Central Europe
Forging a Concept in Time and Space

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Awarding institution:
King's College London

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Central Europe: Forging a Concept in Time and Space

(PhD Thesis)

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Submitted to King’s College London in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

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Abstract

The thesis critically re-examines classical historical conceptions of Central Europe. Its chief concern is to critique the discourses that, in the main, equated geographical imaginaries of Central Europe with a German dominated territorial entity in the crucial, formative 1880 - 1918 period. It is asked whether these could have played a vital role in the great powers’ endorsement of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The research hypothesis suggests that ‘conceptualisations of regional identity are exercises in geopolitics, which through the definitive discourse of Self and Other exercise influence over behaviour of political actors, thereby indirectly impacting upon international structure’.

The research explores a broad range of Central European conceptions originating mainly in the former Austria-Hungary and the German Empire. Their respective influence on the discourse over Central Europe and their impact on how the notion itself was interpreted are analyzed partly through the use of contemporaneous and sometimes obscure secondary resources (newspaper and journal articles, printed volumes) that were written in a range of languages. A substantial body of archival evidence was also collected in various archives in the UK, USA, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia. The latter category of materials, some of which are little-known in the English-speaking academic world, was used in an attempt to evaluate how concepts of Central Europe influenced the behaviour of political actors in the key countries for this research (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Britain and the USA).

The author employed a constructivist viewpoint. The constructivist perception of actors as dynamic units, the identification of a system as a changing social concept, and the attention paid to the use of notions and their influence upon socially constructed international structures, presents a valuable platform for re-examination of classical geopolitical concepts. Constructivism has already
found its application in critical geopolitics. In terms of construction of non-nation state identities, the recent works of Veit Bachmann and James Sidaway (2009), Mindaugas Jurkynas (2007) or Michelle Pace (2007) provide interesting examples and applications.

It is concluded that conceptualising Central Europe did possess a definite geopolitical purpose, though this varied over time and concept to concept. In many cases this also informed the attitudes of policy-makers to a significant degree, mainly in constructing a negative definition of the Other. However, the final decision to dismember the Dual (Austro-Hungarian) Monarchy was based on more pragmatic military considerations and the perceived near-collapse of the country in late stages of war, rather than any particular concept of Central Europe itself.
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Table of contents

Chapter 1: The Puzzle of Central Europe: An Introduction .................. 14

1.1 Research context: The emerging puzzle .......................................................... 15
  1.1.1 Brewing trouble ......................................................................................... 15
  1.1.2 Central Europe is back ............................................................................. 17
  1.1.3 Did it work its magic? .......................................................... 19
  1.1.4 Ein Rückblick auf Mitteleuropa ............................................................ 21
  1.1.5 Pivot of geopolitics? .......................................................... 24
  1.1.6 The rise and fall of empires .......................................................... 26
  1.1.7 The Great Game ..................................................................................... 29
  1.1.8 The end of the Concert of Europe .................................................... 30

1.2 Central Europe in contemporary research .................................................... 31

1.3 Research aim, hypothesis and original contribution .................................... 34
  1.3.1 Research aim ......................................................................................... 35
  1.3.2 Origins of research hypothesis and its envisaged application .......... 35
  1.3.3 Research objectives ............................................................................. 38
  1.3.4 Original contribution of the research .................................................. 40

1.4 Structure of the thesis ................................................................................. 42

Chapter 2: Approaching Central Europe: A Methodology .................. 48

2.1 The puzzle of Central Europe ...................................................................... 48

2.2 Approaching Central Europe ....................................................................... 54
  2.2.1 A constructivist approach in a critical geopolitics study .......... 54
  2.2.2 Methodological clarifications ................................................................. 56
  2.2.3 Key notions defined ............................................................................. 59

2.3 Research hypothesis and questions ............................................................ 60
  2.3.1 Research hypothesis ............................................................................. 61

2.4 Selection: What period? Which concepts? .................................................. 65

2.5 Sources: types and locations ....................................................................... 66
2.5.1 Concepts .................................................................67
2.5.2 Documents in the public domain ..................................68
2.5.3 Archival sources ...........................................................69

2.6 Data collection........................................................................72
2.7 Method of analysis.....................................................................73
  2.7.1 Selected method: discourse analysis..................................73
  2.7.2 Limitations of the elected approach.................................75

Chapter 3: The German Central Europe ........................................78

  3.1 Introduction.............................................................................78
  3.2 The narrative of German Central Europe..............................79
  3.3 ‘The German Question’ ..........................................................81
    3.3.1 Friedrich List .................................................................82
    3.3.2 The 1848-9 Revolution and the Frankfurt Assembly ........84
    3.3.3 Bruck and the shifting identity of Austria .......................85
  3.4 From Germany to Central Europe .........................................89
    3.4.1 Constantin Frantz – from Germany to Central Europe .......90
    3.4.2 Paul de Lagarde – the nationalist parallel .......................95
    3.4.3 The rise of Central Europe ............................................98
  3.5 From a nationalist dream to a pragmatic customs union ........103
    3.5.1 The economic dimension ...............................................104
    3.5.2 The growing influence of the economists? .......................107
  3.6 Friedrich Naumann and wartime concepts ..........................110
    3.6.1 The Central Europe of Friedrich Naumann ....................110
    3.6.2 The wartime discourse ...............................................113
    3.6.3 The interests of the German nation versus the ambitions of the
         German Empire ..............................................................117
  3.7 The impact of the Central Europe concepts .........................118
    3.7.1 The Bismarck period ....................................................118
    3.7.2 The Caprivi period and beyond .....................................120
    3.7.3 Wartime politics .........................................................121
Chapter 4: Central Europe in Austria-Hungary ........................................ 143

4.1 Introduction .......................................................................................... 143

4.2 The legacy of 1848 ............................................................................... 144

4.3 The Pan-German movement and Central Europe ............................... 146
   4.3.1 The rise of Austrian German nationalism ....................................... 147
   4.3.2 A Definitive discourse of Central Europe ......................................... 149
   4.3.3 MEWV in Austria-Hungary ............................................................... 151

4.4 The reformist efforts ........................................................................... 152
   4.4.1 Growing pressures ........................................................................... 153
   4.4.2 The Belvedere Circle ........................................................................ 154

4.5 The First World War ............................................................................ 156
   4.5.1 Early wartime concepts .................................................................... 157
   4.5.2 The post-Naumann debate ................................................................. 160
   4.5.3 Avoiding the label ............................................................................ 166
   4.5.4 Central Europe the Austrian way ....................................................... 170

4.6 Non-German debate over Central Europe ......................................... 172
   4.6.1 The role of Karel Kramář ................................................................. 173
   4.6.2 Reactions to Naumann ..................................................................... 174
   4.6.3 Central Europe in the hands of minorities ........................................ 176
   4.6.4 Hungarian perceptions of Central Europe ........................................ 183

4.7 The influence of Central Europe in practical politics ......................... 185
   4.7.1 Customs union vs. Central Europe ................................................... 186
   4.7.2 Berlin pilgrimages ............................................................................ 188
   4.7.3 The complex position of the Austro-Hungarians ............................... 189
   4.7.4 An uneasy start for customs union negotiations ............................... 191
   4.7.5 Vienna’s balancing act ..................................................................... 193
   4.7.6 The 1867 Compromise renegotiations and the Polish question ....... 194
   4.7.7 Negotiations within the souring alliance .......................................... 196
   4.7.8 Ultimate failure ............................................................................... 198
Chapter 5: Central Europe in Anglo-Saxon environments

5.1 Introduction

5.2 A fuzzy concept

5.3 The view from Britain

5.3.1 ‘The Seat of War’

5.3.2 The influence of German Central Europe concepts

5.3.3 Shifting threat perceptions

5.3.4 Halford J. Mackinder

5.3.5 Central Europe, Drang nach Osten and the Berlin-Baghdad Railway

5.3.6 Britain and Austria-Hungary

5.3.7 The Foreign Office and Masaryk’s dismemberment plan

5.3.8 Efforts for detachment of Austria-Hungary from Germany

5.3.9 Separate peace efforts

5.3.10 A reluctance to see the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary

5.4 The view from the USA

5.4.1 Central Europe almost unknown to cartography

5.4.2 Central Europe in American political science publications

5.4.3 Central Europe in the documents of the Inquiry

5.4.4 Preference for the survival of Austria-Hungary

5.4.5 The Mid-European Union

5.5 Conclusions

Chapter 6: Variations in Time and Space

6.1 The story of Central Europe

6.2 Interwar discourse of Central Europe

6.2.1 Disenchantment of interwar years

6.2.2 Changing face of new Mitteleuropa

6.2.3 Way out of desperation
6.2.4 Émigré Hungarian Danubian concepts........................................270
6.2.5 Armed sovereignties.................................................................273
6.2.6 The battle of interests...............................................................276

6.3 The Second World War................................................................281
6.3.1 (Former) successor states.........................................................281
6.3.2 Mitteleuropa = Das Grossgermanische Europa = Das Reich?.......287
6.3.3 The return of the Middle Tier....................................................290
6.3.4 Federalism versus power politics..............................................295

6.4 The Cold War - the nonexistent concept....................................300
6.4.1 The story of the ‘Titoist Clique’................................................300
6.4.2 The end of the multiple choice question.................................302
6.4.3 Brief resurrection.......................................................................305
6.4.4 No more Central Europe?.........................................................306
6.4.5 Pax Sovietica..............................................................................311

6.5 The breaking of the ice...............................................................315
6.5.1 Metaphor of anti-politics...........................................................315
6.5.2 Imperial hangover?.................................................................319
6.5.3 The western option.................................................................322
6.5.4 Complementary interests.........................................................324
6.5.5 A not-so-obvious link...............................................................326

6.6 Brand new game...........................................................................330
6.6.1 Central Europe as a fuzzy fact..................................................331
6.6.2 The big picture........................................................................333
6.6.3 Within the big picture.............................................................340
6.6.4 The integration tautology.........................................................342
6.6.5 The rise and fall of the tide.......................................................345

6.7 Conclusions.................................................................................348

Chapter 7: Findings and Conclusions..............................................350
7.1 Introduction..................................................................................350
7.2 Findings: Comparative analysis of 1880 – 1918 concepts.............350
7.2.1 Definitive discourse of Central Europe ......................................................... 351
7.2.2 Dominant definitions of Central Europe during the war .............................. 359
7.2.3 Influence on policy makers ........................................................................... 366
7.2.4 Influence on international structure ............................................................. 378
7.2.5 Lessons learned from the core research ...................................................... 380

7.3 Discussion of findings in the context of following historical periods .... 381
7.3.1 Discourse and characteristics .................................................................... 381
7.3.2 Influence on policy makers and international structure ............................. 384

7.4. Conclusions ...................................................................................................... 386
7.4.1 Original contribution and conceptual conclusions ...................................... 386
7.4.2 Concepts of Central Europe are exercises in geopolitics ............................ 387
7.4.3 Definitive discourse is an evolving process ................................................. 388
7.4.4 Overall, ideational concepts struggle to make an impact ......................... 390

7.5 Post-script: Central Europe is back. Again! .................................................... 391

Bibliography ........................................................................................................... 393
Secondary Sources .................................................................................................. 393
Primary sources ....................................................................................................... 441

Appendix .................................................................................................................. 469
Appendix 1: K. L. Bruck: ‘Vorschläge zur Anbahnung der Oesterreichisch-Deutschen Zoll- und Handelseinigung’ (1849a) ......................................................... 471
Appendix 2: K. L. Bruck: ‘Wien’ (1849b)................................................................. 473
Appendix 3: K. L. Bruck: ‘Denkschrift des keiserlich österreichischen Handelsministers über die Anbahnung der österreichisch-deutschen Zoll und Handelseinigung’ (1849c) ......................................................... 475
Appendix 4: E. Plener article, Fremdenblatt, 20 July 1915 ................................. 476
Appendix 5: K. Renner ‘Zollunion und Zwischenzoll’ (1915) .............................. 478
Appendix 6: ‘Delbrück to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 12 April 1915 ............................ 480
Appendix 7: ‘Delbrück to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 23 April (1915b) ........................ 487
Appendix 8: ‘Tschirschky to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 1 Sept. (1914a) ..................... 489
Appendix 9: ‘Tschirschky to Foreign Office’, 9 November (1915a) .......... 491
Appendix 10: Memorandum from 13 November 1915 ......................... 494
Appendix 11: Austro-Hungarian Embassy, ‘Note’, 24 November 1915 .... 508
Appendix 12: ‘Tschirschky to Foreign Office’ 20 January 1916............. 515
Appendix 13: 11 November 1917 report on dealings with Austria
Hungary .......................................................................................... 522
Appendix 14: Comparison maps of Austrian Empire and Austria
Hungary .......................................................................................... 523
Appendix 15: List of Austro-Hungarian prime ministers....................... 524
Appendix 16: William Swinton’s Central Europe (1875) .................... 525
Appendix 17: Johnstons’ Map of Central Europe (1866) ................. 526
Appendix 18: Stanford’s Map of Central Europe (1895) ................. 527
Appendix 19: Bartholomew’s Map of Central Europe (1892) ........... 528
Appendix 20: Bartholomew’s Map of Central Europe (1910) ......... 529
Appendix 21: Bartholomew’s Map of Central Europe (1915) ........... 530
Appendix 22: Bartholomew’s Map of Central Europe (1914) .......... 531
Appendix 23: Letts’s Map of Central Europe (1870) ....................... 532
Appendix 24: Mackinder’s Natural Seats of Power (1904) ............... 533
Appendix 25: Robert Cecil on agreement with CNC (1918) ............ 534
Appendix 26: The Inquiry’s maps of spreading Prussianism ............ 535
Appendix 27: Schapiro’s Map of Central Europe (1918) ............... 537
Appendix 28: Wilson’s 14 points from the New York Times, 9 Jan 1918.. 538
Appendix 29: December 1917 inquiry document ............................ 540
Appendix 30: American reply to the Austro-Hungarian peace note ...... 547
Appendix 31: Contemporary map of Europe 1878 ........................... 548
Appendix 32: Map of Europe 1914 ................................................. 549
Appendix 33: Archives visited and groups of materials used .............. 550
Appendix 34: Andre Cheradame’s ‘What Germany wants?’ map ....... 553
Appendix 35: Illustrations of Harrison and Johnson Central Union
pamphlet ....................................................................................... 554
List of Figures

Figure 1: Maps of Central Europe in the holdings of the British Library 1860 - 1919 .............................................................. 209
Figure 2: Number of books featuring ‘Central Europe’ and ‘East Central Europe’ in their title in collections of the British Library, 1920 - 1979 .......... 307
Figure 3: Number of books featuring ‘Central Europe’ and ‘Eastern Europe’ in their title in collections of the British Library, 1920 - 1979 ......................... 310
Figure 4: Number of books featuring ‘Central Europe’ and ‘East Central Europe’ in their title in the collections of the British Library, 1940 - 1999 .... 332
Figure 5: Number of books featuring ‘Central Europe’ and ‘East Central Europe’ in their title in collections of the British Library, 1950 - 2009 .......... 347
The Puzzle of Central Europe: An Introduction

Chapter 1
Chapter 1: The Puzzle of Central Europe: An Introduction

The aim of the research presented in this thesis is to examine the notion of Central Europe; its formation, meaning and implications. The main emphasis is laid upon study of the formative period of the notion, 1880 – 1920, as it is perceived to have laid the groundwork for all subsequent discourses over the notion in the twentieth century and beyond.

The opening chapter of the thesis begins quite deliberately with the renaissance of a re-emergent Central Europe from the stark context of East-West European bipolarity in the late 1980s. It emerged as a powerful vision of shared destiny in the Cold War borderlands; a metaphor subsuming the universal ideals of humanism, freedom and democracy. Through emphasis on a common culture and history, Central Europe captivated the imagination on both sides of the Iron Curtain and seemingly threw aside decades of ideological enmity. The rise of Central Europe apparently substantiated the proclaimed victory of the liberal democratic order and re-established the basis for a long lost European unity.

Yet such an idyllic and optimistic picture vanishes rather abruptly when qualified by the contextual legacy of the Central Europe vision and the origins of the notion itself. Central Europe was not new – it was a notion deeply embedded in some of the most tragic vicissitudes of modern European history. So, the puzzle of Central Europe starts to take shape in the contrast of its brilliant contemporary record with its murky past.
1.1 Research context: The emerging puzzle

“Central Europe is back” announced Timothy Garton Ash in 1986. (Ash 1986) On its own merits, it seemed a rather unimposing quotation but placed in the then contemporary context of strict geopolitical bi-polarity, it stood out rather starkly. For only two decades earlier Saul Cohen had posited that „Europe outside of Russia is divided into two parts: West and East. Central Europe is no more. It is a mere geographical expression that lacks geopolitical substance.” (Cohen 1964: 218) So what prompted Garton Ash to make such a bold claim? And what was its significance?

1.1.1 Brewing trouble

In the 1980s, Timothy Garton Ash was one of the foremost Western observers of the Eastern bloc societies. His research as well as contacts with the Eastern bloc dissidents led him to the conclusion that imminent changes were brewing under the thick cover of authoritarian regimes. He took a primary role in the debate printed on the pages of The New York Review of Books, which indicated that the abstract notion of ‘Central Europe’ was shaping among the dissidents as an antithesis of the existing ‘East European’ regimes. Central Europe was emerging as a synonym of humanistic values, liberalism and freedom – ‘Anti-politics’ in the context of bureaucratic socialism, if you wish.

Thus Ash joined the group of academics, who argued that the collapse of the Eastern Bloc was not as sudden as other contemporary observers portrayed. In fact, it was long in the making. Valerie Bunce offered an elaborate explanation of the evolving social, political and economic environment within the Soviet bloc following the death of Joseph V. Stalin. (Bunce 1999: p. 38) Building on comparative analysis of institutional design and socio-political dynamics of post-Stalinist regimes, Bunce posited that their collapse in late 1980s was a combined function of their power projection mechanisms and expansion of opportunities for change during the 1980s. She demonstrated that in the de-
Stalinization period, Communist regimes in Europe would opt for a social contract with their respective populations guaranteeing

“A low-level equilibrium wherein weak dictatorships forced to buy public support (in part because of their fear of public unrest) ruled over a citizenry that could not change politics but that could, at the margins at least, dictate economic and social policy.” (Bunce 1999: p. 34)\(^1\)

In these systems, the political acquiescence of the population was being bought by relative price stability, minimalist work norms and a comprehensive social security safety net.

However, the continuance of such an arrangement depended on the generation of economic surplus, which was becoming increasingly hard to sustain within the centrally planned economies in Europe. By the the 1980s, it was becoming increasingly obvious that pervasive economic inefficiency was gradually undermining the fragile social contract. Bunce noted that Communist regimes were faced with two options, both of them unpleasant (Bunce 1999: 37). The first option was to introduce substantial economic reforms, thereby risking public discontent over inevitable economic grievances (unemployment, inflation, increased work norms, etc.), uncapping intra-party factionalism and giving breathing space to those calling for political liberalisation. The second option was to put the reforms off and yet again appease the public with the extension of some sort of economic benefits; however, money to secure continuation of the illusion of prosperity had to be borrowed from abroad – usually, from the West. The middle way, which these regimes typically took, would only realise the shortfalls of both of them – a covert destabilization of the political system by partial reforms and of economic system by increased borrowing.

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\(^1\) The only case that did not fit this model was Nicolae Ceausescu’s Romania, but as we now know, Romania also proved an exception to the general pattern of peaceful transition towards democracy.
Gradually, the myth of the superiority of the socialist system was fading away with declining economic efficiency, to the point that it was obviously challenging regime legitimacy. The delegitimisation of regimes by the mid-1980s was pervasive and attentive observers noted that the social contract negotiated in de-Stalinization period was not only outmoded but on the verge of collapse. (Hauslohner 1987)

On the background of these changes, term ‘Central Europe’ was tiptoeing back into dictionaries of daily parlance on both sides of the strict East-West divide of Cold War Europe.

1.1.2 Central Europe is back

The phrase “Central Europe is back”, is thereby given a whole new dimension if placed within the context of changes long brewing under the cover of seemingly stable state-bureaucratic socialism. (Hodges 1981: 114, Blatt 1997: 81, Whitehead 2001: 357) The comeback of the “myth of Central Europe” (Trybuna Ludu 1986) signaled not only the coming earthquake in the political geography of Europe, but also the fact that conceptualisation of the approaching geopolitical future was well under way – and that at least some observers already had a relatively clear idea of what it would bring for the Iron Curtain borderlands.

Those who sensed the imminent change started to hypothesize what might follow. Obviously, Timothy Garton Ash was not the first to invoke the notion of Central Europe in the late Cold War period. The discussion started with ‘The Tragedy of Central Europe’, the now famous essay of Milan Kundera, a Czech émigré novelist, published in the *New York Review of Books* in April 1984.

His emotionally charged piece depicted “an uncertain zone of small nations between Russia and Germany” as a “kidnapped West” – a region, that lay “culturally in the West, politically in the East” (Kundera 1984: 35). In vivid
prose, Kundera presented the Western reader with a doomed picture of tragically fated, culturally Western nations that had suffocated under the heavy handed rule of an alien power, desperately seeking a political comeback within their native cultural orbit. He sought to depict an independent (and essentially Western) cultural and civilisational identity for these to counter the usual context for study of the region amid “footnotes of Sovietology”. (Ash 1986) And to a great degree, he succeeded. For understandably, Western audiences were only too willing to embrace the states emerging from Soviet domination.

On the other side of the Cold War divide, Václav Havel, a Czech dissident playwright, started to embellish his political essays with references to Central Europe. Similarly to Kundera, he used “Central Europe” as a means of cultural approximation to the values of the West. Havel characterized it as a „spiritual, cultural and intellectual phenomenon... mysterious, a bit nostalgic, often tragic and even at times heroic." (Havel 1985) For Havel, Central Europe was a term tied to spiritual rather than physical territory. It did not have boundaries defined by features of physical geography, but rather by a claimed common cultural and artistic heritage.

Gyorgy Konrád, a Hungarian novelist and sociologist, went even further and devised an ‘alternative history’ of Central Europe, which had “a thousand years ago... taken out a Western option” but was prevented from exercising it first by the Ottoman, then by the Austro-Hungarian and later by the Soviet empires (Konrád 1984b). Ignoring many obvious facts of history and geography, Konrád cast Central Europe as a discrete entity that had been prevented from fulfilling its predetermined fate as part of the West by the machinations and invasions of foreign empires. Now a historically repressed Central Europe was once again calling for help to be relocated in its historically correct geopolitical orbit.

Many other prominent dissident writers were drawn into developing this tragic myth of a deprived Central Europe – a fascinating ahistorical narrative of mystical, heroic nations struggling to break the shackles of alien dictatorship and return into the extended embrace of their freedom and democracy loving
Western family. This depiction of the history of Central Europe, its characteristics and values, was more an expression of desire than fact, but it captivated the imagination of as many in the West as in the East. Central Europe was back. It was an intellectual project that those who wished the Iron Curtain to disappear subscribed to.²

1.1.3 Did it work its magic?

Yes, some authors would claim and in more than one way.

The problems of countries emerging from Soviet domination were manifold and fundamental. The complexity of their envisaged transition was incomparable with previous transitions of authoritarian regimes from Latin America and Southern Europe, which provided the empirical basis for the theoretical tenets of the nascent sub-discipline of transielology. The only thing that was clear was the proclaimed direction of transition – towards the West, was in every sense meant to be taken figuratively. (Whitehead 2001: 366 – 367)

The transition meant nothing less than the complete rejection and disowning of the very building blocs of society – its system of economic exchange, social hierarchies, political system, the security and economic cooperation structures and in some cases, the states themselves. With a threat of potential relapse back into the Russian sphere of influence, transitive countries raced to establish their Western credentials. The concept of Central Europe, as a kidnapped West ‘returning to Europe’, presented an ideal means to vocalise their ambitions to be taken swiftly under the aegis of Western economic and security structures. The idealist character of dissident conceptions of Central Europe presented to the Western audiences towards the end of the Cold War greatly aided the use of

² Indeed, there also existed other ideas of what Central Europe meant – one of them was the Great Hungary vision of the Patriotic Popular Front presented in mid-1980s. (Scott 2006: p. 72) The discourse shaping the meaning of Central Europe was a complex mixture of streams and ideas competing with each other for attention of their target audiences and relevant international actors. For detailed discussion of these concepts, their proponents and relative strength within the discourse see literature review section 3.4.
this notion in the early 1990s. It conveyed the idea that the long suppressed true identity of these countries was finally being translated into their political institutions, society, foreign policy, etc. A recent work of Merje Kuus observes that the Central European narrative was “extraordinarily consistent” (Kuus 2007b: 17) across the region and built on the repetition and reinforcement of themes of Western identity, a chronic existential threat and the resultant need for integration with the West.

Taking on a shade of tautology, the notion of Central Europe became increasingly identified with the group of countries that was on a shortlist for EU and NATO accession, a vocabulary that promised the candidate countries a good chance for speedy admission. In itself, this fuelled the efforts of the transitive countries to be perceived as Central European to the degree that Timothy Garton Ash glossed: “Tell me your Central Europe, and I will tell you who you are.” (Garton Ash 1999: 384) Indeed, Central Europe became a self-fulfilling prophecy and the countries typically associated with the notion would become full members of the EU and/or NATO within less then 15 years of the break-up of the Eastern Bloc.

But Central Europe was not only a narrative of foreign policy. In fact, it was a genuine point of self-identification for many transitive countries and their respective populations. Transitions were neither easy nor painless, and the belief in their own Western credentials and promise of destiny helped to justify and bear the pain of often difficult adjustments in transitive countries. If the characteristics they wished to forget – authoritarianism, a centrally planned economy, foreign rule and occupation – were identified with the ‘East’, the institutions they strove to build – democracy, market economy, freedom, full sovereign independence – were identified with the ‘West’. And, of course, the “semantic division of labour” (Garton Ash 1986) between the negatively contextualised ‘Eastern Europe’ of old and the new positively associated ‘Central Europe’ was visible in the works of dissident writers well before the transitions started. Central Europe was thus a ready made point of identity for
those who wanted to distance themselves from the negativity of the ‘East’ and approximate themselves to the ideals of the ‘West’. In sum, for many transitive countries and their populations, being Central Europe was the second best thing after being part of the ‘West’. It was a kind of “waiting room” for becoming the West. (Kuus 2007b: 16)

Finally, many authors, statesmen and organizations once again began to characterise Germany and Austria as Central European countries, too. Many in Austria were looking for way to escape Austria’s peripheral status by casting it as a natural leader of the emerging region. The West German government employed the concept in a new phase of rapprochement with East Germany, conveying a common regional identity for the two German states.

And this is where the story gets interesting... because the original version of the notion of Central Europe was actually the German expression \textit{das Mitteleuropa} – and it was very far from being a universally acclaimed concept associated with freedom and democracy. Quite the contrary...

1.1.4 Ein Rückblick auf Mitteleuropa\textsuperscript{3}

The notion of \textit{Mitteleuropa} had first appeared loosely in German writings during the second half of the 19th century, however, its elaborate definitions only started to emerge in 1880s. (Evans 2006: 236) Yet, detailed study of these early conceptions unveils a high degree of disunity among authors as regards to the positioning, boundaries and characterisation of Central Europe.

For example, the works of Hermann Wagner and Albrecht Penck, both of which were published in the mid-1880s, presented Central Europe in its narrowest spatial expression as extending from the North and Baltic Seas to the Carpathians and the Alps. A wider definition was offered by Berthold Voltz in 1895. His \textit{Mitteleuropa} comprised France, the Low Countries, Germany, and the

\textsuperscript{3} A retrospective of Central Europe
Upper Danubian Basin. Ernst Friedrich and E. E. Oehlmann alternatively described Central Europe as composed of Germany, Habsburg Monarchy, Switzerland, the Low Countries, Luxemburg and Lichtenstein. (Meyer 1946: 180 – 183)

Moreover, significant modifications in the conception of Central Europe were often evident in various works of a single author. Hermann Wagner changed his definition in 1900, even including Great Britain and Italy within his widened Central Europe. (Wagner 1900: 763) Similarly, while Friedrich Ratzel included France within Central Europe in 1898, his Deutschland: Einfuehrung in the Heimatkunde (1907) presented a Central Europe consisting of Germany, the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, German-speaking Switzerland, the Low Countries and Denmark. (Ratzel 1907)

However, what these concepts had increasingly in common was the belief in a leading role for the German nation in Europe and an underlying drive for conceptualisation of the area it should ‘naturally’ dominate. This effort found its expression in the seminal work of Joseph Partsch, a renowned German geographer. His Central Europe was published in London in 1903 as part of The Regions of the World Series edited by Sir Halford Mackinder and became one of the early classics of traditional geopolitics. He positioned Central Europe between the Alpine ridges and the northern seas, and described it as an area defined by a tri-layered belt of the Alps, lesser mountain chains; and northern lowlands, stretching from Dunkerque to Sandomirz. (Partsch 1903: 2 – 3)

Partsch insisted, that in this area Germans did not only comprise 51 % of the total population, but were also the standard bearers of culture, knowledge and progress for other nations within the region. In order to “reach greatness” (Partsch 1903: 141) Central European nations had to unify on the common basis provided by German language and culture. Partsch reckoned that Central Europe „consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, belongs to the sphere of German civilisation“. (Partsch 1903: 142) Only unification under German leadership held the potential to safeguard it from Russian
expansionism and British hegemonic ambitions, thereby delivering the promise of peace and prosperity. (Partsch 1903: 159)

Partsch’s work introduced some of the main themes that would be carried forward in subsequent conceptualisations of Central Europe in the German tradition – the uniqueness of the German nation and its culture; the need for unification of all areas inhabited by the German speaking population; the righteous historical mission to rise to greatness; ‘natural’ German domination of the said area. The notion of Mitteleuropa gradually became a synonym for the hegemonic pursuits taken to the extreme by Nazi Germany. It was far from being the notion associated with democracy and an overt western foreign policy orientation developed from 1980s onwards. Rather, it was an expression that became part and parcel of German attempts to dominate smaller nations inhabiting the same area.

Yet perhaps the most perplexing piece of the whole puzzle was the conception of Central Europe emanating from the Paris Peace Conference, which directly contested Partch’s vision. Sir Halford Mackinder’s ‘Middle Tier’ (Mackinder 1919) materialised in the form of the successor states to Austria-Hungary...

Was this an inverted power notion of Central Europe displaying the preference of the world powers for dismemberment of the ailing Austro-Hungarian Empire? Was it the fear of a strong Central Europe under German domination (not to mention a potential alliance with Russia) that led, more than anything else, to creation of the successor states? Or was it really the result of another reactionary model of Central Europe – the one preferred by Thomas G. Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, advocating the right of self-determination for small nations – that would storm the age old structures of Europe? After all, this synchronised fully with the Wilsonian idealism of the day. One way or the other, the Mitteleuropa concept created a strong adverse response among the non-German nations, focused attention upon the German ambitions for domination of the area and, in the end, probably contributed to there being little effective resistance to the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
This thesis therefore poses a question – how did this understanding of classical notions of Central Europe arise and what does it have in common with the version being promoted from the end of the 20th century? Perhaps nothing at all… So how does the same notion come to mean two fundamentally different things in a span of less than 100 years? How has the meaning of Central Europe been formulated? What were the main factors influencing this process in these two divergent periods? What happened with this notion in between? And above all – what were the implications of this changed meaning?

1.1.5 Pivot of geopolitics?

The problem of Central Europe is virtually inscribed into the ‘birth certificate’ of classical geopolitics in the shape of Sir Halford John Mackinder's enigmatic treatises, The Geographical Pivot of History (1904) and Democratic Ideals and Reality (1919). Mackinder's work combined the geostrategic thinking of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan with applied geographic determinism, aiming to identify potential threats to the interests of the British Empire. The result was Mackinder's controversial Heartland theory.

Even though in 1904 Mackinder identified Russia (the Heartland) as the main threat to the interests of the British Empire (along the fringes of the World Island), his 1919 obsession was obviously with Germany (the 'Strategic Annex of the Heartland'). Partsch's depiction of Central Europe (edited by Mackinder some years earlier), the role of Germany within it and the vision of its future, presented a material basis for Mackinder's insistence that Germany had great power ambitions and was actively seeking to undermine the position of the British Empire with German dominated regional integration. Reflecting experiences of the war, Mackinder's (1919) nightmare scenario was an alliance between an expanded Germany and Russia. In an effort to prevent such an occurrence, Mackinder suggested the creation of a strip of small nation states separating Russia and Germany, whose independence would be safeguarded by
international guarantees and the region’s accessibility by navigable rivers. The Middle Tier, as he named it, was a direct challenge to the projected visions of a Central Europe under German control. The alarming potential of a Partsch-style Central Europe and the envisaged effort to counter it, thus lay at the heart of one of the earliest theories of classical geopolitics.

Interestingly enough, the second constitutive part of classical geopolitics was the organic growth theory of Friedrich Ratzel. Ratzel drew upon an earlier political geography of Carl Ritter infused with the evolutionary theory of Social Darwinism. (Jones, Jones and Woods 2004: 5) By projecting this peculiar viewpoint onto the political organization of human beings, Ratzel arrived at his conceptualisation of a state that corresponded to a living organism. (Ratzel 1897: 1 – 2) He asserted that “the state of man is a form of distribution of life on the earth’s surface... which carries all signs of moving bodies” or animated organisms.4 Ratzel’s emphasis on the territoriality of the state5 with analogies derived from the natural sciences6 led him to assert that as states got stronger and more populated they naturally needed additional living space – Lebensraum.7 Conversely, as they got weaker, they shrunk. The notion of Lebensraum provided the advocates of German expansionism with their conceptual cornerstone in the following decades, particularly the body of German geopolitical theorists headed by Karl Haushofer. Ratzel himself presented more than one conceptualisation of German-dominated Mitteleuropa (1898, 1907). He was one of the leaders of Altleutscher Verband (Pan-German League, succeeded by Partsch after his death in 1904) and a vigorous advocate of German expansion into Africa. (Buttmann 1977: 126)

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4 “… der Staat der Menschen [ist] eine From der Verbreitung des Lebens und der Erdoberfläche... der... trägt alle Merkmale eines beweglichen Körpers...” (Ratzel 1897: 3)
5 “Der Staat muss vom Boden leben” – the state has to live from the soil. (Ratzel 1897: 4)
6 “Es gibt Algen und Schwämme, die als organisierte Wesen ebenso hoch stehen wie der Staat der Menschen.” – there exist algae and sponges, which as organized existence stand as high as the state of the men. (Ratzel 1897: 9)
7 „Das Volk wächst, indem es seine Zahl vermehrt, das Land, indem es seinen Boden vergrößert, und da das wachsende Volk für seine Zunahme neuen Boden nötig hat, so wächst das Volk über das Land hin.” – the people grows by increasing its numbers, the land grows by extending its territory, and as the growing people needs new territory for its surplus, it takes over the land. (Ratzel 1898: 115)
Thus obsession with Central Europe, Germany and its ambitions for the future, was a trait of both traditions - the geostrategy and the organic state theory. It also remained a central focus for several decades to come, at least until the Cold War shifted the main theatres for conflict to areas outside Europe. Debates over conceptualising *Mitteleuropa* would be a recurring feature of German geopolitics and their contestation a preoccupation of Anglo-Saxon political geographers.

But what was the international stage on which Central Europe made its debut?

### 1.1.6 The rise and fall of empires

In the second half of the 19th century there would be a tectonic shift in European politics, setting the stage for the major earthquakes and landslides of the First World War. (see Appendix 31 and 32 for maps)

With its creation of German Confederation, the 1815 Congress of Vienna had facilitated the gradual unification of the German states that would be fuelled by an awakened German nationalism. The experiences of the Napoleonic wars and a flourishing cultural romanticism aided the process of creating a German national consciousness. Prussia’s increasing military power and spectacular economic advancement throughout the 19th century fostered its dominant position within the German Confederation and the *Zollverein* (Customs Union) that had been formed in 1834. The intertwined effect of both processes paved the way for the gradual ousting of Austria and the political unification of the fragmented German states, finally sealed by their defeat of France in the war of 1870-71. Under Otto von Bismarck’s era of *Blut und Eisen*, the German Empire embarked upon an accelerated period of economic growth and military expansion, cementing its central standing in European power politics.

