Investments and EU Membership

Foreign capital played a decisive role in the success of transformation, structural change, and competitiveness of the V4 countries. In addition, based on their own interests, they were important drivers of EU accession. They started to invest in

the region well before the official negotiations started in 1998 (see Hungary) or during the accession period, anticipating membership for granted. No cost-benefit analysis can ignore that foreign companies fundamentally contributed to economic growth and structural modernization, transfer of technology, education and training, employment, and creating a new social environment. In sum, they definitely strengthened the region's integration in global and EU-level structures.

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2.4. Free Movement of Persons

This was one of the most important requirements of the new member states (mainly driven by Poland) to sign the accession treaties. After 2004, three members (United Kingdom, Sweden, and Ireland) immediately lifted all restrictions, while other "old" member countries did it within a transitional period of 7 years (Germany and Austria being the last countries to eliminate all barriers). The "migration capacity" of the individual V4 countries was rather different after 2004. While we experienced a huge outflow from Poland (and partly from Slovakia), Czech and Hungarian citizens made rather limited use of this possibility. The situation dramatically changed after 2010 in Hungary, resulting in an additional 500,000 citizens leaving the country in the last seven years. At the moment, there are about 6 million EU citizens working (and living) in another EU country, out of which about 40 to 45 percent originate in the V4, with clear dominance of Polish, and increasingly Hungarian citizens. The reasons for working abroad are manifold and can by far not just be explained by wage differences.

Of course, massive (e)migration is an ambiguous development. On the one hand, it reduces high-level and socially unfavorable domestic unemployment (see Poland over a longer period) and increases financial resources as a result of remittances sent back by citizens working abroad.

On the other hand, it may deprive the sending country of the best prepared, talented, mobile, and young people, increase lack of skilled labor needed by competitive domestic and foreign-based companies, sharpen demographic problems, increase regional differentiation, and deprive governments of a broad group of taxpayers.

2.5. The Impact of EU Resources

Over the period of two multiannual financial frameworks (2007-2013 and 2014-2020), the V4 region has access to EU funds in the amount of about 240 billion euros, or, on the average, 17 billion euro annually. Of course, the money, even if fully used (which has not been the case), has not been distributed evenly from year to year. In some years (mainly in the first period with projects launched), only a very modest sum could be drawn, while the second half of the period showed very high payments. There is no doubt, however, that EU resources over 14 years offered an unprecedented historical opportunity for sustainable modernization, provided the money had been or is being spent correctly and for the right purposes. On yearly average, EU transfers corresponding to 2.5 percent of GDP of the region (and about 3.5 percent in case of Hungary) can (or should be able to) produce an annual growth of 2.5 percent without any change in the domestic economic performance – at least on paper.

2.6. Membership in Schengen

The importance of Schengen is generally not emphasized or not even acknowledged. However, it has a very positive impact on member countries, not least the V4 region. First, it can be considered as a win-win system for European security. It shifted the eastern (security) border of the “old” EU to the new members’ eastern border (excepting Finland). Belonging to Schengen (together with belonging to the NATO) has enhanced the security of the new member countries which became the new eastern (and southern) border of the EU.

There is no doubt, however, that EU resources over 14 years offered an unprecedented historical opportunity for sustainable modernization, provided the money had been spent correctly.

Second, free flow of citizens would be massively and negatively affected with border controls among member countries. Third, several transnational companies based on just-in-time-production would not have considered the V4 countries as favorable location for their investments. This continuous flow of commodities in both directions (including export of cars) can only function if there is no border control and substantial loss of time. Non-Schengen would immediately disrupt this supply chain.

Weak Anti-EU Arguments of Populist Governments

In the concluding part I come back to some of the anti-EU arguments mentioned at the beginning of the paper.

First: Hungary cannot survive without EU support. A 3,5 percent potential growth in 2017, the highest in a decade, would be equivalent to the average annual inflow of EU money. Since a higher than average inflow of EU resources is predicted for 2017 and 2018, a 3,5 percent growth will remain even more fundamentally dependent on EU money.

Second: The Polish argument, according to which EU funds mainly favored foreign companies, can easily be rejected. EU funds financing infrastructure projects benefitted not only foreign firms to consider location in Poland favorable but also domestic companies and citizens alike.

Third: The artificially but deliberately created common demon/devil, namely the threat of migration, has to be correctly interpreted and presented to the already mentally contaminated societies of the region. If Polish politicians believe that about 6,000 legally relocated asylum seekers (or Hungarian politicians think that 1,294 asylum seekers) would threaten the “national identity” of the country, then there must be a basic problem with this identity. Even more so if up to 10 percent of the domestic labor force seeks its future outside the country. Why is just this very unfavorable development not considered to be a real threat to “national identity”? The V4 countries, in their own fundamental interest, need to change their current attitude against the outside world (migration is just one topic, the EU is another, and there are many additional issues).

It is crucial to develop a realistic view of the potential of the V4 in the EU context. V4 represents 6 percent of the GDP of the EU-28, much less than the Benelux group.

Fourth: It is crucial to develop a realistic view of the potential of the V4 in the EU context. V4 represents 6 percent of the GDP of the EU-28, much less than the Benelux group. The latter has never come up with leadership demand but could substantially influence decision-making processes by clever compromises, flexibility, and high level of adjustment capacity. Self-proclaimed leadership of the V4 may be a political slogan without any content and credible implementation capacity.

4. Not Visegrad Four, but Vacuum Four

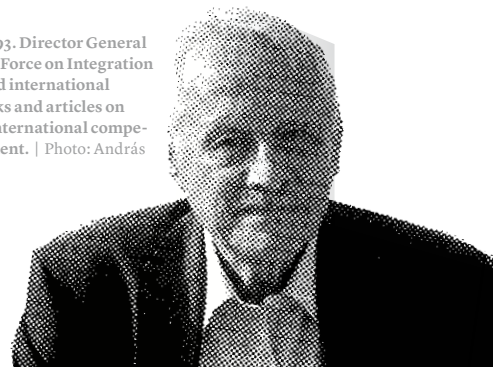
The last decade would have offered at least two historical chances which have not been used. First, after accession, and just by looking at the map, it became clear that the enlarged Union needs a third north-south infrastructure corridor as such a corridor had been implemented earlier between Scotland and Gibraltar and between Scandinavia and Sicily. Unfortunately, nobody in the V4 group came up with such an idea.

Second, nobody would have impeded the V4 countries to start a strategic cooperation in fostering their respective small- and medium-sized entrepreneurial sector and, particularly, extending such initiatives on regional, cross-country cooperation. Even sizeable EU resources could have been used for creating a competitive and strong, young and innovative regional entrepreneurial sector based on export-orientation, participation in the global or regional value chain of transnational companies, and successfully competing with imported goods and services in V4 markets. At the same time, decisive dividing factors remain, such as the assessment of Russia (between the Hungarian and the Polish view), or the introduction of the euro (being a eurozone member, Slovakia holds clear preference to the EU and the euro, in case it should choose between the EU and the V4).

In fact, Visegrad Four, in its current form, may be more appropriately named “Vacuum Four.”

ANDRÁS INOTAI

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Migration into Unemployment and the Fallacy of the Dogma of Equality

All people are equal. We take this statement for granted. It is included in a number of international treaties and declarations. It has become a dogma. It is based on at least one completely fallacious premise resulting from a confusion of terms. However, it is not merely an intellectual problem since its impact on the future of European society has been disastrous.

This is because “equality” has become fundamentally dogmatized. Social democrats in particular tend to interpret the equality dogma in such an exaggerated way that its effect is almost as negative as the totalitarian and feudal inequality of past regimes.

Turning the postulate that all people are equal and equally valuable into a dogma has given rise to a demand for equal opportunities, perverting this Christian-Enlightenment idea to the extent that we now speak of an opportunity of results. No sooner does the slightest hint of inequality make an appearance and the social democratic way of thinking, which is dominant in a number of countries, tries to put everyone on an equal footing regardless of the differences between them. By force, if necessary. Afterwards it claims cynically that this is meant to represent “justice” and “fairness.”

Denying the Differences

Wherever the results are manifestly not the same, the differences between people have either been denied or an outright war has been waged against them. Let me give just a few examples:

- In education there is a strong opposition to marking, entrance examinations, performance requirements, and drawing distinctions between individual schools;
- all schools are expected to be inclusive so that even the most disabled children are taught together with gifted ones;
- aggressive or mentally ill individuals are not supposed to be “locked up”;
- instead of quality of scholarship, gender equality has become the primary criterion in appointing university professors;
- in sex education children are increasingly inculcated with the alleged complete equality of all forms of sexual activity;
- equality dogmatists want to stop everyone from using health services outside the steadily collapsing state healthcare system;
- they demand confiscatory taxation in order to eliminate all differences between real incomes and to eradicate individual property;
- and in criminal law the slogan of “a society without prisons” keeps cropping up.

While new chefs or tourism industry staff are almost impossible to find in the Tyrol, people working in this sector are often unemployed in Vienna.