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8 Blood and Iron
Conversely, the position of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was becoming ever more precarious. Following the revolts of 1848-49 and the establishment of a dualistic structure within the empire in 1867⁹, tensions among the multitude of nationalities presided over by the monarchy were intensifying. Moreover, prolonged involvement in the Napoleonic wars, Austria’s ostracisation from Zollverein and an outdated social structure impeding the progress of industrialisation, all contributed to economic decline of the empire. By the turn of the century, Austria-Hungary was in the midst of internal turmoil and, effectively, just a junior power tied to the rising German Empire. Internal national tensions threatened to destabilize the empire and pointed towards violent implosion. The Vienna government was well aware of this danger and group of aides to the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand d’Este – the so called Belvedere Circle – was preparing internal reform of Austria-Hungary to guard against such a contingency. (Afflerbach and Stevenson 2007: p. 65)

Meanwhile, the Russian Empire seemed unsettled, both internally and externally. Bogged down by an archaic social order and the reactionary tendencies of a paranoid autocratic regime eschewing any possibilities for liberalism, social or political change; Russia was struggling to catch up with economic advances elsewhere in Europe and faced looming threats of social discontent. The emancipation of serfs, the emergence of the proletariat and the strengthening ranks of intelligentsia all gave rise to increasing vociferousness of calls for political and social change. Revolutionary movements were on the rise throughout the second half of the 19th century and culminated in the Revolution of 1905, foreshadowing the tempestuous events that would follow a dozen years later. Russia’s erratic and restless behaviour had been underscored by its determined efforts to dominate the lands of the failing Ottoman Empire in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and conflicts that resulted from such efforts

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⁹ Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 or ‘der Ausgleich’, was a formal act signed by Emperor Franz Joseph, which transformed unitary Habsburg Monarchy into dual structure, governed by two different parliaments (in Budapest and Vienna) and two different prime ministers. The country was only unified in the person of the monarch, the army and three ministries – finance, defense and foreign affairs.
in the 19th century\textsuperscript{10}: the Russo-Turkish war of 1829, the Crimean War in 1854-56 and another Russo-Turkish war in 1877-78. The European powers (especially Austria-Hungary and Britain) were uneasy about Russian ambitions, as demonstrated by their stances over both the Crimean War and the Congress of Berlin (1878). Even though the military decline of the Russian Empire was highlighted spectacularly by its defeat in the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-05 (Page and Sonnenburg 2003: 513), a feeling of insecurity vis-à-vis an expansionary and internally unstable Russian Empire remained deep-seated among European powers, surviving into the second decade of the twentieth century.

The ‘Eastern Question’ had preoccupied the minds of European statesmen from the 1768-74 Russo-Turkish war right up until the Paris Peace Conference. As far as it concerns our study area, it essentially revolved around the instability of Ottoman European possessions and regional destabilisation in the context of Ottoman decline. Balkan wars (1912 – 1913) served as a prelude of the European conflict to come and made great power leaders weary of small states rising in the place of failing empires.

The Russian Empire was directly involved in several wars with the Ottomans gradually pushing the boundaries of its ailing adversary beyond Europe and attempting simultaneously to establish its own influence. Austria had originally joined forces with Russia, but became increasingly concerned over her advances within the Balkans and the Danube basin. (Kaplan 1995: 149) Other European powers were equally opposed to the growing prospect of an increased Russian presence in Europe at the expense of the Ottomans, as it threatened to upset the basis of the balance of power struck after the Napoleonic wars. The revision of the San Stefano Treaty at the 1878 Congress of Berlin became a test case for the European powers’ (and especially Britain’s)

\textsuperscript{10} These wars were preceded by two major armed Russo-Turkish conflicts in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century: the Russo-Turkish war of 1768-74, which marked the beginning of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and established Russia as a Black Sea naval power; and a war of 1787-92, in which Austria joined Russia in its fight in return for sharing the gained territory, causing a major alarm among European powers. Both conflicts ended with a Russian victory. (Faure 2003: 153)
determination to limit encroaching Russian influence in South-eastern Europe. Even though the treaty catered for some Russian territorial gains, they were balanced by adjustments in the settlement that clearly favoured the Ottoman Empire, as well as provisions for the increased influence of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans.

As tension was gradually building up among the Big Five in Europe, another imperial game was being played elsewhere...

1.1.7 The Great Game

In territorial terms at least, the British Empire experienced its heyday during the 19th century. Following the Napoleonic wars, Britain had emerged as a dominant world power. Though it would remain unchallenged on the high seas for decades to come, it was involved in a fierce strategic rivalry with the Russian Empire in Asia. Both empires were competing for the territories of the declining Ottoman, Persian and Chinese Empires in a feverish struggle that became known as The Great Game. The possibility of a real Russian challenge to British dominance of the Asian rimlands seemed imminent and the two powers seemed to be on a collision course by the mid-1880s, when skirmishes in the northern Afghan borderlands almost provoked a full-blown war (Olson and Shadle 1996: p. 478). However, the situation would now change with the addition of a third rival into this great power equation.

Following the Congress of Berlin, Russia left the League of the Three Emperors, leaving Germany to grow ever closer to Austria-Hungary and, eventually, to the Ottoman Empire as well. German involvement in the construction of railways in Turkish territories caused considerable anxiety in both Russia and Britain, with the proposed Baghdad railway threatening to challenge both recently established Russian power interests in the area and British economic domination of colonial trade. A railway link to Baghdad would allow Germany to gain access to the considerable natural resources of the Ottoman Empire,
especially the emergent potential oil wealth of the Persian Gulf littoral. (Adelson 1995: 40) The prospect of increasing economic and political influence of Germany in Middle East was unwelcome for both London and St. Petersburg. However, Germany was on the rise and aiming to foster its position as not only as a European, but also global power, irreversibly upsetting the existing balance of power.

1.1.8 The end of the Concert of Europe

Great Game rivalry between Britain and Russia gradually ebbed off in the late 19th century, as the situation in Europe grew increasingly threatening and complicated. The decline in the relative power of both the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires fuelled the volatility of south-eastern Europe, which was to become a major shatter belt of the early years of the 20th century. The protection of Russian power interests in the region (especially securing a shorter overland route to Mediterranean and access to the straits of Bosporus and Dardanelles) had been geared to gaining access to the Mediterranean at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. Britain was opposed to such possibility and thus supported the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, as did Germany for its own reasons (especially access to Middle East). In the middle of Europe, Austria-Hungary was stretched by internal nationalist battles and was desperate to hold its empire together, dreading the potential domino effect of Ottoman failure. Whatever the interests of great powers might or might not have been, the common denominator in all calculations was the reality that at the turn of the twentieth century the Ottoman Empire was losing its grip on its long held European possessions (Duiker and Spielvogel 2008: 569) and that, consequently, the European Concert was nearing its end.

The alliance building that would determine the fault-lines of future conflict had already started by the late 19th century. The Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary (1879) was joined by Italy in 1882. Then France and
Russia formed their own alliance in the face of increasing German power in 1892. Germany's rise on the back of the declining Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, coupled with its significant naval build-up was certainly alarming the British Empire by the end of the century. So Britain would first approach the French Republic in 1904 (Entente Cordiale) and then invite the Russian Empire (1907) three years later into its Triple Entente.

A complacent Concert of Europe had changed into a cacophony of insecure voices screeching about what the future of Europe would bring. Germany gave cause for concern to many by openly pursuing its Weltpolitik, which aimed for the acquisition of a naval capability that might challenge the supremacy of the British Empire, allowing the projection of greater influence over Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Growing German power, the decline of the Ottoman Empire, tensions within Austria-Hungary and the expansionist tendencies of the Russian Empire provided the fault-lines of insecurity in the eyes of the British. The conceptions of Central Europe put forward by German and Austrian authors were strengthening alliance of these countries and, at least potentially, presented an even larger and stronger future enemy. Any materialisation of the possibilities for their alliance with Russia would have been a recipe for disaster from the British point of view.

This was the discourse Mackinder somewhat belatedly bought into in 1919 as he depicted the area of the Middle Tier of countries as the crucial region, one which would ultimately determine, ‘who ruled the world’. The anxiety over the brewing instability in Europe found its focal point in Central Europe, a region that would become the geopolitical battlefield of the great powers for decades to come.

1.2 Central Europe in contemporary research

A significant volume of research on Central Europe has been published in recent years. Unfortunately, research into the formative years of this very
concept does not feature among its main topics very prominently. The history and formation of the notion as such has been somewhat marginalised. Allowing for the odd volume on gender issues (Lukic 2006), national identity (Judson 2005) or social issues (Breuning 2005), the main themes dominating the bulk of research are post-Cold War transition and EU integration.

Interestingly, the semantic division of labour referred to by Garton Ash (1986) also found its expression in contemporary writing, although in a less clear-cut fashion. While volumes on economic, political and social transition usually operate with the geographical orbit of what their authors define as East-Central Europe (Morlino 2009, Wolchik 2008, Orenstein 2008, etc.), conceptualisation of EU integration for the post-communist countries has shown a greater preference for the notion of Central Europe (Kirschbaum 2007, Kuus 2007b, Polacikova 2005). Interestingly, a comparison of more than 30 volumes on the politics of East-/Central Europe published since 2005 in the holdings of the British Library shows that it is almost exclusively authors originating in the new countries of the EU that gravitate towards the use of the term, Central Europe.

Among these authors, a tendency to use the notion of East-Central Europe when considering issues of transition and Central Europe when conceptualising EU integration or regional cooperation is even more pronounced. Two volumes published in Poland in 2007 document this semantic dichotomy. For instance, Robert Alberski et al. edited a volume on the political systems of the post-communist countries in Europe titled Systemy polityczne Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej (Political Systems of Central and Eastern Europe), while Jacek Wojnicki entitled his book on EU integration of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland Slovakia and Slovenia - Droga Europy Środkowej do Unii Europejskiej (The Route of Central Europe into European Union). This dichotomy can be viewed as an extension of the earlier tendency to associate the adjective „central“ with a positive context and the desired future (within the EU), and „eastern“ with previous negative experiences, in this case awkward questions
of transition. While authors writing under the banner of Central Europe usually limit their area of enquiry to new EU member countries\(^{11}\), volumes bearing East-Central Europe in titles tend to connote a wider geographical scope and include, for example, aspirant accession states such as Ukraine or Croatia. (Orenstein 2008) Thus the recent research tends to use the notion of Central Europe along the lines employed by Merje Kuus, who viewed it as a kind of a waiting room for those countries of the former Eastern Bloc that were on a sure path to becoming part of the West. (see section 1.1.3) Individual authors, of course, have their own personal preferences and some actually use both notions in the same volume, depending on the context. For example, Oskar Krejčí in his book entitled *Geopolitics of the Central European Region* operated within the confines of East-Central Europe when excluding Germany from the area of his considerations. (Krejčí 2005)

The volume of academic writing on the political history of the area is more limited, usually taking the shape of an overview of the main events and issues occurring in the twentieth century. (Webb 2008) Writings on the geopolitical theorisation of Central Europe in the period preceding the First World War are even scarcer. Only one such volume published in the last 5 years can be found in the collections of the British Library – Andreas Peschel's *Friedrich Naumanns und Max Webers "Mitteleuropa"* ('Central Europe' of Friedrich Naumann and Max Weber) published in 2005. This publication contemplated common and distinguishing features of both authors' conceptions, and discussed them in the context of more general trends in German thought during the First World War. The fact that even this volume was not in English (and there are no plans to translate it) underlines the scarcity of recent academic interest in the field.

Inconsistency of writing on Central Europe as a geopolitical notion seems to be a persisting problem. It had been observed even at the height of its popularity – the 1940s. As Henry Meyer summarised at the end of the Second World War,

\(^{11}\) New EU countries include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia from 2004, and Romania and Bulgaria from 2007.
a multitude of writing on German conceptions of Central Europe had appeared principally during the course of the conflict, though most were sketchy „autopsies of what has been written“ (Meyer 1946: 178). Since then, the volume of writing on such issues has been wearing ever thinner and they usually only feature in sections on the history of geopolitical thought within larger volumes (e.g. Dugin 2000, Krejci 2005) and solitary special issues of academic journals (e.g. European Journal of Social Theory 2008) The research presented in this thesis seeks to fill this gap in recent research by providing a comprehensive record of conceptualising of Central Europe in the critical formative period between 1880 and 1920. It tries to answer the fundamental questions surrounding the elusive notion of Central Europe: How did the notion come into being? How was it formulated and why? What were the implications for the international structure and its actors? And, equally importantly – can we observe similar processes in considerations of its (very different) contemporary meaning?

1.3 Research aim, hypothesis and original contribution

The overall argument of this thesis is that conceptualisations of regional identity – in this case, Central Europe – are exercises in geopolitics, which through the definitive discourse of Self and Other exert influence upon the behaviour of political actors, thereby possibly impacting upon international structure. The research presented examines this hypothesis by analysis of concepts of Central Europe spanning a wide historical period (1840s – early 2000s), with special focus on the notion’s formative period between 1880 and 1920.
1.3.1 Research aim

As has just been suggested, the aim of the research is to investigate the formation of the notion and meaning of Central Europe in the period 1880–1920 and its implications for changes in the structure of international relations. The author's enquiry stems from the previous masters degree research conducted on a similar topic. The previous research unveiled recurrent changes in the meaning of the notion of Central Europe throughout the 20th century, observing parallel changes in behaviour of some actors with regard to the notion and the area it described. These changes included the territorial extent as well as the very meaning of the notion, varying from concrete projects of regional federation to subtle abstract intellectual identity. The selected period has been identified (see section 2.3) as crucial for the very notion of Central Europe since it witnessed its emergence as an important concept in international relations discourse in general and geopolitics in particular.

1.3.2 Origins of research hypothesis and its envisaged application

Rather than following concrete objectives, the enquiry started with a set of 'puzzles' and 'hunches' developed during the master level research, which are presented in detail in the first section of the methodology chapter. While being a fairly unorthodox approach, it is recommended to use in case of interpretative research considering textual material – a very fitting description of this research as well. (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: xvi) On the basis of these puzzles and hunches, a working hypothesis of research is developed.

The hypothesis of the research presented in the methodology (presented above and again in the section 2.1) is based upon projection of discourse analysis methods onto research of formulation and implication of constructed notions in international relations. It posits the potential correlation between the

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individual concepts of Central Europe, the constructed meaning of the notion and the behaviour of the relevant actors in international relations. In sum, it suggests that meaning of the notion of Central Europe is constructed through discourse. While various definitions put forward by individual authors are determined by their identities and interests, they gather strength by being consonant with identities and interests of relevant actors in the discourse. The constructed meaning is a result of this discourse, in return moulding the behaviour of relevant actors. Through actor behaviour, the constructed notion indirectly influences changes in international structure.

For illustration of how the hypothesis might work in real context, let’s consider a simplified example of Central Europe as a federalist project creating a strong block of countries running north to south between Germany and Russia; and the Soviet behaviour in face of this possibility at the end of 1940s.

The hypothesis presupposes that the contemporary meaning of the notion of Central Europe is a result of its surrounding discourse. The projects developed during the Second World War by émigré politicians in the United States and Great Britain gave the notion of Central Europe a new meaning – that of a strong federation of states able to resist outside pressures, especially any future potential German expansion. This was a marked departure from earlier pan-Germanist connotations of the notion.

Further, individual concepts follow certain objectives consonant with the identities and interests of their authors, a trait that is discernible to this date. For example, the interest of Czechoslovak authors (Hodža 1942, Beneš 1942, Feierabend 1942, etc.) was to safeguard the future independence of their country. Creation of a federative or confederative unit able to resist the German pressure seemed the best possible way to achieve this security.

Then the hypothesis suggests that the discourse is shaped by individual concepts and their relative strength. As the inter-war period German authors
writing on Central Europe (*Mitteleuropa*) were abandoning this notion increasingly in favour of the term *Reich*, the new concepts mushrooming among the émigré groups in the USA and the Great Britain were ascribing Central Europe a new intrinsic quality – that of a federation of equal nations instead of an empire dominated by one of them.

The relative strength of concepts is determined by the support they gather among relevant groups, which, in turn, may depend on their alignment with their identities and interests. As has been suggested, the projects of Central Europe were being developed by émigré politicians of occupied satellite states of the Reich, with the strong support of the British and the US governments. This support was determined by the fact that influential groups within both establishments believed that a strong political entity to the east of Germany would be able to prevent its future expansionist tendencies. Having sensed the support of Western Allies, theoretical plans were followed by practical preparations for federations, including treaties on future confederation (Poland with Czechoslovakia and Greece with Yugoslavia) and the foundation of working groups preparing plans for harmonisation of education, agricultural production, trade, etc.

The hypothesis then suggests that the result of the discourse is the constructed identity or meaning of Central Europe – in our case as a federal unit consisting of countries between Germany and Russia, stretching at least from Poland down to Greece (with big question mark over Baltic states – Gross 1945).

So far, the hypothesis and the story in our example focused on how the meaning of Central Europe developed and shifted. However, the final point of hypothesis posits that actor behaviour is shaped by the contemporary meaning of Central Europe, what has an indirect impact on international structures. As observed in the Chapter 6 (section 6.1.5), in the interwar period the notion of Central Europe was resented by academics and politicians of the successor states as it was associated with the threat of German domination. For that matter, the successor states were equally suspicious of any regional integration that would
challenge their national sovereignty until the Second World War, when Central Europe became associated with practical plans for a strong regional union able to ward off the threat of German expansionism (see sections 6.1.6 and 6.2.1). Yet, despite the concrete steps taken towards creating a regional federation were taken, the plan did not come to fruition owing to a fierce opposition of the Soviet Union.

1.3.3 Research objectives

Based on the foreshadowed application of the hypothesis, this research will involve in-depth analysis of concepts, the informative influences behind them and their envisaged objectives. In reviewing the formulation of concepts of Central Europe thus the research will attempt to identify the main influences moulding the authors’ identity, interests and views. Emphasis will be laid upon highlighting the envisaged identity of Central Europe in each significant concept and the model in which the author anticipated it would further the interests he or she advocated. Finally, the research will trace the influence these conceptions exercised and the support they have gathered among relevant actors in international relations and within the discourse over Central Europe. A distinctive and valuable feature of the research is its reliance upon original texts in German, Russian, Czech and other languages, to provide the best possible basis for the following analysis. As has been observed by Rankin and Schofield (2004) incorrect translation and misinterpretation of original sources is often carried forward by sources quoting translated materials, rather than the original sources themselves, contributing to further distortion of their understanding and interpretation. This research will therefore examine original sources allowing analysis free of the mediated interpretation of later translators and commentators. A similar effort will be followed in the conduct of archival research, where the author will aim at collecting original documentation relating to the potential influence of analysed concepts.
While the main focus of the research will be the earliest formative period of the notion (1880 – 1920), only discussion of core research findings in the light of processes of reformulation of the notion in following periods can provide for well rounded conclusions. The Chapter 6 provides an overview of the development of discourses over Central Europe since the end of the First World War, eliciting a basis for discussion of the findings of the core research. The chapter is expected to reveal a correlation between the evolving identities and interests of participants in the discourse and the resulting meaning of Central Europe as a notion. As authors entering the discourse follow the interests informed by their own identities, their contribution to the discourse moulds the resulting regional identity. The most obvious example might well be the marked shift in the constructed meaning of Central Europe caused by entry of dissident Eastern Bloc writers into the discourse. (see section 6.4.4) The research hypothesis suggests that the relative power of competing concepts is determined by the support they are able to harness among the relevant actors. Again, while federalist concepts of Central Europe failed to gather substantial support during the Cold War (see section 6.3.4), the abstract vision of Central Europe put forward by the end of the same period found a significant following on both sides of the Iron Curtain and gave the notion of Central Europe a whole new meaning. It is anticipated that the thesis will observe a correlation between the changing identities and interests of relevant actors, their relative power and the resulting character of the constructed regional identity. While the federalist concepts of Central Europe were being put forward by isolated émigré groups in 1970s, the abstract and culturally defined Central Europe was promoted by dissident leaders, who in the mid- to late-1980s commanded considerable attention among Western public. In turn, the newly constructed regional identity informs the attitudes and behaviour of actors, thus indirectly impacting on the international relations and system. The Central European narrative of the late 1980s was consciously used by many dissident writers to induce the sympathies of the Western public and further their cause in dismantling the regimes of the Eastern Bloc.
In short, the discussion of the core research findings with the data presented in Chapter 6 is expected to confirm that regional identities can and do evolve, depending on the changing identities and interests of relevant actors; and these changes induce modifications in the behaviour of relevant actors, shaping the changes in international relations and the system.

1.3.4 Original contribution of the research

The research presented here comprises a historical enquiry into geographic ideational constructs and their impact. The thesis thus operates disciplinarily within (and thereby connects central concerns in) critical geopolitics and historical geography. The original contribution of the work presented vests precisely with this interdisciplinary cross, as its conclusions challenge the perception that regional identities are constant, which underlines the modern geopolitical literature on Central Europe. Geopolitics too often focuses solely on contemporary concerns. Moreover, where historical variations of the notion are examined, past conceptualisations are interpreted through the lens of the present.

Moreover, there is a marked dearth in the recent literature of sources that compare and analyze concepts of Central Europe. Therefore his thesis will patiently trace the origins of concepts in their native Anglo-Saxon, German and Central European contextual environments, thus offering a fuller picture of their intent and reasoning. Varied archival sources will subsequently be used to demonstrate the influence and effect of these theories. Such a deep and comprehensive analysis will hopefully lead to strong, clear conclusions.

The novel and distinctive feature of this research is also its elected approach. There were numerous analyses of the concepts of Central Europe written in the late 1940s and early 1950s, particularly in the United States. They predominantly dealt with German theories justifying territorial aggrandisement and generally employed a positivist viewpoint and simple comparison of
individual concepts. They have been criticized as “bare autopsies” (Meyer 1946) of German theories rather than constituting legitimate research on its own terms. This research intends to overcome this autopsy approach and analyze the historical concepts of Central Europe within their real-life and time contexts.

The research employs methods of discourse analysis. While common in other works of critical geopolitics, this approach is novel in examining geopolitical theories of Central Europe originating in period 1880 – 1920. The intention here is to deconstruct the notions used by individual authors to uncover the underlying intentions pursued in their conceptualisation of Central European space. Such analysis is vital for assessment of links of these concepts to behaviour of political actors and, potentially, changes in the international structure.

This research also demonstrates how conventional wisdom on Central Europe is often derived from works of contemporary authors, who draw on secondary interpretations of original material, or read the original works superficially. In contrast, the enquiry presented here, spans three centuries (1840s – early 2000s) and returns to original sources to challenge the so often repeated misconceptions of Central Europe.

The conclusions of the research imply that constructed notions and identities can have a significant impact on the international relations discourse and the conduct of foreign policy, through the changes in actor behaviour they induce. The substance and perceptions of constructed identities change according to the shifting tensions between the identities, interests and relative power of various actors. Consequently, ever shifting regional identities are at the same time an expression of the changing structure of international relations as well as provide an impulse for changes in the actors’ behaviour. Yet, they struggle to make an impact on international structure, due to its irreducible complexity.
1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis will consist of the following chapters:

1. Puzzle of Central Europe: An Introduction
2. Approaching Central Europe: A Methodology
3. German concepts, 1880 – 1920
4. Austro-Hungarian concepts, 1880 - 1920
5. Anglo-Saxon concepts, 1880 - 1920
6. Variations in time and space
7. Findings and Conclusions

Bibliography will be presented in usual mode at the end of the thesis, followed by several appendices. These are used to illustrate and support the findings of the thesis, to provide higher degree of clarity for references (specifically in the case of archival materials quoted), as well as complement the text (generally maps referred to in the thesis). They include maps, charts, copies of historical maps, relevant treaties and other archival documents.

This Introduction has provided the context for the research, outlining trends and themes in recent research into Central Europe. It also states research aims and objectives, and outlines a structure for the thesis.

Chapter two, ‘Approaching Central Europe’, outlines methodological considerations, introducing the research hypothesis and unveiling its constructivist bent. It argues that constructivism offers a novel approach for analysis of conceptions of Central Europe and that it is likely to reveal sufficient patterns surrounding the notion of Central Europe to allow for the generalisation of the observed patterns. Even though constructivism is advocated as the most useful platform for study of the notion of Central Europe, the chapter also contemplates various other potential approaches to theorizing
Central Europe, such as the traditional and derivative idealist and realist approaches, functionalism, Marxist approaches, etc. The methodological reasoning is followed by a simplified application of constructivist thought developed to scrutinise Mackinder’s characterisation of a Middle Tier of Central European states. In regards to the applied methodology, the chapter discusses sampling, the types and location of data sources, data collection, methods of analysis and possible limitations in the adapted research design.

The following three chapters will comprise the core components of the research.

Conceptions of Central Europe originating in Germany during the period under review are numerous and are scrutinised in chapter three. The chapter documents the rise of the notion as a concept of regional identity with a specific aim for changing international structure shared by its many variations. They will be presented in chronological order, showing the line of development from vaguely defined initially westward-oriented concepts towards detailed plans for a customs and economic union stretching to the south-east of Germany. Increased analytical attention will be paid here to the ascribed role of the German nation in these concepts. Evidence from the political archive of the Auswärtiges Amt (German Foreign Office) and Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archive) in Berlin will be examined in an effort to identify the influences of such constructs. The chapter will debunk some of the myths of the origin of the notion tracing its coherent use to pan-German writers in late 19th century and early 20th century economists, who turned the notion into plan for customs union in continental Europe. It will be suggested that the First World War meaning of the notion of Mitteleuropa is largely a return to the pan-German ideas and reworking of the earlier notion of Deutschtum that flourished post German unification, which did not encompass all areas understood as a realm of the German nation – to say the least, it excluded Austria.

Concepts originating in the area of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, examined in chapter four, can be subdivided into two streams – those in line
with German writing of the day and the reactionism this engendered. The clear dividing line drawn in this chapter advances the argument that definitions of central Europe work as definitions of the Self and the Other. The detailed examination of reaction of Viennese policy makers to the pan-German notion of Central Europe provides evidence to support the hypothesis that concept had both positive and negative influence in the policy circles. The chapter also details the historical episode, in which Central Europe came the closest to its realisation (the spring 1918 Spa Accords). In contrast, two main lines can be identified at the outset as far as reactionary concepts are concerned – the calls for reform of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, presented, inter alia13, by the Belvedere circle of Franz Ferdinand d’Este or Aurel Popovici; and the nation state building project, presented for example by Tomáš G. Masaryk. The pro-German line is examined separately from the reactionary concepts and follows the same chronological order as the section of the previous chapter detailing German concepts. It is showcased how reactionary concepts were used as tools to influence policy makers in the allied countries (the effectiveness of these efforts is in turn examined in the chapter focusing on the Anglo-Saxon world).

Chapter five focuses on the Anglo-Saxon world – Britain and the United States. While elaborate concepts of Central Europe are few and far between, both countries provide an ideal testing ground for examining the influence of the notion on policy makers in environments, where Central Europe was theorized as the Other. The chapter observes that in both environments, the pan-German interpretation of Central Europe was gradually adopted and leaders in both countries defined their policies in opposition to this supposed plan for German domination of Europe and beyond. Central Europe was often equalized to so called Berlin-Baghdad plan of German expansion and presented as a direct threat to British imperial interests as well as established global order. The highlight of the chapter is the examination of the effectiveness of efforts of T. G. Masaryk and other small nation leaders to galvanize support for

13 among other things
dismemberment of Austria-Hungary by utilizing the perceived threat of Central Europe. However, the evidence collected eventually does not support the hypothesis that the great power endorsement of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was motivated by the opposition to the concept of Central Europe.

Chapter six, “Variations in time and space” provides evidence that processes identified in the core research period are not accidental and recur in subsequent historical periods. The chapter traces the development of Central European concepts in chronological order from 1920s onwards and, above all, aims to delineate discourse over the notion of Central Europe for periods associated with systemic change in international relations affecting the region. It follows the development of discourses over Central Europe for five distinctive periods, starting with the interwar years, though the Second World War, the Cold War, the break-up of the Eastern Bloc, to contemporary period. First and foremost, this chapter is intended to serve as a literary underpinning for the core research, providing the basis for discussion of research findings and identifying key material for the formulation of conclusions. Besides the critical discussion of concepts originated in the interwar period, during the Second World War and then within the post-Cold War period, the chapter also reflects on the lack of substantive development of the Central European notion during the Cold War period, suggesting that application of a constructivist methodology can account for this puzzling episode in the discourse of the notion.

Research findings and conclusions attempt to generalise the research outcomes on a constructivist platform. The focal point of this effort will revolve around the identity of Central Europe – perceived, constructed, demonstrated or even just envisaged –, its purpose and effects. The findings are then contrasted to body of data derived from Chapter 6. There are strong suggestions that this comparison will unveil real links between the issues raised and dealt with in these two distinct periods and conclusions of the research may well have wider
implications than merely clarifying the origins, basis and implications of traditional geopolitical theorisation of Central Europe.

Finally, the thesis is completed by the Bibliography and Appendix. Bibliography presents materials quoted in the thesis, separated primary and secondary sources. Appendix contains numerous maps, contemporary newspaper clippings and copies of key archival documents. The list of visited archives is also included, in order to provide the reader with an insight into breath and depth of primary research, which forms the back-bone of this thesis and its conclusions.
Central Europe: forging a concept in time and space

Approaching Central Europe: A Methodology

Chapter 2
2.1 The puzzle of Central Europe

Perhaps the most unique characteristic of the notion of Central Europe is its protean nature. Proteus was, of course, an enigmatic character in Greek mythology: a god, who could foretell the future and morph into whichever creature he chose. Homer wrote in his *Odyssey* that to obtain a truthful answer from this unusual oracle, his hero, Menelaus had to hold Proteus in a tight embrace as he shifted shapes. Central Europe seems to be an able shape-shifter itself, but how can we make it reveal its secrets?

The introduction foreshadowed some of the apparent metamorphoses that Central Europe has been subject to. We saw how the territorial extent ascribed to Central Europe was first associated with German settlement while, during the First World War, it became a synonym for unifying the Austro-Hungarian and German empires. Then, during the Second World War, Central Europe was designated as a buffer strip of nations, running north-south between Germany and Russia. Later on, in the early 1980s, it became loosely associated with the European countries under Soviet domination. Its professed purpose differed from period to period – it has been a project of unification for the territories inhabited by ethnic Germans, a proposed union of two empires, a suggested buffer between Germany and Russia to safeguard world peace, a uniting regional identity helping post-Communist countries to part with their ‘Eastern’ past. It has been a pet notion of German nationalists, Nazi propagandists, dissidents in Eastern bloc countries, modern democrats, and advocates of European integration.

The meaning of Central Europe has undergone a puzzling number and variety of metamorphoses within a relatively short period of a hundred years - in terms
of territory, intention, purpose and underlying philosophy. Often unpredictable protean shape-shifting seems to have been its most consistent characteristic. Invoked by a whole spectrum of ideological streams, its only firm connection seems to be with classical geopolitics and its realist variants in international relations.

While this perplexing vicissitude in itself might sound a bit inconsequential in terms of international relations theory, the observed ramifications of these changes make it well worth researching. Divergent interpretations of Central Europe seem to have generated contrasting responses from the very same collective of international actors, contributing to a reshaping of their policies. While West German political elites had always been careful to avoid any references to Mitteleuropa for its negative association with the German expansionism of the early twentieth century; the same notion identified with the intellectual project of 1980s Eastern bloc dissent swiftly became a headline for their Ostpolitik. Thus defined, a revitalised Central Europe galvanized Western public support for the countries emerging from the Soviet sphere of influence; while yet another Central European metamorphosis would consequently become instrumental in supporting the integration of these countries into the European Union and NATO. The implications of both recent characterisations were in obvious contrast to the highly negative view harboured by the Western public and policy makers towards the Central Europe perceived as the union between Germany and Austria-Hungary in the First World War.

One of the original features of this project is its examination of individual concepts of Central Europe in their varied historical contexts, rather than, as is more usual, just latching onto one particular interpretation. The research seeks to explain how can one notion undergo so many erratic and multifold changes, galvanize such strong and divergent responses, and ultimately contribute so significantly to the shaping of critical international structures? The puzzle is impelling. Perhaps the processes identified by scholars as ‘definitive
discourse\textsuperscript{14} can account for changes in the meaning of the notion of Central Europe and their implications.

Dwora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea presented their concept of ‘interpretive research’ as concerned with discourse analysis and text interpretation. (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: xvi) They presented this as different from both qualitative and quantitative modes of the usual research taxonomy, and asserted that its distinguishing feature is the premise that “the meaning-making activity of human actors is central to understanding of causal relationships”. (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: xii) This description is applicable to the proposed research project, which focuses on conceptions of Central Europe, the formative influences behind them, their role within the discourse and the practical implications that follow. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea underlined that the very philosophical paradigm of interpretive research questions the application of traditional positivist research design, as it requires flexibility and adaptation to ensuing research findings. They suggested that for this reason, rather than setting objectives,

“researchers in interpretive modes more commonly begin their work with what might be called informed ‘hunches’ or puzzles or a sense of tension between expectations and prior observations, grounded in the research literature and, not atypically, in some prior knowledge of the study setting. Understanding and concepts are allowed (indeed, expected) to emerge from the data as the research progresses.” (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: xvi)

The puzzle of this research has already been presented at length. The first hunch with respect to its untangling was triggered by a number of discourse analysts contemplating the social construction of notions as linguistic propositions. Authors such as Edward Schiappa, Thomas S. Kuhn or Richard

\textsuperscript{14} a discourse that defines meaning of a notion in process of social construction of reality (Schiappa 2003: p. xi)
Rorty. Rorty put forward the assertion that people define notions on the basis of their needs and interests. (Rorty 1999: xxvi) The needs and interests are in turn said to be informed by any individual’s socially constructed identity. Here, we might remind ourselves of Timothy Garton Ash’s already-cited exclamation: “Tell me your Central Europe and I will tell you who you are.” (Garton Ash 1999: 384) Yet the challenge for the research is not only to recognise that individuals formulate their own personal definitions, but, more importantly, to show how it is that these become recognized by other individuals and why certain of them seem to gain widespread acceptance. Especially illuminating in this regard is the work of Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Star, who studied the institutional choice of definitions of relevant notions – such as the definition of HIV/AIDS provided by the World Health Organisation. They posited that wider groups of individuals forming institutions typically chose from the pool of potential definitions of a notion the one best suited for the shared institutional beliefs and interests; or, indeed, create their own. Some definitions, such as those for clinical diseases, become so strongly institutionalised that they count as the very meaning of the notion. (Bowker and Star 2000: 108) This does not mean that competing definitions for the same notion do not exist; it just means that they did not harness the necessary support among the various individuals, groups and institutions relevant for the given discourse. In fact, Bowker and Star assert that notions are in a continual process of reformulation and can undergo quite erratic changes in meaning over the course of time, particularly if the balance of power between various definitions keeps changing. Central Europe seems to provide a striking illustration of this tendency. However, the same authors also posited that given the nature of social interaction based on linguistic propositions, individuals are compelled to mould their behaviour to fit them, that is to conform (Bowker and Star 2000: 53). This conformity can be seen in many forms – even opposition to the idea expressed by the notion or a challenge to its definition. However, even these responses have to be formulated in reference to the institutionalised definition. For example, political leaders of the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire opposed the
Central European vision of union between Germany and former imperial territories, when that notion was in vogue. Instead, they placed emphasis on their respective national sovereignties. However, when this meaning of the notion started to weaken in the late 1930s (see section 1.3), they advanced their own definition of Central Europe and shifted its very meaning.

Contemplating notions as a philosophical category and observing the successive metamorphoses of Central Europe that have already been noted, this author has earlier suggested that all of them may have had something in common after all: they each constituted a distinctive, constructed version of regional identity, irrespective of whether the region was loosely formulated or identity variable. Attempts at definition of Central Europe typically spell out a set of unifying characteristics substantiating its separate identity from the surrounding world and ascribe it territory, purportedly demonstrating these characteristics. It seems that the characteristics of identity in successive Central European notions have taken precedence over its territorial shape and extent, which have only been defined by association. Look, for instance, at the clear tautological relationship during the 1990s between those Central European countries described as having made good progress towards joining Western economic and security structures and the tendency to therefore brand such countries as Central (rather than, for instance, Eastern) European (Kuus 2007, Dittmer 2005). Thus it seems that definitions of Central Europe attempt to construct certain regional identity, rather than define a region.

Of course, any observed processes of notion formulation, regional identity construction and changes in meaning in the context of this research need to be conceptualised in terms of appropriate theory within the social sciences. Concepts capable of facilitating the projection of definitive discourse analysis into study of international relations needed to be identified. Indeed, the suitability of this approach for the study of international relations had to be tested and its analytical merits substantiated. This author believes that conceptualisation in this instance can be based upon a holistic modification of
Alexander Wendt’s actor-structure dynamics. My scrutiny of available theory and the reasoning behind selection of a Wendt-derived model are summarised in section 2.2 of this methodology. To foreshadow the conclusions of the discussion that follows in this chapter, it is suggested that constructivism will prove better able to account for various events in the history of international relations as well as to provide a more rigorous methodological framework for the projection of definitive discourse onto international relations.

As a result of these considerations, a working hypothesis has been developed:

*Conceptualisations of regional identity are exercises in geopolitics, which through the definitive discourse of Self and Other exert influence upon the behaviour of political actors, thereby indirectly impacting upon international structure.*

The aim of the research is to conduct an in-depth investigation into this hypothesis and potentially formulate transferable generalised observations. As outlined in section 1.3, the core research focuses on the four decades period between 1880 and 1920. Findings of the core research will then be contextualised in the light of secondary research covered in Chapter 3, which traces development of the meaning of the notion of Central Europe from 1920s onwards. As has already been suggested, one of the original features of this research is its examination of various concepts of Central Europe without necessarily linking these to current geopolitical and regional concerns. The multitude of permutations of Central Europe throughout the twentieth century and beyond offers ample cases, on which to test the findings of the core research, maximising potential of this research to produce well substantiated conclusions.

There is probably no other notion that would offer the same number and divergence of variations in such a short period. Study of Central Europe provides a unique opportunity to analyse the process of formulation and implications of notions in international relations. Perhaps, just like
mythological Proteus, Central Europe can provide us with answers to our questions, if we hold it through all its metamorphoses.

### 2.2 Approaching Central Europe

This research contemplates conceptual spatializations of identity, their role in informing the construction of self/other binaries and the influence these ‘imaginations’ can potentially exert upon behaviour of political actors (Atkinson 2005: 68). This assertion would seemingly place the research within a group of critical rather than classical or neoclassical works in geopolitics.

#### 2.2.1 A constructivist approach in a critical geopolitics study

Authors in neoclassical geopolitics, such as Geoffrey Sloan or Colin Gray, are commonly regarded to have built on the classical work of Halford Mackinder. In works of these authors, Mackinder’s take on world politics is considered to be a grand strategy at its best, while they recognize and address its limitations. (Venier 2010) However, in this research, classical geopolitics is an object, rather than framework of analysis presented. The research seeks to deconstruct the very first prominent discourse of classical geopolitics – the one of Central Europe – and highlight its implications. The works of Halford Mackinder, Friedrich Naumann or Friedrich Ratzel are to be subjected to a scrutiny rather than used as a methodological guidance. Paraphrasing Gerry Kearns, it could be said that rather than seeing spatialized identities as given, the research focuses on the processes of construction of these ‘given’ geographical imaginaries and their implications.

The research employs a constructivist methodology, which is already well established in critical geopolitics, especially in the study of ‘geopolitical imaginations’. The concerns of works in this field of critical geopolitics are the self-images of states that define them “in relations to equivalence and antagonism to
other actors in world affairs” (Atkinson 2005: 68). The contributors to this debate include David Atkinson, David Newman, David Campbell and Matthew Sparke (Sparke 2003, Atkinson 2000, Newman 2000, Campbell 1992), and their works focus on questions of the construction of dominant interpretations of the notion of given nations, their underlying historical myths and institutionalisation through state bureaucracy. While the object of this research is a regional rather than national identity, works of Merje Kuus have already demonstrated value of the constructivist approach to interpreting this form of spatialized identity.

Kuus presented several works considering identity formation in the states of ‘Central Europe’ (Kuus 2007, Kuus 2007b, Kuus 2004, etc.) in which she scrutinized construction of shared regional identity of the post-Communist European states during the 1990s through the process of their othering from the former ‘Eastern’ context and approximation to their desired ‘Western’ orbit. She highlighted the processes of self-construction of identity as well as its reinforcing through perceptions of other actors. Kuus also suggested that regional identity of ‘Central Europe’ gradually developed from shared effort to reinforce cultural affinity with the West, as the means to further transitive countries’ security and economic interests. However, the logic of mutual construction of the Self and the Other dictated the identification of these states with their own deeds and led to the development of a tautological relationship between regional identity and its constructed characteristics.

However, the recent history of the region is not the only subject of critical scrutiny from the constructivist viewpoint. A recent article by Richelle Bernazzoli (2010) tracks the US construction of self as the ascendant leader of the ‘free nations’ through the process of othering from the failing Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. The analysis of then contemporary newspaper articles follows the construction of the ‘autocratic’, ‘anomalous’ and ‘monstrous’ identity of the multiethnic empire in popular media and the portrayal of the USA as a champion of national sovereignty, the polar opposite of this faltering
Old World power. (Bernazzoli 2010: 656) Interestingly for this research, Bernazzolli observes the profound impact that the recognition of the potential slipping of former Austro-Hungarian territories under German influence had on the debate about the future of empire in 1918, even though it is not the primary focus of his article. (Bernazzolli 2010: 654–656)

As suggested below, it is the aspiration of this research to enrich the constructivist debate of spatialized identities within the discourse of critical geopolitics by tracking potential effects of articulations of Central Europe in works of early classical geopolitics onto the changes of international structure following the First World War.

**2.2.2 Methodological clarifications**

Building on the above, it comes as a somewhat obvious statement that the research employs a constructivist viewpoint. The constructivist perception of actors as dynamic units, identification of systems as a changing social concept, and the attention paid to the use of notions and their influence upon socially constructed international structures, presents a valuable platform for re-examination of classical geopolitical concepts. As already mentioned, constructivism has already found its application in critical geopolitics in the works of Merje Kuus, Richelle Bernazzoli, and also many others – in terms of construction of non-nation state identities. Here, the recent works of Bachmann and Sidaway (2009), Mindaugas Jurkynas (2007) or Michelle Pace (2007) provide interesting examples.

Ostensibly, constructivism offers the tools and a methodology for analysis of concepts, the context of their origin and their intended aims. It also provides models for idea transmission, identity construction and its influence on social

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15 Bachmann and Sidaway presented a critical enquiry into geopolitics of the European Union as a global power, Jurkynas examined shared identity of the Baltic states and Pace focused on the Mediterranean.
and international structures – all vital components of the projected research. Various actors can be examined as constructive parts of the system that are both accepting and creating systemic influences, thus potentially shaping international systems and relations. Most importantly, constructivism provides a viable basis for generalising of research results and for the possible formulation of these into transferable rules or models of behaviour for the actors involved.

The decision was taken to follow in large part Alexander Wendt’s methodology, though not all the constitutive parts of his theory can be employed. Given the fact that this research treats conceptions of Central Europe as attempts to create a new regional identity, Wendt’s focus on agents, identity, interests, environment and structure holds great promise for the projected research.

Wendt’s model revolves around identity, shaped by notions of self and the environment (the other), which becomes the basis for formulation of interests. (Wendt 1987: 336 – 338) Notions of self and the environment both shape and are shaped by interaction, which is characterised by inter-subjectivity and the ascribing of meaning to agent behaviour and environmental change. This understanding of international relations will be engaged with through analyses of the domestic and international situation related to concepts of Central Europe. Emphasis will be laid upon the environment where examined concepts originated, gathered support or failed to do so. It will be used to explain why were certain conceptions of Central Europe formulated, to identify what interests they served, and to try and ascertain why they either managed or failed to be translated into reality in the practice of international relations.

Certain other aspects of Wendt’s ideas will be applied in this research: his aforementioned explanation of agent-structure dynamics and collective identity formation theory (Wendt 1996). However, two of the main features of Wendt’s project seem much less likely to be useful for our purposes – his emphasis on the state-centric characteristics of the international structure and his reliance on analysis of international level agent-structure dynamics. Non-state actors,
such as émigré groups and exile politicians reportedly had a significant impact on the positions taken by allied governments through lobbying; therefore, both non-state actors and unit level processes need to be taken in regard. Therefore, this research prefers to adopt a holistic constructivist approach, employing Wendt's agent-structure model on both the specific unit (state) and international level. This approach is unusual, but not unprecedented. The importance of identity as a determinant of state behaviour within international structure has been analysed by Kuus - interestingly for us, in direct relation to the notion of Central Europe. (Kuus 2007)

There are three different ways in which a constructivist approach will be applied in this research.

- Firstly, an analysis will be provided of the influence that the international and domestic environment exerted in shaping identity and recognition of environmental legacy in which specific conceptions originated. International and domestic structures, their norms and rules, significant events, significant theoretical influences, behaviour and the deeds of domestic and international actors will be analysed in this regard.

- The second way is an application of constructivist theory on the studied concepts themselves. These will be examined for evidence of intersubjective interpretation of structure, agents' behaviour and the intended impact that the concepts were meant to exert upon the existing international structure. Here, techniques of applied linguistics and discourse analysis will be utilized.

- The third manner of application is the analysis of influences on the concepts of Central Europe, which will directly apply agent-structure model and draw conclusions on this basis. Perhaps, Gerard Toal’s reinterpretations of works of Halford Mackinder (Toal 1992), Karl Wittfogel, Isaiah Bowman and Ives Lacoste (Toal 1994) could be
approximated to the method intended here. The findings of the research (Chapter 7) challenge some conventional wisdom on influence of theories of Central Europe, especially on policy making in German and Austro-Hungarian empires.

2.2.3 Key notions defined

Research operates more prominently with some notions than others; their use therefore needs to be both explained and justified.

The most obvious notions under scrutiny here are Self and Other, as well as the derivate verb othering. Scholars in the stream of critical geopolitics often make extensive use of all three concepts (Kuus 2010, Toal and Agnew 1998, Dalby 1998), which originated in post-positivist philosophy. As Kuus (2010: 689) observed, classical geopolitics frequently engages in reduction of geographical complexities into simplistic territorial demarcation of inside/outside, friend/enemy binaries. Perhaps the most famous of these simplifications is the conflict of the land and the sea in the defining work of traditional geopolitics (or, to be more precise, geostrategy), Halford Mackinder’s pivot theory (1904). Such opposites then become a basis for the analysis and formulation of recommendations.

The fact that classical geopolitics engages in the formulation of such binaries makes the use of Self and Other important methodological tools for analysis of examined concepts. The concept of Self is defined as a sense of the author’s own defining features, the Other as their polar opposite. The concept of Self becomes a basis of referring to identity in this research: an individual’s sense of belonging to a nationally, regionally or otherwise determined group sharing the defining features of the Self. This research focuses on a particular regional identity – Central Europe, but in the analysis presented, it also operates within national identities (such as German, Czech etc.), where applicable.
Interests, then, are the desired goals determined on the basis of the given identity and perceived advantages the Self should achieve. Othering refers to gradual development of independent concept of Self and distancing from the group or territory that given actors previously considered themselves to be a part of.

The research also widely operates with notions of author, political actor, behaviour and international structure. By author, all individuals engaged in conceptualisations of Central Europe with at least one attributable written work on the topic are meant. Political actor refers to elected officials or civil servants with decision making powers. Behaviour refers to both recorded perceptions as well as physical acts. International structure is defined narrowly and refers to the system of sovereign states and their territorial extent.

Finally, the research is described as holistic on several occasions in this chapter. Such description essentially means that besides of unit level (state) influences – typical of Wendt’s analysis –, the research considers inputs and constraints of the international structure and its changes, as well as domestic sub-state events and actors.

### 2.3 Research hypothesis and questions

The research aims to re-examine some of the classical concepts of Central Europe from a critical perspective. The centrepiece of these considerations is the contention that the discourse itself surrounding geographical imaginaries of Central Europe as a German dominated territorial entity originating in the 1880 – 1918 period could have played a vital role in great power endorsement of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
2.3.1 Research hypothesis

Let us again state the working hypothesis of the projected research:

*Conceptualisations of regional identity are exercises in geopolitics, which through the definitive discourse of Self and Other exert influence upon the behaviour of political actors, thereby indirectly impacting upon international structure.*

The first part of the hypothesis stems from the critical viewpoint of definitions of space, which unveils the nature of any such articulations as purposeful conceptualisations mirroring the authors’ geopolitical allegiances and convictions. Initial research into concepts of Central Europe suggested that rather than being impartial descriptions of physical space, definitions of Central Europe typically spell out a set of unifying characteristics. These are then used to substantiate its separate identity from the surrounding world and ascribe it territory purportedly demonstrating these characteristics. Thus derived concepts then take on a character of the construction of a notion of the Self (Naumann 1916) or the Other (Mackinder 1919) within a particular geopolitical scheme. Here the hypothesis employs a position developed by discourse analysts, a novel feature for examination of Central Europe, and treats conceptions of Central Europe as linguistic propositions informed by the authors’ socially constructed identities and resultant interests. (Rorty 1999: xxvi)

The second part of the hypothesis also spells out the original contributions of the research, as it suggests that articulations of Central Europe have real impact on popular perceptions of regional identity and the conduct of political actors. It envisages the likely applicability of the process of definitive discourse developed within the framework of discourse analysis. (Bowker and Star 2000: 108) Through the process of definitive discourse the dominant interpretation of a given notion is derived from the interplay of multiple definitions competing for the support of relevant actors within the discourse. In the process of definitive discourse, relevant actors develop or adopt definitions of a notion
consonant with their identities and interests and promote them in order to further these interests. Depending on the specifics of the discourse (in this case mutual construction of the Self and the Other in international relations), some definitions become so strongly institutionalised that they count as the very meaning of the notion. Should a dominant interpretation of a notion arise, the nature of social interaction based on linguistic proposition then necessitates the actors to mould their behaviour to conform to it. Yet, this conformity can demonstrate itself various forms, even an opposition to the dominant interpretation or a challenge to the idea it expresses. In the context of the research, the hypothesis suggests that through the process of a definitive discourse in regards to Central Europe was dominated by Pan-German authors and gave rise to its interpretation as a plan for a German-dominated territorial entity consisting of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Conformity with this dominant interpretation took a form of endorsement among Pan-German circles. In contrast, among the representatives of small nations of Austria-Hungary it fuelled efforts for national emancipation.

The single most important part of the hypothesis lies in suggesting that the dominant interpretation of regional identity can actually have a real impact on international structure. Contrary to the popular assertion that the great power endorsement of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire was based on the idealist principle of self-determination of nations (Bradshaw 2008: 32), this hypothesis contends that the US and the British position on the issue might have been more significantly informed by the unwelcome prospect of a substantial German dominated territorial entity in the form of Central Europe than a genuine desire of political leaders for self-determination of small nations in the area.

Yet, the conclusions of the research highlight that Central Europe as an attempt at constructing regional identity struggled to make a real impact on the international structure. The final decision making in the US and Britain was informed more by emergent or perceived situations on the ground than
arguments for or against a German-led Central Europe. This supports the final conceptual claim of the thesis that ideational constructs have to be examined in their complex situational context and a cautious approach should generally be assumed when drawing links between concepts and practical politics.

2.3.2 Research questions

In order to test the hypothesis as presented, the research will focus on three main questions:

1. What are the characteristics of definitions of Central Europe originating in the period 1880 – 1920?

Under this question, the research will focus on what could be described as works in formal geopolitics. (Dalby and Toal 1998: 5) Besides establishing the necessary environmental context and the identity of the author in terms of his works and influence upon public opinion or political actors, the following sub-questions will be the main point of the analysis in regards of each considered definition of Central Europe:

1.1 What were the defining characteristics of the envisaged Central Europe?

1.2 What were the geopolitical imaginaries implicit in the presented definition?

1.3 What were the underlying philosophical and theoretical frameworks of the definition?

1.4 What was the utility of Central Europe within the geopolitical scenario presented by the particular author?

2. What were the main features and outcomes of the definitive discourse of Central Europe in period 1880 – 1920?
Moving more towards the realm of *popular* and *practical* geopolitics (Dalby and Toal 1998: 5), this question is tied to the second part of the hypothesis and can be further divided into following sub-questions:

2.1 What concepts of Central Europe most significantly influenced its definitive discourse in period of 1880 – 1920?

2.2 What was the mechanism by which individual concepts gained influence within the discourse?

2.3 What was their contribution or challenge to the dominant interpretation of Central Europe?

2.4 What changes in dominant interpretations of Central Europe can be observed as a result?

3. *What evidence exists that the dominant interpretation exerted influence upon the behaviour of relevant political actors in the period 1880 - 1920?*

Under this question, the archival evidence will be searched for evidence of influence of the dominant interpretation of Central Europe upon behaviour and actions of the relevant political actors – namely, the US, British, German and Austro-Hungarian governments and the political leaders of small nations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The sub-questions here would focus mainly on the following areas:

3.1 What evidence exists that a particular concept of Central Europe was adopted by any given political actor?

3.2 What evidence exists that a particular concept of Central Europe was actively promoted by any given political actor?

3.3 What evidence exists that dominant interpretation of Central Europe influenced an actor's behaviour, actions or policies?

4. *What evidence exists in regard to the indirect influence of any dominant interpretation of the notion of Central Europe upon the international structure?*
With these questions, the research will consider whether evidence exists that would support the claim that perceptions of Central Europe as a constructed regional identity exerted an impact upon decisions and actions taken by relevant political actors leading to the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

2.4 Selection: What period? Which concepts?

While the thesis explores variations of the notion of Central Europe across a significantly longer period of time, the core research focuses on the period of 1880 – 1920 since the need for an in-depth enquiry of this key formative period has remained essentially unfilled, certainly in the English language.

It does so for three main reasons. First of all, the period gave rise to the notion itself and witnessed the process of its original formulation. Second, previous research projects of the author have indicated that nascent notions of Central Europe held significant implications for the behaviour of several important actors in the international relations of the day\textsuperscript{16}. Finally, the period offers ample (and generally as-yet unexplored) sources that make conduct of the research viable, especially the provision of archival materials for notionalising Central Europe – something that is not available for more recent periods. The temporal focus of the decision was thus information oriented and concentrated on the period that the author deemed to be paradigmatic.

Even for this 40-year period, dealing with the sheer volume and variety in conceptions of Central Europe - more often than not emanating from German authors - has required extensive categorisation and a certain level of generalisation. It soon became obvious that only selected concepts could be analysed in a useful manner. Again, their selection is based upon the information-oriented method, as the author was searching for the period

\textsuperscript{16} Previously, as a masters student at Oxford University, this researcher investigated notions of Central Europe since their emergence in the 1880s in a more general sense.
formative for the notion of Central Europe. Similarly, the decision, as to which concepts to include in the research, was taken on the basis of their observed impact on the discourse in the phase of literature review and initial primary research. Only those concepts showing the greatest level of influence upon discourse will be examined in detail, with number of less influential ones referred in the text where appropriate.

2.5 Sources: types and locations

Given the historical character of the research, the project is necessarily based on upon analysis of secondary sources of data, which are essentially materials written or published by authors and group entities. (Clark ed. 1998: 8) This research will utilize various types of materials, such as:

- **Books** (e.g. original concepts Ratzel 1898, Naumann 1916, Mackinder 1904, assessments and analyses Werstadt 1920, Meyer 1946, Mattern 1942, etc.)
- **Journals** (*New Europe, Journal of Central European Affairs, Central European Observer*, etc.)
- **Media abstracts** (mostly daily and weekly press, e.g. *The Times, The New York Times, Neue Freie Presse*),
- **Online materials** (e.g. documents on the website of the Office of the Historian of the US Department of State, Google newspaper archive, electronic resources of the British Library, etc.),
- **Memos, minutes, internal reports** (e.g. Foreign Office, the Inquiry, the Belvedere Circle, etc.),
- **Letters, diaries and other personal documents.** (e.g. of Milan Hodža, Tomáš G. Masaryk, Halford Mackinder, etc.)
In general, the necessary data can be divided into four groups: concepts in the studies themselves; published sources; unpublished sources; and cartographic and other illustrative material.

2.5.1 Concepts

Anglo-Saxon concepts of Central Europe, originating in both Britain and the United States, have already been located in various collections of the British Library. Besides the works of British authors (e.g. Mackinder, Headley, Seton-Watson), the British Library also holds original issues of volumes presenting the concepts put forward by the members of the Inquiry, such as Edward House and Charles Seymour (House and Seymour 1921 and 1926), and other American authors (e.g. Cram 1918).

Significant research was necessary to collect and catalogue numerous theories of Central Europe originating from Germany in the period of 1880 – 1920. The data was collected primarily in the library of the Institut für Weltwirtschaft (Institute for the World Economy) at the University of Kiel, Germany, where a substantial collection of Central Europe concepts was concentrated during the 1930s.

Austrian Pan-German conceptions of Central Europe are also available in the Library of the Institute for the World Economy. Various nation-state conceptions originating from the former imperial Austria-Hungary were translated from national minority languages into English and are available in both the National Archives at Kew and the British Library at St. Pancras. Where applicable, original editions of Slovak or Czech writings available in the Štátna Vedecká Knižnica (National Scientific Library) in Bratislava, Slovakia, were examined.
2.5.2 Documents in the public domain

Published secondary sources (books, journals, reports, media abstracts and online sources) were used to examine the historical and theoretical background of the concepts discussed.

Reconnaissance research soon established that the British Library would provide the most important English language sources for secondary research. The holdings of the British Library include relevant volumes and articles on wide ranging issues of history, economics, culture and society (in and prior to the period of the core research) for the countries of origin of all of the authors discussed, as well as writings on international relations, system and relevant events (prior and during the period). These works are predominantly written in (or translated to) English, however, volumes in German and languages of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire are also available here (Riesser 1914, Kálal 1905, Nejedlý 1913, etc.). Also, the British Library Newspapers Colindale reading room holds various British, American, German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian (microfilm) newspapers contemporary to the period of research.

Even though the holdings of the British Library are more than sufficient to provide information on the background of British and American originated concepts, for the study of others, visits to additional libraries were necessary to examine materials in their original languages. These included the Institute for the World Economy in Kiel, Germany; and National Scientific Library in Bratislava, Slovakia. Online newspaper archives, such as Austrian ANNO service of the Austrian National Library (http://anno.onb.ac.at), which holds scanned copies of Austrian newspapers dating back to the 18th century, were also used in the research.

Few, if any, of these foreign language historical materials have been consulted in the English language literature on Central Europe. One of the unique features of this research is the return to original sources, so often referred to but rarely examined in their original version. Repeated misinterpretations of these
sources (e.g. Bruck 1849a, b, c; List 1844; etc.) have, indeed, been uncovered through the research and pointed out at appropriate places.

2.5.3 Archival sources

Another source of evidence for the influence and pervasiveness of the studied concepts upon the actors and structure of the international system are materials gathered in archival research. Published and unpublished sources, such as official correspondence, minutes and memos, personal log journals or documents of authors are used in analyzing concepts and their influence on foreign policy.

The National Archives in Kew hold rich collections of materials related to foreign policy decision-making in the UK and comprise the most obvious source for assessing the possible influence, reach and pervasiveness of conceptions of Central Europe at various points in time. These include the records of the Foreign Office (e.g. FO 371: General Correspondence 1906 – 1966) and the War Cabinet and Cabinet Office (e.g. CAB 24 War Cabinet and Cabinet: Memoranda). Collection and examination of sources held in Kew comprised a considerable share of all primary research work conducted as a part of this thesis. Especially the group FO 371 contains vastly under-researched breath and dept of material on policy-making in the British Empire, but also reports on events in other European countries and communication with foreign representatives. Moreover, at the time the research took place, holdings of FO 371 were not digitally catalogued. The research had to start with old-fashioned and painstaking leafing through paper catalogue cards and indexes to identify individual files to be examined. In total, thirteen subgroups of FO 371 files, three CAB 22 file groups, 73 digitalized documents from various groups and four volumes of the British Documents on Foreign Affairs provided the backbone of findings on British policy-making in regards of Central Europe in the core research period.
Yet, this work led to collection of key material for the research as well as better structuring of research of more geographically distant archives. Timeline of decisive events established in Kew allowed better temporal focus of research in US, German and Austrian archives, thus helping to cut down on research costs. Finally, besides the core research chapters, research conducted in the National Archives also provided rich material for Chapter 6, which focuses on later periods of the twentieth century, following up on themes raised in the core research chapters (see sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.5).

The National Archives of the United States contain ample document directories detailing Central European concerns during the First World War. They moved less than two decades ago from Washington DC to their current premises at College Park, Maryland (8601 Adelphi Rd, College Park, MD, United States). The holdings of Group 256: Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, include the record of the Inquiry Commission (organized by and operating under the immediate supervision of President Woodrow Wilson), especially those files in the ‘Special Reports and Studies, compiled 1917 – 1918’ series (ARC Identifier 635966 / MLR Number I9 4). These proved vital for analysis of the official US views of concepts of Central Europe, the reasoning behind the settlement that eventually transpired in the Central European area as well as the specific role played by representatives of the United States.

Sources located in the archive of the Auswärtiges Amt (German Foreign Office) and Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive) in Berlin were consulted to establish the level of influence of the examined concepts upon government policy both prior to and during the First World War. Prior to the actual visit to the archive, the British Library’s ‘Catalogue of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1867-1920’ was consulted for the purposes of preliminarily identifying likely materials of interest. The records of the Auswärtiges Amt have recently been re-catalogued, making use of its record much more user-friendly
than was the case previously. The initial research pinpointed the group of documents under shelf mark R 43/2254 *Mitteleuropäischer Wirtschaftsverein* (Central European Economic Union) 1903 – 1918 in *Auswärtiges Amt* records as the likely starting point of any research. Ultimately, significant volumes of material were researched in both archives, as detailed in the appendix.

The archival research of concepts and conceptions originating in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire was inevitably geographically disbursed.

The Austrian State Archive is a central archive, which contains materials of the former imperial offices, such as Federal Ministries and the supreme organs of state power. It also holds the records maintained by the former Habsburg monarchy (1526 - 1918). *Das Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* (The House, Court and State Archive) of the Habsburg Monarchy, which provides evidence of the activities of the highest court offices, the imperial cabinet, diplomatic and other official staff of the Danube Monarchy. The group of documents under shelf mark ‘AT-OeStA/HHStA KA Vorträge’ (Cabinet Office Meetings’ minutes) for the years 1880 – 1918 was the starting point of the research. Additional files were then identified based on dates and context of key cabinet decisions recorded in these minutes. These were located in the Staatsarchiv, as well as the *Allgemeines Verwaltungssarchiv*, another branch of the Austrian State Archive. Furthermore, the diaries and personal papers of key Central Europe enthusiasts, such as Joseph Maria Baernreither, were consulted for the added detail of the Austrian Central Europe movement that they provide.

Some documents of interest in various collections of *Národní Archiv České Republiky* (The National Archive of Czech Republic) in Prague were located during an early reconnaissance trip in 2009, followed by another trip in the later phases of the research (January 2012). These included the private papers collections of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (*Archiv Akademie věd České republiky* – Archive of the Czech Academy of Sciences – 1999 Inventory Registry no. 5019 –

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17 [http://startext.net-build.de:8080/barch/MidosaSEARCH/search.htm](http://startext.net-build.de:8080/barch/MidosaSEARCH/search.htm)
5022) and Milan Hodža (*Archiv Národního muzea* – National Museum Archive – 1983 Inventory Registry no. 84), and collections of influential emigre organisations, such as České národní sdružení v Americe (Czech National Association in America, collection held at Vojenský historický archiv – Military Historical Archive, 1993 Inventory Registry no. 296) or České národní sdružení – Anglie (The Bohemian (Czech) National Alliance in Great Brittain - London Branch 18, collection held at Military Historical Archive, 1992 Inventory Registry no. 272). Crucially for this research, documents of Československá národní rada v Paříži (Czechoslovak National Council in Paris), which would have become the provisional government of a nascent Czechoslovakia in 1918, were located at the 'Military Historical Archive 1992 Inventory Registry no. 410'. These sources helped to document the full story (previously untold in English) of the efforts of those Czechs and Slovaks, as well as other nationalities of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, that worked towards dismemberment of the empire and the establishment of new nation states upon its former territorial extent.

The Czech and Slovak collections will be complemented by data extracted from those documents from the UK and US archives that relate to the activities of national pressure groups from the former Austro-Hungary, since the essential issues here are obviously interrelated.

A list of archives visited and materials researched is attached as Appendix 33. The depth of the archival research undertaken here is one of the distinctive features of this research and forms the backbone of its original contribution in terms of examination of complexity of formulations of regional identity.

### 2.6 Data collection

In terms of data collection, the main concern was one of practicality and cost – especially in the case of the US and German archives.

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18 The name of the organization differs in Czech and English language. It was used in these forms by the organization itself.
Luckily, as with the example of the German archives, the possibility exists for undertaking initial research of the American archives via materials available in the UK. The sources of the State Department Historian’s Office and *Foreign Relations of the United States Series* are both available in the British Library or online (history.state.gov). This will help to narrow down areas where research of Maryland sites will be most necessary. Subsequently, the researcher used archive offered copy services and ordered copies of microfilms identified as containing key documents for the research. These microfilms were then consulted on the old-fashioned reader machines still thankfully retained at the British Library.

In all other repositories, the author collected data in person – a considerable challenge of time and resources but one that had to be met in order to do full justice to the subject and the related issues under investigation. The core research was carried out mainly between January 2011 and February 2012; some reconnaissance trips to archives and a visit to Institute for the World Economy in Kiel had earlier been conducted in 2008 and 2010.

### 2.7 Method of analysis

#### 2.7.1 Selected method: discourse analysis

Given the strides made in methodological approaches since the 1950s (so vast in its scope as to be almost unquantifiable), this research can employ cross-disciplinary methods. In recent years, discourse analysis has gained popularity as a methodology in constructivist social sciences as well as critical geopolitics especially in the study of the formation of geopolitical identities (Newman 2000). Gerard Toal demanded deeper theoretical engagement with discourse analysis to move critical geopolitics forward (Toal 2002).
Yet, a unified methodology for the conduct of discourse analysis is missing as yet and various authors use relatively loosely-defined approaches. In this research, discourse analysis is understood as method of analysis focused on “the link between text and context. For discourse analysis, texts are not containers of self-referential meaning, but the recorded traces of discourse activity, which can never be completely reduced to text” (Angermüller 2001: 8)

This research thus examines the texts defining Central Europe, their context of origin as well as their potential impact on the context in order to close the loop of the discourse analysis. The discourse is treated as a continually evolving process. Every closure of a definition of Central Europe is understood to be temporary and contingent in the specific condition at the time of its fixation (Müller 2010: 27, Shapiro 1992: 38). Conversely, individual articulations of the notion are considered to constantly reproduce, challenge and transform its surrounding discourse (Mattissek and Reuben 2004, Jorgensen and Phillips 2002).

Analysis of the assembled data for the original research here focuses on interpretation of Central Europe as conceptualized and represented. The research assumes – in line with emerging principles of discourse analysis – that the geopolitical concepts of Central Europe are utilitarian in nature. To provide well rounded analysis, several facts need to be taken into account here:

- The international, regional and national environment at the prevailing time of origin of the analyzed concept:

  Relevant actors, their interests and conduct in existing international context are taken into account to establish individual viewpoint for a particular concept. Appropriate secondary literature is used as a predominant source.

- The overall objectives of theory and the concept of Central Europe itself:
This core section of the analysis focuses on the use of notions, formulations and definitions; structure of the text, referencing methods, data and illustrative material used (or any relevant features) will be evaluated to assess objectives of individual concepts. It is envisaged that besides original writings themselves, the secondary literature will be consulted. Also, archival materials will clearly be of high value.

- Analysis of the influence of concepts upon the conduct of foreign policy and their impact on regional developments in Central Europe:

  This is based on archival research and analysis of the relevant documents of bodies concerned with the conduct of foreign policy. In addition, the secondary literature was also consulted.

Outlined model of analysis is also used in Chapter 6, which discusses the notion of Central Europe in subsequent periods of the twentieth century – or at least as far as is practically possible, given time and resource limitations.

### 2.7.2 Limitations of the elected approach

The limitations of discourse analysis stem from its own epistemological roots considering all knowledge constructed (Müller 2010: 19). Assertion that geographical truths are created through discourses that are partial, if not outright political has been at the very heart of critical geopolitics and its application of discourse analysis (Toal 1998: 3, Dodds and Sidaway 1994: 516) Since there is no claim to absolute truth, competing claims are possible in regards of the same discourse. This could be considered a serious limitation until we consider that a similar limitation must logically apply to other methods of inquiry as well. (Powers 2001: 64) For example, an excellent study of genetic origin of a certain disease in medical science can be followed by an equally compelling study providing solid evidence for its viral origin.
In addition, similarities and differences between concepts may cause confusion and there needs to be an explanation of concepts and justification for their use in each and every analysis. (Morgan 2010: 4) This research addresses this particular limitation by its very focus – the detailed analysis of individual concepts of Central Europe and their impact in the discourse. The concept of dominant definition of the discourse is used to pinpoint the meaning of the notion and its changes in the examined period.

Questions over possibility of generalization of findings of discourse analysis have also been raised by critics of the approach. However, given the wide variety of discourse analysis approaches ranging from narrow dialogue analysis to wide generalist inquiries, the limitations vary. This research remains modest in its envisaged generalization of conclusions. It merely suggests that the hypothesis could be applicable to other notions similar to Central Europe – articulations of regional identity.
Central Europe:
forging a concept in time and space

Germany

Chapter 3
Chapter 3: The German Central Europe

3.1 Introduction

In terms of the overall argument, this chapter documents how the notion of Central Europe arose as a conceptualisation of regional identity replacing the notion of Deutschtum in the aftermath of the foundation of the German Empire, which excluded much of the German population in the region. The complex definitive discourse and its many tribulations are explored from Central Europe's beginnings as a marginal pan-German notion in the 1880s to its evolution into a centre-point of public discussion (largely as a byword for a close alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary) during the First World War. However, the conclusions of the chapter observe only a minimal impact of Central Europe as a concept affecting the behaviour of policy makers, and thereby on international structure.

The beginning of the chapter examines the common narrative, that typically traces the concept of Central Europe back to early 19th century German authors, especially Friedrich List and Karl Ludwig von Bruck. It is suggested that both of these authors operated with the geographical confines of Germany rather than Central Europe.

Conversely, the writings of Constantin Frantz and Paul de Lagarde published in the 1870s and 1880s unveiled a direct link between earlier designs for Germany and later conceptions of Central Europe by Pan-German authors during the First World War. However, it is also observed that the link was far from straight forward.
At first, any vague definitions for Central Europe often included France or other non-German countries. Later on, the increasingly significant economic line of reasoning behind the union effectively gave birth to the idea of a ‘two-tier’ Central Europe – with its core of Austria-Hungary and Germany, and the wider area in which the core's economic influence would radiate in due course.

It was only with the First World War that there would be a final and formal identification of Central Europe with the union of Germany and Austria-Hungary, which would develop into an exaltation of the ambition of the German nation to become a common state. However, the chapter concludes that it was exactly this line of theorizing of Central Europe had least in common with what the German government was working towards – a wider continental customs union, where Austria-Hungary was to be only one of the countries included.

3.2 The narrative of German Central Europe

It is often claimed that the first conceptions of Central Europe reach as far back as the early 19th century. Friedrich List (1789 – 1846) is often presented as the first proponent of Central Europe, with his efforts followed up by the endeavours of Karl Ludwig von Bruck (1798 – 1860) and Felix Prinz zu Schwarzenberg (1800 – 1852) at the constitutional assembly in Frankfurt during 1848 – 49. Popular orthodoxy holds that this progression culminated with the late 19th century writings of Constantin Franz (Müller 2001: 14).

Such assertions are typically found in works conceptualising Central Europe during the First World War, linking the notion and its rise explicitly with the struggle of German nation-building (Brechtelfeld 1996: 12). Efforts to create a common German political or economic area are presented as precursors to the rise of Mitteleuropa concepts at the turn of the century and the invisible extended hand of Bismarck behind these plans often hinted at (Bascom 1994, Mommsen 1995).
Yet, other analysts of the concept point out that the German (and, indeed Austrian) intellectual environment was not the sole proprietor of the notion in the 19th century – the 1879 article by Gillaume de Molinari, a French economist, presented a well rounded proposal of an economic union of France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Austria-Hungary and Switzerland (de Molinari 1879). Thus, the link between the advocates of the great-German solution of 1848 and the early 20th century notion of Central Europe is not necessarily as obvious or direct as often presented.

The roots of the frequent repetition of this somewhat misleading representation are twofold.

First, there was an equation of Central Europe (in its ‘Mitteleuropa’ permutation) with plans for a German-Austro-Hungarian customs union during the First World War. Analysts looking into First World War concepts of Central Europe tended to focus on works that used the notion in this particular sense. Eventually a tautology developed that lead to the equation of all plans for political economic union in the area with the concept of Central Europe.

Second, many First World War authors expended considerable effort in establishing their credentials by linking their own proposals to earlier works of respected authors and historical political leaders (e.g. Gaertner 1911: 11 – 12). The uncritical re-reading and repetition of these links contributed to the reverse equation of all plans for political economic union in the area being associated with the concept of Central Europe.\(^\text{19}\)

Thus, while the early 20th century authors presented themselves as following in steps of List and Bruck, the later observers often adopted this narrative in their analysis. Yet, the fact that the German concepts of Central Europe became so strongly associated with the German nation building in the 19th century warrants an inquiry into how this all happened.

\(^\text{19}\) This narrative can be traced back to inter-war period German analysts (Heller 1933), but has been repeated in following periods in publications of widely varied authors and organizations (English Goethe Society 1967), and can often be found in contemporary publications, too. (Cook and Stevenson 2005: 349)
3.3 ‘The German Question’

The year 1806 brought a formal end to the Holy Roman Empire, giving rise to the emergence of a “German Question” (Geiss 1997: 16) that would persist for decades to come: what kind of replacement political organization were the Germans to put in its place? The immediate reaction of many was to articulate the ambition to unite all territories in which “…the German language is heard”. (Arndt 1813) Yet, the task of bringing together a myriad assembly of German states of varying sizes and composition was no simple one and a youthful nationalism was rivalled and resisted by age-old dynastic ambitions and traditional allegiances, just as much as it was beset by practical difficulties.