Floodgates to Other Demands

In this context it is not surprising that ideologues of equality fail to distinguish between migration and the granting of political asylum. The decision on whether to grant asylum is no longer based on whether a person has fled their country because they were directly and personally persecuted, which used to be the precondition for granting asylum based on the Migration Convention. Equality means that those who have passed through dozens of other safe countries before applying for asylum, engaging in “asylum shopping,” should also be granted protection.

Exactly the same nonsense is being applied in the labor market. One example is the quotas for the representation of women on supervisory boards. Not only does this requirement constitute yet another serious economic restriction, it also ignores the fact that in many sectors there simply are not enough women who may be interested in taking on the demanding tasks involved in being on a supervisory board. In other words, quotas seriously damage the situation of many men who might be able to take on the positions in question.

The opening of borders towards the East has turned out to be a blessing for the West, and its impact has been far more beneficial than predicted.

At the same time the enforced “women quotas” have opened the floodgates to other demands for minority representation, be they in favor of Muslims, people who are illiterate, dyslectic, of a particular sexual orientation, members of sects, the old or the young. Once you have uttered the word “quota” you have to keep using it. That is the only way to live up to the egalitarian dogma.

Labor Shortages? Let the Migrants In.

Even more absurd is the application of this dogma in the sphere of the labor market and mass migration. A shortage in the labor force in certain sectors, from the technical professions to doctors and nurses, is a well-known fact. In countries with full employment, such as Germany, this shortage is nowadays felt across all sectors, even though only ten years ago the country suffered from high unemployment. On the other hand there is Austria which, after a long period of high unemployment, now struggles with asymmetric labor shortages. While new chefs or tourism industry staff are almost impossible to find in the Tyrol, people working in this sector are often unemployed in Vienna.

In view of this labor shortage some infinitely naïve people, especially entrepreneurs, have advocated the following approach: “Hundreds of millions of young people around the world are unemployed and wish to come to Europe. Let’s make use of them to solve our labor market problems.” It is this kind of thinking, in conjunction with other factors, that has resulted in, among other things, the recent decision to let millions of illegal migrants enter Europe.

Great Britain and the Migration from the East

What is depressing about this way of thinking is that there is indeed one wave of migration where this really has proved to be the case. I am talking about the hundreds of thousands of people who came to Great Britain, Germany, and Austria from Eastern and Central Europe after the fall of communism. This migration has benefited both sides. Most of the new arrivals from former communist-bloc countries are hard-working, well-educated, and willing to adapt. They have filled gaps in many professions affected by shortages. They have also quickly contributed to economic growth in the countries of their choice, and have become fully integrated there.

The opening of borders towards the East has turned out to be a blessing for the West, and its impact has been far more beneficial than predicted. Great Britain is the only country where migration from the East has become a significant issue. However, it certainly did not play a decisive role in the British vote to leave the EU.

The influx of labor from Central and Eastern Europe has recently declined, not because of problems in the host countries but because of the rapid economic growth in the home countries. The Visegrad states (Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics) in particular have achieved de facto full employment and their economic prospects are outstanding, making their citizens reluctant to leave even though wages still lag behind those in the West. Moreover, these countries themselves now attract labor migrants from Ukraine.

The really big problems started well before the EU enlargement and they were connected with the large-scale migration of labor from Turkey.

The Problems Began with the Turks

There is no such good news with regard to South-East Europe. Nevertheless, the really big problems started well before the EU enlargement and they were connected with the large-scale migration of labor from Turkey.

Nearly all the immigrants from Turkey are Muslims. Moreover, many of them are radical nationalists. This specific religious and nationalist background is exacerbated by a phenomenon that had not, initially, been anticipated in Germany or Austria, where the Turkish workers were referred to as *Gastarbeiter*, i.e. “guest workers.” Unlike real guests, however, most of them

remained, and were even joined by other family members later. Also—and this is why it is particularly problematic—they have permanently cut themselves off from the world around them, indulging in their denominationally oriented nationalism. They have not gone back for obvious reasons. In addition to better infrastructure, the social benefits in Western EU states are, in fact, too generous to be easily given up.

Nevertheless, in most cases their integration into society has failed and has not taken place to this day, whether linguistically, in terms of education, or by intermarriage with people from other cultural backgrounds. Naturally, they also refuse to adopt the values prevalent in the host country by (e.g.) giving up their archaic attitude to women. Nor do they tend to give up Turkish citizenship.

Admittedly, in many countries there are Turks who have become perfectly integrated in terms of language, values, and culture, and become very successful as well. Nevertheless, many of them differ strikingly from other migration waves of the recent past.

The Unwillingness to Integrate

The Turks who live in the European Union are often unwilling to integrate. This manifests itself in the fact that most of them are ardent followers of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, showing him even more support than do Turks living in Turkey. Many have not been put off by Erdoğan's hateful chauvinism or the transformation of Turkish democracy into a prison dictatorship. Nor have they been discouraged by Turkey's slide from a secular and relatively modern state into a fundamentalist Middle Ages.

This raises concerns, especially with regard to the future of West European societies, also in view of the substantially higher birth rate among Turkish women. This is so dramatic that Turkish immigration, a certain positive economic impact notwithstanding, cannot be judged a success. The same is true in terms of the economy. Most of the jobs which the Turks came to fill have vanished. These were undemanding jobs that are now done by machines. Neither has the second and third generation of Turkish workers managed to adapt to the changing labor market.

Far too few Turks have gained qualifications that would enable them to take on more demanding technical jobs in which there are still shortages, and too few of them are university graduates. Moreover, education and jobs have

completely passed by the women, with the result that many have remained literally hidden under their headscarves, their lives limited to looking after their homes and children.

The Turks who live in the European Union are often unwilling to integrate. This manifests itself in the fact that most of them are ardent followers of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

European societies, befuddled by their do-gooder self-delusion as well as thanks to a temporary economic demand for cheap labor, have refused to accept that Turkish immigration has failed. The myth prevailed that immigration would be ultimately beneficial to the host country, just as was the case of the Jews who fled the Holocaust to the US or the Sudeten Germans who fled to Germany and Austria. In addition to this, the socialists and the Greens soon began to court the Turkish vote, which a priori penalized anyone who drew attention to the problems.

The Turks Were Followed by “Refugees”

Before Western governments managed to fully analyze the failure of Turkish immigration, which has given Germany and other countries more problems than it has solved, another wave of migration arrived. The smaller-scale Bosnian prelude was followed by the great “tsunami” from a range of third world countries. The list of new refugees’ countries of origin ranges from Afghanistan to Eritrea.

In German and Austrian business circles, voices were again heard justifying the opening of borders to a new great migration by the need for a bigger labor force. These illusions were dispelled only in late 2016. As recently as in 2015 many had quite seriously claimed that Syrians and Iraqis would be a real bonus since they were better educated than the Turks.

There were, however, additional reasons that played into the hands of the open-arms policy:

- The German politicians in particular were wary of being labelled as heartless by the media;
- the pressure from the left-wing media, whose profound disdain for European identity has been characteristic since 1968;
- the conviction among those in power that in order to defeat the so-called extreme Right they had to oppose all its demands;

- the false interpretation of the notion of “love thy neighbor” on the part of Christian dignitaries;
- the erroneous estimates of the scale of migration that would follow if the gates were opened;
- the inappropriate and flawed comparisons between the current migration and the Jews fleeing the Holocaust;
- a wholly exaggerated interpretation of the Migration Convention by the highest European courts, which gradually allowed groups not covered by the Convention to remain in Europe;
- underestimating the cost of the “massive flight” to Europe;
- the widespread misapprehension that the migrants were fleeing individual persecution rather than being driven by the desire to finally enjoy a share of European prosperity;
- and the fact that after 70 years of peace and prosperity, Europe has completely lost the ability to take a firm stand.

European societies, befuddled by their do-gooder self-delusion as well as thanks to a temporary economic demand for cheap labor, have refused to accept that Turkish immigration has failed.

Nevertheless, let us set aside all the reasons for the welcome bubble listed above and focus on the argument, heard particularly from Germany, that opening the borders was necessary because of shortages in the labor force. This argument was used mostly in the context of the demographic disaster resulting from Europeans’ widespread and rapid ageing which, in turn, has two main causes:

- Instead of the average birth rate of 2.1 child per woman required to maintain population levels in Europe, the average birth rate is below 1.5 child per woman (n.b. this figure includes Muslim women with their higher birth rate);
- at the same time, the constantly increasing life expectancy results in a growing number of people who make no contribution to economic performance. While this phenomenon is positive in its own right, its negative impact is related to the fact that the growing life expectancy is not reflected in an increased pension age.

Naïve Maths

In view of this catastrophic news, the idea of welcoming millions of people from the third world in order to resolve the demographic problem seems logical at first sight. However, this is wholly illusory.

In German and Austrian business circles, voices were again heard justifying the opening of borders to a new great migration by the need for a bigger labor force. These illusions were dispelled only in late 2016.

First and foremost, the fallacy of the equality dogma becomes apparent. In terms of their ability to join the labor market, a person from Africa or the Middle East is not comparable to a European. However, this is precisely what many advocates of mass migration believe.