The Mediatization of 1803 brought consolidation of over 300 states of the Holy Roman Empire; however, significant fragmentation remained, both politically and economically. Friedrich Seidel estimated that there had been more than 1800 customs barriers in existence within the German speaking areas of the Holy Roman Empire in 1800, almost 70 of them within Prussia alone (Seidel 1971). Napoleon’s satellite creation, the Confederation of the Rhein (1806 – 1813), comprising 39 consolidated German states proved to be short-lived and an inadequate basis for political and economic unification. After its fall, autochthonous efforts in this direction started to gather strength.

Establishment of the German Confederation at the Congress of Vienna on 8 June 1815 opened a new chapter in the history of the German nation, one that was dominated by a power-struggle between its two dominant forces, Austria and Prussia. Significantly, both had vast territorial possessions that extended beyond the area of the confederation. Moreover, many small and middle-sized German states feared the dominance of either power. With meaningfully closer convergence hampered by these rivalries, the confederation remained loose structurally, even though it was institutionalised with a Federal Assembly.

20 to use its official term, The Principal Conclusion of the Extraordinary Imperial Delegation
A search for economic consolidation started with the 1818 Prussian drive for abolition of internal customs barriers and the development of a common customs area that embraced the other Hohenzollern territorial possessions. This initiative would eventually become a cornerstone of the *Zollverein*, the German Customs Union, which by 1835 encompassed a majority of the states of the German Confederation. A gradual removal of customs barriers was associated with accelerated economic progress, especially for the previously overwhelmingly agrarian Prussia – so it won many advocates, with the foremost of them being Friedrich List.

### 3.3.1 Friedrich List

As has already been mentioned, List is often regarded as the forerunner in conceptualising Central Europe. For example, Gerard Delanty claimed that "the idea of Central Europe was popularised in 1914 by Friedrich List for whom it also included the Low Countries". (Delanty 1995: 103) Besides the obvious temporal mistake (List died in 1846), such an assertion also misrepresents the contents, tenor and aim of List's work. When suggesting that List was one of the first to theorise Central Europe, Delanty and other authors typically refer to his seminal work, *Das Nationale System der Politischen Ökonomie*, (*The National System of Political National Economy*, 1844). Yet, this particular work is more concerned with suggesting a continental economic system pitched against the trade supremacy of the British Empire, rather than a proposal for instituting any form of a Central European union. (List 1844: 558) List acknowledged the likely futility of attempting to introduce a continental economic system in

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21 Much earlier, in 1819, Baden put forward a proposal for creation of a customs union organized through the confederation, however, it failed to secure support of the Frankfurt based Federal Assembly.

22 Perhaps the 1916 book by Heinrich Theodor List, *Deutschland und Mittel-Europa: Grundzüge und Lehren unserer Politik seit der Errichtung des Deutschen Reiches*, is responsible for this confusion.

23 A recent edition of its English translation was published in 2005 by Cosimo publishing house, see List 2005 in the Bibliography.
Europe at such a point in time – even if Europe’s big 5 were getting on at the time, instead suggesting that:

“Würde dagegen Deutschland mit den dazu gehörigen Seegestaden, mit Holland, Belgien und der Schweiz sich als kräftige commercielle und politische Einheit constituiren... so könne Deutschland dem europäischen Continent den Frieden für lange Zeit verbürgen und zugleich den Mittelpunkt einer dauernden Continentalallianz bilden.” (List 1844: 559)

While this sentence foreshadows precepts of later Central Europe conceptions, List proposed no constructs under any such banner. Instead, he suggested that the aforenamed territories be incorporated within a German Customs Union. List used the adjective of Central European (‘mitteleuropäische-’) only very occasionally and, even then, in a pronouncedly vague geographical sense. It should not be forgotten that the focal point of List’s lifelong project was the German Customs Union and his enthusiasm for the realisation of a genuinely national German economy. Thus describing List as the author or advocate of a defining Central European concept is misleading – for he operated within notion of Germany (as ‘Deutschland’) and was an advocate of expansion of the Customs Union (as ‘Zollverein’).

It should be acknowledged that List’s works featured some of the cornerstones of later conceptions of Central Europe: description of Britain as a ‘sea-power’ (‘Seemacht’), a preoccupation with rivalling Britain’s global economic dominance, suggestions for the expansion of German influence towards the Middle East, and an overall firm belief in the superiority of the German nation. (List 1844: 573) He also suggested that more German settlers should be sent into areas adjoining the Lower Danube to better guarantee that country’s access to the Black Sea and Asia Minor (List and Häuser 1850: vol. V, p. 547).

24 - If, on the other hand, Germany could constitute itself with the maritime territories which appertain to it, with Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland, as a powerful commercial and political whole... then Germany could secure peace for the continent of Europe for a long time, and at the same time constitute herself as the central point of a durable Continental alliance.
The latter idea was consonant with the historical practice of German settlers across the region; however, by the mid-19th century, it was clashing with growing Hungarian nationalism. So List suggested a compromise view, in which Hungarians were portrayed as a constitutional nation of his proposed construct, gradually intermixing with Germans (List and Häuser 1850: vol. III, pp. 474 – 480).

Given such hallmarks, it should come as no surprise that German theorists of Central Europe at the turn of the century quoted List as their intellectual inspiration. However, for any careful analyst it merely signalled that these underlying ideas and concepts were present in theorising the political and economic construct of Germany well before the word ‘Mitteleuropa’ entered into daily parlance. Contrary to all later propositions for a Central European construct, List -towards the end of his life, would suggest a strategic union of interests between Germany and the British Empire, directed pragmatically against the threat posed by any purported French-Russian alliance. (List and Häuser 1850: 267 - 296)

3.3.2 The 1848-9 Revolution and the Frankfurt Assembly

The tumultuous 1848-9 revolutionary wave brought a development that redefined the concept of Germany – the Frankfurt National Assembly. The intention was to lay a cornerstone for a future German nation-state - however, the rivalry of Prussia and Austria split the assembly. The main point of contention became the question whether Austria should be a part of any new union (‘grossdeutsch’ solution) or not (‘kleindeutsch’ solution). Even Austrian deputies themselves were divided on this question with some preferring inclusion of Austria, some against it and some abstaining from this debate completely (Katzenstein 1976).

25 ‘Frankfurter Nationalversammlung’, 18 May 1848 – 31 May 1849
While initially, *grossdeutsch* sentiment at Frankfurt was strong, with even Bohemian representatives receiving an invitation on the basis that Bohemian crown lands had been included within the former Holy Roman Empire; eventually, final settlement favoured the *kleindeutsch* solution. Despite having the Habsburg Empire onboard, as embodied in the Bruck-Schwartzenberg plan, the *kleindeutsch* camp at the Assembly eventually prevailed with the pragmatic realization that including Austrian-Germans within any unified national state was so difficult that it would postpone unification indefinitely.

Sure, some compromise ideas had emerged at the Assembly, with Heinrich von Gagern’s suggestion for a ‘narrower and broader confederation’ (Wigard 1848 – 50: 2894 -96) and Julius Fröbel’s vision for a greater European confederation (Fröbel 1848)). Eventually, however, deliberations at the Frankfurt assembly eventually led to the decision to unify Germany without Austria, as embodied in the draft constitution of March 1849.

The Frankfurt Assembly is often held up as a failed attempt to realise ‘Mitteleuropa’. (Perraudin and Zimmerer 2011 14, Konstantinović 1999: 367, Hayes 1994: 35) However, this argument is flawed - the stenographic record of 12 months-long assembly deliberations barely contains the word ‘Mitteleuropa’ or its derivatives. (Wigard 1848 – 1850) The Frankfurt Assembly was, indeed, called to resolve the question of Germany, not Central Europe.

### 3.3.3 Bruck and the shifting identity of Austria

Karl Ludwig von Bruck was a trade minister (1848 – 1851) in the government of Felix Schwarzenberg (1848 – 1852) during the crucial period of the Frankfurt Constitutional Assembly. In many Central Europe concepts and their subsequent analyses, Bruck is presented as the ultimate forerunner of concepts of Central Europe (Krejčí 2005, Berchtfeld 1996: 16, Stirk 1994: 7, Henderson 1939: 202); however, closer inspection reveals that such accounts typically rely
on the works of early 20\textsuperscript{th} century German and Austrian authors, who put forward this representation – especially Richard Charmatz in his biography of Bruck (Charmatz 1916).

Interestingly, re-reading Bruck’s original works\textsuperscript{26} suggests that more than creating a concept of Central Europe, Bruck was presenting essentially practical considerations en route to a customs union between Austria and what he referred to as Germany\textsuperscript{27}. In his most significant expose on the topic (Bruck 1849a), Bruck uses the notion of Central Europe only once – as a reference to the geographical position of Austria within the region that his proposed customs union would become operative\textsuperscript{28}; meanwhile, there are 12 different references to a “trade” or “customs union of Austria and Germany”. This fact is often overlooked in works analyzing his contributions, including Meyer’s notorious \textit{Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action} (Meyer 1955: 16 – 17), as the authors tend to zoom in that particular sentence employing the word ‘Mitteleuropa’ (e.g. Brechtefeld 1996: 18).

Bruck’s characterisation of the proposed customs union as German-Austrian\textsuperscript{29} suggests the increasing othering of Austria from members of the German Customs Union (‘Zollverein’). The binary expression German-Austrian gives away a subtle shift in identity of the Austrian Germans. While List simply referred to a German Customs Union and suggested its gradual extension, Bruck felt it necessary to phrase his plan as a proposal for a union of two equal and

\textsuperscript{26} Bruck published 4 memorandums contemplating reorganisation of economic life in the region, see Bruck 1849a, 1849b, 1849c, 1850 and one in his political testament written in 1859, shortly before his death (Bruck 1860)

\textsuperscript{27} ‘Zollvereinigung von Oesterreich und Deutschland’

\textsuperscript{28} ‘Durch das handelspolitische Zusammenfassen Mittel-Europa’s wird Oesterreich vermöge seinen zentralen Lage zum Westen und Osten, zum Süden und Norden und der freien Entwicklung seiner Natur- und Geisteskraften, nothwendig der Mittel- und Schwerpunct des grossten Weltverkehres, und die weiteren Folgen davon für die politische Gestaltung find unschwer zu übersehen.’ – Through the trade-political unification of Central Europe will Austria capitalize on its central position to the west and the east, to the south and the north, and will find it easy to see the free development of its natural and spiritual forces, the crucial central and focal point of the largest world transport, and other consequences for the political arrangement would be easily overlooked. - (Bruck 1849a: 1)

\textsuperscript{29} ‘Oesterreichisch-Deutsche Zoll- und Handelseinigung’ (Bruck 1849a: 1)
separate entities – ‘Germany’ and ‘Austria’.30 It suggests the unspoken recognition that by 1848, Austria was growing increasingly detached from the gradually consolidating group of German states to its north-west. In Bruck’s view, the German States31 as a group were different from Austria, and the Germans and Austrians were two separate peoples32. The notion of a Germany expressed as ‘Deutschland’ did not seem to cover Austria anymore. Austria was now a separate entity, an equal partner for the new Germany in the proposed union.

Bruck’s second memorandum dealt squarely with ‘Zolleinigung mit Deutschland’ (Bruck 1849b: 2) and contained no references to Central Europe. Similarly, a third memorandum actually used the expression ‘Anschluss Österreichs’, rather than ‘Mitteleuropa’ (Bruck 1849c: 164 and 166). The fourth and longest memorandum, spreading over 28 pages, twice mentioned ‘mitteleuropäischer Kontinent’ contextually, as a reference for the geographical location of Austria within the projected area of the economic union (Bruck 1850: 188 and 204), otherwise operating with the notion of ‘Zolleinigung’, in referring to his proposal. Finally, in his political testament, Bruck used the actual expression ‘Mitteleuropa’ only once, in very similar fashion to his other works33, otherwise reverting once again to ‘Einigung mit Deutschland’. (Bruck 1860: 250)

To sum up, in all of Bruck’s five works collectively the expression ‘Mitteleuropa’ is employed only four times – and in all four instances, this is a vague reference

30 ‘Deutschland und Oesterreich werden unermesslich wachsen auf Wohlfahrt und Kraft.’ (Bruck 1849a: 2)  
31 ‘…die freie Durchfuhr durch die Deutschen Staaten and Oesterreich und umgekehrt.’ (Bruck 1849a: 2)  
32 ‘Die Tarifreform wird hier mit eben so viel Umsicht und Energie, als mit grossartiger Auffassung der Lage und Bedürfnisse der Oesterreichischen und Deutschen Völker betrieben.’ – The tariff reform will be conducted here with as much care and energy, as with a greater view of the situation and needs of the Austrian and German peoples. - (Bruck 1849a: 1)  
33 ‘Österreich bildet in Mitteleuropa die grosse Wasserscheide zwischen der atlantischen und der pontisch-mitteländischen Abdachung und deren beiderseitigen Flusssystemen…’ – Austria builds in Central Europe the great watershed between Atlantic and Pontic-Mediterranean slopes and their respective river systems. – (Bruck 1860, pp. 263 – 264)
to the naturally central position of Austria in the economic life of the continent. While this may suggest use of the vague geographical notion of Central Europe in mid-nineteenth century parlance, Bruck was simply proposing a customs (and later a more comprehensive) union between Germany and Austria, rather than presenting a theory of Central Europe.

At the Frankfurt Assembly, Bruck served as vice-chairman of its economic committee and argued forcefully for moves towards a customs union that included the Habsburg Empire (Stirk 1995: 7). In November 1848 he also became Austrian Minister of Commerce, which, in addition to his business interests – centring on a Trieste-based shipping firm – surely drove and explained his efforts in Frankfurt. His essential proposal focused on protection of an internal market for the Customs Union through the adoption of protective tariffs, while the simultaneous development of Trieste harbour would help to channel and increase trade with the Middle East. He hoped, too, for a Mediterranean port within the territory of the empire to catch British trade stopping off en route to India as well. Austrian Prime Minister Schwarzenberg supported Bruck’s proposal, yet with somewhat different underlying motivations. His interest lay in creation of a larger union, where Austria could balance the influence of Prussia, thereby keeping its power in check.

For the Prussian side, as represented by Rudolf von Delbrück, was fundamentally opposed to any such ideas. At stake was the dominant standing of Prussia among the German states. As was apparent from Bruck’s separate nomination of Germany and Austria, Prussia had managed to centre the German unification process on itself and exclude Austria in the process. Bruck’s proposal would bring Austria back into the union, counter-weighting Prussian influence. Moreover, Austria was also assigned with the key commercial role with development its priority.
Eventually, Bruck’s Frankfurt Assembly proposal was defeated alongside other parallel attempts to create a German customs union with Austria. Later efforts lacked any kind of audience as Austria was excluded from a territorially-consolidating Germany.

### 3.4 From Germany to Central Europe

The definitive split between Austria and the remainder of the German states was sealed by the Austro-Prussian war of 1866 and Bismarck’s pursuit of Prussian dynastic rather than national interests. (Stirk 1994: 6) More importantly, the defeat in this war forced Austria into its compromise with the Magyar aristocracy, the essential basis of their Compromise of 1867. This finally put to rest any remaining self-portrayals of the Habsburg Empire as an integral part of Germany.

Following the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles in 1871, only 5 years after the Battle of Sadowa, a definite answer had been provided to the German Question that had loomed for more than half a century. Germany now encompassed those German states that had been subsumed under the imperial power of the Hohenzollners.

And it is perhaps from this point that the real Central Europe debate emerges. Interestingly, it takes on a different dimension in each empire, so necessitating their separate discussion. Here, we will focus on the development of the notion within the German Empire, leaving exploration of Austro-Hungarian concepts to Chapter 4.

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34 Mostly as a result of Austria’s own reluctance to accept proposals put forward and disregard for the assembly itself (e.g. execution of the assembly member Robert Blum, despite the granted immunity). The last nail in the coffin of grossdeutsch plans was Schwarzenberg’s speech at the All-Austrian Assembly at Kremsier on 27 November, in which he declared his determination to build a truly unified Habsburg monarchy. This act convinced many members of the Frankfurt Assembly that Austria had no intentions to concede to a larger union with German states.

35 Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 established Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, by re-establishing Hungarian sovereignty. The two parts of the country had two separate parliaments and prime ministers, and were unified in the person of the monarch. They also had three common ministries – foreign affairs, defence and finance.
3.4.1 Constantin Frantz – from Germany to Central Europe

The works of Constantin Frantz (1817 – 1891) span a period that witnessed crystallisation of the German territories of the former Holy Roman Empire into a coherent German Empire with a separate Austria (Austria-Hungary). His writings show a clear shift from detailing the concept of Germany to that of elaborating a Central Europe as a political unit in the space lying between France and Russia - making Frantz’s writings a (or the) genuine fore-runner of Central Europe conceptions made during the First World War.

The sheer volume of Frantz’s work makes interpretation complex. A majority of later authors analyzing his writing typically isolate and discuss one or two of his concepts, i.e., those which fit into the context of their analyses (e.g. Brechtelfeld 1996, or Meyer 1955). Another layer complicating the interpretation of Frantz’s concepts is added by the early 20th century German advocates of Central Europe and a greater Germany, who purposefully chose to reprint particular works to showcase those of Frantz’s proposals that fitted the then contemporary discussion (e.g. Eugen Stamm’s edited collection of Frantz’s essays entitled Das Grössere Deutschland, 1935). Given the fact that Frantz’s influence in his own life-time was limited and therefore that surviving originals of his works are relatively rare, it is these reprints that are typically quoted in the later literature. For example, Meyer (1955: 26 – 27) chose to quote Stamm’s Konstantin Frantz’ Schriften und Leben (1907) and Heinrich von Srbik’s Deutsche Einheit (1933), rather than the original works. The result is a misrepresentative singular focus on one particular federative conception of Central Europe developed by Frantz in the early 1880s and reprinted by the said authors.

3.4.1.1 The revolutionary period and beyond

Yet it should not be forgotten that between 1841 and 1891, Frantz published 78 books. In the 1841 – 1848 period alone, Frantz’s writings span a variety of
topics ranging from philosophy (Frantz 1844) to financial systems (Frantz 1848a). After opening of the Frankfurt Assembly, where Frantz presented his proposal for a loose federation including Austria (Frantz 1848b), his works concentrate almost exclusively on politics. Frantz continued advocating inclusion of Austria, regularly publishing works renewing his call for federation of German states (Frantz 1851, 1858a, 1858b, 1861, 1865).

These works mirrored the European power context of the period where “Prussia unaided could not keep the Rhine or Vistula for a month from her ambitious neighbours” (Meyer 1955: 27). Frantz was preoccupied with the threat from France. The very starting point of his considerations was an insistence that the very purpose of German confederation was to protect its western borders. The most elaborate presentation of his post-Frankfurt ideas is his 1861 treatise, *Drei und Dreißig Sätze vom Deutschen Bund*. In his view, the German confederation was failing on this task because of insufficient political integration, which was the result of outside imposition (post-Napoleonic wars Congress of Vienna 1815) and not an expression of the political ambitions of the German nation. The only means to ensure its safety was for the German confederation to become a real power within a European context through the inclusion of both Prussia and Austria. (Frantz 1861: 22 and 126) Yet, history, politics and cultural differences would preclude Germany from becoming a successful unitary state. Frantz therefore suggested a federative structure that would make the best of the complementary strengths of individual German states. While Frantz observed that such a union would provide necessary protection from both France and Russia (Bruck 1861: 28), his primary concern remained France. He suggested inclusion of Netherlands, Belgium and

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36 ‘Sicherung der deutschen Westgrenze ist der vornehmste Zweck des deutschen Bundes.’ – Securing the German western border is the chief purpose of the German Confederation. - (Frantz 1861: 43)
37 ‘…der deutsche Bund und die deutsche Nation zwei sehr verschiedene Dinge sind. … Der deutsche Bund ist nicht aus der deutschen Nation entsprungen, sondern von den europäischen Mächten gemacht worden, man kann sagen, in Paris…’ – German Confederation and German nation are two very different things. German Confederation did not spring from the German nation, but it was made by the European powers – one could say – in Paris. - (Frantz 1861: 9)
38 “Foederalismus ist eben so positive als aktiv, und synthetisch im höchsten Grade”. – Federalism is as positive as it is active, and synthetic to the highest degree. - (Frantz 1861: 126)
Switzerland within the proposed federation was essentially in order to keep France in check as fully as possible\(^39\).

In this work, Frantz dealt with reorganisation of the German Confederation, rather than any concept of Central Europe. He occasionally did use the expression as a general reference to the area lying between France and Russia, but the centre-point of his theorisation was still the German Confederation. His purpose was to design a political unit which could provide safeguards against potential French or Russian adventurism. Yet, as the notion of Germany gradually solidified as a short-hand for German Empire, a new expression needed to be found to describe Frantz's desired political unit.

### 3.4.1.2 Central Europe enters the scene

In the post-1871 period, Frantz's writings turned to criticism of Bismarck's policy (Frantz 1871, 1873, 1874a, 1874b, 1875). He highlighted exactly the same failings that he had observed previously with the German Confederation, dismissing the German Empire, built on its *kleindeutsch* premise, as a mere continuation of the same old mistake.  

In a 1879 work with its unwieldy title - *Der Föderalismus als das leitende Prinzip für die soziale, staatliche und internationale Organisation, unter besonderer Bezugsnahme auf Deutschland, kritisch nachgewiesen und konstruktiv dargestellt*\(^40\) - Frantz reiterated the need for any federation to include both Prussia and Austria. An overarching concern with the French threat remained a feature of his reasoning (Frantz 1879: 133). While Frantz continued here to

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39 "Dazu liegen grade diese Staaten in der Linie, von welcher die Gefahr kommt, und helfen gerade diejenige Seite Deutschlands decken, wo wir selbst am schwächsten sind. Gleich passend und wichtig ist es für den deutschen Bund sich mit diesen Staaten zu vereinigen, als es umgekehrt für diese Staaten selbst passend und wichtig ist, sich mit dem deutschen Bunde zu vereinigen." – These are precisely the states in line, from which comes the danger, and they would help to shelter that side of Germany, where we are the weakest. It is equally appropriate and important for the German Confederation to unite with these states, as it is, conversely, appropriate and important for these states to unite with the German Confederation. - (Frantz 1861: 128)

40 - Federalism as a guiding principle of social, governmental and international organization, with particular reference to Germany; critically examined and constructively demonstrated. -
refer to Prussia and Austria, rather than the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, this book introduced the notion of political union under the term, ‘Mitteleupäischer Bund’\textsuperscript{41}, an economic and cultural union of three politically federated and geographically separate regions: Prussia (with Russian Poland and the Baltics); Austria (governing Hungary and the Balkans) and the remainder of the German states. Besides these three core constitutive parts, the union was to be widened to potentially include countries he had earlier considered might form part of a German Confederation (Frantz 1861) – Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland, together thereby comprising the Central European Union (Frantz 1879: 140). The purpose of the union was to enable the rise of a united power in the space between Russia and France (see the then contemporary map in Appendix 34).

In this work Frantz also presented his vision of a future world consisting of large political units such as Russia, the British Empire or the United States. The need for wider union in Europe was substantiated on the grounds of necessary integration to face down the challenges posed by these super-powers in the future. In terms of trade, greater economic areas were to dominate the world. These lines of reasoning were to be picked up by subsequent Central Europe theories.

Interestingly, the work also shows (as compared to his previous pieces) an increased dose of Christian universalism. This is used to substantiate the newly introduced culturalising role of Germans in their sphere of influence. The language is not dissimilar to the later organic theory of state: for example, the proposed federation was said to be ‘vigorous’ and the old empire ‘reborn’.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41} Chapter entitled ‘Erweiterung des deutschen Bundes zum Mitteleuropäischen Bund’ – Broadening of German Union into a Central European Union – (Frantz 1879: 130 – 153)

\textsuperscript{42} ‘Eine lebenskräftige Föderation… würde erst die wahre Wiedergeburt des ehemaligen Reiches sein.’ – A vigorous federation would be the true reincarnation of the former Empire – (Frantz 1879: 129)
If any particular work could be described as the forerunner of First World War conceptions it was this one, shifting smoothly from conceptualising Germany to theorizing Central Europe.

3.4.1.3 Die Weltpolitik

The final shift in Frantz’s theorizing of the space between Russia and France became obvious with his 1882 three volume work, *Die Weltpolitik*. Besides the further strengthening of organic references to nature, blood and even flesh (Frantz 1882: 37), this introduced another familiar feature of early classical geopolitics – the dichotomy between land- and sea-based power, essentially represented by Germany and the British Empire (Frantz 1882: 142). Importantly, this was Frantz’s only work to display a global reach rather than a regional focus, here theorizing the space between Russia and France from the grand perspective of world politics.

Its second volume – *Deutschland und Mitteleuropa* – highlighted the ‘universal meaning’ of Germany in a regional cultural history mediated by the Holy Roman Empire (Frantz 1882: 134 – 136). The federation remains unchanged in its geographical scope (see Frantz 1879); however, there are new explanatory contextual features. Germany has now assumed the historical mission to unify the region43. Meanwhile, the previous concern over France is somewhat muted amidst recognition of the perceived need to create a regional federation that might counter the global powers of Russia, Britain and the USA.

In fact, Frantz had even considered inclusion of France within his proposed structure. It was ultimately dropped in recognition of its own historical importance – with Frantz considering that France could not accept any lesser standing than centrality in any new union - yet this role had already been reserved for a Germany expressly defined as the ‘land of the middle’ (Frantz

43 ‘Ist Deutschland in Europa das Land der Mitte, so ist es auch wie dazu prädestiniert, andere Nationen zu einer Vereinigung heranzuziehen.’ - If Germany is the land of the middle in Europe, it is also predestined to bring other nations to unification. – (Frantz 1882: 161)
1882: 161 – 162), around which other nationalities would be united, so that the
‘natural order of things’ might be realised (Frantz 1882: 163). The necessity of
German protection for Hungary, the Southern and Western Slavs is re-
emphasised with the invocation of the Russian and Ottoman threats.

More than anything, this last in a long line of major works of Constantin Frantz
strongly resembles the works of Central Europe authors during the First World
War. With the publication of Die Weltpolitik, Central Europe inadvertently
entered the stage as a replacement notion for Germany, but one which notably
did not succeed in encompassing the whole of the German nation. Frantz’s
Central Europe was an expression of unfulfilled national ambition, mixed with a
touch of cultural messianism and nationalist grandeur – all of these
characteristics would underpin the many concepts of Central Europe that
would follow.

Despite the towering volume of Frantz’s works, their impact during his life-time
remained limited. His career in the civil and diplomatic services was cut short
by his outspoken opposition to official policy lines in 1860s and 1870s and his
reach was generally limited to journals and newspapers (Brechterfeld 1996: 28
– 29). His works were really only rediscovered when reprinted by advocates of
Central Europe in the early 20th century.

3.4.2 Paul de Lagarde – the nationalist parallel

A similar evolution to Frantz can be seen in the works of Paul de Lagarde. A
biblical scholar and an orientalist by education, Lagarde presented his designs
for the region in a collection of short works Deutsche Schriften. A first volume
was published in 1878 and a second three years later (Lagarde 1878, 1881),
before both would be revised and amended in 1892. The first proposed the
creation of a Greater German Empire including a lost and floundering Austria,
whose *raison d’etre* Lagarde reckoned could only be rekindled by becoming a colony of Germany\(^{44}\) (Lagarde 1878: 84). While the term Central Europe (in form of ‘Mitteleuropa’) itself was not used, Germany is described as Central European. ‘Central European’ referred to that familiar old designation of space between France and Russia, with each characterised as posing a threat to peace in Europe:

“den frieden in Europa ohne dauernde belästigung seiner angehörigen zu erzwingen, ist nur ein Deutschland im stande, das von der Ems- zur Donaumündung, von Memel bis Triest, von Metz bis etwa zum Bug erreicht, weil nur ein solches Deutschland sich ernähren, nur ein solches mit seiner stehenden Heere sowohl Frankreich als Russland... niederschlagen kann. Weil nun alle Welt Frieden will, darum muss alle Welt dieses Deutschland wollen, und das jetzige deutsche Reich als das ansehen, was es ist, als eine étappe auf dem Wege zu Vollkommenerem, eine étappe, welche zu dem endgültigen mitteleuropäischen Staate sich so verhalten, wie sich der einst bestandene norddeutsche Bund zum jetzigen deutschen Reiche verhalten hat.”\(^{45}\) (Lagarde 1878: 87)

\(^{44}\) ‘Oesterreich hat längst kein existenzprinzip mehr: man weiss nicht, warum es da ist. Es gibt keine andere aufgabe für Oesterreich als die, der coloniestaat Deutschlands zu werden. Die völker in dem weiten Reiche sind mit ausnahme der Deutschen und der südSlaven alle miteinander politisch wertlos: sind nur material für germanische neubildungen.’ – Austria does not have a reason for existence anymore: one does not know, why it is there. There is no other purpose for Austria besides of being a colony for Germany. Peoples in the wider Empire are with the exception of Germans and South-Slavs altogether politically worthless; they are only a material for Germanic renewal. - (Lagarde 1878: 84)

\(^{45}\) - Only a Germany, which stretches from Ems to Danube’s mouth, from Memel to Terst, from Metz to approximately Bug; is in position to ensure peace in Europe without constant harassment of its nationals; because only such a Germany consummates itself, and only such a Germany with a standing army can beat both France and Russia, with their armies. Because now the whole world wants peace, therefore, the whole world has to wish for this Germany, and view the current German Empire for what it is – a stage on the way to the more perfect, a stage, which relates to the final Central European state, as the former North-German Alliance related to the current German Empire. -
Demonstrating a speedy shift away from explicit conceptions of Germany itself, Lagarde’s second volume expressly employed the notion of ‘MittelEuropa’ (Lagarde 1881: 91), even if his description of the construct closely resembles the one previously provided for Germany:


Somewhat more respect is now shown to Austria, too - now characterised as an ally. The threat from Russia is now depicted as more pronounced, while France has pretty much gone missing in any calculations. However, the very purpose of forging a Central Europe is still to bring peace to Europe, as was earlier the case with Germany. The exact delineation of the proposed political unit is missing, but it is tentatively identifiable from the vague characteristisation he provides – such as when dividing Russia from the South-Slavs.

46 - It is in every case possible to conceive that Central Europe has to be created, [Central Europe] which would instantly guarantee peace for the whole continent, in which Russia would be pushed from the Black Sea and that way from South-Slavs as well; and German colonization – because we are agricultural people – would gain wider space in the East. Moreover, only through this containment of Russia, at least towards the south, can we obtain a powerful position for our natural ally, Austria. -
Lagarde’s focal and terminological shift from Germany to Central Europe is often missed or overlooked, as a majority of subsequent commentators, starting with Meyer (1955) utilise 20th century reprints of the 1892 revised joint edition of both volumes of Deutsche Schriften. Yet, the original prints of his works clearly suggest that within the space of three years, Lagarde had moved from using the word ‘Deutschland’ to ‘MittelEuropa’, while his view of Austria changed from a mere, almost naturally subordinate appendage of Germany to a legitimate, separate entity, which should be allied to Germany, rather than an integral part. It was this change of heart over Austria that seemingly explained Lagarde’s shift towards elaborating a ‘MittelEuropa’. Yet, while Austria was clearly no longer part of ‘Deutschland’ in Lagarde’s mind, the need to conceptualise the space between France and Russia remained – with the goal of elaborating for Germany a spatial power position that might counter any perceived or emergent threats. A new notion had to be developed to replace the now redundant ‘Deutschland’ and ‘MittelEuropa’ must have seemed an obvious choice, since Lagarde had already described Germany as ‘mitteleuropäisch’ (Lagarde 1878).

So Lagarde provides a parallel to Frantz’s dropping of the notion of ‘Deutschland’ in favour of ‘Mitteleuropa’, proving this was no isolated case and that it was paralleled by other authors in the early 1880s. Yet, Frantz and Lagarde in no way constituted the mainstream in German intellectual thinking and the notion of Central Europe still had a long way to travel to the forefront of regional theorisation.

**3.4.3 The rise of Central Europe**

Of course, Lagarde and Frantz fit easily into the common narrative of the emergence of Central Europe – that it developed seamlessly from Grossdeutsch ideas and was essentially a replacement notion for a political unit including
both Austria and the German Empire, and then achieved its greatest popularity during the First World War.

Indeed, it should be underlined that it was those advocates of a Germany inclusive of Austria who made the smooth transition towards employing the term, ‘Mitteleuropa’. However, one must guard against the impression that this was the only meaning ascribed to the term Central Europe in late 19th century Germany.47

Many authors used this term in a completely different connotation than the resurrected *Grossdeutsch* project. Indeed, some considered it a basis for conceptualisation of a mainland Europe that included France (Le Temps 1890). In fact, neither Frantz nor Lagarde had very much influence during their lifetimes (Brechtfeld 1996: 29 and 32) and a variety of geographical representations (and therefore divergent explanatory bases) of central Europe had been presented in the 1880s and 1890s. The definitive discourse that gave ‘Mitteleuropa’ its meaning of the project of political and economic unification of the German Empire and Austria-Hungary spanned two decades and was hardly straightforward.

For example, the works of Hermann Wagner and Albrecht Penck, both of which were published in the mid-1880s (1883 and 1887 respectively), presented Central Europe in its narrowest spatial expression as extending from the North and the Baltic Seas to the North-Western Carpathians and the Alps. This aligned with the underlying German-ness of the region, but obviously fell short of the wider area Frantz and Lagarde intended to include. In the same period Lujo Brentano presented a concept that went well beyond *grossdeutsch* ideas – a customs union between German Empire, Austria-Hungary and a number of Balkan states (Brentano 1885). This added an economic dimension that was not present in either Frantz’s or Lagarde’s works. Yet, a further and significant number of authors included France within their Central European constructs –

47 Discourse of the political unit in the area was conducted also outside the notion, using descriptions such as “europaeischgermanisches Gebiet”.
a vision that lay far from the Francophobic tendencies of Frantz and Lagarde, or the *Grossdeutsch* plans of Bruck or List. For instance, Berthold Volz included France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and the ‘upper Danubian basin’ (Volz 1895), while Friedrich Ratzel included France within Central Europe in his work: *Deutschland: Einführung in the Heimatkunde* (1898a: 220). Moreover, in early usage as the notion was increasingly adopted, many authors continued to refer to it as a geographical area rather than any grand political plan. This was the case with Ratzel, for instance who used the term to designate the wider area within which Germany was located.

In addition to this divergence in concepts, developmental change in the substance of the notion is evident in the 1880s and 1890s. Significant modifications to conceptions of Central Europe⁴⁸ appear in the consecutive works of many authors. For example, Hermann Wagner changed his definition in 1900, even including Great Britain and Italy within his widened Central Europe. (Wagner 1900: 763)

Yet, the mainstream of works on Central Europe was gravitating towards common characteristics: the belief in a leading role for the German nation in Europe and an underlying drive for conceptualisation of the area it should ‘naturally’ dominate – a step beyond mere unification! By the end of the century, the notion was gradually permeating daily parlance as well as academic debate. The discourse was gradually shifting towards use of Mitteleuropa as a notion that described a political unit encompassing the whole of the German nation and the area of its influence. It was underpinned by organic theorisation of the state and prevalent geographic determinism. Put simply, since Germany was a young vigorous state in the middle of Europe, it would grow into a ‘Mitteleuropa’ encompassing the whole of the German nation to dominate the continent, finally giving the German nation the place among the

⁴⁸ not necessarily in the linear manner towards the First World War association of Central Europe with the political unit consisting of Germany and Austria Hungary
great powers it naturally deserved. The growth process of the constituent political units of the German nation was thereby presented as a natural development from the small German states, through the North-German Alliance, to the German Empire and now beyond, in the form of Central Europe. So the German nation was to follow its destiny to greatness.

Issues of Geographische Zeitschrift from the late 19th century amply demonstrate these tendencies. Within its first volume of 1895, a section appears under the title of Central Europe (accompanying a separate section on Europe), containing 39 separate articles and other items and forming a major part of the volume. Everything here was essentially focused on the Germans as an ethnic group, dealing with such issues as the historical Germanisation of Lithuania, for instance. The same, first volume featured an article by Ratzel on the development of states, essentially a more concise version of his organic growth theory (Ratzel 1895). Further organic growth theory articles would appear in the next (1896) volume (e.g. Hözel 1896) with the Central Europe section featuring Belgium, Switzerland and the Baltic, as well as Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The 1898 volume features an article by Ratzel on the question of Central Europe in the context of the rising power of Russia and the global dominance of the British Empire. (Ratzel 1898b) He predictably defined Central Europe along the lines established in his Deutschland: Einführung in the Heimatkunde (Ratzel 1898a) and – consistent with his social Darwinist convictions – suggested creation of a larger unit in Central Europe as necessary to counter the influence of larger empires. His comparison of France, Austria-Hungary and Germany resulted in the familiar observation that Germany had incomparably more

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49 Geographical Journal, 1895 – today, established and edited by Alfred Hettner, a professor at the university of Tübingen. The journal was printed by publishing house Teubner in Leipzig. Today the title is still in publishing under Frantz Steiner Verlag.
people per square kilometre than other countries and - being culturally strong and swiftly developing – necessarily had to be regarded as expansive. On the other hand, he described France as a country that had stopped growing and was thereby in relative decline (Ratzel 1898b: 147) While again falling short of offering any precise proposal for the organisation of the central European space, he called for a unification embracing all three regional “smaller great powers”, reminding the reader that “a whole literature has been written on United States of Europe and on Central European Union”, pointing specifically to the works of Albert von Schäffle (1895) and Alexander Peez (1898). (Ratzel 1898b: 144) The article displayed a strong nationalist bent and invoked the image of Germany as the strongest leader in the region, the state with the will and energy to grow and lead. Yet, unlike later nationalist conceptions as well as the earlier works of Lagarde and Frantz, Ratzel’s central Europe definitively included France.