Not even years of study can bridge the gap in education. Similarly, as the small number of migrants who do have the requisite education has shown, an African doctor or an Arab computer engineer is not comparable to their European colleagues.

Dramatic differences in education attainment and knowledge levels are substantiated by results of the Pisa comparative tests. Before the war in Syria, the survey also included fifteen-year-olds in that country, provided they had access to education at all. The study showed that Syrian education lagged nearly four years behind the European average in terms of knowledge among fifteen-year-olds. The war is certain to have made this gap even bigger.

It is thus absurd for the dogmatists to enthuse about the number of years of education the “refugees” have. A less naïve view shows that even a few extra years of schooling after arrival in Europe is not enough to bridge the cultural differences. The main reasons are as follows:

- Geneticists point out that many inherited factors have to be taken into account that will manifest themselves in future generations through various epigenetic changes;
- educationalists claim that the first four years of life are key to human development, i.e. the parental influence that passes on the parents’ cultural and social traits;
- moreover, an additional problem arises in Islamic culture. Of the nearly 50 Islamic countries on the planet, only Turkey and Iran have developed

an educated middle class, and in these two countries attempts to permanently establish democratic rule of law have also failed. This suggests that the cultural and religious influence represents a strong disadvantage in terms of the ability to fully integrate into post-industrial society.

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Islamic Societies Lack a Tradition of Employment in Social Care

Apart from the knowledge gained through education, successful integration also requires the acquisition of deep-rooted social and cultural virtues: punctuality, diligence, orderliness, reliability, discipline, accuracy, basic mathematical skills, awareness of key levels of legal and social behavior, adaptability, as well as a basic willingness to accept a completely new cultural context. All of these skills, very important in our European societies, are often lacking in immigrants from third world countries. That is why one can confidently predict that only a half of these young men, at most, will ever be able to work in a normal profession, with most of them never being able to undertake more than very basic tasks. All the others will live at public expense for the rest of their lives, with plenty of time to hatch silly ideas.

Besides, Islamic societies in particular lack a tradition of employment in the one area that ageing Europe needs most of all: social work and care for the elderly. These are tasks that in the Islamic world are carried out exclusively by women, and only within their families. To say nothing of how shocking Islamic families would find it if women worked outside the home.

It is not true that the number of jobs on offer will decline in future. In fact, there will be more jobs in some sectors, for instance in electronics or other technical fields, as well as in counselling and communication, or social work. However, these are all areas in which it will be extremely difficult for immigrants from the third world to succeed because of the shortcomings mentioned earlier.

Living off the West, not for the West

This is why a large proportion of the new arrivals will live at the expense of Western societies rather than for their sake, and that is why they will fail to

contribute to the creation of values. This is why the hopes that many in Europe had pinned on the positive economic impact of the “refugee” migration are completely unfounded. Even if the frequently cited negative phenomena such as Islamization and cultural and social decline did not occur, no other new immigrants would arrive just in order to finance and care for an ageing Europe.

Europe expects in vain the advantages of migration for the labor market promised by business and equality dogmatists. On the contrary, continued migration will lead to enormous additional costs.

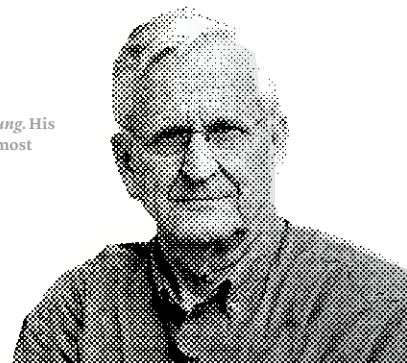
P.S. Should the text above suggest that many of those from Africa and Arabs are lacking in certain skills, this must not be taken as a generalization. There are positive exceptions, people who have managed to overcome every obstacle. I am sure that there will be many more of these. However, it would be wrong to generalize from these cases or, what is worse, to demand on this basis that everyone should be given a chance to show Europe that he or she might be that positive example. It is just such an opportunity that hundreds of millions of people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been waiting for, ever since the opening up of Europe. Many of them have not yet set out on their journey. It would be crazy to offer all of them a chance, given the

Islamic societies in particular lack a tradition of employment in the one area that ageing Europe needs most of all: social work and care for the elderly.

cost and the problems arising from their deportation. It would be far more sensible, just, and Christian to provide them instead with assistance in their home countries. There are many ways of doing this, from creating a system of technical education to a free market not constrained by pan-European subsidies. Unfortunately, this is made very difficult by the activities of a number of left-wing non-governmental organizations as well as by US President Donald Trump’s neo-isolationist policies.

ANDREAS UNTERBERGER

served for 14 years as editor-in-chief of the Austrian dailies *Die Presse* and *Wiener Zeitung*. His “not entirely unpolitical diary” at www.andreas-unterberger.at is currently Austria’s most widely-read blog. | Photo: Andreas Unterberger Archive



The Visegrad Group Needs the European Union for the Sake of Its Own Modernization

For the Visegrad Four countries, or 2+2 as they are sometimes known (i.e. Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary), the European Union represents a modernization framework similar to one that the Austro-Hungarian Empire had once provided.

Zoltán Kiszelly A hundred years ago, 52 million people inhabited the Dual Monarchy. The 28 states comprising the present-day European Union have a total of 500 million inhabitants. We know that history repeats itself but the only question is: What have we learned from it? From the economic point of view, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe need the West for its markets, capital, and know-how, although they have always regarded themselves as being a part of it. As Samuel Huntington put it: Europe stretches as far as we have Gothic cathedrals.

The V4 countries represent the eastern periphery of the European Union, the economic “backyard” of the reunified Germany. To the displeasure of Paris and London, the center of gravity of the European integration processes, symbolized by the German metropolis, shifted eastwards following the 2004 EU enlargement. In terms of NATO, the V4 countries, Poland especially, are very close to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

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Starting from this premise and with a view to the most burning issues of the day, I would like to focus, from Hungary’s perspective, on the strategies the V4 countries are pursuing within the European Union, both as a group and in terms of the four countries individually.

Strategy

“If you are not at the table, you are on the menu,” goes the old geopolitical adage, which has led all V4 countries into NATO and the EU. This is the reason why they have not become a part of the buffer zone stretching from Ukraine, Moldavia, and Georgia through Turkey and Syria all the way to Iraq, whose allegiance is being so fiercely contested at the moment.

Turkey has become a deterrent example for many. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan lacks a forward-looking strategy. Even though his country is a member of NATO and a privileged EU partner, Turkey has embarked on its own, national path taking it away from its Western partners and into uncertainty. In addition, this path is strewn with conflict, incurring vast political, social, and material expenditures. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to be a regional player.

Poland is keen to play a similarly important role. Warsaw does have a clearly defined strategy and is searching for allies to implement it. The Polish concept of “Intermarium” is striving to link countries located between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas and take on a leading role in this grouping. Such a unit, with its 180 million inhabitants, could, theoretically, provide a counterweight to Germany in the West and Russia in the East in the long term. It could ally itself against Russia with the Scandinavian countries and, in particular, with the United States under Donald Trump. During his Warsaw visit, the US president welcomed this plan; it would weaken Germany

and open up new markets for American arms industry. However, Berlin and Brussels are making an effort to attract the Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs into the eurozone as their allies and additional partners against the southern eurozone periphery (known as the ClubMed), led by France.

Poland's Rights and Justice Party (PiS) government lacks the majority required to change the constitution, which is why it has been under pressure from Brussels not only about the refugee issue but also when the EU launched infringement proceedings against Poland for breaches of democracy. In this respect, Warsaw can count on support from Budapest. Poland and Hungary have enjoyed friendly neighborly relations for a thousand years, whereas the European Union has been around for a mere sixty years. Empires come and go, nations remain. At least for the time being.

Illiberal State

Hungary has been trying to forge its own way, acting as a “political laboratory.” As a consensus between the country's pro-Western political parties on the one hand and the nationally-oriented ones on the other appears unlikely, a single dominant ruling party is about to emerge in the system of party pol-

Berlin and Brussels are making an effort to attract the Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs into the eurozone as their allies and additional partners against the southern eurozone periphery, led by France.

itics, something that has happened frequently over the past 150 years. Over the course of several terms in office, it aims to attain national modernization goals, echoing the success that Hungary achieved following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, which lasted until the outbreak of World War I.

While preserving the overall framework of the market economy, four key strategic sectors of the economy—energy, finance, media, and trade—will be placed under the state's majority control. Boosting investors with close links to the government, not least by using EU funds, is seen not as corruption but rather as the natural accumulation of capital.

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán can rely on the European People's Party which, despite growing criticism, is still betting on dialogue with Fidesz instead of expelling the country from its ranks. Fidesz continues to support key EU policies, including decisions that are rather unpopular in Hungary, such

as economic sanctions against Russia. Brussels has not been able to prevent Hungary's ruling party, which has enjoyed a constitutional majority since the 2010 election, from remaking the country.