Yet, by the turn of the twentieth century, the issue of geographical delimitation was being seen as less important than its driving vision. Discourse was settling on the understanding and aspiration for Mitteleuropa as an envisaged political unit (with all its distinctive organic reasoning) which spanned the area of the German nation. For the record, authors continued to differ on what the span of such an area actually was. Much of the definitive discourse of Central Europe was reflected in the Geographische Zeitschrift. The articles of Penck, Partsch and Ratzel and others published in the journal carried the main thrust of the gradual formation of the notion not by agreeing on a common definition, but more in the way of establishing the essential characteristics it carried. Besides identifying Central Europe with the area of German settlement in Europe, other unifying characteristics had emerged from the discourse by the early 20th century – glorification of the German nation’s unique qualities, proclamation of its historical mission as a leader of the region, the aim to cement an intervening
political unit between France and Russia, with all the underlying reasoning premised upon organic growth theory and geographic determinism.

3.5 From a nationalist dream to a pragmatic customs union

An emerging consensus on Central Europe as the region that was inhabited by Germans, however vaguely this might have been defined geographically, was strengthening by the early years of the 20th century. In the amended reprint of Ratzel’s Deutschland, published after his death in 1907, Central Europe was presented as consisting of Germany, the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, German-speaking Switzerland, the Low Countries and Denmark. (Ratzel 1907) By this stage, France was clearly and definitively excluded.50

The most famous articulation of Central Europe during this period is attributable to Joseph Partsch, a renowned German geographer. His Central Europe was published in London in 1903 as part of The Regions of the World Series edited by Sir Halford Mackinder and quickly became one of the early classics of traditional geopolitics. He positioned Central Europe between the Alpine ridges and the northern seas, describing it as an area defined by a tri-layered belt of the Alps, lesser mountain chains and northern lowlands, stretching from Dunkerque to Sandomirz. (Partsch 1903: 2 – 3) It was to include contemporary Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria-Hungary, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria.

Partsch insisted that not only did Germans comprise 51 % of this area’s total population, but they were also the standard bearers of culture, knowledge and progress that other nations might aspire to within the region. In order to “reach greatness” (Partsch 1903: 141) the Central European nations had to unify on the common basis provided by the German language and culture. Partsch

50 Ratzel presented two conceptualisation of German-dominated Mitteleuropa (1898, 1907), he was one of the leaders of Aldeutscher Verband (Pan-German League), succeeded by Partsch after his death in 1904) and a vigorous advocate of German expansion into Africa.
reckoned that Central Europe „consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, belongs to the sphere of German civilisation“. (Partsch 1903: 142)

Only unification under German leadership held the potential to safeguard it from Russian expansionism and British hegemonic ambitions, thereby delivering the promise of peace and prosperity. (Partsch 1903: 159)

Partsch’s work introduced to an international audience some of the main themes that would be carried forward in conceptualisation of Central Europe in the German tradition – the uniqueness of the German nation and its culture; the need for unification of all areas inhabited by the German speaking population; the righteous, fatalistic historical mission to rise to greatness; with ‘natural’ German domination of the said area. The notion of Mitteleuropa gradually became part and parcel of German attempts to dominate smaller nations inhabiting the same area.

3.5.1 The economic dimension

About the same time as Partsch’s Central Europe went into print, a crucial, emergent aspect was gaining prominence within the discourse – economics. While economic considerations – such as the production of staple crops or industrial production – had also been a feature of the works originating in the 1890s, the idea of a Central European Union wholly substantiated by economic order of the day was a new feature added after 1900. Growing protectionism and a scramble for markets can be viewed as a new and real influence on the notion of Central Europe, now cast as the vehicle for carving out a greater economic area for Germany in Europe, potentially offering a robust demand for industrial products and a powerful platform for global economic expansion.

In 1902, Zeitschrift für Socialwissenschaft brought the thoughts of Albert Sartorius to a wider audience, here summarising economic assessments of a

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51 Journal for Social Science, published by Julius Wolf, later founder of the Central European Economic Association (Der Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsverein, 1904), between 1898 and 1921
possible federative future for Central Europe. (Sartorius 1902) His article was an epitome of contemporary thought on Central Europe with a novel economic twist.

Sartorius’ work shows clear signs of Ratzelien influence – with a country’s economy itself clearly described as an organism (Sartorius 1902: 562) and transport as its blood circulation\(^52\) (Sartorius 1902: 558). Similarly, geographic determinism was another obvious hallmark of his methodology, with the claim that the essential preconditions for achievement of economic greatness are naturally bestowed – the presence of the sea and navigable inland waterways to mediate trade. He built his argument for creating a greater economic area on the assertion that a combination of terrestrial and maritime possessions best afforded the essential preconditions for economic growth (Sartorius 1902: 675). Further influences quoted in his work included Friedrich List, Klement Juglar and Joseph Arthur de Gobineau.

The combination of these influences translated into his reasoning that in anarchic global economic conditions characterised by regular crises, Germany needed to guard against the contingency of withering away by building up a larger economic area, which would provide it with the resources to grow and achieve prosperity. The benchmark to measure up to was, in Sartorius’s eyes, the United States of America.

For Sartorius the main source of domestic economic growth was global trade. He considered the continued existence of a number of small coastal states along the North Sea an “anomaly of economic geography” (Sartorius 1902: 676), suggesting that the main production areas of the Rheinland, Westphalia and other regions of Germany could easily be cut off from world trade routes by a “political wall” (Sartorius 1902: 676). He maintained that both sides were damaged by perpetuation of a situation he characterised as “the chaos of small

\(^52\) “Der Verkehr ist also eine Bethätigung der Volkswirtschaft wie die Blutzirkulation eine Funktion des lebenden menschlichen Körpers ist.” – Transport is thus an exertion of the economy such as blood circulation is a function of the living human body. - Sartorius 1902: 558
states” whereby Germany depended on mediation of its exports by Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark, while these countries’ trade income depended on production in Germany. (Sartorius 1902: 676) Sartorius highlighted the example of the United States and its economic rise after gaining access to the sea in the east and west, immediately facilitating a doubling of access to world trade routes for its vast production areas. (Sartorius 1902: 676)

The need to create a greater economic area was justified by observed changes in patterns of world trade, whereby Sartorius saw the “British principle of laissez-faire” as no longer workable. World trade was, in his opinion, heading towards a system of larger, protected economic areas fenced off from one another by high import duties. In a historical comparative exercise, Sartorius demonstrated that size of economic zones of individual states was the source of economic inequality among them (Sartorius 1902: 564). Therefore, he recommended smaller states should build larger economic areas through various forms of alliances. Quoting the research of Clement Juglar, Sartorius demonstrated that such areas (e.g. the United States or the French colonial empire) were better able to withstand global economic crises (Sartorius 1902: 772) and survive each other’s recessions through protection of their large domestic market.

Central Europe was envisaged as the larger economic area centred on Germany. In an idealised situation, Sartorius would have included France here. However, historical rivalries and conflicts over territory and, more specifically, the ongoing dispute over Alsace-Lorraine (Sartorius 1902: 881) meant this was not a practical possibility. Thus his Central European Customs Union was to be formed of the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria and eventually Denmark. Belgium was omitted for the political reason of the potential clashes with France its inclusion might unleash. (Sartorius 1902: 880) Interestingly, he decided to leave out Hungary since it only “offered inferior consumer markets” (Sartorius 1902: 880). On the other hand, he suggested that inclusion of Austria would facilitate access to “the quiet port of Trieste allowing trade to flow
through Elbe and railway connections for wide area from Bohemia to Hamburg” (Sartorius 1902: 677).

Overall, Sartorius likened his proposed customs union to a cartel or alliance, which would stand the region in good stead to deal with the near anarchic global economic conditions he saw coming at the turn of the twentieth century - a vehicle for self-help for all parties involved. While the nationalist edge was generally not as sharp as with many other contemporaneous (though less economically-focused) works on Central Europe, it surfaced in his Gobineau-inspired assertion that some races and nations were more suited (i.e., Germany) to economic success than others (i.e., the Slavs).

3.5.2 The growing influence of the economists?

A number of other works pursuing similar arguments for the creation of a customs union or greater economic area on the European mainland led by Germany were published in the same period. Most notable were the works of Josef Grunzel (1901) and Julius Wolf (1901, 1902), which recognised the absolute centrality of improving the interconnectivity between the German Empire and Austria-Hungary to maximise the potential for economic growth in conditions of increasing global competitiveness. The unifying aspect here is the view of world trade as ever more competitive and escalating, 'brutally' unrestrained and unregulated The rapacious dictates of organic theory held that those who did not grow would wither away. The logic of such an analysis was that small countries, with their limited economies, could not survive as they would be isolated with their small domestic markets by fast growing greater economic areas. To ward off such a prospect, Germany had to build its own greater economic area, addressing the conditions that would most likely facilitate further economic growth.
Julius Wolf became the leader of this economic Ratzelien strand of thought. Besides publishing a multitude of articles and books espousing such a position, he took it upon himself to oversee its realisation in practice.

The 1903 issue of *Zeitschrift für Socialwissenschaft* carried Julius Wolf’s article: ‘Ein Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsverein’ (Central European Economic Association, Wolf 1903). Here Wolf underlined that while “the idea of Central European customs union has been about for twenty-five years... its’ realisation has not been fulfilled until today.” (Wolf 1903: 232) While he did not specify the countries that should constitute any Central European customs union, he insisted it would need to begin with an economic federation of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The main reason behind the failure to institute a Central European customs union before this time was, in Wolf’s opinion, a prevailing lack of appreciation of its potential value but also the systemic resistance of large German industrialists and the threat it posed to their vested interests. Wolf pointed out that similar obstacles must surely have been overcome in process of creating the German customs union back in the 19th century and that lessons must have been learned here. For this express purpose, he suggested the creation of a business chamber, *Der Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsverein*, representing all that was “healthy and valuable in the idea of an economic union”53 (Wolf 1903: 235).

Its purpose was to unite and empower those industrialists and policy-makers who favoured the creation of a Central European Customs Union. It was to foster cooperation and pursue activities that might convince and convert the

53 “An der Spitze dieses Artikels steht das Wort “Ein mitteleuropäischer Wirtschaftsverein”. Es bezeichnet einen Plan der, seit einigen Jahren erwogen, Männer der einzelnen hier in Betracht kommenden Staatsgebiete auf sich vereinigt. Der mitteleuropäischer Wirtschaftsverein will, was hier als erforderlich bezeichnet wurde: was gesund und wertvoll an dem Gedanken einer wirtschaftlichen Union, durch das Mittel einer solchen aber nicht zu verwirklichen ist, in andere Gestalt zu retten suchen.” – At the top of this article are the words "A central European economic association". It means a plan that unites men from individual respective state entitites. The Central European Economic Association wants what would here be described as necessary: to save in other form, what is healthy and valuable in the idea of an economic union, but not possible to realize through this medium. - (Wolf 1903: 235)
reluctant. Following his proposal, Wolf reminded everyone of the possibilities and opportunities that the economic federation of Germany and Austria-Hungary would bring – with waterways under unitary control stretching from the Baltic to the Black seas. He highlighted that German industries should remember that the shortest way to their newly extended sphere of interest in Asia Minor and the Middle East “certainly does not lead through Gibraltar” (Wolf 1903: 237).

Within a year (1904) the proposed association had been duly established and the 1907 issue of the journal carried Wolf’s report on its first annual conference, for which a wide array of supporters and important speakers had been assembled. (Wolf 1907) Der Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsverein (MEWV) would become one of the foremost organisations championing the idea of an economic federation between Germany and Austria-Hungary. In addition to contemplating the strategic and nationalist Central Europe concepts of the late 19th century, its focus was on addressing practical business and economic interests to help pave the way for the envisaged future union.

Wolf was the most active promoter of Central Europe in the pre-war period, as chairman of the MEWV, a publisher, an economist and an author. It was mainly through his activities that the economic vision for Central Europe became the prominent strand in the discourse during the early 20th century. Under his aegis the emphasis had shifted firmly towards actualisation of a customs union of Germany and Austria-Hungary as the vehicle by which a sizeable economic block would materialise, as well as direct access to eastern markets for German industrialists with the promise of ports on the Adriatic and Black seas.
3.6 Friedrich Naumann and wartime concepts

The literature on Central Europe originating between 1915 and 1918 is voluminous, reflecting the peak in popularity that the *Mitteleuropa* concept enjoyed during this period. In alliance with Austria-Hungary and under wartime conditions of blockade, the public became highly receptive to the idea of Central Europe: its overtones of a shared identity, history and mission; its narrative of uniqueness and preordained destiny of greatness; and, its seeming guarantee of future great power status. These all lined up with what the German society was searching for in acrid conditions of unprecedented war, not to mention the country’s encirclement by enemies with nobody but their south-eastern allies to look towards for support. Friedrich Naumann’s notorious *Mitteleuropa* (1916) would become the centrepiece of the hectic wartime discourse over Central Europe, elevating the notion to international scrutiny as its key precepts were increasingly regarded as the German design for Europe in the case of victory – now even Germany’s enemies were watching!

3.6.1 The Central Europe of Friedrich Naumann

Friedrich Naumann, a German politician and a Protestant priest, understood Central European space in its widest possible context as the body of the European continent without its peninsular and insular annexes. However, congruently with Joseph Partsch, he considered the Austro-Hungarian and German Empires as the essential inner core of such a region.

Friedrich Naumann published his treatise on how a new political unit in the Central European space might materialise in a book simply entitled *Mitteleuropa* in 1916 (Naumann 1916). Almost immediately, the book was translated into English (Naumann 1917) and several other languages (e.g. Czech and Hungarian). He was basically urging the establishment of the Central European Union at the end of the war. For him the war would serve as the
‘creator’ of the Mid-European soul, ahead of any corresponding, more formal territorial definition.

The primary purpose of Naumann’s Central European union was an economic and political union under the leadership of Germany. The construction of the envisaged economic bloc had to be regarded as inevitable if Germany did not want to become a poorer cousin separating the economic spheres of Russia or Great Britain:

"[T]he world’s economic system has become so much more narrow and everywhere the principle of syndicates and exclusion has made conditions very different from what they were in the individualistic atmosphere of the early beginnings of capitalism. ... He who is alone today will find himself outside to-morrow.”

(Naumann 1916: 193)

He expected the widespread adoption of protectionist policies by the great powers, the levy of tariffs and duties that would prevent German exports reaching their markets. Germany could save herself from bankruptcy only by creating its own customs zone and economic area. The core of this project would ideally comprise the territories of Austria-Hungary and Germany, under the leadership of the German nation.

The establishment of the union was also presented as fundamental for the defence of the Central European nations. According to Naumann, a single state no longer held any significance within the international system by the turn of the twentieth century - only large powers could possess any meaningful sovereign power.

More than just envisaging a mainstream customs union, Naumann famously proposed a union of states (Staatenbund), an effective supra-state (Oberstaat) with its own institutions (Naumann 1916: 233). These would eventually provide the basis of "something like a Central European central
administration"\textsuperscript{54}. Yet Naumann also insisted that the union should constitute no one new state\textsuperscript{55} – it was proposed as a union of existing states, a confederation with no prospects of becoming a federation. In his discussion of constitutional arrangements (Chapter VIII: Verfassungsfragen, Naumann 1916: 229ff), Naumann argued that the organs of union could be established without there actually being any Central European state (Naumann 1916: 240). The downplaying of the political implications of his proposed plan is perhaps explicable by the need to overcome resistance to the creation of a supra-state unit and, especially, concerns over its domination by the Germans. Unlike previous authors concerning themselves more narrowly with the elaboration of a customs union, Naumann combined arguments of economic and strategic necessity en route to his proposal for a political supra-state union; yet, he was well aware that such proposal would meet with political opposition. It should not be forgotten that Naumann’s emphasis on German leadership of the union made him vulnerable to critique that he was not looking to establish a Central European Union for the good of all peoples concerned, but to further the economic and wider power interests of Germany.

For this reason, Naumann insisted on the need for emancipation of all the nations involved in the project. Obviously, however, his comparison of the contemporary challenge of creating a Mid-European union with the earlier creation of the German Empire under Prussian leadership (‘Blut und Eisen’ \textit{et al}) implied that his plans would entail a dominant German role in order to come to fruition. He was well aware of the fact that the Austrian and Hungarian Slavs did not expect too much benefit from fraternisation with the German Empire. On the other hand, he was convinced that they would prefer continued Austrian rule to the prospect of possible Russian domination. He expected the Slavic

\textsuperscript{54} “Sobald man sich aber eine gewisse Mehrzahl solcher mitteleuropäischen Kommissionen oder Oberverwaltungen vor Augen stellt, bilden sie zusammen etwas wie eine mitteleuropäische Zentralverwaltung.” – But once you keep in mind a certain number of such commissions or supra-administrations, they form something like a Central European central administration. – (Naumann 1916: 241 – 242)

\textsuperscript{55} Naumann (1916: 233) made a difference between state union (\textit{Bundesstaat}) and a union of states (\textit{Staatenbund}).
nations living between the Russian east and German west to understand the likely impossibility of their survival as independent political units. This should logically lead them to accede voluntarily to the proposed project. The project of a Central European union was essentially premised on an exaltation of German national goals; thus to avoid accusation of hegemonic ambitions, Naumann suggested that Slavic nations should be allowed to fulfill their own national aspirations.

Interestingly, Naumann’s book was delivered in a relatively restrained rhetorical fashion, avoiding the repetitive exclamation marks and emotionally charged phrases that were so typical of many of his contemporaries. While the nationalist underpinnings of his book are obvious, Naumann chose to frame them in a less overtly confrontational manner, tweaking the tone to suit his purposes. For example, chapter 4 of his book carries the title ‘Das mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsvolk’56. While the chapter mainly speaks of Germany’s trading expertise and productive virtues, its title was designed to invoke the picture of an economically productive and cohesive regional powerhouse. Indeed, in earlier chapters of the book, Naumann discussed the individual features of the peoples inhabiting the region, expressing his hope for the future rise of a “Central European type” (Naumann 1916: 61). Yet, despite his effort Naumann failed to enlist substantial support among the small nations of Austria-Hungary. Quite the contrary; their representatives would become the most eloquent opponents of his proposals.

3.6.2 The wartime discourse

Naumann was not the first commentator to offer a clear vision of the Central European project during the Great War – in fact, a significant volume of literature on Central Europe was published in the first year and a half of the conflict (see e.g. Ullmann 1915, Wolf 1915, Jesser 1915). Yet, it was Naumann

56 - Central European economic people – (Naumann 1916: 102)
who successfully tapped into the economic and strategic headlines of the day to propose a plan whose timing could not have been more acutely judged: a loose political and economic union of the core Central Powers – Germany and Austria-Hungary – which would be dominated by the Germans and extended further, if practicable and expedient. Naumann published the right book at the right time, sparking an unprecedented debate on the topic, unleashing a flurry of articles and books.

Some contributions to the debate were direct responses to Naumann (e.g. Eichhorn 1916, Jäckh 1916) though an even greater proportion was not – a great variety of authors with vastly diverging points of view raced to publish their particular take on the topic of the day. Both pre- and post-Naumann contributions empathised with greater-German sentiments, portraying Mitteleuropa as a necessity. So the underpinning core of the construct shifted firmly towards the union of Germany and Austria-Hungary, with many authors hoping for more – especially what seemed like a likely unopposable route to the Orient via the Balkans. The war-time body of works broadly comprised a mainstream of narrow concepts premised upon a union between Germany and Austria-Hungary. If this supposedly was meant to herald a new, greater Germany there was also a lesser but significant proportion of published material calling for this core area to provide the defining basis for Germany’s own extended sphere of influence to the southeast. While support for the mainstream relied typically on pan-German nationalist rhetoric and focused practically upon the mechanisms and institutions that could bring it to reality, the sub-stream calling for a more extended regional form held back on the language of German brotherhood gearing their reasoning towards non-German audiences as well.

For example, Naumann’s liberal colleague (and expert on the Middle East), Ernst Jäckh presented his view of Central Europe as a direct consequence of Naumann’s book, under the following title: Das Größere Mitteleuropa: Ein
Werkbund-Vortrag (Jäckh 1916). He suggested that the narrow economic union envisaged by Naumann was inadequate and, moreover, that a larger Central Europe was already in place with the then existent alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. (Jäckh 1916: 6) Its continuation and development was portrayed as the only way out of strategic encirclement in Europe for Germany\(^{57}\), bordered, as it was, by enemies to the west, north and the east. His justification and articulation bought into the geographic determinism of the previous two decades and was dotted with references to organic growth theories of the state. Interestingly, Jäckh was one of the first authors to quote Rudolf Kjellén and to employ the adjective ‘geopolitical’ when arguing that Central Europe was not only a necessary political construct for Germany but for others too:

“Die geographische Not, diese ‘gottgewollte Abhängigkeit’ führt zur politischen Notwendigkeit, wird zum geopolitischen Zwang – für Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn – wie für Balkan und Orient.”\(^{58}\) (Jäckh 1916: 8)

In an effort to reassure his non-Germanic audiences, Jäckh depicted a German historical mission to protect Turkey and Bulgaria’s sovereign independence. This would be achieved through German leadership of a Central European bloc capable of fighting off the hegemonic ambitions of Russia, France and Britain. Yet, Jaeckh was an editor of the journal, Das Größere Deutschland and had already commented that, compared to Germany, the smaller nations in the area were “not yet ready to build a state” (Jäckh 1916: 7), here presumably alluding to Austria-Hungary. Thus, his portrayal of Germany as a mere leader of equals within Central Europe was no more convincing than Naumann’s.

\(^{57}\) “… der letzte, einzige Weg Deutschlands in die Welt!” – the last, the only way for Germany into the world! - (Jäckh 1916: 7)

\(^{58}\) - The geographical necessity, this “God-given function” leads to political necessity, [and] will become a geopolitical compulsion - for Germany and Austria-Hungary - as for the Balkans and the Orient. -
Another interesting variant on this theme was E. F. Karl's *Vereinigte Staaten von Mittel-Europa! Eine Denkschrift zu Frieden* (1917), though here the focus was more plainly strategic through the prism of German war aims. Again, aimed partially at potentially friendly non-German audiences, Karl outlined his vision for a strategic and political unit stretching from Calais to Lemberg, (Karl 1917: 44). Eventually, and presuming a German victory, the United States of Central Europe would ideally have been extended to cover all of Europe to provide for the security and freedom of all of its constituent nations (Karl 1917: 51).

By way of contrast, mainstream wartime conceptions of a Central Europe – encompassing just Germany and Austria-Hungary – typically derived their very definition from its ascribed German character. Robert Sieger started from the basis that:

“[d]er geschichtliche Boden, auf dem sich die deutsche Nation entwickelt und vor allem betätigt hat, heist uns Mitteleuropa.”

(Sieger 1917: 7)

Such characterisation of Central Europe as essentially German was then used to reason the need for economic and strategic unification of both empires in order to give unity to the area of the German nation. The realisation of such a union would then provide the springboard for Germans to realise their greatness among world nations, recognition of which was long overdue from a historical and cultural standpoint (Stern 1917: 11). Emphasis was typically placed here upon the stock phrases, “brotherhood of arms” and cultural unity (Diehl 1915). Other incarnations went a step further, presenting Austria as a mere annex of Germany or any extended Central Europe in the future as the logical outcome.

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59 For illustration, he suggested that Italy would fall under British domination if his United States of Central Europe would not provide it with protection. Under Central Europe, Italian independence was to be guaranteed. (Karl 1917: 49)

60 - The historical ground on which the German nation has developed and primarily operated, we call Central Europe. -
of a protracted German national integration project – a unit encompassing the whole of the German nation.

3.6.3 The interests of the German nation versus the ambitions of the German Empire

Basically, all the works just discussed shared the common characteristics discussed earlier, referencing geographic determinism, organic theory, German uniqueness, etc. Yet, there was probably one crucial difference between extended regional conceptions of Central Europe and the mainstream focused solely on Germany and Austria-Hungary. It is the logic that lay behind them.

Broadly speaking, the mainstream theories started from the assertion that all Germans are the same nation regardless of sovereign part of European territory in which they reside and therefore, should be united. This was a clear continuation of the *grossdeutsch* thought of the 19th century. Also, the emphasis these works placed on economic rather than political integration fell in line with the established model of German integration in previous decades.

On the other hand, the broader regional conceptions started by questioning what needed to be done to secure a favourable future positioning for Germany. Within the constraints of organic theory demanding growth from the state to survive, the authors suggested the spatial expansion. Their reasoning was underpinned by geographic determinism and so the concepts aimed to endow the enlarged Germany with navigable rivers, land access to Asian markets, and natural borders where possible.

Perhaps the mainstream authors were trying to articulate a pathway to unity of the German nation and overcome systemic resistance to it, while the less numerous authors advocating a wider geographical Central Europe were considering vehicles that might expand the influence of the German Empire. Generally, we can assume that the two sets of authors understood German
identity somewhat differently – with the mainstream authors concerned to address the then contemporary ramifications of their scattered German Volk and a second group more focused on interests of an extended German Empire. While this difference may seem subtle, it has important implications for analysis of influence of these concepts on the practical conduct of policy. The conclusions will demonstrate that German policy-makers were more concerned with the interests of the empire than the German Volk.

3.7 The impact of the Central Europe concepts

It has been suggested time and again that conceptions of Central Europe exercised an overwhelming influence on the practical policies of the German government. However, evidence for such influence seems thin at best. This subchapter gauges the potential influence of Central European conceptions in chronological order from the ascendancy of Otto von Bismarck through to the end of the First World War.

3.7.1 The Bismarck period

Various authors mention the iconic chancellor of the German Empire himself, Otto von Bismarck, when trying to evidence support for the profound influence of Central European conceptions during the late 19th century. (Young 2006: 76) Works such as Bascom B. Hayes’ Bismarck and Mitteleuropa (1994) convey the impression that Bismarck helped to foreground German concepts of the First World War period.

However, any serious review of Bismarck's policies and actions must conclude that the ‘Mitteleuropa’ idea had virtually no impact upon them. If there was any influence to be identified, it is only in the negative sense. (Brechtfeld 1996: 31) Numerous analyses of Bismarck’s era in office as the Prussian Chancellor
observe that his immense political talent was then aimed at maintaining the *status quo* in Europe, rather than challenging it. (Steinberg 2011, Lee 2008, Abrams 2006) His foremost interest was to protect and strengthen the German Empire within the existing balance of European power. His distrust of popular nationalism during the late 19th century was well known and this applied to German nationalism as well.

The cornerstone of his foreign policy was maintaining the balance of power in Europe, with its most conservative forces (as represented by the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Russia) jointly keeping a check on France and ensuring continuing British non-involvement in the continent’s affairs. Indeed already Henry Cord Meyer observed in his 1955 *Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action* that system of balance of power in Europe was significantly more important for Bismarck than potential expansion of the German Empire into an ‘all-inclusive’ German nation state (Meyer 1955: 47) – something that would involve the destruction of Germany’s closest ally. On the contrary, Bismarck’s interest lay in a strong but cooperative Austria-Hungary.

Bismarck dismissed Central Europe-centred ideas on several occasions and in no uncertain terms. He expressed great misgivings over the ‘tactless’ activities of a bunch of pan-German activists (mainly journalists and academics) who were then publicising the purported oppression of Germans in Hungary and Transylvania (Rothfels 1934: 39). Hans Rothfels highlighted his 1894 speech to a group of Austrian German nationalists suggesting that the affairs of Germans in Austria were not a concern Berlin wanted to get involved with (Rothfels 1934: 79). A year later, when speaking to an academic delegation of Austrian Germans, Bismarck argued that one of the strongest pillars of German national strength derived from its alliance with Austria-Hungary and the loyalties of their two peoples. Efforts to establish a homogenous nation state thus went against the interests of the German Empire as unification would deprive it of a key ally within the Concert of Europe. (Bismarck and Schüssler 1930: 568)
Given these unequivocal rebukes, searching for any policy making influence that theories of Central Europe might have generated in the Bismarck period seems a somewhat stretched idea. However, the notion does surface in the files of the Foreign Office, even if only sporadically (Reuss 1885). Unsurprisingly, it features in papers related to the attempted renegotiation of German-Austro-Hungarian customs arrangements in the 1880s, yet it appears in the context of an alternative to these bilateral negotiations. It is presented in a vague reference to a potentially wider agreement reorganizing trade relations across Europe (Holtz 1885), notably including France.

3.7.2 The Caprivi period and beyond

Chancellor Caprivi is sometimes accredited with having made an official attempt to create a Central European Union in the 1890s. (Stirk 1994: 11) Again, however, such an interpretation is questionable, since Caprivi’s series of commercial treaties included one concluded with Russia, venturing well beyond the widest boundaries of any of the Central Europe concepts. In fact, Caprivi insisted on the inclusion of Russia within the preference system, against the advice of the foreign trade division of his Foreign Ministry. (Theiner 1984: 131) While the idea of Central Europe had undoubtedly found an audience by 1890s, rather than using this notion, Caprivi’s contemporaries dubbed the New Course represented by his foreign policy as a ‘United States of Europe’ (Fischer 1970: 30) instead. Caprivi himself tended to employ the notion ‘zentral-europäisch’ rather than ‘mitteleuropäisch’. (Vagst 1935)

Yet, the notion of Central Europe does occasionally feature in the files of the German Foreign Office from the period of the late 19th century. It is presented as a regional context for wider economic cooperation in Europe and appears alongside papers related to the attempted renegotiation of the trade agreement with Austria-Hungary. Unlike the Bismarck period, Central Europe is characterised early in the Caprivi period as expressly embracing France. (Lens
This shows considerable divergence from notions that were then solidifying in the published literature; however, its presence in the files in the round of things is marginal.

If anything, during the Caprivi era, the German public progressively lost interest in the pan-German cause. Austria-Hungary was gradually becoming a foreign country for Germans outside Germany but within the empire. Any interest in the Dual Monarchy’s internal concerns, including the fortunes of fellow Germans, was withering. As one contemporary observer noted:

“Shortly before the war I had the opportunity of conversing with German politicians, among others, with Friedrich Naumann. I was most disagreeably surprised and astonished at the extent of his ignorance of Austrian conditions and difficulties.” (Zenker 1935: 186)

Yet, pan-German thought did not disappear completely and organizations emerged at the turn of centuries which resurrected the idea and promoted the concept of Central Europe. The most prominent of these was perhaps the Alldeutsche Verband, whose chairmen included Ratzel and Partsch at one stage or another; as well as the MEWV of Julius Wolf. As discussed in section 3.6.2, the idea of Central Europe was now on the march – finding both new advocates as well as followers.

3.7.3 Wartime politics

The idea of an economic alliance with Austria-Hungary resurfaced early in the war (Delbrück 1914). However, rather than being influenced or even triggered by the positive flurry of publications on Central Europe alluded to earlier in this chapter; the government’s Central Europe debate had preceded it. Moreover, motivations for (and framing of) the eventual drive for a customs union with
Austria-Hungary were based upon calculations very different to those of Pan-German conceptions of *Mitteleuropa*. Rather, the themes underlying the government’s decision to pursue the idea of an economic bloc with Austria-Hungary were very similar to those underpinning any rationale for Central Europe on economic grounds.

A letter dated 12 April 1915 from Clemens von Delbrück (Vice-Chancellor and the Interior Secretary, 1908 – 1916) to Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (Chancellor, 1909 – 1917) sheds light on the German government’s regional designs and the debate which surrounded them at the time. (Delbrück 1915) Early on in the war, Bethmann-Hollweg had instructed Delbrück to investigate the likely economic relationship of Germany with its enemies and allies at the end of the war (Delbrück 1915: 1b). Delbrück observed rather obviously that all trade agreements concluded with Germany’s enemies had already been cancelled by this stage. On the other hand, the existing trade agreement with Austria-Hungary was up for renewal again on 1 January 1918, with renegotiation planned to commence during 1916. Delbrück suggested that trade agreements with “most of European and non-European states could be renegotiated to the same date” (Delbrück 1915: 1b). What Delbrück had in mind was a complete overhaul of Germany’s trade relationships with neighbouring countries (which, at that time, were clearly non-existent). The fact remained that the trade agreement with Austria-Hungary, which gave it a privileged relationship with Germany as compared with other countries, was a convenient one as the new agreement could be renegotiated with a wider customs union in mind. The main interest here was to secure European markets for Germany’s industrial exports, as opportunities in non-European markets were curtailed through war.
3.7.3.1 Early wartime plans

So as to examine the possibilities for German exports in Europe, Delbrück had already established a commission consisting of officials from the relevant ministries by the autumn of 1914. The commission undertook detailed reviews of Germany's economic relationships with Austria-Hungary, Belgium, France, Russia and Russian Poland; and contemplating a potential customs union with Austria-Hungary and Belgium, as well as compiling a report on the economic capabilities of Russian Poland. (R43/404: 26 - 304)

The commission focused on production levels of various articles, and demand for goods in individual categories, as well as pre-war trade agreements and levels. In sharp contrast to the romantic Pan-German mood of the day, the commission's files are technocratic in style and devoid of any nationalist language or concepts. The mismatch between the government's wider functional approach and high-tide of nationalist Pan-German concepts of Central Europe that was surging in the public domain at the same time is conspicuous.

In an attachment to his letter (Delbrück 1915a; R43/404: 1b – 7, Appendix 6), Delbrück summarised the commission's deliberations from November 1914. In their course, six proposals for an economic bloc were put forward (R43/404: 361 – 371), all of them premised on the firm belief that the days of free trade were over and that Germany needed to build a customs alliance to avert the possibility of being shut out from foreign markets after the war. Their outcome was a proposal for a customs alliance (as opposed to customs union, Delbrück 1915a: 8) of 'Central European states' (Delbrück 1915a: 15), in the first instance with Austria-Hungary alone but eventually designed to encompass France, Italy and Switzerland. The commission was only too aware that – with the exception of Austria-Hungary – none of these states would enter into alliance with Germany willingly (Delbrück 1915a: 17) and several of its members therefore expressed scepticism over its plausibility (R43/404: 450). On the other hand, the commission's evaluation of the projected customs
alliance with Austria-Hungary offered a bleak economic picture, mired with forecasts of its likely negative impact upon the German currency (Reichsbanksdirektorium 1914) and a resultantly low purchasing power for German industrial products. Yet, its ultimate conviction in the overriding necessity of establishing a German zone of economic influence led the commission to recommend the conclusion of a customs alliance with Austria-Hungary\(^{61}\), with the potential accession of other named states an issue to be broached during or after the peace negotiations (Delbrück 1915a: 18).

At a meeting of governmental officials under the chairmanship of Bethmann-Hollweg on 5 June 1915 (German Federal Archive 1915), several officials, notably Delbrück, spoke against any customs union with Austria Hungary.\(^{62}\)

Yet, the fear of being shut out of foreign markets finally led the commission to conclude that while it would be best to pursue the possibilities afforded by a return to free markets, this path remained unlikely; thus the option of ‘economic rapprochement’ (‘wirtschaftliche Annäherung’) with Austria should be pursued.

### 3.7.3.2 Initial interactions aiming at closer economic relations

Heinrich Leonhard von Tschirschky, German Ambassador to Vienna (and a former Foreign Secretary), suggested during 1914 that the Austrian society was ready for a “customs-Anschluss” with Germany. (Tschirschky 1914) His letters betray his personal bias in favour of German domination of the Austrian part of the monarchy and Pan-German Central European concepts in general. His reportage of the pro-German feelings of the Austrian public and the struggle of German Austrians to maintain predominance in their part of the Dual Monarchy

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\(^{61}\) The basis should have been the 1853 Prussian-Austrian trade agreement (R43 404: 428, overall conclusion of Director Johannes) as already suggested early on in the war by Delbrück (Delbrück 1914: 3).

\(^{62}\) ‘Österreich-Ungarn könne uns nicht mehr bieten als was wir durch den Handelsvertrag erhalten haben.’ – Austria-Hungary cannot offer us anything more than what we have already achieved through trade agreement. – German Federal Archive 1915::77
(Tschirschky 1915a, Appendix 9) clearly inspired the language of the German memorandum to Austrians proposing closer economic relations. (Jagow 1915c)

This memorandum picked up on the received nationalist rhetoric of conceptualising Central Europe, speaking of a brotherhood in arms sealed by blood and promising Austrian Germans support in their fight against the impending Slavicization of Austria. A closing sentence that described Austria as an ‘eastern Germanic mark’ (Jagow 1915c: E585814) was predictably digested none too well by an Austrian side, that refuted such a slur in a sharply worded note of their own (Austro-Hungarian Embassy in Berlin 1915). This sought to highlight the multinational character of the monarchy and suggested that growth and flourishing of its non-German national elements was welcomed by the Austro-Hungarian government.63 When informed about the note, Tschirschky himself observed that the Austrian prosecution of Czech national activists suggested otherwise. He labelled the note as a mere positioning device ahead of the forthcoming negotiations. In his opinion, Austria’s categorical refusal to entertain any use of the term ‘east Germanic mark’ hinted at an aim to position Austria-Hungary on an equal footing with(in) the German Empire. (Tschirschky 1916a, Appendix 12) Following the spat, this type of nationalist rhetoric would never resurface in official correspondence that was decidedly functional, limiting itself strictly to technical negotiation of tariffs and mechanisms.