Between Confrontation and Cooperation

Being a small country, Hungary has been able to get away with things that would have provoked a crisis in the case of larger EU members. Just one example: both Marine Le Pen and Italy's Five Star Movement have wanted

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to leave the eurozone, reinstating the national currency and thereby devaluing it, as Great Britain did in 1945 on John Maynard Keynes's advice, and as the Fidesz government did in late 2010. Until then the interest rate set by Hungary's central bank had been 8 percent. At a time of stable exchange rates this was advantageous for many Western investors. They could convert the profit from the interest into dollars and euros using the same exchange rate, and take the money out of the country. The devaluation of the national currency by 10 percent in late 2010 wiped out the profit on interest. Since withdrawing money would have resulted in a loss, investors preferred to bide their time. In this way money continued to circulate and the existing loans were reinvested in forints. After a change in the leadership of the National Bank it was possible to continuously lower interest rates, enabling the state to finance the budget from the money in circulation, under very favorable conditions and without having to resort to unpopular austerity measures. As a result, Budapest was able to manage without the aid of the International Monetary Fund.

Viktor Orbán is forging a middle way between confrontation and cooperation, maneuvering around the EU law. By placing the burden of evidence on Hungary, the European Commission has tried to prove alleged breaches of European law, but the Hungarian government has always responded by promptly eliminating any specific issues that gave grounds for complaint. In case of the much-criticized media law, this concerned precisely the four problem issues Brussels was able to raise.

Future Prospects

The Czech and Slovak Republics, on the other hand, prefer cooperation with the European Union to confrontation. In doing so, Slovakia's ruling social democratic party Smer can also rely on the support of a large European party, as can ANO, the potential winner in the Czech general election. Berlin and Brussels have repeatedly tried to force the Czech Republic and Slovakia to splinter off from the Visegrad Group. However, the V4 have closed ranks around the migration issue and the European Union has had to acknowledge the group's power.

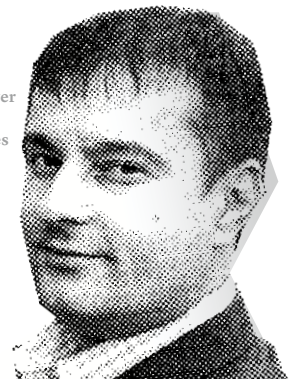
The number of things uniting these four countries exceeds by far the number of those that might separate them. Their unity can be further sealed by other key issues.

The number of things uniting these four countries exceeds by far the number of those that might separate them. Their unity can be further sealed by other key issues, such as the fight against the differences in the quality of foods in the East compared to the same sold in the West and fair conditions for EU citizens following Britain's exit from the European Union.

Budapest, which currently holds the V4 presidency, sees the grouping as the core of a coalition that could take ad hoc joint action, for example in negotiating the future EU budget and future funds earmarked for cohesion and the agriculture policy. The V4 group is thus seeking its future prospects within the European Union.

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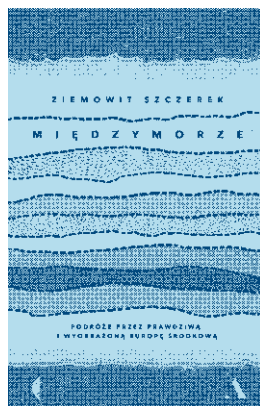
A Chronicle of a Certain Superstition

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ALEKSANDER
KACZOROWSKI

CULTURE
INTERMARIUM
CEE
COLONIALISM
POLAND

Międzymorze. Podróże przez prawdziwą i wyobrażoną Europę Środkową

Ziemowit Szczerek (*The Intermarium: Travels Across
Real and Imaginary Central Europe*), Agora, Czarne 2017, pp. 343.



For almost one hundred years the concept of the Intermarium has been a synonym of political wishful thinking, ignoring both the political realities and the desires and interests of other nations of Central Europe. The voluntarism of this idea is particularly obvious to anyone who has taken the effort to understand the reasons for the historical misery of our part of the continent, and the fact that this area has never been subordinated to one political center. In the economic context, the Eastern European triangle defined by the shores of the Adriatic, the Baltic, and the Black Sea since early Middle Ages was the space of trade exchange between the East and West Europe,

while in the political context it was an arena of the battle of conflicting cultural influences – and this is what makes its culture so unique.

In the case of Poland, it is so at least since the middle of the 13th century, when as a consequence of the Mongol invasions the lands of the Piast dynasty, previously lying away from the main trade routes, unfarmed, fragmented, and lagging behind more developed state structures in the West (the Roman Empire of the German Nation), the South (Bohemia, Hungary), and the East (Kievan Rus), suddenly became a peripheral country of Christian Europe,

The “Intermarium” obfuscates the reality of Central or Eastern Europe. It rejects the achievements of those historians who in the 20th century precisely described the cultural uniqueness of the region.

exposed to attacks of the Asian empire with the capital in Karakoram, or a “gateway to the East” (Henryk Samsonowicz). Or to the West, depending on your perspective.

A Conglomerate of Rival Nation-States

Thanks to the efforts of the Piast and Jagiellonian dynasties, one of the main political centers of the region emerged on the Vistula. After the Partitions, its fate was jointly decided by three powers ruled by the German dynasties. Conflicts between them were meant to be resolved at monarchical summits, such as the famous meeting of the three emperors in Skierniewice (1884), but ultimately their rival claims to the Balkans led to a global conflict and self-destruction. And thus, on the ruins of the three empires, Central Europe appeared, and contrary to the wishes of F. Naumann, author of the concept of *Mittleuropa* (1915), it was no longer a space for cooperation of nations under the influence of the German Empire, but a conglomerate of rival nation-states with numerous minorities (up to one third of the population), trying to survive between Germany and Bolshevik Russia. The year 1939 produced a disaster the consequences of which were borne by the region for the next half-century. So from the historical perspective the European Union is a miracle. Yet even the EU, despite its cultural attractiveness and economic advantages, supported by the military and financial power of the USA, did not manage to embrace the whole “Intermarium” in the last quarter-century.

An Obfuscation of the Reality

I deliberately put this word in quotation marks. The “Intermarium” obfuscates the reality of Central or Eastern Europe. Plainly speaking, it rejects the achievements of those historians who in the 20th century precisely described the borders, origin, and cultural uniqueness of the region, as well as pointed to the reasons of its backwardness and defined the perspectives for its returning on the development path. Oskar Halecki and Marian Małowist, two prominent researchers of the phenomenon of the European East, although they represented diametrically opposed worldviews (Halecki was a Christian historiographer, while Małowist was a non-orthodox Marxist), were in agreement as to the existence of the “Third Europe” (J. Szűcs), that is, the area between the West and Russia. (In fact, Małowist rarely used the term Central Europe, preferring to describe it as Eastern Europe, but this resulted from the fact that his research focused mostly on the period from the 13th to the 17th century, an epoch when you can hardly speak about the state then forming around Moscow as being European.) While Halecki described Central-Eastern Europe in civilizational terms, highlighting especially the religious and political criteria, Małowist was convinced that the reason behind the separate nature of Eastern Europe, including the former Commonwealth, did not lie in insufficient ties with the West, but in their particular nature, perpetuating in our region from the 16th century onward at the latest “a backward capitalism, called by

Central-Eastern Europe is in fact the first colony of the West, that is, an area bound with the center through a permanent and disadvantageous economic relation based on grain exports.

some dependent capitalism” (Małowist). He differentiated three zones (the Baltic, Balkan, and Black Sea areas) of the region trading with the West and pointed at the slower pace of economic and social development there. This is how Henry Samsonowicz wrote about the work of his master:

“For the main line of his enquiries was the South-North divide [meridian 20] splitting Europe in two parts with unequal economic and social development. His vision showing the crisis of developed countries [Western Europe] in the 16th century and the process of overcoming it, also by way of economic exploitation of the countries in the centre and East of the continent, reflected the emergence of the global market on the basis of the division of labour between developed countries and peripheries.”

The First Colonies of the West

Tomasz Siewierski, the author of the recently published work *Marian Małowist and the Circle of His Students: From the History of Economic Historiography in Poland*, reminds us that it was the findings of Małowist which Immanuel Wallerstein invoked in the 1970s when he created the theory of the global system. Under this theory, Central-Eastern Europe is in fact the first colony of the West, that is, an area bound with the center through a permanent and disadvantageous (although profitable for local elites) economic relation based on grain exports (this also led to the emergence of manor estates and involuntary labor, in the shape of indentured servitude and serfdom) as well as materials necessary for the construction of ocean fleets (timber, tar, hemp), which enabled the northern countries of Western Europe their later colonial expansion in Africa, both Americas, and Asia. It is worth quoting here a longer fragment of Małowist's *Great States of Western Sudan in the Late Middle Ages* (1964), for it provides a good illustration of his scholarly intuitions:

“There are some analogies here to the situation of Eastern Europe, where in the same period, as I have repeatedly underlined, we also observed the phenomenon of economic colonisation, reinforcing old social structures and hampering further economic and social development, although obviously both Poland and Russia, and the neighbouring countries of the region, were at a much higher cultural level than Western Africa. It is tempting to define the 16th and 17th century not only as the epoch of rapid development in a few countries of North-Western Europe, but also as a period when slower development of huge areas of the world got bogged down, distorted and consequently reversed.”