The negotiations proved to be tedious. The Dual Monarchy’s unique national composition entailed complex domestic calculations, even before unified positions vis-à-vis Germany could be contemplated. The Hungarian Prime

63 ‘Die hervorragende Stellung der Deutschen in Oesterreich beruht auf ihren ziffernmässigen und spezifischen Geschichte. Die Zunahme der Bedeutung anderer Völkerelemente ist eine Folge ihrer zunehmenden Kultur und kann nicht zurückgedrängt, sondern muss im Gegenteil mit Befriedigung begrüsst werden. … Monarchie… nicht blos “eine germanische Ostmark” ist.’ – The prominent position of the Germans in Austria is based on their numeral and specific history. The growth of importance of other ethnic elements is a consequence of their growing culture and can not be pushed back, on the contrary, it has to be welcomed with satisfaction. Monarchy is not merely ”a Germanic eastern mark”. – (emphasis original, Austro-Hungarian Embassy Note, 24 November 1915, E585864 – 865)
Minister Istvan Tisza wrote to German Foreign Office State Secretary Arthur Zimmermann, stressing that while he wished for friendship with Germany, Austria-Hungary could never be its vassal. (Tisza 1915a) By this stage, too, the Austro-Hungarian state agreement was coming up for renewal and Tisza was determined to negotiate the best conditions possible. This stalled negotiations with Germany, as Tisza insisted that internal relations in Austria-Hungary had to be renegotiated first. So at the time when public enthusiasm for the concept of Central Europe was at its greatest, talks were stalled, more than anything, by the problems on the Austro-Hungarian side.

3.7.3.3 The influence of Central Europe advocates

Meanwhile, a significant volume of letters of support or opposition to negotiations with Austria-Hungary was accruing in all the relevant governmental offices. (e.g. German Hop Growers Union 1916, or Union of German Linen Industrialists 191764). While note of all received opinion was taken, there was only a handful of organisations that the German Foreign Office took seriously and whose opinion it followed systematically: namely, the Central European Economic Union (‘Der Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsverein’, MEWV); the German-Austrian-Hungarian Economic Union (‘Der Deutsch-Österreichisch-Ungarische Wirtschaftsverein’, DÖUWV) and; the Working Committee for Central Europe (‘Arbeitsausschuss für Mitteleuropa’, AAfME). Yet, even then, there was never any real prospect that advice from these organizations would work into policy formulation. The ministry merely monitored their activities and collected their publications.65

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64 Multitude of such letters can be found in German Federal Archives in Berlin under shelfmarks R901/3988 and R901/3994
65 The most informative files in this regard are in collections of the German Federal Archive R 43/405 – 407 and a special MEWV file 2254, which contain MEWV files and various files on all three organizations within holdings of the German Foreign Office Political Archive – AA PA Germany 180 2593 – 2598 – and the German Federal Archive – R901/3994, 3995 and 3998.
The most voluminous material in the archives details the activities of MEWV, spanning three dedicated files (German Federal Archive R43/405-407) as well as more scattered documents in various other files of the German Federal Archive and Political Archive of the Foreign Office. It is clear that the German government was following the activities of the MEWV very closely - it was the most established organisation, dating back to 1904, to advocate an economic concept of Central Europe with many high ranking Austro-Hungarian politicians and businessmen within its ranks. Among its membership included Richard Riedl, Director of the Trade Policy Department of the Austrian Trade Ministry. (Delbrück 1915b, Appendix 7) Thus the MEWV was a convenient, non-official channel for the gathering of intelligence on the moods in Austria-Hungary towards the German Empire as well as spreading the empire’s influence.

Yet, the organisation evidently exercised little influence on German governmental policy and decision making beyond meetings with governmental officials or occasional congratulatory ‘thank you’ letters to MEWV for its reports (e.g. MEWV 1916) and memoranda (e.g. MEWV 1915). The high ranks of members in Austria-Hungary were not mirrored on the German side. With the obvious exception of Julius Wolf – a governmental aide during the war– the MEWV did not manage to recruit significant political figures. Perhaps the greatest accreditation MEWV receives from government arrives in a letter from Bethmann-Hollweg dated 27 February 1917. Here it is commented that the memorandum sent by MEWV earlier that month was “a very valuable material for examination of difficult questions of our future economic policy” (Bethmann-Hollweg 1917).

Among individual advocates of Central Europe, the German government maintained by far the most frequent contact with Friedrich Naumann; not surprisingly, since he was himself a liberal member of the parliament. (Retallack 2008: 160) Yet, even here, the evidence for actual influence is relatively limited. His AAFME had, on paper at least, the best chance of swaying
the government though its influential membership. Again, however, this organization could only claim a limited impact through its reports and memoranda. Naumann himself routinely communicated with Foreign Office Undersecretary Zimmermann and Bethmann-Hollweg (e.g. Naumann 1916b, Naumann 1916c and Naumann 1917b). During the war he also posted several books and memoranda on Central Europe that he had written or co-authored (e.g. Naumann et al. 1917).

Yet, none of the policy or decision-making related documents in the archival evidence suggests that Naumann’s memoranda or, indeed, the opinions he expressed in his letters, exerted any direct influence. In fact, towards the end of the war, some influential figures within the government increasingly began to comment that both his publications on Central Europe and his promotional activities were damaging for the interests of Germany. (AA PA 1917)

3.7.3.4 Tedious negotiations

With renegotiation of the Austro-Hungarian treaty largely resolved by 1917 (Wedel 1917, Boyé 1917) and talks on duties and customs regimes for 46 individual categories of goods and services well advanced (Schoenebeck 1917), it was a ‘Polish’ (rather than any Central European) question that would emerge to complicate the political background to negotiations.

German interest groups in Eastern Prussia, as well as the military, were pressing for Russian-occupied sections of Poland to become a part of Germany (e.g. Lersner 1917, Hamburg Chamber of Commerce 1918). However, Austrian officials were demanding the same territory for the monarchy. The German government was concerned over the potential erosion of Austrian German power within their part of the dual monarchy, if further Polish sections of the population (and additional members of parliament) would be added to the

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66 For example Max Weber, Prince Eulenburg, or Naumann himself. (German Federal Archive, Nachlass Naumann N 3001/29, folio 94)
already existing Slav population of Austria-Hungary (see files in German Federal Archive R 901/3998, folio 29 – 58; and AA PA Germany 180 R 2593 – 2597). So the main German concern remained not just the ability of the Dual Monarchy to maintain control of increasing national tensions but a potential increase in its constituent nationalities. (AA PA 1915c, Tschirschky 1916b) In November 1917 the German government agreed to a Austro-Polish solution, albeit one with several conditions: the constitutional arrangement of union would be of a purely personal character67; in return, Germany's sole rights of influence would be admitted in Romania, as would preferential access to the Adriatic sea, a direct railway connection to Hungary and a port for its fleet at Valona; additionally Austria would abandon any further interest in Belgium. (AA PA 1917b, Appendix 13; Johannes 1917b)

Yet by the time German government had cleared its stance over the Austro-Polish solution and related packages, the conviction had hardened that Austria-Hungary itself was in such deep peril that it would not survive another year. (Treutler 1917, Stolberg 1918) The increasing tensions between its many nationalities and the plainly horrific economic situation described in Ambassador Wedel’s many letters further eroded Germany’s threadbare confidence in their ally’s potential for stability. The opinion that the economic alliance was simply impracticable ('undurchführbar') – present in some governmental documents since the beginning of the negotiation process (Tschirschky 1916, Johannes 1916) – was now quickly gathering strength.

3.7.3.5 Faltering commitment

With the realization that post-war Austria-Hungary could not be a strong and stable trade partner, the preferences of German political and economic circles shifted back to concluding a free trade arrangement. (AA PA 1917) Since the very start of the process, the German government had received reports that its

67 Many remained unconvinced. In May 1918, General Erich Ludendorff noted that “from a strictly military standpoint, there is strong interest in seeing the Austro-Polish solution fail.” (GHDI 1918)
wartime enemies – especially the United States – would not tolerate the creation of any customs union with Austria-Hungary or, indeed, with any other European state. (Luxburg 1915) Hopes that Germany could conclude the alliance with Austria-Hungary and then negotiate free trade conditions more widely at or during any forthcoming peace negotiations, were fading.

By 1916, highly publicised talk of a German-dominated greater economic area under the banner of Central Europe was engendering strong opposition from Britain, France and the USA (Kühlmann 1916). This realisation motivated strong critique of “Mr Naumann and his friends” among German governmental officials. The November 1917 assessment of progress on negotiations with Austria-Hungary elaborated by the Foreign Ministry blamed Naumann’s frenetic Central Europe agitations for blocking any post-war attempts to foster free trade. (AA PA 1917: E569131) The whole idea of the customs union and especially the pan-German tenor of proposals for a German dominated Central Europe were fast becoming an impediment to projected post-war economic relations with other countries, most crucially the United States. (German Federal Archive 1917: folio 207)

As Herman Johannes, a director with the German Foreign Office observed in his notes dated 7 January 1917:

“Je lange der Krieg dauert, desto schwerer wird es werden, unsere alten Export-beziehungen im entfernteren Ausland wieder anzuknüpfen; desto mehr werden wir aus den verschiedenen Gründen auf Autarkie angewiesen sein und desto mehr in die Notwendigkeit kommen uns mit unseren Nachbarn und Verbündeten zu einem mitteleuropäischen Wirtschaftsgebiet möglichst eng zusammenzuschliessen. ... Mann könne nicht mehr zurück; die Lobby für ein Mitteleuropa sei bereits zu stark und überdies habe die ‘Naumannsche Agitation’ die Alliierten zu den
In this context, there was a growing sense among officials that concluding a customs treaty with Austria-Hungary prior to any peace negotiations would bind Germany's hands in negotiating convenient trade conditions with its former enemies (AA PA 1917, Schoenebeck 1917). While such negotiations did not appear very likely and such suggestions might have been nothing more than wishful thinking, the concern was real. The peace negotiations with Russians at Brest-Litowsk confirmed this view as the constraints of an emerging relationship with Austria-Hungary proved to be an impediment in negotiations (Koerner 1918). Following Brest-Litowsk, the German preference shifted firmly towards postponing the conclusion of negotiations until after the end of the war.

Indeed, negotiations as such continued, but without much commitment from the German side (Hertling 1918) – the only motivation remaining was the perceived lack of any viable alternatives should, as seemed likely, a post-war return to free trade prove impossible. In 1918, ever worse news was arriving to the German Foreign Office from its embassy in Vienna and consulate in Budapest about the economic situation of the country and prevailing hunger on the streets. (Stolberg 1918b, Wedel 1918b, Fürstenberg 1918) Business circles were growing increasingly negative about the prospect of a customs alliance with Austria-Hungary (various letters in German Federal Archive R 901/3998, folio 6 – 31, 143 – 162) - to the extent that Berlin began to look for alternatives, even discussing a union with Poland. (AA PA 1918)

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68 – The longer the war lasts, the more difficult it will be to rekindle our old export relationships with distant countries, the more we will be for various reasons relying on self-sufficiency, and the more necessary it will be for us to bind ourselves as closely as possible with our neighbors and allies into a Central European Economic Area... There is no way back anymore; the lobby for Central Europe was already too strong and ‘Naumann-like agitation’ caused the Allies to take decisions in Paris and significantly complicated the return to a free world trade. –
3.7.3.6 An unexpected turn of events and the ultimate failure

April 1918 brought the spill-over of the worst scandal to have existed in recent memory between Germany and Austria-Hungary. After a spat with Czernin, French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau published a letter signed by the Austrian Emperor proving that Austria was in secret negotiations towards a separate peace with the Entente.

The fallout from the so-called ‘Sixtus Affair’ brought about what was hailed as a final coming for Central Europe by its advocates. To placate his ally, Karl I had to undergo the humiliating experience of apologizing to Wilhelm II in Spa during May 1918. Yet, an apology was not enough; Austria-Hungary was now considered an unreliable ally for Germany. (Broucek 1979: 463, Krizman 1970: 102) The solution was now seen as binding the Dual Monarchy to Germany by both political and economic treaties. These eventually became known as the 1918 Spa Accords.

The Minutes of the 11 May 1918 meeting of the Supreme Army Command, held just prior to this meeting of sovereigns, shed light on the decision-making motivations on the German side. As the minutes stated:

„State Secretary von Kühlmann thinks... it is now essential to demonstrate both to the domestic population and the rest of the world that Austria-Hungary is willing and compelled to remain on Germany’s side.“ (GHDI 1918: 1)

Chancellor Georg von Hertling had commented that the forthcoming conference of the two emperors would need to deal with political, economic and military dimensions of alliance. Yet priority would be accorded to top-level political agreement, over economic and military goals. All participants in the meeting (including military command, the German Ambassador to Vienna, the Chancellor and representatives of the Foreign Ministry) agreed that the emperors should discuss the principles lying behind these agreements, which would be signed up to by both states with the actual details of agreement.
hammered out subsequently. The Polish question featured prominently in the discussions, but the final consensus was that it should be avoided during the emperors’ meeting to avoid increasing the potential for failure of the three key agreements under consideration. While it was agreed that any economic alliance should be as close as possible, the Chancellor observed that concluding a direct customs union would be difficult due to widespread public opposition in Germany. On the other hand, the military commanders recommended that any military union should be as flexible and pragmatic as possible, given the unresolved structural issues confronting the Austro-Hungarian Army.

Along the lines agreed therefore, the three agreements – an overarching political one, an economic one elaborating a tight customs union and a looser one over military cooperation – were presented to and signed by both the emperors a week later. The negotiations of their particulars of these had started back in June.

Yet, only a month later – during July, the German Ambassador to Vienna reported his conviction that Austria-Hungary was going to be dismembered (Wedel 1918), amidst Hungarians calls for their own sovereign vehicle. (Fürstenberg 1918b) By September, Germany’s Ambassador to Vienna reported that the Austro-Hungarian government itself was convinced that the end was near. Pro-German feelings were all but gone with even Austrian Germans preferring now to surrender to the British and their allies existentially (Wedel 1918b) – so any economic alliance was completely out of the question. (Fürstenberg 1918)

Yet despite and throughout all of this, negotiations at a more junior civil servant level were continuing. The Austrian negotiators were particularly half-hearted, having been instructed to negotiate the most loose conditions for any customs union possible by the new Seidler administration. They lost out to their German counter-parts, who were in a much stronger negotiating position and had been instructed with quite the opposite advice. So, the ‘Guidelines for Customs and
Economic Union’ were signed in September, stipulating very tight union between the two empires (Gratz and Schüller 1925: 93).

But the proposal was by then clearly out of touch with reality – Austria-Hungary was on the verge of dismemberment and the German public now opposed to strengthening ties with what was now an uncomfortable ally. Negotiations never made it past the formulation of guidelines. The idea of Central Europe was finally abandoned in the chaos of a lost war.

3.7.3.7 The notion of Central Europe within the German government

In governmental use, the term Central Europe appeared only occasionally, in notably vague and variable contexts. In the tentative 1915 draft of the treaty on the customs union between Germany and Austria-Hungary, the contractual parties were described merely as “customs allies” (‘Zollverbündeten’). (AA PA 1915b) Central Europe was not used to describe or characterise any alliance with Austria-Hungary by governmental officials. In fact, the only time the notion was used consistently was in Delbrück’s report of April 1915 (Delbrück 1915a), which suggested an economic alliance of Germany with Austria-Hungary, France, Italy and Switzerland.

Overall, the language of files dealing with negotiations with Austria-Hungary is highly technical. It does not resonate with the nationalist language of pan-German Central Europe concepts and shows a remarkable lack of regard for nationalist themes. It is virtually impossible to find any document that would highlight the national affinity of Austrian Germans with their imperial brethren, whether ethnic, historical or cultural. The talk is of production of maize, railway tariffs for coal transport, impact on hop farmers in Bavaria and the financing of dams on the Danube; rather than unique German nation or its historical mission.

This is in stark contrast to the surge of nationalist Pan-German concepts overflowing with romanticism and promising unification as a road to greatness
for the scattered German Volk. The supporting background materials prepared to assist in negotiations did not contain historical studies of German settlement or its cultural reach. Their content was strictly functional, dealing with technical aspects of tariffs for 46 different product categories, filling hundreds of pages with detailed charts and calculations. A pedantic and somewhat mechanical tradition of German officialdom is often stereotyped, but, as these documents show, is perhaps not without an ounce of truth.

Even the overarching political questions were dealt with in a practical rather than an ideological manner. For example, in the midst of the complications surrounding internal treaty renegotiations in Austria-Hungary, the debate revolved around issues of convincing the Hungarian government to buy into the process. The German government considered promising development of railways to Hungary and trade-offs in the shape of offering non-tariff advantages to Hungarian agricultural producers.

While this could all be dismissed as dealing with technicalities while pursuing the aim of establishing a political union of dissipated German nation; the evidence suggests otherwise. In fact, the files tell a completely different story to the one told by popular Pan-German conceptions of Central Europe or their interpretations abroad (e.g. Chéradame 1916).

The very first file of material collected by Delbrück’s commission focused on patterns of production in surrounding countries and their trade exchanges with Germany. The countries considered here included France and Russia but any kind of consideration of Germans lying beyond imperial borders was conspicuously missing. Indeed, the customs union with Austria-Hungary was not recommended, attracting a negative evaluation from the Reichsbanksdirektorium (1914).

This is not to say that the pan-German nationalist thought was entirely absent from imperial policy-making circles. Indeed, as with anywhere else in German
society of the day, this strand of thought was to be found across the board, including politicians too. Memoranda and other documents showing the influence of the pan-German thought are scattered across archival files (e.g. AA PA 1915d). Yet, they tend not to appear in the core decision-making documents, rather as the opinions of relatively peripheral governmental officials.\(^{69}\)

On the other hand, an example of German government activity that could be interpreted as being influenced by the Pan-German thought was its obvious support for the maintenance of German domination in Austria. Yet correspondence exchanged between ambassador Tschirschky and the Imperial Foreign Office reveals that rather than supporting German predominance in Austria out of any great nationalist convictions, the main interest of the German Empire was a strategic one. In their view, the growing influence of Slav nationalities would destabilize Austria and draw it away from Germany. Thus rather than merely preserving the domination of Germans in Austria, it became a strategic imperative for the German Empire to prevent a regional rise of the Slavs. This was indeed the opinion expressed by Tschirschky in his letter to the German Foreign Office dated 20 January 1916 (Tschirschky 1916a), in which – for this very reason – he suggested that Germany should not only help to safeguard the predominance of Germans in Austria, but, crucially, also that of the Hungarians in Hungary.

To sum up, rather than being driven by the dream of any greater economic or political area for a unified German nation, German thought, policy and actions over the question of an economic alliance with Austria-Hungary were clearly the result of more practical considerations. Indeed, the files rarely mention a concept of Central Europe, whose occurrence is largely limited to documents originating in the early months of the war and in documents arriving from

\(^{69}\) For example, even Tschirschky occasionally displayed such tendencies, as apparent from the wording of some his official letters (e.g. Tschirschky 1915a); yet, he eventually made policy suggestions that went head on with ideas of German domination of Central Europe (e.g. Tschirschky 1916a).
outside inner government circles (letters from Friedrich Naumann, the concepts of Austrian authors and articles from Hungarian newspapers, etc).

The bid for a larger economic area can thus be considered an effort independent of contemporaneous and historical attempts to conceptualise Central Europe. The only set of documents that evidences a consistent employment of the notion, Central Europe, is Delbrück's initial report in 1915 (Delbrück 1915a), which suggested a wider economic alliance in Europe, including France, Switzerland and Italy. Yet, the government's drive for such zone stemmed from the very same perceived necessities as the lesser strand of Central Europe concepts presented in section 3.6.2.

**3.8 Conclusions**

To sum up, the chapter demonstrated that conceptualisations of Central Europe in the German environment evolved with a definite geopolitical aim; effecting a change in the international structure on the ground. While the aim varied across time and among authors (causing changes in the territorial reach and characteristics of the proposed new arrangement) it eventually coalesced during the First World War into a rallying call for the establishment of an economic and political union between Germany and Austria-Hungary, a sense of the new *Self* as defined in relation to the hostile surrounding *Other* (the Entente powers). Yet, the German establishment had its own well-established functional definition of Central Europe – a continental customs union – and the public discourse clearly exercised very little influence on its decision making. The 1918 Spa Accords were motivated by necessity to tie a wavering ally into the German orbit, rather than any especial pro-Central Europe enthusiasm.

At the beginning of the chapter, the misleading nature of common narratives tracing the concept of Central Europe back to early 19th century German
authors, especially Friedrich List and Karl Ludwig von Bruck, was established. It is suggested that both individuals were in fact operating with the notion of Germany rather than Central Europe. While List was theorizing enlargement and development of the Customs Union, Bruck was operating in the conditions of an emerging German nation state and was conceptualising Austria's role in it. Only after the process of othering Austria from Germany resulted into its self-identification as a separate entity did the need for a replacement notion expressing ambitions for a political and economic unit encompassing all German people arise.

The shift towards the concept of Central Europe is directly observable in the writings of pan-German authors in the late 1870s and early 1880s, demonstrated in the analysis of works by Constantin Frantz and Paul de Lagarde (section 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). The notion itself was certainly not invented by these authors – references to Central Europe or descriptions of something being Central European had been present in German and non-German environments alike as generic geographical references well before pan-German political constructs started to emerge. Similarly, they continued to be used as such afterwards.

Gradually, however, the notion started to be associated with the political project of a wider unit lying in the middle of Europe, whether in a pan-German or wider geographical sense. This trend became visible in academic journals and volumes from the 1880s onwards, occasionally appearing in the relevant governmental documentation as well. In the late 19th century, the definitive discourse of the notion was led by the pan-German authors and Central Europe emerged as a concept of political unit, which should be 'naturally' dominated by Germans. The dissipated German nation was presented as having a historical mission of unifying the area under its lead. Due to the characteristics of German settlement in Europe, the core of the concept gradually shifted from a German Empire towards the combined territories of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The
distinctive features of these concepts were their theoretical underpinnings in geographic determinism and the organic growth theory of the state.

Yet, in the early 20th century, an added line of reasoning appeared – the economic one. While authors pushing this line of argument bought readily into the existing discourses of Central Europe, they argued that any final borders must be kept flexible and fuzzy. Their thoughts were framed in convictions about the changing nature of international trade and the necessity to build a greater economic area dominated by Germany - if the latter was not to lose out in an envisaged customs duty war with British Empire, Russia and the United States. Austria-Hungary was losing its importance as a trading partner for Germany and, in economic terms, ethnic ties, in any case, secondary to consideration of trade patterns and prospects. While social Darwinist theory and geographic determinism continued to underpin their concepts, the economic authors perceived the interests of Germany primarily in terms of establishing a strong European base and securing the requisite structural conditions for success in global trade. Given existing ties between Germany and Austria-Hungary, the centre of gravity remained on their combined territory but the desired extent typically extended well beyond. The economic line of reasoning was growing in importance as its proponents became active in promoting their concepts through various associations, most prominently the MEWV.

As has already been suggested in section 3.6, the First World War period witnessed a peak in popularity for concepts of Central Europe. By then, the economic basis of the idea of Central Europe was well established. Yet, the war brought about a revival in the pan-German thought and shifted the mainstream of theorisation of Central Europe back towards strong pan-German nationalism. Broader concepts of Central Europe soon became the minority, pushed by authors whose priority was securing convenient positioning for Germany, rather than unification of any German nation. While the mainstream could now be identified as a continuation of grossdeutsch thought and projects of the 19th
century, the lesser strand had largely resulted from observations of the realities of war – the blockade, isolation, and the perceived need to either establish a greater economic area or wither on the vine.

Interestingly, it follows from the archival evidence that the considerations of the Berlin government were remarkably devoid of pan-German underpinnings. Indeed, the rare use that was made of such rhetoric, as evidenced in the Memorandum of November 1915 (Jagow 1915), was seen as a diplomatic blunder and never employed again. The decision to pursue economic alliance with Austria-Hungary was driven by the necessities of the day and a firm belief that the days of free international trade were numbered – here, Germany had to establish a larger economic zone in order to secure survival of its industries after the war. While Austria-Hungary was seen as the inferior partner in any envisaged union, it was also regarded as a stepping stone providing access to the Middle East and ports on the Adriatic Sea. Equally and much more pragmatically, Austria-Hungary was for the time being the only neighbouring state that would consider an economic alliance with Germany of its own freewill and there already existed a track-record of attempted negotiations towards such arrangements.

So, a distinctive lack of pan-German nationalism set it apart from the mainstream romantic Central Europe concepts that characterised the peak wartime debate. Governmental considerations had been consonant with pre-war economic concepts of Central Europe, and to a certain degree, to the lesser wartime strand. Yet, the design put forward by Delbrück’s commission (as well as the reasoning that lay behind it) demonstrably lacked the theoretical underpinnings shared by all Central Europe concepts – their social Darwinism and geographic determinism. Instead, it was built on patterns of trade and a practical reading of the contemporary political and strategic situation.
It only remains to be commented here that while the German government’s wartime designs were aligned with economic concepts of Central Europe from the pre-war period, they were constructed on a very different basis – that of economic necessity, rather than that of organic theory.
Central Europe: forging a concept in time and space

Austria-Hungary

Chapter 4
Chapter 4: Central Europe in Austria-Hungary

4.1 Introduction

The evidence presented in this chapter enforces the argument that conceptualisations of Central Europe are exercises in geopolitics, as in the Austrian environment their formulation clearly sought changes in the international structure. In this case, the creation of an economic and political unit encompassing all Germans was sought, largely since the notion was pushed by pan-German authors. In addition, this chapter advances the argument that such conceptualisations actually displayed an impact on the behaviour of political actors (both positive and negative).

The chapter starts necessarily with the establishment of the context in which the concepts of Central Europe developed in the late 19th and early 20th century in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The chapter draws a parallel between the developments of these concepts: first, more widely within the pan-German movement in Austria and Germany; however, it also observes important differences stemming from the diverging conditions in which they were conceived, and the influences upon them. The concerns for Austro-Hungarian sovereignty, the changing standing of Austrian Germans within the empire and the recurrent efforts at internal reform form a background to the notions of Central Europe put forward by Austrian German authors.

A significant part of the chapter presents the reactions to the Central Europe movement in the Austro-Hungarian Empire from the perspective of its non-German nations. It focuses on the concentrated effort of Tomáš Garrigue
Masaryk, who consistently used the notion of Central Europe to influence Entente policy makers to favour his policy implorations for dismemberment of the dual monarchy.

Importantly, the chapter finds that, for a long time, conceptions of Central Europe were actively suppressed by the Viennese government, due to concerns their identity calls might pose for internal security and sovereignty. It was only in 1917, that the standing of those who advocated a Central Europe changed to the dramatic tune, as they stepped directly into positions of power.

As this chapter concludes, despite several months in power, they were unable to deliver their project. The signature of economic and military treaties with the German Empire only came about as a fallout from revelations of Emperor Karl’s secret separate peace negotiations in spring 1918. This was perhaps too little, too late, for Central Europe enthusiasts.

4.2 The legacy of 1848

As suggested in the previous chapter, considerations of the customs union in the German inhabited area resurfaced several times in the 19th century, the most prominent of these discussions being the deliberations of the Frankfurt constitutional assembly. Yet, these did not feature or elaborate any notion of Central Europe explicitly, operating within the framework of the German Customs Union.

In addition to Karl Ludwig von Bruck – a German by birth – there were other Austrian representatives present in Frankfurt forwarding their proposals for including Austria within the German customs union. Just like in the case of Bruck, their links to later conceptions of Central Europe are at best indirect.

The radical right-wing Viennese representative in the Frankfurt assembly (and future liberal leader), Eugen Megerle von Mühlfeld, also called for a "grossdeutsch" solution, but with guarantees for the unimpaired sovereignty of
Austria. Mühlfeld also proposed federalisation of Austria to contain nationalist tensions. (Kann 1950a: 76) In contrast, Count Friedrich Deym, a representative of the Austrian crown-land estates, proposed that the empire should first weld all its nationalities into one state-nation which would help it to consolidate its power and only then could treaty with the German federation be contemplated. (Deym 2010)

The centre of the political spectrum was represented by Carl Möring and Anton von Schmerling. Möring promoted federalisation of Austria on the basis of combined crown-land and ethnic boundaries, and inclusion of the whole federation into a wider German association. Interestingly, he described this final construct as a central European super-power, yet, similarly to Bruck, failed to use this expression consistently or as the main descriptive geographical basis of his proposal. (Möring 1848) Schmerling favoured inclusion of only those parts of the Austrian Empire that had previously belonged to the Holy Roman Empire within the German federation. In his view, this would suffice to secure Austrian supremacy within the federation as well as guarantee German domination within the Austrian Empire. (Arneth 1895: 128)

Finally, on the left, Franz von Sommarunga, doubting the possibility of a complete inclusion of the whole Austrian Empire within a German federation, proposed a vehicle that had both narrower and wider federal components. The former (narrower and closer knit federation) was to include Austria’s German lands and the latter (territorially wider and looser political construct) would also comprise the remainder of its territorial possessions. (Sommarunga 1848)

However, the best known proposals are perhaps those of Julius Fröbel and Heinrich von Gagern, whose conceptions, just like Bruck’s, are often linked to later notions of Central Europe (e.g. Meyer 1955: 21). While Gagner presented his proposal orally at the Frankfurt Assembly (Wiggard 1848 – 1850: 2894 – 2897), Fröbel preferred to put it down on paper (Fröbel 1848). Gagner spoke of the need for unity and a historical mission to spread German culture, language
and customs down the Danube River; while Fröbel proposed a confederation encompassing Germany, Poland Hungary, the South Slav territories and Walachia – yet neither of the two individuals used the notion of Central Europe to describe their respective constructs. Both spoke of Germany and Europe, and Austria’s future in both.

In fact, in the works of all the above mentioned authors, with the marked exception of Möring, instead of being a hallmark, any notion of Central Europe is conspicuously absent.

### 4.3 The Pan-German movement and Central Europe

In defying all the *grossdeutsch* projects placed before it, the Frankfurt Assembly effectively excluded Austria from the ensuing integration of German space. Central Europe would replace the notion of an extended Germany as the byword for the shared economic and political union of all Germans.

The key to interpreting the undercurrents of Austrio-German thought about Central Europe as a political concept lies in appreciating that while Austrian Germans viewed the Habsburg Monarchy as multinational, they understood it would always be dominated by its German national component. This was not only viewed as an established fact, but as historically and culturally justifiable (Kann 1950: 64) The Compromise of 1867, which restored the sovereignty of Hungary (see map in Appendix 14), seriously challenged this established view. In their own part of the redefined monarchy, Austrian Germans remained in a minority (KuKSZ 1915), facing increasing nationalistic pressures from other ethnic groups.
4.3.1 The rise of Austrian German nationalism

The confidence of Austrian Germans was shaken by the combined tremors of exclusion from German unification, their declining power position and, above all, the virtual loss of half of the empire in 1867, as Hungary regained its sovereignty (see Appendix 16).

The links with their brethren in the German states were also diminishing – the steady, routine flow of immigrants from this source, that had traditionally provided the Austrian intelligentsia as well as its statesmen and businessmen, dried out following the battle of Sadowa in the mid-1860s. (East 1950: 275) Austrian Germans felt cut off from their kinsmen in a unifying Germany and exposed to the ambitions of rival nationalities within their own unstable empire. With this heightened sense of insecurity, many in Austrian-German society perceived the growing national ambitions (and numbers) of the Slav social elements as the “threat of Slavicisation” (Lindström 2008, Vysny 1977) and started to organize themselves to safeguard their own national interests and traditional privileges.

The first associations that aimed to reconsolidate the diminished position of the Austrian Germans’ emerged in this context of heightened national anxiety, among them the *Deutscher Volksverein* established in Vienna in 1867 and the *Verein der Deutschnationalen* in Graz in 1869. (Schäfer 2007: 15) Austrian German nationalism, which would later take on a form of Pan-Germanism, was thus born out of reaction to their changing political and social standing after the decline of Habsburg power.

Yet, political activism only developed gradually, in reaction to the changing political landscape of Austria in the following decades. The pan-Germans split from the German Liberal Party in 1879, following the unsuccessful bid of emergent leader Georg von Schönerner to propose customs union with Germany as a central tenet of party policy (Carsten 1985: 223). The parallel efforts of Count Eduard von Taaffe to build his cabinet on the support of Slav parties
caused obvious consternation in Austrian Germans and prepared fertile ground for Schönerer’s ideas. The idea, that from then on Austrian Germans had to rely on their own strength (*Selbshilfe*) rather than government support, resulted in the formation of an increasing number of nationalist associations. One of them was the *Deutscher Klub* in Vienna led by Schönerer - aided here by Engelbert Pernerstorfer, Victor Adler and Heinrich Friedjung, all future power-players in Austrian politics. (Cohen 2006: 119)

Within three years (September 1882), this group, headed by Schönerer, formulated its famed Linz Program. This postulated Austria’s complete separation from Hungary and the consolidation of Austrian German political power in Austria by its separation from Polish territories but advocated the forging of a customs union encompassing Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Balkan states. (Roman 2009: 512) This proposal was not too different from the concepts of Gagner or Fröbel presented some forty years earlier and heralded the comeback of the idea of bringing Austria back together into a wider union with Germany.

Schönerer’s star had dimmed by the late 1880s and early 1890s, as the *Deutschnationale Bewegung* grew, both in the number of constituent groups and the heightened profile of its leaders. The German National Party was founded in 1891, followed by the German Peoples Party in 1896. The fight for maintaining German national privileges was fought through *Deutscher Schulverein*, *Bund der Deutschen* and other social groups, as antagonism between Slavs and Germans in Austria gained momentum.

Schönerer’s day came again with the controversial Badeni Language Laws of 1897, which placed the Czech language at the same level as German. A nationalist explosion followed in the Bohemian crown lands and Schönerer and his group were expelled from the parliament. By the time the Badeni Laws were repealed in 1899, it would be too late to placate the outraged Austrian
Germans, who felt betrayed by their government. Schönerer launched an outright attack on the monarchy, calling for its dissolution and the unification of the Empire’s German territories (including Bohemian crown lands inhabited mostly by Czechs) with Germany. (Alexander 2012: 257) Schönerer’s new *Alldeutsche Vereinigung* heralded a new chapter in Austrian German nationalism and the quest for union with Germany. (Ingrao and Szabo 2007: 172)

4.3.2 A Definitive discourse of Central Europe

The notion of *Mitteleuropa* with its relatively loose meaning was present in Austrian daily parlance and academic writing well before its political meaning was developed. Central Europe as a concept - if not yet a political project – had started to appear in Austrian academic writing by the 1870s. A *General Map of Central Europe* (*General Karte von Central-Europa*, 1875) was produced by the Austrian Military Geographical Institute in 1875. However, its title did not employ the notion of *Mitteleuropa* as yet. *Mitteleuropa* as a notion only started to appear consistently in Austrian writing by the end of the 1870s and into the 1880s (e. g. Woldrich 1886), in parallel with the rise of the notion in Germany and temporal proximity to foundation of the Dual Alliance (*Zweibund*) in 1879.

Austrian geographers were among the first to enter the discourse over Central Europe. Their concepts were not necessarily political and were elaborated in maps, geographical handbooks and school text books (e.g. Peucker 1893). On the other hand, the delimitation of Central Europe in these texts was often based on political or economic geography rather than physical criteria. One example using political criteria for delimitation was Ludwig Neumann’s description of Central Europe as consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, the Low Countries, Luxemburg and Lichtenstein. (reprinted in

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70 For excerpts from mid 19th century Austrian newspapers employing the notion as general geographical term, see Gaertner 1911, pp. 11 – 12; or *Wiener Zeitung*, 1 – 10 July 1848.
Scobel 1908) An example of economic criteria being used is Ernst Friedrich’s delimitation, which spanned approximately the same area. (Friedrich 1907)

Yet, geographers were significantly outrun in the volume of writing on Central Europe by the pan-Germans (indeed, some authors belonged to both groups at the same time), even though their writing is still limited as compared to works published in Germany. Pan-German propaganda was severely restricted by the governmental censorship (Kann 1950a: 99, Müller 2001: 159), as the government was careful to cap the simmering conflict of nationalities within the empire. Instead, Pan-German pamphlets and books were being smuggled in from Germany, among them those detailing the emerging concept of Central Europe. Moreover, some of the foremost German proponents of the notion lived and worked in Austria-Hungary or visited on a regular basis. Among them, for example, was Albrecht Penck, a geography professor at the University of Vienna. Intellectual exchange was lively and Austrian authors often figured among those contributing to the Geographisches Zeitschrift, which would carry the thrust of articles arguing for a redefinition of the notion of Central Europe into the early 20th century. Despite existing censorship, Austrian pan-Germans produced a significant number of political conceptions of Central Europe, the majority of them remarkably consistent in their interpretation of Central Europe as an economic and political union of Germany and Austria even before the end of the 19th century (e.g. Vernaleken 1898). It was both this consistency and prevalence within the definitive discourse that helped to gradually steer interpretation of the notion their way.