Another analogy with the countries of the Intermarium comes into mind, for also here nationalist tendencies appeared in the period of decolonization, that is, breaking away from the dependence on Moscow.

Rejection of Western Values

Małowist wrote these words in the era of decolonization of Africa, which he supported, although he perceived “some excessive nationalist elements.” Another analogy with the countries of the Intermarium comes into mind,

for also here nationalist tendencies appeared in the period of decolonization, that is, breaking away from the dependence on Moscow in the last quarter-century. The common feature of these tendencies is the view that the countries of the region are still colonies, but now of the West.

Szczerek roams the East, but the conclusion arising from his wanderings is the same: “Kudamm, not Arbat.”

Ziemowit Szczerek is a political scientist, a regular contributor to the *New Eastern Europe* quarterly, and a man who knows this whole Central-Eastern theory inside out; this is perhaps why he focused on field studies on the Central-Eastern madness. Almost everywhere during his travels across the Intermarium he encountered manifestations of the persistence or even “long duration” of a certain Central European superstition. This superstition wants Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, and a dozen other nations portrayed by Szczerek to believe that since they undoubtedly are something separate from the West—the East, the Center, or at least the Intermarium—they should highlight these differences with an intensity proportionate to how much they in fact resemble the West. An extreme example of this are the nationalists, whom Szczerek quite rightly compares to Islamists from Western Europe, often the offspring of immigrants in the second or third generation. Both these groups reject Western values, promote violence, glorify anti-Semitism and fascism. Both these groups are a by-product of the historical process which produced the peculiar, insecure, and resentful mentality of the “native” at the fringes of the capitalist center. But they are not the only ones.

“Kudamm, Not Arbat”

For it is hard to read Szczerek’s account of his travels across “real and imagined Central Europe” without the feeling of *déjà vu*. At least to a Bohemian scholar, for whom the audacious reports call to mind Jaroslav Hašek’s stories about his youthful outings on the rim of the Habsburg Empire. Hašek also went to Macedonia, he most probably was in Bulgaria, he certainly visited Hungary, eastern Galicia and Bukovina, he was in the Tatras and Zakopane, and in Kraków, where he made an “unfortunate attempt at crossing the border with Russia; he wanted to get to the Kingdom of Poland, but ended up in a Tsarist prison” (J. Magnuszewski, *Polskie tropy wędrówek Jaroslava Haška*). On top of it he was a Slavophile; he identified Europe with Germanisation, militarism, capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism, and he really believed

in a revolution which was to arrive from the Asian steppes. Also today such Hašek's are legion, from the Baltic up to the Black Sea and the Adriatic – and they are the true protagonists of Szczerek's lampooning book. But Szczerek himself is more remindful of Karel Čapek, whose letters from a journey to the countries of Western Europe were meant to convince his compatriots that, contrary to the drivel spread by Hašek and pro-communist intellectuals, Bohemia was part of the West ("Paris, not Moscow").

Szczerek roams the East, but the conclusion arising from his wanderings is the same: "Kudamm, not Arbat." And because he did not have to wander per pedes like Hašek, he managed to repeatedly visit not only Germany (which is also part of Central Europe after all), Albania, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey but also the Baltic countries, Ukraine, and even St Petersburg and Moscow, not obviously Central European. From the Polish perspective it is still an uncharted territory where you meet your compatriots much less frequently than in the West (and when you do, you

It is possible that in a few years we will read *The Intermarium* as a prophetic book, a "chronicle of a death foretold" of the European East, of its marginalization or exclusion from the EU.

usually have met them before). The locals are divided into Occidentalists and Slavophiles. In other words, into bores, "very democratic and liberal [...] like Michnik and Havel put together," and paranoid nationalists like the Slovak neo-Nazi Kotleba.

A Prophetic Book?

Despite his distanced attitude towards the "bores," Szczerek himself is of course an Occidentalist. I would even say a fanatical one, which manifests itself in a very emotional, expressive language. However, if you weed out the profanities (although it is rather a mission impossible), the author emerges as a beacon of liberal correctness or at least a sober analyst and an embodiment of common sense. Jerzy Giedroyc would certainly publish Szczerek's texts in *Kultura* (like the editor of *Polityka* does). He would understand that the post-Soviet reality requires an adequate language, like in a brief description of Zaporozhye, which "was like one huge village. The main drag, Lenin Street, was like a dozen-kilometres-long fucking log dumped in the middle of a muddy steppe."

This is a quote from an earlier book *Mordor Will Come and Eat Us* (2013). In this book Szczerek showed Ukraine as a country which we do not understand, we mistakenly take phantasmagoria for reality, we treat our inferiority complex there. And in fact the only possible thing to do for us in Ukraine is to help the local patriots in their drive towards Europe. Instead of that, and this is one of the things analyzed in *The Intermarium*, the Poles have quite unexpectedly joined the ranks of the crazies (Szczerek would write “crazy fuckers”) who recently have been trying to reverse the course of history, turned their backs towards the West and walk East, or—like in the case of the current government in Poland—delude themselves and the voters with the hope that you can be somewhere in between.

It is possible that in a few years we will read *The Intermarium* as a prophetic book, a “chronicle of a death foretold” of the European East, of its marginalization or exclusion from the EU. If Ziemowit Szczerek, in a sense continuing the liberal Central European discourse of Czesław Miłosz or Milan Kundera, is still regarded as an eccentric then, it will only prove that the political reality in Poland has really been stood on its head.

ALEKSANDER KACZOROWSKI

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The Ruler of Orbánistan



Orbáns Ungarn Paul Lendvai

Kremayr & Scheriau, Wien 2016, 239 s.

These days it would be hard to find a European leader who stirs up as much emotion as Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. He especially caught the public eye in 2015 when the refugee crisis gripped Europe. An image that epitomized the crisis was the dramatic footage of refugees camping out at Budapest's Keleti Station. Orbán's government made it clear right from the outset that refugees were not welcome in Hungary. A few weeks earlier he had started building a fence on the border with Serbia in an

ironic twist that turned the country that was the first to cut through the Iron Curtain in 1989 into the first European country that responded to the wave of refugees by starting to build fences and roadblocks again.

This was the point when the then 54-year-old Viktor Orbán laid the foundations to his image of an unofficial leader of the part of the European Union that rejects further integration under the banner “my country first.”

The solutions proposed by Viktor Orbán have edged from the margins to the center of the political discourse. In his view, the only way out of all crises is a strong nation state with secure borders.

However, he has also called for the dropping of sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia after its annexation of Crimea in 2014. The Hungarian prime minister has thus become the main adversary not only of the European Commission and European Parliament but also of his fellow European prime ministers (the German Chancellor Angela Merkel in particular) who, unlike him, rely on joint European solutions. Things have now reached the point that any statement of Orbán’s could be regarded as a more or less veiled attack on the EU and its very substance, even if it seems constructive at first sight.

Stability First

The EU has been hit by the refugee crisis, Brexit, and Donald Trump’s election victory in the US in rapid succession. What had long been taken for granted in global politics no longer holds true. In this situation the solutions proposed by Viktor Orbán have edged from the margins to the center of the political discourse. In his view, the only way out of all crises and uncertainties is a strong nation state with secure borders, one that asserts its interests with confidence and guarantees its citizens stability and clarity. Orbán has presented this as an alternative to the project of European integration, which is increasingly losing popularity.

Who is Viktor Orbán? Where does he come from? What drives him? What is the secret of his continuing success at home in Hungary, where he has repeatedly won landslide victories and has even secured a constitutional majority? An answer to many of these questions can be found in *Orbán’s Hungary*, the most recent book by the Austrian writer and commentator Paul Lendvai.

The veteran journalist, who was forced to flee his native Hungary in the whirlwind of the failed 1956 Revolution, had over the following decades established a reputation as one of the greatest experts on countries on the far side of the Iron Curtain. Having served for many years as *Financial Times* correspondent in Vienna, he founded the Eastern European desk at ORF, the Austrian public broadcaster, became head of its foreign broadcasting and continues to chair its discussions to this day.

This is not the first book in which he has cast a critical eye over his former motherland. His 2011 book *My Squandered Country* caused quite a stir. On that occasion, the author experienced at first hand the ire of Orbán's followers among Hungarians living abroad. Several public readings had to be cancelled, either out of concern about the potential negative repercussions on Austro-Hungarian relations or because of the anonymous threats Lendvai received.

A European High Flyer's Fall

Lendvai's latest book is not a traditional biography, and probably was not intended as such either. Against the backdrop of Orbán's personality the author documents the momentous changes the country has undergone under his leadership over the past few years. In this period, Lendvai's book claims, Hungary's position has shifted dramatically. The high flying country, which had weathered the transition from communism to a free society better than any other in Central Europe and became a magnet for investors, has turned into a country whose government now hews more closely to the authoritative and apparently stable regimes in Russia, Turkey, China, Azerbaijan, or Kazakhstan.

The high flying country, which had weathered the transition from communism to a free society better than any other in Central Europe has turned into a country whose government now hews to regimes in Russia, Turkey, China.