One of the authors falling into this category was Alexander von Peez, an Austrian German industrialist and politician. He considered that the strengthening of Austria-Hungary could only be achieved by fostering and protecting the predominance of Germans in the monarchy. He presented his Central Europe project, comprising the states of the Triple Alliance, as the only option to successfully face down the competition from other great powers in the economic field. (Peez 1895)
Among later entrants into the debate was Albert Ritter - his pamphlet *Berlin-Bagdad: Neue Ziele mitteleuropäischer Politik* (1914) really stood out. The fervently written pamphlet aroused considerable interest and was reprinted several times just before the outbreak of the First World War (Meyer 1955: 108). Ritter considered any concepts defending Germany and Austria-Hungary as outmoded, since they were just two parts of the larger whole – the German nation. He called for the immediate implementation of the Central European project, defined as both the economic and political union of Germany and Austria-Hungary. In line with prevailing organic theories of the state, Ritter insisted that Germans had to either grow or wither away, making creation of Central Europe a matter of their 'life and death' (Ritter 1914: 18).

Under the influence of its pan-German lead, the notion of Central Europe settled relatively early along the lines of the economic and political union of Austria-Hungary and Germany. It was often employed by the daily press in supporting arguments for a customs union in the 1880s and 1890s.

Thus, while the process of othering after 1848 created a perception of two separate German nations (Vernaleken 1898), the end of the century brought them back together in what was (in an Austrian context at least) being presented as a shared strategic, economic, cultural and historical space for all Germans – *Mitteleuropa*. Tellingly, when the Austrian Military Geographical Institute updated its General Map of Central Europe in 1903, it would opt this time for the title, *General Karte von Mittel-Europa*.

### 4.3.3 MEWV in Austria-Hungary

After *Der Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsverein* (MEWV) was founded in Berlin in 1904, its first conference met later during the same year in Vienna. Julius Wolf, its founder, had in fact been born in Bohemia, even though he spent most of his life in Germany.
Austrian branches of MEWV promoted the idea of closer economic cooperation by the way of harmonization of regulations, procedures and schemes for trade, transport and communication, rather than calling for a customs union. In this way, they could avoid the many pitfalls that pan-Germans would fall into, especially the censorship, as their proposals did not represent such a threat to Austro-Hungarian sovereignty.

MEWV focused on practical proposals and its propaganda in favour of Central Europe was relatively limited, especially in Austria-Hungary. In fact, Wolf set out rules for MEWV societies, which specifically instructed members of the newly founded association not to conduct political agitation, provoke any suspicion of impinging on the economic sovereignty of any state, or put forward aggressive designs (Wolf 1905; 8–9).

The focus on simplification of trade and investment relations between Austria-Hungary and Germany, rather than any agitation for grand political designs, steered MEWV activities towards working out the details of individual pieces of regulation and tabling proposals for relevant policy makers. However, their impact was very modest. The practical results of their work were limited to simplification of banking procedures and customs formalities in trade with Germany (Patzauer 1911).

Overall, while activities of MEWV, unlike the pan-German movement, did not threaten sovereignty of Austria-Hungary and thus avoided censorship, they did not have much impact on policy-making either. As a result, MEWV’s infrastructural effect in the monarchy was, in fact, negligible.

4.4 The reformist efforts

Even though the monarchy was said to be on the verge of collapse for decades (e.g. Sorel 1878 or Leroy-Beaulieu 1888), in the early years of the twentieth century the plans of Pan-Germans did not attract overwhelming support even
among their own followers. In the first elections with general suffrage for men in 1907, the Pan-German and radical parties achieved only 2.8% support. (Morgenbrod 1994: 22)

Repetitive outbursts of nationalism by Austrian Germans against their Slav compatriots did not necessarily translate into political support for union with Germany and Austrian Germans generally remained loyal to the Habsburg sceptre. Nationalist struggle translated itself into support of nationally defined, yet, not anti-dynastic parties. While parliament was deadlocked in national struggles most of the time, calls for dissolution of the monarchy were rarely voiced. For the most part, power-struggles focused on petty local issues, and safeguarding or advancing of competing ethnic privileges.

While the Pan-Germans conspired and the rest of Europe debated the break-up of the empire (Tille 1895, Benoist 1897, Hirst 1898, Beaumont 1901, Brooks 1901, Chéradame 1901), the Austrian government was busy trying to defuse and stabilise a simmering melting pot of national tensions. Pan-German conceptions of Central Europe under a unified German leadership certainly did not align with the efforts of the Austrian government to stabilise its shaky empire.

4.4.1 Growing pressures

Discussion of reform under the Habsburg Monarchy was a recurrent theme in the 19th century and successive Austrian governments were notorious unable to keep pace with the increasing pressures for change. The flourishing of modern nationalisms and the ossified, ages-old empire clashed violently – for instance, the 1848/9 revolution could only be suppressed with the help of the Russian imperial army. The 1866 defeat by Prussia shook Austrian power to its foundations. The result was the 1867 Compromise; the only reform that addressed nationalist pressures with some degree of success. The Compromise brought restoration of Hungarian sovereignty and restructuring of the Austrian
Empire into a dual monarchy under a shared monarch and three key ministries. Its likely effectiveness in meeting the pressures of rising nationalisms always seemed questionable, and the regular renegotiation of the compromise (scheduled every 10 years) predictably brought about renewed constitutional crises.

The pressures posed by the Slav nationalities in the Empire were also rising and the Vienna government had to increasingly engage in a fine balancing act to hold the situation under control. It should not be forgotten that Austria was dominated by its German population, who considered it their prerogative to maintain a dominant position. Yet, the necessity of placating the Slavs required implementation of reforms in their favour. This, in turn, was sure to result in a negative reaction from the German population. A heightened sense of vulnerability on the part of Austria’s Germans led them to increasingly doubt the court’s dedication to advancing the interests of their own kin. The reforms thus implemented were partial and often reversed, owing to the competing pressures of national groups on the government.

By the end of the 19th century it was clear that tensions between the nationalities of the empire would sooner or later force stronger changes in the empire’s structure. The common expectation was that these would arrive with the demise of the elderly Emperor Franz Joseph, placing growing pressures on the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand d’Este.

4.4.2 The Belvedere Circle

The heir to the throne surrounded himself with a group of advisers, who analysed, debated and developed proposals for imperial reform. The so-called Belvedere Circle was a heterogeneous collective of young conservatives and representatives of national minorities (chiefly from Hungary), who strove to preserve the empire’s threatened position in the face of radicalising social forces. Their efforts centred on devising a federal structure for the empire, one
that would be able to meet the demands of radical nationalisms in the country and, at the same time, preserve the empire as such.\textsuperscript{71}

The debate within the circle was significantly influenced by the ideas of Aurel Popovici, a Romanian from Hungary, who joined the group after being exiled for his reformist views (Castellan 1989: 149). In 1906, Popovici published his \textit{Die Vereinigte Staaten von Gross\-\österreich} (Popovici 1906), in which he renounced the Compromise of 1867, proposing instead a federalist structure for the whole of the monarchy. Its territory was to be divided into 15 federal units joined together by strong centralistic elements. His aim was to restore Austria to its former power status, resolve its nationality question and avert the spectre of potential future Russian influence over the monarchy’s Slavs. The major challenge here was the implicit degradation of the status of Hungarians and Germans in such arrangements, which was always unlikely to go uncontested.

This broad view was apparently shared by the heir to the throne as well. One of the most interesting works of the Belvedere Circle was its \textit{Manifesto for the Austrian People} (Eichhoff 1926: 1 - 3)\textsuperscript{72}, which was drafted by the director of the Archduke’s military chancellery, Alexander von Brosch, and presented as the plan Franz Ferdinand would follow after his succession to the throne.

The basic objective of the plan was to strengthen the cohesive forces of empire, implying a stronger position for the crown, the lesser status of Hungary, now levelled with all other imperial nationalities. Essentially, federalisation was to be carried out along ethnic territorial lines, more or less consistent with Popovici’s proposal. The federal structure was to be dominated by a strong central power: Franz Ferdinand intended to end the permanent constitutional conflict in the country, restore the empire to its pre-1867 homogeneity and

\textsuperscript{71} Many of the concepts analyzed and developed by the circle can be found in the Austrian National Archives: Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Nachlass Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand, Denkschriften und Broschüren, AT-OeStA/HHStA HausA NL Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand, depot Hohenberg, box 14.

\textsuperscript{72} The document was first published in 1926 by J. A. von Eichhoff. It is not dated, but historians put its origins between 1908 and 1911. The document carries ideas, whose authorship is ascribed to several members of the group, including Count Czernin, Heinrich Lammasch and Gustav Truba. The manifest is also mentioned by another member of the group, Milan Hodža, in his \textit{Federation in Central Europe} (1942).
regain Austria’s former glory as a great power within the Concert of Europe. To this purpose, a manifest series of legal tricks was concocted to enable the ascending monarch to avoid an oath of loyalty to the Hungarian constitution. Avoiding the oath would allow him to carry out the envisaged reform. Indeed, the manifesto even stipulated the potential use of force, if necessary.

The aim of the Belvedere circle was to safeguard the monarchy and not the leading role of Germans, as would have been hoped for by the pan-Germans. While Franz Ferdinand’s death prevented realisation of any such plans, the work of the group evidences quite clearly that rather than striving to maintain a German hold on Austria, the monarchy was striving to maintain Austria’s hold on all its nationalities – not just the Germans but the Czechs, Poles, Slovenians and the increasingly confident Magyars. Similar attitudes were apparent across cabinets of Franz Joseph, which showed a preference for fostering the empire over advancing the interests of the German population.

Pan-German plans for Central Europe would at the very least have made Austria-Hungary a junior partner to Germany, if not annexed altogether. These were demonstrably not in line with the interests and policies of the Austrian throne and government.

4.5 The First World War

In the run up to the war, the focal point of the debate over Central Europe was Schönerer’s Deutscher Klub in Vienna (Samassa 1917: 6). The club became a centre for various groups of German nationalists and on 19 September 1914 at an event organized by the club, the chairman of the Alldeutschen Verband, Heinrich Class introduced his ‘Six Point Program’ for Austria-Hungary. While many of his propositions evoked a mixed response, point five – advocating customs and economic union with Germany – met with general acclaim (Baernreither 1914: 19 and 20 September). From then on, proposals for
The actuation of such a union became virtually the sole theme of debates in the club. (Müller 2001: 35)

The German National Union (*Der Deutsche Nationalverband*) was the first political organisation that actively promoted the idea of a Central Europe\(^\text{73}\) (Müller 2001: 28). In the days after the outbreak of the war, Gustav Gross, the chairman of the union, sent its members a memorandum in which he outlined a comprehensive program: political union with Germany was to be established and recognized in the constitution, while economic union under a customs parliament was to be created with German language elevated to the role of state language (Gross 1914a). His letter met with enthusiasm from union members, responding to Gross's memorandum with their own proposals for how the union should be achieved. (Beurle 1914) While the usual problem of reaching consensus over an exact form for Central Europe persisted in this group as well, several members suggested in their written replies that the union should insist on German leadership of Central Europe (Dobering 1914a, Freissler 1914).

Pan-German writers produced a positive flurry of concepts for Central Europe in the following four years of war, the main features of which will be explored in the following sections.

### 4.5.1 Early wartime concepts

German ambassador Tschirschky reported to his superiors in Berlin on 1 September 1914 that the idea of a customs integration with Germany\(^\text{74}\) was gaining traction in the Austrian society. (Tschirschky 1914a, Appendix 8)

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\(^{73}\) *Der Deutsche Nationalverband* was an umbrella organisation for the national and liberal parties established just before the parliamentary elections in 1907. The purpose of the union was to represent political interests of Austrian Germans in the domestic political struggle. By 1911, the union included five parties\(^\text{73}\), which among themselves gained 105 seats in the 514 seats strong Chamber of Deputies, followed by Social Democrats and Christian Social Party. (Uckar 1985: 362)

\(^{74}\) Tschirschky used the expression “Zollanschluss an Deutschland”, subconsciously indicating that in his view Austria should be attached to rather than form equal partnership with Germany. (Tschirschky 1914b)
Indeed, the proposal resonated not only among the Pan-German members of the Viennese parliament (e.g. Medlinger 1915) but also in the daily newspapers (Tschirschky 1914b) in the early months of the war.

A flurry of pan-German concepts calling for union with Germany was published in this period. The first formulation of the Pan-German idea of Central Europe to attract major public attention was the Heinrich Class’s ‘Denkschrift zum deutschen Kriegsziel’ published as on 28 August 1914. (Fischer 1969: 647, Kruck 1954: 71) In an outburst of feeling founded on the new unity to be founded between the Austria-Hungary and Germany, Austrian pan-Germans called for union on political grounds and not just economic reasons. Professor Eugen Philippovich, an Austrian German political economist and one of the foremost advocates of closer relations with Germany, wrote:

“Wir wünschen die Verbindung nicht allein aus wirtschaftlichen Gründen, sondern auch darum, weil dann naturgemäß die Stellung der Deutschen in Österreich gestärkt wird.” (Philippovich 1915: 2)

Some went so far as to claim that political union with Germany was necessary in order to help Austrian Germans “fight the second war with German-hating Slavs and Magyars” (AA PA 1915b). Joint manifestos on the endangered position of Austrian Germans within their own state were written by pan-German members of parliaments in both countries. (Erzberger 1915) The language used was particularly charged:

“Der schönste Staatsvertrag ware ein Blatt Papier gegen eine slavische Majorität und einen slavophilen Regierunskurs in Oesterreich.” (Erzberger 1915: 15)

75 - We wish for the union not only for economic reasons, but also because it will naturally strengthen the position of the Germans in Austria. -

76 - The most beautiful state treaty would be one sheet of paper against a Slavic majority and Slavophil orientation of the government in Austria. -
Interestingly, the expression Central Europe did not feature in these documents exclusively, as write-ups typically focused primarily on internal reforms within Austria-Hungary (e.g. Philippovich 1915); it appears alongside expressions such as *wirtschaftliche Vereinigung* (economic union), *wirtschaftliche Annäherung* (economic rapprochement) or *Zollunion* (customs union). The necessity of forging the unity and kinship of a German nation divided into two states was over-emphasised. Tediously long expressions using the names of both states were used alongside references to the German nation as one unit. The importance of Austria in such schemes was typically highlighted by assertions that it was “the bearer of German culture” or "medium of German supremacy in the East" (Brandt 1915: 2, Jesser 1915: 16, Gross 1915). Austrian pan-Germans now ‘felt German again’, and took advantage of a lighter hand of the censor to voice their grievances and reassert their identity.

Many proposals, as suggested above, stemmed from envisaged internal reform of the monarchy: Austria was to reassert its former German character and the dual monarchy remodelled to increase Austria’s relative power. (Jesser 1915) Closer military and economic alliance with Germany was discussed only after proposals for reassertion of Austria’s German character were laid out and wider Central European economic area was finally alluded to, highlighting the envisaged role of Austria in the further expansion of influence (as the German power in the East). (Gross 1915) A typical example arrived with the ideas of Alois Brandt, a Bohemian German academic, who spent 9 of his 16 page treatise addressing German demands for the reorganization of Austria after the war, discussing internal reforms in Austria, then devoting 2 pages to the restructuring of Austria-Hungary, a further 2 pages on the future relationship with Germany and 2 more pages on relationships with neighbouring states, including proposals for a Central European economic area.77 (Brandt 1915)

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77 Austrian Germans were not the only ones obsessed with reform of the monarchy to restore its former great power standing. Even though from a different point of view, and with obviously different proposals for internal reform, Hungarian authors were trying to resolve the same problem –
On the other hand, an almost equal body of Austrian German writing on Central Europe fell firmly in line with the definition of Central Europe as the union of Austria-Hungary and Germany, emphasising its German character; essentially, a replacement notion for ‘Deutschland’. Edmund Steinacker’s analysis of such proposals during January 1916 (Steinacker 1916) observed that they typically embraced two elements – military alliance and economic union. Such concepts reasserted the need for a close alliance of the two empires in an envisioned post-war world comprising enlarged and antagonistic economic areas. Authors were conscious of the lesser economic and military strength of Austria-Hungary compared to Germany and were careful to portray the important role Austria could play in mediating any future alliances radiating to the south-east of Europe or even the Middle East. (Rechenberg 1916) Sustaining the dual monarchy’s sovereignty was a non-negotiable condition even for Austrian German writers in the early war-time debate over the concept of Central Europe.

4.5.2 The post-Naumann debate

It was only after the publication of Naumann's book that Central Europe became a real buzz-word. The number of works on Central Europe published within just a small matter of months soared following publication of this iconic book. Broadly, they could be divided into three broad groups – those works endorsing and building upon Naumann's concept, critiques of his work and the works of authors proposing alternative concepts within the context of the debate that had hereby been triggered.

It was also at this point that the discourse over Central Europe transcended its traditional pan-German boundaries and spilled over into daily parlance. Authors outside this narrow movement entered the discourse in a manner that

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to restore the monarchy as the power in the east and equal partner for Germany in a future military and economic union. (e.g. Kristoffy 1916)
unsettled the established characteristics of the debate. Central Europe was paired with a multitude of synonyms, such as the above mentioned *wirtschaftliche Vereinigung* (economic union), *wirtschaftliche Annäherung* (economic rapprochement) or *Zollunion* (customs union). The economic line of argument became particularly pronounced and popular, as it did not contradict Austria’s political sovereignty and was considered a necessary addition to the military alliance, with a post-war return to free trade now deemed unfeasible.

4.5.2.1 Naumann’s followers

Authors in the first category would typically firmly assert their belief in the German character of Central Europe:

“Der geschichtliche Boden, auf dem sich die deutsche Nation entwickelt und vor allem betätigt hat, heisst es Mitteleuropa.”

(Sieger 1917: 7)

As such, they included Germany and Austria-Hungary within Central Europe and alluded to the option of potentially extending its reach, contingent upon future economic developments. After Naumann, the world war was presented as the instrumental event in forging a future Central Europe.

Some, like Alfred Gürtler, took it upon themselves to elaborate the internal processes of Naumann’s construct. Gürtler’s work is exceptional for its comprehensiveness and complexity, as well as its legalistic rather political line of enquiry. He focused on the legal underpinnings of the Dual Monarchy, especially the Pragmatic Sanction, Compromise of 1867 and its later renegotiation. For Gürtler concluded that when these legal norms are analysed

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78 - The historical area, in which the German nation developed and primarily operated, we call Central Europe. – (Sieger 1917: 7)
79 “Österreich-Ungarn und das Deutsche Reich sind durch das Feuer des Krieges zu einer militärischen Einheit zusammengeschmiedet worden.” – Austria-Hungary and the German Empire have been forged together into a military union by the war. – (Succovaty 1916: 16)
80 An edict issued by Emperor Charles VI to ensure a female heir could inherit Habsburg possessions, issued 1713
and compared to Naumann’s proposal, Austria-Hungary already constituted a small version of Central Europe (Gürtler 1916a: 27). In its conclusions, he asserted that organisational schemes developed in Austria-Hungary should become the model for Central Europe. Thus Central Europe would offer the solution for the monarchy’s chief problem – national tensions – and the monarchy would offer a solution for the chief problem of Central Europe – its organisational structure. Gürtler further elaborated his ideas in later works, proposing a model for the future customs union of Germany and Austria-Hungary built upon existing legal norms in Austria-Hungary. (Gürtler 1916b)

Yet, not all works building on Naumann were oriented towards putting the concept into practice. Some of them, like Karl Schneider’s *Mitteleuropa als Kulturbegriff* (Schneider 1916), were also highly academic works, introducing a layer of philosophical reasoning behind the idea of Central Europe. Schneider started by defining it as a combination of Germany and Austria-Hungary. This central state union81 was later to be enlarged with the addition of Bulgaria and Turkey (Schneider 1916: 13). Yet, cultural unity first needed to be achieved within Central Europe, as it was not only to be a state union (in the classical nation-state sense) but the ‘first line of military defence’ in any future fight against Russia. Russia was cast as the polar other when set against Central Europe, determined to extinguish the beacon of pure culture that this new order would represent. Schneider’s original gloss for the scheme was his concept for a ‘new Christianity’, which Central Europe would embody in its role as a new cultural form. Schneider’s novel take on the historical mission of Central Europe was otherwise accompanied by relatively repetitive and routine insistences on the central role for Austria-Hungary in mobilising any new political union to project its power to Asia and Africa. Yet, between the lines, it becomes obvious that for Schneider the value of Austria was in providing a land-bridge for further expansion.

81 ‘Zentraler Staatenbund’
Finally, Austrian authors also elaborated practical proposals for implementing the Central Europe idea, aimed at influencing and guiding policy makers. An interesting addition to this part of the debate was the *Denkschrift aus Deutsch-Österreich* of Austrian historian, Heinrich Friedjung. Friedjung was one of the earliest adherents of Central Europe: in 1880, he had co-authored the program of the Austrian German People’s Party (‘Deutsche Volkspartei’), which incorporated the idea of a Central European economic union (Müller 2001: 157). Proposing a Central European Union between Germany and Austria-Hungary, Friedjung had openly championed Austrian German preponderance in the dual monarchy. Wider union with the German Empire should have been, in the first place, German in its national character. The first step would have been an immediate creation of customs union for at least 25 years, initiated by the Bavarian king, as a mediator between the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs. So as to avoid censorship, the paper was only sent to 200 carefully selected and influential politicians. A unique feature of Friedjung’s proposal is the fact that it was the collective outcome of the Baernreither group that included Eugen Philippovich, Michael Hainisch and Hans Übersberger. It was also one of very few works on Central Europe by Austrian German authors that attracted the serious interest of German policy makers (see Friedjung 1915 in AAPA R2594, doc. no. 368/0).

4.5.2.2 Naumann’s critics: Karl Renner

Not all Austrian German authors agreed with Naumann. The Austrian socialist community was an especially fertile ground for his critics. Foremost of these was Karl Renner (usually writing under his pseudonym of Karl Kautsky). Renner had written on the subject of customs unions, using the notion of

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82 Friedjung was a part of the closely knit community of Central Europe proponents surrounding J. M. Baernreither and Edmund Steinacker. (Steinacker 1937: 234)
Central Europe, even before Naumann’s book was published (Renner 1915, Appendix 5). He rejected Naumann on ideological grounds.

Renner viewed Naumann’s proposal as a capitalist plot, one which would certainly not lead to a ‘United States of Central Europe’ (Kautsky 1916: 43); rather, it was just another political construct promoting the interests of large capitalists. He observed that Naumann’s starting point was the perceived detrimental effects of high customs duties levied by other countries for German industry. Kautsky insisted that all Naumann really had in mind were the interests of large industries, for whose purpose he devised protection in the form of a larger economic zone, one from which the large industries of other countries would be excluded. Renner (Kautsky) reckoned that by doing so, the larger domestic market would be ring-fenced to the detriment of the population, as large producers would be able to maintain high prices and even monopolies, building trusts and cartels. Thus Naumann’s proposal, instead of eliminating the negative effects of foreign capitalist influences, would cement in place the negative effects of domestic ones. (Kautsky 1916: 24 – 25) He insisted that it was not Naumann but proponents of a “workers’ democracy” that were the true advocates of “United States of Europe” and had been for half a century. (Kautsky 1916: 43)

In conclusion, his critique suggested:

“Sollte der mitteleuropäischer Staatenbund je zu seiner Verwirklichung gelangen, so könnte er nur ein Übergangsstadium sein. Denn dieselben Tendenzen, die allein ihn zu schaffen vermochten, müssten nach seiner steten Erweiterung in der Richtung eines Weltbundes bringen.”83 (Kautsky 1916: 48)

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83 - Should the Central European State Union ever be realized, it could only be a transitional stage. For the very same tendencies, which facilitate its creation, must bring its further enlargement in the direction of a global union. -
Renner had also voiced his critique at a meeting of Austrian and German social democrats in January 1916 (Renner 1916) and many of his colleagues agreed with him. At the meeting, speakers avoided any mention of Central Europe, preferring to refer to a “wirtschaftliche Annäherung”, even though they would have used the notion previously (just like Renner). They were now clearly dissociating themselves from the political baggage that Central Europe now carried. (SDPD 1916)

Renner was not the only critic of Naumann's concept. The most radical pan-Germans were also unconvinced by his scheme and accused Naumann of being insufficiently ambitious and excessively accommodating of the small nations in the region. (Dodds and Atkinson 2000: 44; see e.g. Spahn 1925) Conversely, some of his most outspoken critics came from the representatives of the small nations – Tomáš Garigge Masaryk, to name but one – his *The New Europe: The Slav Standpoint* (1918) was pitched directly against Naumann’s proposal.

4.5.2.3 Independent definitions

Many authors aired their definitions and visions of Central Europe before the public in the noisy debate following the publications of Naumann’s work. While the bulk of the discussion was led by Naumann’s supporters and opponents, there were also those, who offered visions for Central Europe of their own.

One of these authors was Erwin Hanslik, who argued that Central Europe was not an area with set boundaries, but a transitional area between the East and the West. These two anti-poles represented in Hanslik’s view opposing geographical, climatic and cultural characteristics and Central Europe would be the area of their transition. Hanslik contrasted the bourgeois culture of the West and the backward feudal structures of the East; the industrial society of the West and rural society of the East; the maritime climate of the West and the continental climate of the East, etc. The net effect of such transitions delimited
his Central Europe in a geographical area whose coastal outposts were Trieste, Odessa and Danzig. (Hanslik 1917: 94)

Hugo Hassinger presented a dynamic model for developing a Central Europe as defined by its geographic and socio-political characteristics. His Central Europe consisted of two components – a core defined by Germanic culture (consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Switzerland) and the Low Countries; and a periphery, which, while falling under the influence and supervision of the core, was located around the lower Danube basin and to the south of it. Hassinger, like Gürtel, insisted that Austria-Hungary served as an ideal model for the future political organisation of the space, which would drive its future economic prosperity from its positional centrality - allowing access to sea lines of trade as well as controlling a ground route to the Middle East. (Hassinger 1917: 476 - 493)

However, these independent voices were peripheral to the main discourse of Central Europe, which had by then firmly been associated with the notion of a projected military, economic and political alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary, one that was to be dominated by the Germans and expanded south-east down the Danube, should an opportunity arise.

This association was so strong that Albrecht Penck, at the time a geography professor at the University of Vienna, decided to drop mention of the notion in his geographical works, suggesting that it had now become unfit for the purpose of geographical differentiation. (Penck 1915)

### 4.5.3 Avoiding the label

As negotiations on a customs union between Germany and Austria-Hungary progressed in 1916 and 1917, more and more practically oriented studies of its likely effects, processes of conversion, individual product groups, etc. were undertaken. (Matlekovits 1916, Reichenberg HuGK 1916, Carus 1916) The
conviction that the economic future of Austria-Hungary depended on a customs union with Germany was now deep-seated and academics as well as politicians now debated the details rather than the principle of such unification. However, these tended to avoid employing the notion of Central Europe, by now firmly associated with characteristics assigned to it in the post-Naumann discourse, instead often opting for replacements such as ‘wirtschaftliche Annäherung’, ‘zollpolitische Annäherung’, ‘Zollbund’, ‘Wirtschaftsverband’ and others.

Economic reasoning behind the idea of an enlarged Central Europe was gathering strength in Austria. Yet, rather than simply endorsing the idea of a customs union, authors promoted Austria-Hungary as a gateway to the east, emphasising the importance of the Danube and the place of the Balkans in any new customs union. As Dietrich Berl, director of the coal mining company, Berl, wrote in a letter to the German Embassy:

“Es ist selbstverständlich dass jedermann, ohne sich etwa von Gefühlsmomenten leiten lassen zu wollen, Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn in einem einheitlichen Zollgebiet vereinigt sehen möchte. Es würde wohl noch von weitergehender Bedeutung sein, wenn auch die Balkanstaaten nach Friedensschluss dieser Zollgemeinschaft angehören wurden, so dass von der Nord- und Ostsee bis zum Schwarzen Meere ein einheitliches Zollgebiet bestünde.” (Berl 1916: 4)

The weight of Berl’s proposal was centred on the ‘customs area’ (‘Zollgebiet’) rather than Central Europe. He was also ultimately concerned about the balance

84 ‘ Unsere ganze wirtschaftliche Zukunft liegt in einem zollpolitischen Annäherung an Deutschland’ – Our whole economic future lies in customs-political rapprochement with Germany. – (Carus 1916: 2)  
85 For comparison with earlier debate on principle of customs union see Szterenyi 1915  
86 It goes without saying that everyone, without wanting to be somewhat led by emotional moments, would like to see Germany and Austria-Hungary in one united customs area. It would probably be of still broader significance, if also the Balkan states belonged to this customs union after the conclusion of peace, so that there would be one united customs area from the North and Baltic Seas to the Black Sea.
of power in the post-war global market and saw the only chance for Austria-Hungary as rivalling Britain and France in forging such an economic block.

In Hungary, where these concepts were far less prevalent, former Prime Minister Ladislaus von Lukács published his concept in *Pester Lloyd* in spring 1916. In this article he suggested that a customs union of Germany, Hungary and Austria was the ideal constellation to counter the likely teaming up of other countries against the Central Powers in the post-war economic arena. Its bottom line was its contained warning against potential future customs duty war:

“Möglich, dass die Verbandmächte durch den Hass, der sie alle gegen uns erfüllt, sich wie in der allgemeinen Politik, so auch auf wirtschaftliche-politischem Gebiete in eine ihren eigenen Interessen zuwiderlaufende Richtung werden hinreissen lassen, was einen gegen uns gerichteten, unnatürlichen wirtschaftspolitischen Bund zur Folge haben würde.”87 (Lukács 1916: 20)

Interestingly, while Lukács referred to Central Europe in the title of his article (‘Die wirtschaftliche Zukunft Mitteleuropas’), in the text itself he preferred to use ‘Zollunion’. This suggests that he used Central Europe as a reference to its geographical area, the site of his envisaged bloc and ‘Zollunion’ as the title of the proposed construct. He was also careful to highlight that each component state of the customs union maintain its full sovereignty.

This pattern is present in many proposals published during the latter part of the war: emphasis on economic integration in an anticipated future customs

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87 - It is possible that Allied Powers - through hate they all feel against us -, just as in general politics, also in the area of economic policy will be carried away by their own interests in the clashing direction, which pitched them against us, forging an unnatural economic policy union. -
war, the highlighting of the role Austria might play within the construct and reference to customs union or derivative notion instead of Central.  

One explanation for such term avoidance is political correctness. Given the combustible national mix of Austria-Hungary, escalating tensions during the war and the long-standing governmental policy of capping nationalist language, this requirement simply precluded the use of Central Europe as soon as it became widely associated with the vision of German domination over Austro-Hungarian non-German nationalities. However, an alternative explanation offers itself as we read through the Austrian German concepts – the notion was simply not in line with the ambitions of Austrian Germans at the height of the war, when their eyes were set on a south-eastward expansion well beyond what was possible to include under any heading of Central Europe:

“Der Weltkrieg hat die Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie und jene des deutschen Reiches aneinander geschmiedet und schon treten die Umriss vor, welche die weitere Ausgestaltung des neuen Gefüges vorausahnen lassen. Um Balkan und in nahen Osten reihen sich schon organisch neue Bestandteile des grossen Wirtschaftskörpers an, dessen Bezeichnung als ‘Mitteleuropa’ eigentlich schon überholt ist, da seine Wirtschaftsgrenzen schon weit, nach Asien hinausreichen”

Austrian German authors emphasised Austria-Hungary's importance in the envisaged drive to south-east Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterranean or even Africa. The view that the two empires could and should have ambition

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88 For example, Karl von Frey wrote: ‘Wenn ich vom Wirtschaftsbunde oder vom Bunde kurzweg sprechen werde, so verstehe ich darunter: Oesterreich, Ungarn, Deutschland, Bulgarien und die Türkei.’ - When I speak of economic union or, shortly, union, I mean Austria, Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria and Turkey. - and continued on emphasizing the crucial role the port of Trieste would play in future of his economic union as a gateway to the East. (Frey 1916: 38)

89 The World War forged together the history of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and that of the German Empire, outlines that foreshadow future development have already appeared. In the Balkans and the Middle East, new composite parts are already lining up organically to present themselves as a large economic body, whose name ‘Central Europe’ is already outdated, because its borders already reach further, to Asia.
beyond the boundaries of Europe was widespread in 1916 and 1917; and consonant with prevailing territorial and colonial ambition within Europe generally.

The discussion remained dense along the more technical lines until the last months of the war. The debate revolved around how to model, organize and run the customs and economic union, rather than turning on the questions of a larger philosophical or ideological context of the plan. It also narrowed down in scope as the ambitions of Austrians became more sober in the light of development of the war. The emphasis shifted back to the partnership of Germany and Austria-Hungary rather than visionary exploits to the south-east. (e.g. Lusensky 1918)

In May 1918, when the two Emperors signed agreements on military and economic union, Central Europe supporters rejoiced at this progress towards their theoretical schemes. However, only six months later, the outcome of the war reversed the trajectory completely.

4.5.4 Central Europe the Austrian way

Debate over the notion of Central Europe during wartime differs from the German experience. Naumann’s book, as in Germany, prompted a boom in Austrian publications: whether these were elaborating the practicalities of creating a German – Austro-Hungarian union, examining its philosophical background, criticising it, or presenting alternatives. Yet, employment of the notion was somewhat patchier than was the case in the contemporaneous German debate. Alternative notions used by individual authors included mainly the following expressions: customs union, economic union, and Germany-Austria. The specific characteristics that influenced participants in the Austrian discourse of Central Europe can explain this obvious discrepancy.
First of all, the pan-German authors saw in Central Europe a tool to foster and further the German role in Austria-Hungary. Pre-Naumann concepts were, in fact, often intertwined with proposals for reorganisation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. (e.g. Brandt 1915) In some cases, they were directly pitched against the Slavs and Magyars. (e.g. Erzberger 1915) Here, pan-German authors were trying to resolve the long-standing problem of the deteriorating standing of Germans within the monarchy and the growth in parallel national tensions through the assertion of a Central Europe dominated by a German majority character and distinguished by a Germanic character.

Second, the role of Austria as an organisational model, a gateway to South-Eastern Europe and a bridge to the Middle East was highlighted, as Austrian authors struggled to establish structural equality with Germany within the envisaged union. Particular attention was paid to highlighting the sovereign preservation of both empires as ‘Central Europe’ was often seen, understandably, as a challenge to Austria’s independence. It would be relatively easy to dismiss these statements as mere compliance with political correctness and efforts to avoid censorship. However, it seems more plausible that Austrian German authors actually had ambitions for their empire in the projected union and beyond.

Finally, such reasoning would also help to explain why, later on in the war, references to customs union or economic rapprochement (referring to negotiations between Germany and Austria-Hungary) were used in many works instead of Central Europe. The notion of Central Europe, influenced by the German (as much as any local) debate, was increasingly interpreted as project dominated by the German Empire, where Austria was just a junior partner, a sort of German periphery. A strong association was observed here by several authors outside the pan-German movement, who consciously dropped the notion conspicuously because of such attendant baggage. (e.g. SDPD 1916, Penck 1915) The German mainstream was certainly not in line with the
ambitions of Austrian Germans at the height of the war in 1916-17, who saw Austria-Hungary reaching out to the Balkans and beyond.

4.6 Non-German debate over Central Europe

During the early 20th century, ‘Central Europe’ also entered the parlance of Austro-Hungarian minorities. (Zunkovic 1904) However, like many of their German compatriots, national minority writers in Austria-Hungary were preoccupied with a constitutional restructuring of the monarchy rather than any grand designs of enlarged economic areas.

The best known of these authors was obviously Aurel Popovici, whose work has already been discussed; however, there were many others across the decades from a variety of ethnic backgrounds - from the Czech František Palacký to the Slovene Bogumil Vošnjak (Vošnjak 1917 and 1918). Works of these two writers best demonstrate the long way the leaders of small nations took in their relationship to the monarchy: While Palacký insisted that if Austria did not exist, it would have to be invented for the sake of its small nations (Palacký 1848); Vošnjak openly called for its dismemberment (Vošnjak 1917: 253 – 254).

While the minorities did not really make a sizeable contribution to the discourse over Central Europe with any autochthonous concepts90, their involvement with the notion is an intriguing and very significant story, especially since it was their understanding and employment of the term that would essentially shape the subsequent interpretation of the Entente countries.

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90 Besides the federative concepts of the Masaryk group (especially Edvard Beneš) drafted in the final months of the war, see below, section 5.6.3.
4.6.1 The role of Karel Kramář

Karel Kramář was one of the leaders of the Young Czech Party and member of the Viennese parliament. Kramář was a liberal nationalist and used his strong political connections to pursue a policy of cooperation with the central authorities in Vienna. He resigned as chairman when party policy shifted towards the more radical positions opposing central power in 1914. This did not save him from being tried and sentenced for treason in 1916, only to be released in Emperor Karl I’s general amnesty of 1917.