Lendvai does not conceal the fact that back in the 1990s he was among Orbán's admirers. Unlike many other representatives of his country's new post-communist elites, Viktor Orbán spoke fluent English and was willing to continuously improve himself. No one doubted that his goal was to introduce to Hungary the standard political model familiar from the established West European democracies.

Lendvai portrays Orbán as a strong-minded man of quite humble origins. His father was a typical “homo kádáricus,” an exemplar of a successful petty-bourgeois whom the communist regime under First Secretary János **Reshaping Hungary in his own image is not Viktor Orbán’s sole ambition. He also wants to secure a dominant position for his party, Fidesz, for the next fifteen to twenty years.**

Kádár provided with satisfying opportunities in exchange for staying out of politics. This enabled Orbán’s entire family to climb the social ladder. However, his father did have to pay a price and this experience may have taught the present-day prime minister to be tough with himself and those in his closest circles following the adage: “If you get a slap in the face, you slap them back twice.”

The Reconquest of Hungary

The unflagging confidence the prime minister has shown on the European stage derives from his firm grip on the situation in Hungary. A “reconquest of the country” is how Lendvai, referring to the work of the law professor Tamás Sárközy, characterizes the manner in which Orbán filled all the key positions in the state with his people after resuming the prime ministerial post following his landslide victory in the 2010 general election, in open disregard of the rule of law and the founding values of the European Union. Comparing this event with the Hungarian conquest of the Danube basin in 896, Lendvai points out that while the earlier one involved wild tribes, the later, post-2001 reconquest “was carried out by commandos of self-enriching plebeians, aiming to establish a new order with a new social elite.”

Reshaping Hungary in his own image is not Viktor Orbán’s sole ambition. He also wants to secure a dominant position for his party, Fidesz, for the next fifteen to twenty years. It is worth noting that the party’s core is basically comprised of the same group of people who founded it nearly thirty years ago at the István Bibó College in Budapest, albeit, at that point, as a student society called “The Union of Young Democrats” (Fidesz), not a political party. This is where the strong network of connections, of personal and political friendships was formed, fortified by their joint love of football, which has contributed to the group’s strong cohesion. This is where

the foundations of many a political career were laid, subsequently making a mark on the post-communist Hungary's political scene. And this is why the three top offices in the country are currently held by Fidesz founding members: apart from Orbán, they include Hungary's President János Áder and the Speaker of the Parliament László Kövér.

Anyone Who Sticks out of the Crowd Is out

By contrast, Orbán has gradually drifted away from Gábor Fodor and Lajos Simicska—two other college friends and close allies from the early days of Fidesz—their relations eventually souring into open enmity.

In both cases what probably played a role was the Fidesz leader's fear that they might overshadow him and get out of control. For example, Fodor enjoyed far greater popularity than Orbán in the 1990s, who therefore saw him as serious competition. Simicska, in turn, had for years been the “party's brains,” ensuring that the party coffers were full. In return, his building company could rely on a steady stream of lucrative state tenders. However, the two men fell out after 35 years, with Simicska accusing Orbán of dictatorial tendencies. The actual facts were probably slightly different: following his second landslide victory in a row in 2014, Orbán started replacing Simicska's loyalists in various ministries and other key positions. Simicska took this very badly, realizing that this posed a threat to his economic model and political influence.

As part of what he refers to as his “unorthodox economic policy,” Orbán has decided not only to transform Hungary's economy but has also given his blessing to a new generation of oligarchs.

On the other hand, the rift between the two men fits into a broader pattern of changes in the economic functioning of the country, initiated by Orbán. As part of what he refers to as his “unorthodox economic policy,” Orbán has decided not only to transform Hungary's economy but has also given his blessing to a new generation of oligarchs. A new economic empire has emerged around the prime minister, with János Lázár and Antal Rogán, ministers in the prime minister's office, and György Matolcsy, head of the National Bank, as its key actors. There was no room left for Simicska in this structure.

Control Above All

The picture of Orbán that emerges from Lendvai's book is thus, strictly speaking, a portrait of a man constantly striving to seize control of something. First over the party (his rivalry with Fodor), then over political competition (the first election victory), and eventually also over the institutions that are supposed to control Orbán: the media and the courts.

As soon as Orbán could form a government, he did not hesitate to seize the opportunity and build a media empire that was favorable to him.

How much importance the Hungarian prime minister attached to controlling the media was apparent from the start of his career. He confided in József Debreczeni, the author of his first biography, how strongly he resented the fact that József Antall, the first non-communist prime minister after 1989, had allegedly allowed a situation to arise in which the Right had no media of its own compared to the post-Communist Left, and ended up being at a disadvantage. For this reason, as soon as Orbán could form a government, he did not hesitate to seize the opportunity and build a media empire that was favorable to him – either by founding new media outlets or trying to gain control over the existing ones, especially the state-run radio and television. News coverage was supposed to follow a single line: lavishing praise on the prime minister and his government while showing his coalition partner, the Smallholders' Party and parties of the former social-liberal coalition, in the worst possible light.

In addition to a number of factors that had played into Orbán's hands in the past, such as the widespread corruption of the previous social democratic governments, Lendvai mentions another issue that the prime minister has seized upon and has used in a masterful way: the powerful national card.

Keeping Trianon Alive

This is a reference to the enduring trauma of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, which left two thirds of the former Kingdom of Hungary and forty percent of its inhabitants outside the borders of the newly-created Hungarian state. Over the years this has fostered patterns of behavior that have echoed through Hungary's recent history and are present in the current confrontation between the country and its government and the European Union, playing on the sense of an existential threat to the nation and its betrayal by the foreign powers.

The national issue continues to be explosive even though, following the Central and East European countries' EU accession, all restrictions on the free movement of the Hungarian minority have been effectively removed.

Lendvai believes that, as the result of the Right's populist rhetoric on the one hand and the Left's passivity on the other, the issue has been completely appropriated by right-wing and extreme right-wing politicians, who have made sure they give it a suitable spin. Lendvai dates the moment when Orbán came up with the issue to 2004. It was the year when his scheme to grant Hungarian citizenship to ethnic Hungarians living abroad failed. After Fidesz regained power in 2010, his government introduced new legislation that enabled members of Hungarian minorities to apply for Hungarian passports even if they were not permanent residents of the country. Four years later, Hungarians living abroad were able to participate in the next general election and it was hardly surprising that 95 percent of them voted for Orbán's party.

Democracy or Semi-Dictatorship?

Political scientists disagree as to whether the system Orbán introduced in Hungary after 2010 is still a democracy or whether it is a form of an authoritarian regime. The only thing they agree on is that it is not a liberal democra-

Political scientists disagree as to whether the system Orbán introduced in Hungary after 2010 is still a democracy or whether it is a form of an authoritarian regime.

cy. Labels such as "hybrid regime" (András Bozóki) and "semi-democracy" (Erzsébet Szalai) have been used while others have spoken of a "Mafia state" (Bálint Magyar) or said that Hungary is headed for a "highly centralized illiberal democracy that systematically weakens the system of checks and balances" (Jan-Werner Müller).

It is customary to conclude a book by outlining prospects for the future, with maybe even a touch of optimism. You will not find much of either in Lendvai's book, however, particularly with regard to the chance that opposition can be mobilized against a regime whose controversial new constitution helped to cement its power structures for years to come. Given the ramshackle state of the traditional Left, civic initiatives are the only ones who might take on the opposition mantle, something they have recently demonstrated

in the context of a petition against the proposal to hold the summer Olympics in Budapest.

Nor does the author hold high hopes that the European Union might exert pressure on Hungary. Lendvai believes that the EU will never go as far as to use the “nuclear option,” namely invoke Article 7 of the European Union Treaty enabling it to suspend the voting rights of member countries that have committed fundamental human rights violations. Lendvai thinks that, if nothing else, group solidarity among Central European countries would prevent that.

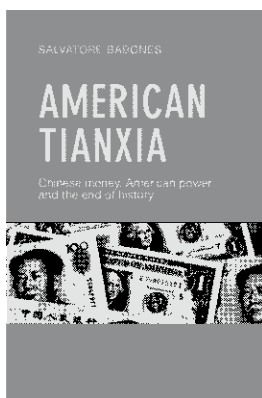
His conclusion is thus thoroughly pessimistic: as the European vision disintegrates, Viktor Orbán will probably see his power grow more than ever.

ROBERT SCHUSTER

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The (American) Empire Strikes Back



American Tianxia: Chinese Money, American Power and the End of History Salvatore Babones

Policy Press 2017

When 28 years ago Francis Fukuyama published his famous “The End of History?” essay, world looked differently. It was just about to enter the “unipolar moment” when US dominance was unquestioned. Later, however, much changed and “history returned.” Washington weakened, China emerged, and the global scene became much more unstable, with Beijing being seen worldwide as the main challenger to Western dominance and a possible future hegemon. Hence Fukuyama’s prophecy has been seen as a clearly failed one: unfulfilled wishful thinking at best. Now, Salvatore Babones, a Sydney University professor, defends Fukuyama’s concept in his new book *American Tianxia. American Power, Chinese Money and the End of History*. He goes against the current global intellectual mainstream by saying that not only the US global dominance is here to stay but it will last long, very long: “The next system transition is likely to be several centuries away.”

China is globally on par with such middle income countries as Brazil or Mexico.

This kind of opinion could have been shrugged off for being intellectually conservative (if not outright reactionary) have *American Tianxia* not been well-argued and well-written at the same time (the latter is important as the book successfully follows the best Anglo-Saxon tradition of readability and good writing style of the academic papers). Babones, a Wallersteinian

economist, claims that China is globally on par with such middle income countries as Brazil or Mexico. According to him, China is important, no doubt, but ultimately is (and will be) unable to challenge US dominance out of simple economic realities and the structure of international trade.

An Intellectually Refreshing Criticism

Babones' views are well-grounded in statistics and data without being repellent for non-economist readers at the same time. What is even more important, they are well-grounded in economic history too. Babones is best when he offers

Babones is best when he offers a *longue durée* view on Chinese economy.

a *longue durée* view on Chinese economy (e.g. when he hints at the possibility of Ming overthrow in 17th century China due to the end of “trading bonanza” and a possible repetition of this scheme now), or when he presents unorthodox comparisons (Zhang He flotilla as China’s “gunboat diplomacy”). It is a real ability to switch back and forth from 15th and 16th centuries to contemporary times to show comparisons – and he does it skillfully and convincingly.

This is best seen in the headline Tianxia concept. Babones uses this ancient Chinese term (meaning literally “all under the heaven” and politically the China-dominated international system in East Asia until 1841) to describe the current US-dominated global world. His decision is nothing but intellectually brilliant. To borrow a term from your foes to tell them that you dominate is provocative, flamboyant, and perhaps even blatant. Certainly not to be ignored!

Babones is equally good when he criticizes “an entire intellectual industry of China specialists, authors, and consultants” based on the “rise of China.” He labels it (after William Callahan) as “a new form of orientalism” (“one that associates the mysterious East with hidden reserves of power”). Generally, Babones' theses should become a good antidote for all those too much enthusiastic about possible positive implications of China's rising power. The same can be said about the increasing number of fans of geopolitics, especially those who believe geopolitics have all the answers to political problems: a reading of Babones' book (his mocking of famous Mackinders' claims about Central Asia being the pivotal region of world politics or his skepticism about One Belt One Road Initiative) should bring them down to earth. Overall, Babones' criticism is really intellectually refreshing.

Boasting about America's Power

Being a book not to be missed, *American Tianxia* is, however, not without flaws. There are minor ones, easy to point out, like on page 11 where Babones calls the seizure of Goa a “violent one” (this opinion is at best debatable as 50 soldiers killed in the invasion is hardly a violent result in the realities of subcontinents’ decolonization), or on page 68 where he writes that USSR had not “held any appeal beyond sheer force” (and what about the pre-war communist fascination in Europe?). The major one is more difficult to operationalize but easy to spot: it is Babones’ pro-American bias. To put it in one sentence: I like Babones’ criticism of China, but I do not like his boasting about America’s power and centrality that borders on national arrogance.

Or when he presents unorthodox comparisons. It is a real ability to switch back and forth from 15th and 16th centuries to contemporary times to show comparisons.

Citations from the book will be essential here. According to Babones, USA by the virtue of being built on individualism created an “universal, self-sustaining, and expansionary” system (American Tianxia) that “makes available to individuals opportunities that their own countries can’t or won’t provide”; hence: “the United States was founded on individualism, and as more and more people put their individual interests ahead of those of their countries of birth, they come into alignment with the American Tianxia [...]. The result is an extraordinarily stable central state system in which individuals, especially elite individuals, insist on the maintenance of free access to the US-centered global system as the cornerstone of their own country’s national policies.”

Not Everybody Would Like to Become American

Throughout Babones’ book this message is clear and simple: the history has ended and USA has won. All elites of world’s countries want either live in the USA (or in other Anglo-Saxon countries) or have their children live there. All countries in their best interest want to have good relations with the USA. Ultimately, we will all become the citizens of American Tianxia, all nations will sooner or later vanish by becoming remodeled on the American example. And this situation is to last at least several centuries ahead!

I am not sure if Babones is aware that for many, many people in the world this message sounds really bad. He ignores a thousand of social features (from cultural and lifestyle differences and national pride, via imperialistic US foreign policy, the inhospitality of the USA, its unlimited and often offensive-to-others freedom of speech, its universal and hence lethal access to weapons, its lack of proper general healthcare, its underdevelopment of public transportation, its primitive materialism, its dramatically low quality of aesthetic culture, and finally its horrible food – just to list the top of the iceberg of the major ones) that make (too) many people in the world not wanting to live in the USA. But most importantly, it ignores the very fact that USA is NOT being liked globally (which is, by the way, one of the reasons why China is so popular: not only leftist intellectuals hope that China will be a better alternative, this sentiment is much more widespread in Western Europe, Russia, and in the Global South). In many world rankings of the “most hated” country, USA leads or is near the top; even more respected polls, such as Reputation Institution’s annual reports, show a sharp decline of USA’s global popularity. For many, many people in the world it is USA that is today the evil empire. This almost universal global dislike makes USA no longer such an attractive option as it was, say, in the 19th and 20th centuries. Thus, this is the biggest drawback of Babones’ concept: no, not everybody would like to live in the USA, become American, or follow US lifestyle. Not at all.

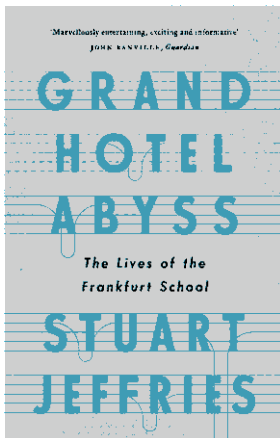
That said, and putting Babones’ irritating overappraisal of the USA aside, I still have to say that *American Tianxia* is a must-read for everyone interested in the current global affairs. It is a thought-provoking antidote for China-enthusiasts and for geopolitical fans alike. Its defense of Fukuyama (with replacement of democracy by individualism) is brave and honest – after the reading, Babones comes out here as a very good, even if biased, intellectual. If he is right in what he says, he will go down as an intellectual that against the mainstream proved to be correct; if he is wrong, he will be forgotten as an epigone that documented the swan song of the passing era.

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Myth over Math



Grand Hotel Abyss:
The Lives of the Frankfurt School
Stuart Jeffries (*Verso*, 2016)

Amid the deluge of fake news it is attractive to blame 20th century academia's supposed relativism, political correctness, and multiculturalism for the death of facts as a prevailing force in politics. The post-truth campaign tactics of Donald Trump, Nigel Farage, and others, the argument goes, are the unholy offspring of critical theorists, post-modernists, deconstructionists, and other wishy-washy leftist types who irresponsibly blurred the boundaries of what is knowable and how we know it. In other words, while Ivory Tower scholastics were busy examining petty concepts like discourse, tolerance or—gasp!—questioning the justice of capitalism, the barbarians were gathering at the gates.

And yet the countries—France and Germany, for example—where post-positivist and post-modernist thought are most engrained have also proved more resistant to populism than their pragmatic, analytical counterparts in the United States and the United Kingdom. While the insanity of Brexit won a majority of votes, Marine Le Pen was trounced by Emmanuel Macron. While the climate change denying, gun toting extreme fringe of the Republican Party controls the U.S. House of Representatives, even in its best performing locality (Görlitz, on the Polish border) the Alliance for Deutschland won just 32.9 percent of the vote.

Within a few years, Frankfurt School thinkers found themselves presented with new questions: Why had Germans proved so susceptible to Hitler's charms?

“Enlightenment believes itself safe from the return of the mythical,” Frankfurt School thinkers Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno wrote in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. “It equates thought with mathematics.” What better way to summarize the shock of American and British liberals when their reason-based arguments and statistics lost out to fantastic promises and nostalgia for the 1950s than to say that myth had triumphed over math?

Why Had the Working Class Opted for Hitler?

The Frankfurt School, formally called the Institute for Social Research and mostly associated with the practice of critical theory, was founded in 1923 with a central mission to figure out why a Marxist revolution had not taken place in Germany. While the Soviet Union had embarked on an ill-fated attempt to construct a worker's paradise, the Bolshevik takeover had occurred in a largely agrarian society rather than in an advanced industrialized state that Karl Marx had predicted. Within a few years, Frankfurt School thinkers found themselves presented with new questions: Why had Germans proved so susceptible to Hitler's charms? Why had the working class opted for the far right over socialism or social democracy?

As this same voting pattern perpetuates today, these latter questions have renewed resonance, as do other preoccupations of Frankfurt School scholars like the threats posed by rampant consumerism and simplified media narratives. All this makes Stuart Jeffries's *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School* essential reading. The book's title comes from

Hungarian philosopher György Lukács' facetious denunciation of Frankfurt School work that saw them paint a pessimistic worldview from the relative safety of upper middle class comfort.

Though the Frankfurt School comprises a diverse set of actors with varied interests that have produced work across nearly a full century, their starting point is to differentiate early capitalism and its petit bourgeoisie owners from late (or monopoly) capitalism dominated by corporations. Amid the centralized power of corporations, the loss of influence and prestige among the entrepreneurial middle class leaves them frustrated and searching for answers. Sufficiently discouraged and ever less convinced that they are capable of influencing their own destiny, they surrender instead, settling for escapism and comfort in commercial goods. They also look for somebody to fix problems for them. "The desire for authority is channeled toward the strong leader, while other specific father figures become the objects of the rebellion," the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm wrote in 1932.

Arguments about Middle-Class Attitudes

For the empirically inclined, or those ideologically allergic to critical theory, there are a number of contemporary thinkers making similar arguments about middle-class attitudes today. The American economist Tyler Cowen is among them. In his 2017 book *The Complacent Class*, he argues that even in the United States, the supposed heartland of entrepreneurial energy and Silicon Valley startups, small businesses account for a declining share of GDP. The number of US firms considered startups is down

People are more risk-averse - as evidenced by the fact that the number of Americans moving to another state for work has fallen more than 50 percent since 1970. People also spend less time outside.

by half since 1978, as the weakened anti-trust regulation means a few big players have a growing presence in fields as diverse as healthcare, media, retail, and tech. Amid these negative trends, people are more risk-averse - as evidenced by the fact that the number of Americans moving to another state for work has fallen more than 50 percent since 1970. People also spend less time outside and more time watching television or playing video games.

Jeffries begins his book with a heavy helping of biographical background about the early lives of first-generation Frankfurt School scholars. Most were the sons of wealthy German Jewish businessmen, and all are diagnosed as rebelling against the economic successes of their fathers. A good portion of the book also focuses on the exploits of Walter Benjamin, a philosopher and literary critic who profoundly influenced Frankfurt School thinking but never acted as a formal member. The familiar, dramatic story of his death while attempting to escape the Nazis by crossing the Pyrenees into Spain adds an adventurous twist and a bit of a legend to the book's narrative arc.

Negation or Rejection as the Only Course Forward

Among other things, Benjamin questioned the narrative nature of history and the capitalist—not to mention Marxist—notion that events unfold on a forward path of progress. In contrast, Jeffries does proceed chronological-

Frankfurt School scholars were not shy about drawing parallels between Nazi propaganda and the cultural paradigm of the West.

ly, the text is divided into sections, with the first comprising 1900-1920, and each successive section limited to a single decade through the Frankfurt School's 1960s heyday. A final section is dedicated to second-generation Frankfurt School thinker Jürgen Habermas. This means we see the Frankfurt School literally from childhood, through its scholarly adolescence, into the Nazi period, amid World War II exile in California, and then the eventual return of some scholars to Europe after the war. Along with the evolution of their ideas, Jeffries tracks the personal rivalries of thinkers both inside and outside the Frankfurt School circle.

Critical theorists contend(ed) that it is a lack of consciousness preventing the working class from rebelling against their own domination by capitalism. At the same time, because this status quo was so powerful, they viewed negation or rejection—rather than potential change—as the only course forward. The potential for revolution was so remote, the best that could be done for the moment was to critique the means by which capitalism—a system of mass culture, communication, and social control in addition to a mode of production—perpetuated itself. Critical theorists sought to address what

they contended a massive gap between the public's actual consciousness and the level of consciousness deemed necessary to make systemic change.

Parallels between Nazi Propaganda and Western Cultural Paradigm?

Most controversially, Frankfurt School scholars were not shy about drawing parallels between Nazi propaganda and the cultural paradigm of the West.

In 1944's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno argued that

Whereas Marx had once lamented religion as an opiate that paralyzed political action, Adorno and Horkheimer saw consumerism as the new drug of choice.

contrary to standard thinking, close adherence to Enlightenment values (like reason) works to limit rather than liberate society, as it inevitably leads to more and more administration, and thus networks of control. As Adorno's protégé Habermas would later write, the text "denounces the Enlightenment with its own tools."

Hollywood and mass culture received particular criticism from Adorno and Horkheimer as they argued individual personalities were dying out in the same manner that once-varied corner shops were overrun by uniform supermarkets. "Decisions for men as active workers are taken by the hierarchy ranging from the trade associations to the national administration, and in the private sphere by the system of mass culture which takes over the last inward impulses of individuals who are forced to consume what is offered to them," they wrote.

Whereas Marx had once lamented religion as an opiate that paralyzed political action, Adorno and Horkheimer saw consumerism as the new drug of choice. "The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them," they wrote in passage that seems prescient of people lining up to purchase new iPhones to replace another they bought just a year before.

A Drift into Pessimism

At the same time, the Frankfurt School drifted further and further away from traditional Marxism. After the war, Adorno and Horkheimer returned to Frankfurt, while some of their associates stayed in the United States. As the

European-based philosophers are noted for their continued drift into pessimism, the American wing of the Frankfurt School increasingly dreamed of the possibility that society could yet be transformed for the better. Herbert Marcuse in particular was a hero to hippies and 1960s student radicals on both sides of the Atlantic. Meanwhile, Adorno, among others, found the New Left movements of this era authoritarian in mindset. Habermas would call them “left fascists.”

With many of the Frankfurt School’s leading luminaries known for dense, impenetrable prose, Jeffries quotes liberally from some of their key texts while providing context and explanations for the lay-man and -woman. The book does a great job of summarizing some of the Frankfurt School’s seminal texts: *On the Critique of Instrumental Reason* (Horkheimer), *Negative Dialectics* (Adorno), *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse), *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas), and many more. A journalist with *The Guardian*, Jeffries writes of these complex matters with a clarity that makes for smooth but substantive reading. He is also unafraid of critique and comment. “That’s the problem with sensitive geniuses: they are hardly ever men of action,” Jeffries writes. “The leading lights of the Frankfurt School all had this problem; a problem that, looked at another way, is part of their allure.”

Marxists without Party, Socialists Dependent on Capitalist Money

No doubt the Frankfurt School thinkers harbor at least as many contradictions as they diagnosed in the society surrounding them. Their initial funding came from Hermann Weil, a capitalist if there ever was one and the world’s largest grain trader. This led the playwright and Frankfurt School opponent Bertolt Brecht to come up with the following joke: “A rich old man dies, disturbed by the poverty in the world. In his will, he leaves a large sum to set up an institute which will do research on the source of this poverty. Which is of course himself.”

Most of the Frankfurt School criticized the capitalist system while enjoying pleasures delivered by that same system.

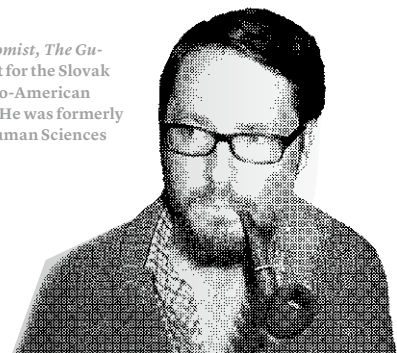
Most of the Frankfurt School criticized the capitalist system while enjoying pleasures delivered by that same system. Starting with their American exile years, it was institute policy to discourage the use of Marx’s name in

writing so as to not threaten funding. During World War II, Marcuse and others worked for the OSS (precursor to the CIA). Upon returning to Germany the Frankfurt School conducted research for the Federal Republic. Even as they doubted scientific truth was possible in an environment poisoned by ideology, they thought themselves uniquely capable of seeing through mist to interpret the world as it is. As Jeffries notes, the Frankfurt School was comprised of “Marxists without party, socialists dependent on capitalist money, beneficiaries of a society they sniffily disdained and without which they would have had nothing to write about.”

Agree, disagree, or know nothing about the key tenets of the Frankfurt School, Jeffries takes the reader through a healthy exercise in skeptical thinking about how our own civilization is organized and the implications this has at an undeniably dangerous political moment. If nothing else, the Frankfurt School collectively managed to come as close as anybody yet in finding a clear way of describing the worldview represented by the likes of Donald Trump: *Verblendungszusammenhang*, meaning a far-reaching system of total delusion.

BENJAMIN CUNNINGHAM

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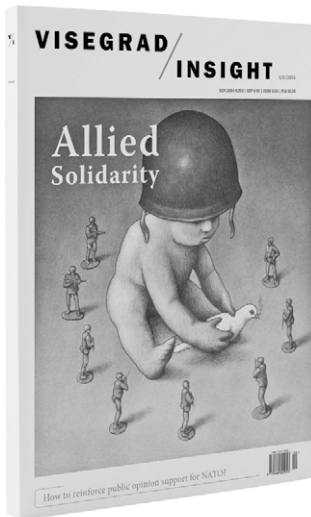
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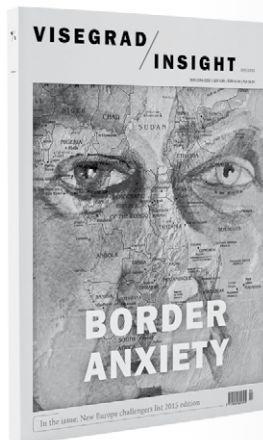
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