In 1899 Kramář published an article in Revue de Paris in which he highlighted the threat of any alliance with Germany to the sovereignty of Austria, potentially resulting in its de facto annexation. (Kramář 1899) In what was the only one of his articles published in foreign newspapers, he highlighted that the empowerment of Czechs was essential to keep the spectre of Pan-Germanism in check: otherwise “Germany would become the sole mistress of the destinies of the entire world” (Kramář 1899).

The archival evidence from his 1916 trial suggests that through his articles in foreign newspapers, Kramář had become the preferred contact for several foreign journalists covering of the Austro-Hungarian and Pan-German questions (Abrams 1944: 192) The most prominent of these was Andre Chéradame, who would later himself become an influential source of information on Pan-Germanism and conceptions of Central Europe for Entente policy makers.91

Kramář helped Chéradame from 1897 in gaining essential contacts for his research on Pan-Germanism. Correspondence confiscated for the purposes of the trial showed that the pair was in frequent contact with Chéradame frequently alluding to their common program and shared ideas for opposing Pan-Germanism. Letters suggest that Kramář was Chéradame’s ears on

91 Kramář also had strong influence over several other foreign publicists, such as a René Henry (Henry 1900), a leading opponent of Pan-Germanism in France, or William Lavino, The Daily Telegraph and later The Times reporter.
developments inside the monarchy. (Abrams 1944: 193) Chéradame’s works, as essential mediations of Kramář, will be discussed in the following chapter, since they were instrumental to Anglo-US policy interpretations of the Central European concept.

Kramář opposed the idea of a German-dominated Central Europe. In May 1914, even before the war started, he had proposed the creation of a Slavic Empire headed by the Russian Emperor and stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the forests of Šumava. The Bohemian crown lands of the Austrian Empire, Prussian Silesia, the Lusatian areas of Saxony and Slovak districts of Hungary should have been its westernmost outposts. (Krejčí 2005: 193) However, the Russian revolution of 1917 swept away the cornerstone of Kramář’s scheme, and he was under arrest at this time. He would eventually go on to become the first prime minister of an independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.

4.6.2 Reactions to Naumann

The idea of Central Europe as presented by Friedrich Naumann occasioned heightened debate among the leaders of Austria-Hungary’s smaller nationalities. Naumann met Slovak politician Milan Hodža (a former member of the Belvedere Circle), only days after publishing his book. As Hodža later recollected, this was the interaction that pushed him to develop his own idea for Central Europe, one he would later publish during the Second World War (Hodža 1942); yet that is where the positives began and ended – Hodža and Naumann apparently could not agree even on the most elemental aspects of the concept. (Tobolka 1937: 84) Hodža’s Central Europe was to be a federation of independent, predominantly agrarian, Danube valley states that excluded Germany.

Given the ongoing struggle of Slav nationalities for equality under the monarchy, it would only have been natural for this national component to oppose a political and economic supra-state agenda that was perceived to
foster future German domination. (Kořalka 1995: 28) This was, indeed true; yet, there were those, who were willing to lend Naumann an ear as his concept ostensibly equally provided for the facilitation of national emancipation within Austria-Hungary.

In Bohemia, for at least two decades, many Czechs had differentiated between ‘our Germans’ and ‘imperial Germans’ (Seckendorff 1899, Fellner 1953); while they led a struggle against the former, the latter were often portrayed as potential allies. This opinion was broadly replicated among Czech liberals and social democrats, who maintained vibrant links with their imperial German counterparts. (Marek 1991: 272)

Bohumír Šmeral, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party in Bohemia (1916 – 1918), was one such politician (Galandauer 1986). In fact, he and other leading Social Democrats had been in touch with Naumann even before the publication of his seminal work, expressing an interest in the furtherance of closer ties between Germany and Austria Hungary. (Naumann 1915b) Naumann informed the German Foreign Office about Šmeral’s interest in the idea and the latter was invited immediately for a meeting at the German embassy in Vienna. (Tschirschky 1915) Šmeral sought publishing opportunities to present his views in Germany, something Naumann and the embassy were happy to help him with. On one hand, he presented the opinion that rising Czech nationalism was not the only option on the table for his compatriots and there were potential benefits to be sought from the envisaged relationship between the two empires. On the other hand, Šmeral wanted to educate the German public to understand that Czechs were not necessarily their enemies, but could work towards common cultural and economic goals. He also called for imperial German members of parliament to influence their Austrian German partner parties to work towards national harmony in Bohemia. (Theiner 1983: 241)

Naumann visited Prague in April 1916 and held a meeting with several reform-minded Czech politicians including Šmeral and Zdeněk Tobolka – member of
the Reichsrat and a leader of the Young Czech Party. However, the Czechs left disappointed from the meeting. In retrospective, Tobolka recognised that it had been Naumann’s visit that convinced the Czechs they could not rely on imperial Germans to help them advance their interests. In his recollection, the Czechs were disappointed that Naumann had little empathy for their national ambitions within the framework of his Central European political construct. (Tobolka 1937: 84)

This highlights that reactions to the idea of a German-led Central Europe were not necessarily negative, at least to start with. At least some leaders of nationalities of Austria-Hungary had been prepared to contemplate the idea, if it offered them space to further their own interests. But looked at in another way,, Naumann had spectacularly missed an opportunity to enlist Austro-Hungarian nationalities on his side. In fact, they turned into the bitterest opponents of his idea for Central Europe. And most crucially, they would be the ones who would be listened to by the Entente governments.

4.6.3 Central Europe in the hands of minorities

By the time Naumann’s *Central Europe* was published, some of the foremost political leaders of Austro-Hungarian Czechs and Slovaks were already lobbying for complete dismemberment of Austria-Hungary while exiled to the Entente countries.92

Their leader was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a member of the Austrian parliament and a professor at the Charles University in Prague. Early in the war, and well before the Central Europe movement picked up, Masaryk decided that the dismemberment of the monarchy and establishment of an independent

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92 For other nations of the monarchy, the aims of their national movements were not that clear. Polish demands were during the war placated by the promise of a united kingdom under German or Austrian suzerainty and their political representatives remain disunited in their demands and loyalties. Serbians, Slovenians and Croatians had a difficulty getting along and especially their exile representatives engaged in much mutual bickering.
nation-state was the only way to assert the national rights of his nation. (Hájková and Šedivý 2004: 15)

Considering that Britain was likely to wield the most decisive future political influence (Masaryk 1938: 79), he enlisted the help of his friends – Wickham Steed and R. W. Seton-Watson - to try and win support for an ‘independent Bohemia’.93. In a secret meeting in Rotterdam during October 1914 he outlined his arguments to Seton-Watson for the first time. (Seton-Watson 1943: 21) The reasoning behind dismemberment of Austria-Hungary was still relatively crude at this stage but Masaryk was already maintaining that “[t]o weaken or crush Austria-Hungary is the effectual way of weakening Germany.” (Seton-Watson 1943: 43 – 44) Seton-Watson wrote up a memorandum for the Foreign Office94, though this did not gain much traction at the time.

It was the developing debate over Central Europe that allowed Masaryk to reframe his argument in a language more conducive to attracting the attention of British policy-makers. Essentially, Masaryk bought into the discourse of Central Europe from the other side – i.e., he presented his plan for an independent Bohemia as the perfect antidote to schemes for a German dominated Central Europe95, presented either as a remorseless ‘Drang nach Osten’ or the ‘Berlin-Bagdad axis’, which the British establishment was already all too familiar with. Both notions implied a challenge to the interests of the British Empire. Masaryk consistently used this inherent if intermittent threat to support plans for the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary in communication with the British government. For other audiences, as discussed below, he varied his nuances to target their individual concerns.

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93 Wickham Steed used to be the Times correspondent in Vienna and Seton-Watson was an established champion of the cause of small nations of Austria-Hungary (Viator [Seton-Watson] 1907, 1908a, 1908b; Seton-Watson 1911a, 1911b).
94 Text of the memorandum was later reproduced in Seton-Watson’s Masaryk in England (Seton-Watson 1943: 43 – 47). Copy of the original is stored in the National Archives in Kew (Seton-Watson 1914)
95 as described by Sidney Mezes (Unterberger 2000: 61), the head of The Inquiry, analytical unit set up by President Woodrow Wilson to prepare materials for the eventual peace conference.
Shortly after his exile to London, in March 1915, Masaryk produced his first concise document written specifically for the Foreign Office. A memorandum entitled *Independent Bohemia* (Masaryk 1915a) foresaw the respective creation of an independent Polish, a Czechoslovak and a Serbo-Croat state as collectively constituting a barrier against any “German march on Constantinople and Bagdad”. Identifying Germany as the continental-power - opposed to England’s sea-based power\(^96\) - he argued that:

“As a Continental, overpopulated, Power Germany presses constantly on Austria and uses her. Bismarck’s policy towards Austria is the diplomatic and political formulation of the constant pressure of the Prussian North on the Austrian South. Lagarde, the father of modern Pan-Germanism, formulated the German programme: ‘Colonisation of Austria by Germany.’ By colonising Austria Germany aspires to colonise the Balkans and thus to reach Constantinople and Bagdad. This ‘Drang nach Osten’ explains the policy of Berlin towards the Magyars, towards Roumania, towards Bulgaria, and towards Turkey. The watchword Berlin-Bagdad denotes the real aim of Germany, the direction of the ‘Drang nach Osten’. The alliance with Turkey in the war is the final result of the German invasion in Constantinople and in Asia Minor (financial policy, railways, schools and hospitals, etc.).” (Masaryk 1915a: 4 - 5)\(^97\)

Masaryk proceeded to describe Austria, a colony of Germany, as an artificial state destined for progressive dismemberment, from which an independent Poland, Bohemia and Serbo-Croatia should arise. The latter two would then be interconnected by a corridor running between Austria and Hungary, one which would possess economic as well as military significance. Thus a “Slavic barrier coincident with the interest of the allies in Asia” (Masaryk 1915a: 14) would be

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\(^{96}\) While Masaryk did not refer to any academic work in his paper, it is likely he was aware of the works of both Alfred T. Mahan and John H. Mackinder.

\(^{97}\) Text quoted including grammar and spelling mistakes made by the original author.
formed to stop the eastward march of the German Empire. The employment of 'Central Europe' was not yet pronounced in the document, with the elected emphasis placed rather upon 'Drang nach Osten'. The boom of the Central Europe debate later on in the year would eventually better facilitate Masaryk' argument, as it provided a direct and imminent anti-thesis to his proposals.

In his next memorandum, *At the Eleventh Hour* (Masaryk 1915b), published in November 1915 just after Naumann’s book – he called for a clear strategic plan to counter plans for a pan-Germanist Central Europe: it was suggested that the Entente should present its own Central European plan involving the forging of a series of independent nations between Germany and Russia. In this work, Masaryk used the notion of Central Europe to describe and characterise “the German political programme” (Masaryk 1915b: 25) that might result in a Berlin-Baghdad axis, warning that Germany was close to achieving such an aim:

“This grand scheme of Berlin Baghdad was drawn up and elaborated by the Pan-German politicians; there are numerous authors of untiring energy, who popularised these political aspirations realised finally in the present war, for Germany controls practically at this moment the area of the Pan-German ‘Central Europe’.” (Masaryk 1915b: 27)

The only way to prevent the materialisation of such a plan and German world domination was, in Masaryk’s view, by creating a line of independent Slav states: Poland, Bohemia and Greater Serbia. (Masaryk 1915b: 29)

Masaryk employed a somewhat different but rather more refined portrayal of an independent Bohemia as the polar opposite to plans for a pan-German Central Europe when addressing the French government, in 1916. In preparation for his meeting with Aristide Briand in February of that year, Masaryk penned his *L’Europe centrale pangermanique, ou une Bohème libre?*
'Pan-German Central Europe or independent Bohemia', Masaryk 1916b) that painted the threatening picture of a unified pan-German Central Europe as the future neighbour of France, a prospect that had to be thwarted. As the only real alternative, an independent Bohemia, together with Poland and a Yugoslav state would help France contain this aggressive prospect through their constitution of an “effective barrier against Prussia... from which the Allies would profit politically as well as economically.” (Masaryk 1916b: 116) Finally, he asserted that in its fight against Germany, “Bohemia is disposed towards close alliance with France and Russia”. (Masaryk 1916b: 118)

Finally, in communication with US President Woodrow Wilson, Masaryk yet again tailored his portrayal of the spectre of Central Europe tailor to suit that constituency. Masaryk actually finalised his New Europe (first printed in 1918) en route to the United States. In this version, any realisation of an enlarged Central Europe was represented as negation of the rights of small nations to self-determination (Masaryk 1920: 93 – 95) – a notion cherished and promoted by Wilson. So, the realisation of independent nation states in lieu of any pan-German Central Europe could only be regarded as the ultimate exaltation of such a principle. Masaryk argued vigorously that as per Wilson self-proclaimed principles, he had to recognize that continued existence of Austria-Hungary was a negation of freedom of nations:

“an ordinary president must not know that, but Wilson as President is bound to express in his war program the moral judgement of history”. (Masaryk 1918a)

In all three of these lines of presentation, the argument is constant and consistent; it is just the emphasis that changes. For example, we can locate the threats posed by the Berlin-Baghdad (railway) plan in the memorandum tailored for the French government (Opat 2003: 271, Klimek et al. 1994: 13) as
well as in communications with US officials (e.g. Masaryk 1918a) but the focus was on the aspect that Masaryk considered to be the closest to the heart of his audience. In the case of the French, this was the looming threat of a large enemy bloc on its borders; then, when addressing US officials, he focused on the strategic advantages Germans would gain at the expense of a US-allied British Empire, all the time playing to the logic of the self-determination rights of nations advocated by President Wilson.

In summary, Masaryk portrayed a negative image of a pan-German Central Europe to argue that dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the only alternative to safeguard the vital interests of the allies. This message was augmented by the delivery of a coordinated, supporting narrative from other members of the Czech independence movement in communication with the allied governments. The same stark contrasts between a dark, expansionist pan-German Central Europe and a bright assembly of aspiring small nations within the imperial rump of Austria-Hungary are articulated in the memoranda sent to British Foreign Office by Emanuel Voska98 (Voska 1917), Edvard Beneš (Beneš 1917) and Štefan Osuský (Osuský 1918)99. Close coordination is a hallmark of these works, with many including exactly the same maps of the intended future Bohemian state (e.g. Beneš 1917 and Voska 1917). Milan R. Štefánik100 also used the same basis of articulation in his communication with the Italian government (Štefánik 1916), as did Beneš with the French (Beneš 1917).

However, none of the allied governments were actually that keen on the binary choice presented to them by Masaryk and his colleagues. Sure, the allies would

98 Emanuel Voska was Masaryk’s contact in the United States, where he was in close communication with the US government. His value for the US government lay in Voska’s personal network of contacts in Austria-Hungary, which he used to obtain valuable intelligence. Voska was also largely responsible for organizing the crucial financing for the Czech independence movement and personal funds for Masaryk. He was reportedly working with André Chéraudame on CNC strategy to discredit Austro-Hungarian federalization plans in autumn 1918 (Unterberger 2000: 107).
99 Osuský was also a member for Masaryk’s inner circle and would eventually become the first Czechoslovak ambassador to London.
100 General M. R. Štefánik was a member of the three-man leadership of the CNC and later became the first Czechoslovak Minister for War.
have preferred to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany and see its development as a European counter-weight. But the efforts of Masaryk and his wing-men, especially Edvard Beneš\textsuperscript{101}, only gained the genuine support of the allies in the latter stages of the war.

Masaryk’s fortunes changed after negotiations broke down with Austria-Hungary in the spring of 1918. In May 1918, Beneš wrote a letter to the Foreign Office in which he reacted to the aftermath of the Sixtus Affair\textsuperscript{102} and the announcement of a military and economic alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary: “The definite plan of the Central Empires is at last clear to the whole world!”\textsuperscript{103} (Beneš 1918a: 126) Proclaiming the alliance a “new system of oppression, which places Austria-Hungary under the control of Germany” (Beneš 1918a: 127), he reiterated the Czech vision for the reorganisation of the region. Beneš characterised it explicitly as a “Pro-Entente Central Europe: against a German-Magyar Central Europe”, underlining that if the allies were to win the war, they would need to adopt a “policy favourable to the oppressed nations of Central Europe” (Beneš 1918a: 130)

The actual effectiveness of pushing the anti-Central Europe line of argument as the most likely means of breaking up the Austro-Hungarian Empire might reasonably be questioned. Looking at the timeline of decision making in Paris, London and Washington, it seems that by far the more persuasive argument in Masaryk’s toolkit was the existence of a sizeable army of Czech and Slovak deserters and prisoners-of-war. Its units were located in France, Italy and

\textsuperscript{101} Edvard Beneš was the right-hand man of Masaryk, a general secretary of the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris, which would eventually be recognized as an interim government of independent Czechoslovakia in 1918. He would go on to become the first Foreign Affairs Minister and later on a president of Czechoslovakia (during the Second World War).

\textsuperscript{102} The April 1918 publishing of letters suggesting separate peace between Austria-Hungary and France, exchanged between Emperor Karl and his brother-in-law Sixtus de Bourbon in 1917. The affair led to the humiliating episode for Karl, who was forced to control the damage from the revelations by a visit to the German Emperor and signing of the agreements, which were designed to place Austria-Hungary firmly in the German orbit.

\textsuperscript{103} Original text as written by Beneš.
Russia. By the end of the war, the US government, especially, remained unconvinced about the desirability of introducing a system of small, independent nation states while both Masaryk and Beneš presented their own visions for a federative Central or Mid-Europe. (Beneš 1918a, Masaryk 1918c) Chapter 5 will discuss these interactions in more detail; however, the bottom line of these considerations was the observation that allied leaders were not convinced that dismemberment of Austria-Hungary was the best way to counter the threat presented by a German-led Central Europe.

4.6.4 Hungarian perceptions of Central Europe

During the war, conceptions of Central Europe gained significant traction in the Hungarian half of the multinational monarchy. The 1916 Hungarian translation of Naumann’s *Mitteleuropa* was printed at the height of a debate engaged in by over 100 articles in leading Budapest newspapers that had been published since its original German publication six months earlier. (Diószegi 1995: 63) The Hungarian discourse of Central Europe has been well documented, especially in the works of Károly Irinyi (Irinyi 1963 and 1973), and provides an interesting point of view as Hungarian cooperation was essential in the plan. While many leading politicians were predictably suspicious about the proposition, seeing Naumann’s Central Europe as a vehicle to establish German supremacy over Hungary, there were adherents of the concept to be found in fringe political movements. The so-called civic radicals104, especially, showed some enthusiasm for Naumann’s proposal. Oszkár Jászi – who would later publish several theories espousing regional reorganisation himself (Jászi 1918, 1941, 1949) – belonged to this group, believing that Hungary had much to learn from Germany. In their opinion, the union would ensure the transfer of German

104 Civic Radicals did not establish themselves formally as a party nor did they have any representation in the parliament; yet, the movement featured many leading intellectuals and public figures of contemporary Hungary.
know-how in terms of organisation of industrial production, scientific research and technology; Hungary would benefit from an implantation of German discipline and its strong sense of duty.

On the other side of the political spectrum, Ervin Szabó, a leading social democrat, suggested that realisation of the union with Germany would help to shake up Hungary’s ossified social structures, strengthening the influence of the bourgeoisie and sidelining the traditional feudal elites. A union would also serve as a guarantee against alleged pan-Slavist pressures and the advancing influence of Russia. (Szabó, Litván and Bak 1982: 136)

Guyla Andrássy the Younger saw Naumann’s scheme as potentially both economically advantageous and militarily significant (Baernreither 1915d: 31 October) and suggested that such a union could offer its constituent states adequate protection as well as to promise a post-war balance of power for Europe. (Diószegi 1995: 64) Another supporter of Central Europe in Hungary was Albert Apponyi, the former Hungarian education minister (1906 – 1910), who had become notorious for implementing a policy of Magyarisation in the Hungarian educational system. (Heuss 1949: 376)

Economic lobby groups were divided. While industrial unions supported the idea of a common market, agrarian groups opposed it, since their very prosperity depended on artificially high prices for agricultural produce – a practice that wouldn’t be sustained once any customs union had been put in place. Both supporters and opponents of the plan focused their reasoning on the economic aspects of any Central European project, rather than its political implications. General preference laid in fostering a pragmatic relationship with Germany that would see the introduction of a system of preferential custom duties, as proposed by Josef Szterényi, later to become Hungarian Trade Minister, (Szterényi 1915b); or the continuation of some form of internal customs duty to protect the internal Hungarian market and its youthful industrial sector. (Rajnik 1914, Lukács 1916b)
Yet, most Hungarian authors were to reject the idea of Central Europe, warning against the pan-German threat and highlighting that in any form of union with Germany, Hungary would lose out since it could only ever play a subordinate role. This position was expressed, for example, by Péter Ágoston, the future Foreign Minister of Hungary (1919) in many of his articles penned for the Népszava newspaper. (Diószegi 1995: 65) The aim of the majority of Hungarian was to safeguard their kingdom’s sovereignty, not to fall under German domination.

4.7 The influence of Central Europe in practical politics

The bitter disputes of 1848 – 1849 had left Austrian Germans out in the cold, as their German brethren were gradually heading for economic and political integration. The first trade agreement between Austria and what was to become the German Empire was signed in October 1853. (Katzenstein 1976: 81) Karl Ludwig von Bruck interpreted this event as a turning point, from which the full integration of Austria into the customs union would ensue. (Beer 1891: 161) This was certainly an optimistic assessment – any relationship between Prussia and Austria was bound to get much worse before it got better. The Austro-Prussian war in 1866 resulted only in Austria’s expulsion from the customs union. However, following the foundation of the German Empire, the idea of a customs union with Austria was discussed several times in the 1880s and 1890s. (Auswärtiges Amt 1885, Reuss 1885b, Auswärtiges Amt 1890, Reuss 1890) By the end of the century, the idea of a customs union with Germany was a familiar one in an Austro-Hungarian context, but so too were its recognised risks.
4.7.1 Customs union vs. Central Europe

Tschirschky had been correct in recognising that the Austro-Hungarian government was ready to discuss customs union with Germany in the early days of war (Tschirschky 1914a and 1914b). The political calculations made in Vienna were very similar, if less structured, than those made in Germany. The Austrian policy makers also looked to establish a strong economic bloc as a base to further project their power to the south-east. A baseline expectation was that the post-war global market would be divided into larger economic areas and the widest possible territorial footprint was needed to gain the necessary edge in any such environment. However, as had been the case in 1848, Austria was not prepared to surrender its sovereignty to Prussia, which had only become even more powerful in its latest imperial reincarnation.

If, indeed, they were ready to discuss a customs union with Germany, the Viennese ruling circles were not necessarily supportive of the idea of a German led Central Europe, as proposed by the Pan-Germans. In fact, conceptions and promotion of the idea of Central Europe were subject to official censorship imposed by the government of Prime Minister Karl von Stürgkh. (Dobering 1914b, Stolper 1915)

From Stürgkh’s point of view, the Pan-German version of Central Europe was dangerous for two reasons. First, the insistence on the leading role of Germans and the definition of Central Europe as the final unifying fate for all Germans attracted the strong resentment of the monarchy’s non-German nationals and had a potential to exacerbate already escalating national tensions. Second, Central Europe presented a threat to Austrian sovereignty, as it would likely lead to domination of by the German Empire.

Stürgkh also strove actively to limit promotion of the idea of Central Europe in political circles. Stürgkh’s master-stroke was his neutralisation of Gustav Gross’s initiative, by which the latter proposed his Central Europe program to members of the German National Union in August 1914 (Gross 1914a). The
letter and the union membership’s enthusiastic response to it (Beurle 1914, Dobering 1914a, Freissler 1914, etc.) were in marked contrast to the lack of any real effort to put such ideas into practice, despite the strong parliamentary position of the union (105 of 514 seats). At Stürgkh’s behest, Gross not only dropped promotion of Central Europe, he also started to prevent the rest of his group from doing so in September 1914, i.e. within a month of formulation of his Central Europe program. Josef Maria Baernreither noted in his diary that Gross blocked all efforts for organisation of proper internal discussion on various sketches of Central Europe presented by the members of the union, preventing formulation of a common program. Baernreither’s suspicion was that Gross’s change of heart had been due to his links with Stürgkh. (Baernreither 1914: 20 September)

While the official archival documentation held in the Austrian State Archive does not provide direct evidence to support Baernreither’s suspicions, Gross was admittedly a close confidant of Stürgkh’s. The prime minister had spoken to him to express concerns that open political discussion of Central Europe might galvanize the opposition of smaller national groups and cause upheaval in the monarchy. (Licht 1914) Baernreither speculated that Gross then blocked all activity in this direction out of regard for the concerns of his close friend. (Müller 2001: 31) In his letter to the union membership on 26 October, Gross did indeed use the very same arguments to dissuade internal debate on the topic (Gross 1914b), providing circumstantial evidence to support Baernreither’s words.

Baernreither decided to take things into his own hands – for while Gross could block official union debate, he could not stop individual members from discussing proposals for Central Europe in fora outside the union.

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105 Liberal politician, member of both houses in various periods, twice a minister of trade (1898 and 1907), later minister without portfolio (1916 – 1917), chairman of Mitteleuropäischen Wirtschaftsverein and later Arbeitsausschusses für Mitteleuropa.
Baernreither and Gustav Marchet took the leadership in advocacy of Central Europe. The founding chairman of the German Club and a departmental director at the Trade Ministry, Richard Riedl, joined Baernreither and Marchet in their efforts, as did several German National Union members of the parliament - including Robert Freissler, Stephan Licht, Joseph Redlich, Karl Urban, Heinrich Janotta and Otto Lecher. Yet, rather than debating and refining its conception, the group ended up promoting the general idea of Central Europe and trying to enlist support for it in political circles.

4.7.2 Berlin pilgrimages

The efforts of this group are well documented in the diaries maintained by Baernreither and Redlich (Baernreither 1914, Redlich 1953), especially the contacts made with political circles and decision makers in Berlin. Early on in the war, during November 1914, Baernreither travelled to Berlin to sound out support for the idea of Central Europe. While he observed that the idea of larger economic area was well entrenched in Berlin political circles, he was relatively pessimistic about the potential for any early rapprochement between the two empires. In his view, the interests of both Austrian and German industry clashed with the idea of a customs union, while German policy-makers had little understanding for Austrian power interests. (Baernreither 1914: 3 – 7 November) Moreover, he was already aware that the Germans were bent on a larger Central European economic area, rather than expressly landing themselves with weak and crisis-ridden Austria-Hungary. (Baernreither 1914: 17 October) It was clear that Austria-Hungary was to be but one of Germany’s junior allies, rather than its equal partner; a position hard to accept for Vienna.

In the first six months of the war, dozens of Austrian advocates of Central Europe made the trip to Berlin – among them Riedl, Max von Tayenthal (chairman of the Viennese Trade Chamber), and even Gross. (Molisch 1926: 240) Many approached German ruling circles with definite plans in mind: for
example, Richard Riedl openly suggested a customs union with his detailed proposal for double tariffs and differential external duties. (Müller 2001: 40) However, in the absence of proper debate early in the war, these proposals tended to differ from one another quite widely. The cacophony of Austrian pro-Central Europe voices frustrated the German Foreign Office fairly quickly with its officials suggesting that Austrian Germans should first make up their own minds at home and come with a single proposal. (Dobering 1914c)

At the same time, the acts and attitudes of these Austrian advocates of a Central Europe and their overtures towards Berlin irritated the Austrian government. The counsellor of the Austrian Embassy in Berlin, Gottfried zu Hohenlohe-Schillings, protested verbally against this “second channel of diplomacy” in his meeting with German Foreign Minister Jagow. (Delbrück 1915b, Appendix 7) However, these protests did not have much effect in stopping these “Berlin pilgrimages” by Central Europe enthusiasts. (Hohenlohe-Schillings 1915) At the same time, their influence was not far-reaching - German governmental officials saw their visits as a valuable source of information, but little more. (Delbrück 1915b)

4.7.3 The complex position of the Austro-Hungarians

By November 1914, Richard Riedl, a departmental head at the Trade Ministry, had elaborated his plan for the union of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, Romania and part of Serbia (Riedl 1914). This proposal was in line with his (already mentioned) preference for the concepts of Austrian authors awarding Austria-Hungary a role in projecting the union’s power to the south-east. However, his enthusiasm for Central Europe was not necessarily shared by a majority of core members of the government in the early days of the war. Indeed, while Stürgkh’s ministry looked to project its power towards the south-east and to Poland, its approach to negotiating a closer union with Germany
was considerably more cautious. As demonstrated above, Stürkgkh was wary of the idea of a German-led Central Europe to the point of making it a subject of censorship and personal interventions. The prospect of curbs on Austrian sovereignty, coupled with likely escalations in conflict with the non-German nationalities was an uncomfortable one for the Vienna government.

On top of this, Stürkgkh also had Hungary to take into account. There, a heightened sense of national interests dictated attitudes to the concept of Central Europe as a German led larger political and economic entity.

István Tisza, the prime minister (1903 – 1905 and 1913 – 1917), was in favour of a customs union with Germany, but could not bring himself to agree with the idea of Central Europe as presented by Naumann – in his view, such a union would undermine Hungary’s sovereignty and economic interests. He likened it to ‘a larger version of Austria’, which he certainly did not wish for. (Tisza 1915) Interestingly, Mihály Károly, Tisza’s longstanding opponent, shared his opinion on the issue. In Károly’s view, Naumann’s Central Europe was not a union of equals; on the contrary, it would make Hungary a vassal of the German Empire and turn it gradually into a colony. (Müller 2001: 101) Károly, a supporter of full Hungarian sovereignty was thus never likely to favour a plan that, in his view, would place his country in yet another unequal constitutional relationship.

Prevailing opinion in Hungary was always going to be an important factor in the realisation of Central Europe, whatever form it might take – therefore the main proponents of the idea had to make an effort to get Hungarians on board. Friedrich Naumann conducted talks with prominent Hungarian politicians long before the publication of his iconic book: upon his visit to Budapest in February 1915, he discussed his ideas with Tisza and Andrassy, as well as Apponyi. (Müller 2001: 144) While his project found support from Andrassy and Apponyi (see 5.6.4), Naumann decidedly failed to convince the most important of the three – Prime Minister Tisza. A renegotiation of the Austro-Hungarian
Compromise of 1867 was due in 1916 and its successful renewal became a pre-requisite for any further negotiations with the German Empire.

4.7.4 An uneasy start for customs union negotiations

The first draft of the customs union treaty had been prepared as early as March 1915 (Riedl 1915) but negotiations between Austria-Hungary and Germany got off on the wrong foot. German reports from Vienna just days before the first scheduled negotiations early in November 1915 suggested that the Austro-Hungarian government – and especially Prime Minister Stürgkh - was preoccupied with the political influence Germany would acquire within the monarchy through this deal (Hatzfeld 1915, Zöllner 1915). Reports observed the “distrust and antipathy” of the Austrian government towards Germany and even cautioned that in the foreign policy arena, the monarchy might turn against Germany once the war was over. (Hatzfeld 1915: E585780) Zöllner wrote that the Austrian court continued to maintain links with royals in enemy countries and still cherished the possibility of allying the monarchy with France, England and Russia, rather than Germany.106

The available archival evidence does not provide a satisfactory explanation as to why the German government disregarded such warnings and proceeded to bet on the language of pan-German brotherhood in the Memorandum of 13 November 1915. (Jagow 1915, Appendix 10) 107 The Viennese government was,

106 ‘Es ist für Deutschland ein Glück, dass Franz Ferdinand nicht zur Regierung gekommen ist, denn er war der Hauptverte ter der Idee, dass Österreich-Ungarn einen Anschluss an Russland, England und Frankreich, auch auf Kosten Deutschlands, suchen müsse.’ – It is a luck for Germany, that Franz Ferdinand did not come to power, because he was the main proponent of the idea that Austria-Hungary has to seek alliance with Russia, England and France, at the expense of Germany. – Zöllner 1915

107 Indeed, the Pan-German propaganda of Austrian Germans was at its height in autumn of 1915 (e.g. Baernreither 1915, Jagow 1915) and Naumann’s Central Europe was fresh off the printing press. Moreover, the same reports as quoted above also highlighted that Austrian Germans looked ever more towards Germany for protection of their interests within monarchy. (Zöllner 1915) High food inflation, fallouts in basic services, post, telegraph and railway were highlighted and suggestions floated that only full unification of Germany could help to alleviate situation. (Hatzfeld 1915: E585784)
indeed, reportedly furious at being reduced to a ‘German mark in the East’ in the text of that memorandum. (Austro-Hungarian Embassy 1915)

On the other hand, as poignantly noted by Tschirschy (Tschirschky 1916a), Vienna did not possess any viable alternatives to closer ties with Germany so negotiations continued – however, these were characterised strictly as trade agreement negotiations by the Austrians. The files relating to the process remain archived under the classification of ‘trade agreement’ (Handeslvertrag) negotiations, while in the German archives the corresponding folders are to be located under the category of Central European Economic Federation (Bundesarchiv, Imperial Chancellery files R901/403–407) or even the European State Federation (AA PA Germany 180 European State Federation). The titles of files holding corresponding documents in the Austrian State Archive avoid any reference to Central Europe or any hint of political implications in negotiations with Germany. They keep strictly to labelling these records as pertaining to the customs union negotiations, painting a functional picture of ordinary trade agreement negotiations on harmonisation of trade and tariffs, etc. The Austrians actually harboured many of the same concerns as Germany – it was the opinion of many that after the war, free market arrangements would not be restored and the world would divide into larger, mutually exclusive economic areas (Baernreither 1914: 28 July). So, Austria-Hungary needed to take actions to secure future markets for itself and the most obvious step here was to ally with Germany and secure the likely projection of economic power as far as Poland and the Balkans. (Komjáthy 1966: 191)

This is not to say that the Central European project would have had no supporters in the Austrian government under Stürgkh – indeed, there were those who, like Richard Riedl, thought that the customs union represented the only possibility for survival of the monarchy (Riedl 1915). Yet, as late as July

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108 The files relating to actual negotiations with Germany are in the Austrian State Archive filed as ‘Fach 37: Handelsverträge nach Staaten ab 1909, Karton 94: Deutsche Reich’; in contrast, corresponding files in German archives as ‘Auswärtiges Amt – Politisches Archiv, Deutschland 180, Geheim, Europäischer Staatenbund’.
1915, the Stürgkh government maintained that discussion over Central Europe was undesirable and talk of a customs union premature. (Plener 1915, Appendix 4)\textsuperscript{109}

### 4.7.5 Vienna’s balancing act

The potential strengthening of economic ties with Germany was the topic of the Joint Ministerial Council on 18 June 1915, with Tisza denouncing the idea suggesting that Germany was only interested in driving Austria-Hungary into ever greater financial and economic dependence, with further political strings attached, undermining the sovereignty and great power status of the monarchy. (ÖMRP 1915)

Records in the German archives confirm that Vienna was performing a delicate balancing act between the competing interests within the monarchy to maintain its own stability and position vis-à-vis its stronger partner in Berlin. Bethmann-Hollweg was warned not to push too hard for recognition of German superiority in the relationship, which would likely challenge the sovereignty of the Viennese court. This might have lead to further destabilization of the already tense situation in the monarchy (Treuler 1915) and upset the balance of power in the wake of crucial renegotiations of the 1867 Compromise (Tschirschky 1915b). These renegotiations – reconvened every 10 years – were vital, as they would necessarily specify the internal and external customs policy of the monarchy. (Müller 2001: 110)

Besides having to manage the relationship with Hungary, Austria was increasingly conscious of the growing alienation of its Slavic minorities. Vienna was not unaware of Masaryk and Benes activities in London and Paris (Erzberger 1915). Stephan Burian, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister,

\textsuperscript{109} Stürgkh’s opposition to Central Europe resulted in attempt to oust him, to which purpose Marchet, Baernheiter and Friedjung tried and failed to enlist the support of the high army command in late July 1915. (Rauchensteiner 1993: 277)
reportedly contemplated appeasing the Slavic minorities by emancipating their status, thus curbing the power of the Hungarians (Tschirschky 1915b, Jagow 1915b). Fostering of the monarchy through internal reorganisation was an aim of many patriotic officials, who, once again, dusted down old plans of the Belvedere Circle. (Schlitter 1914: 3 November, Zöllner 1915, Stolzenberg 1916) Conversely, the Hungarians were sure to defend their privileges, and probably set on asking for further advantages or concessions (Tisza 1915a, Tschirschky 1916b, Auswärtiges Amt 1916). A successful renegotiation of internal questions between the two parts of the monarchy was the necessary precondition for progress in negotiations with Germany. (Tschirschky 1915b)

In the end the Austrian government decided to proceed with negotiations towards a customs union and closer economic ties with Germany after several sector ministers\textsuperscript{110} spoke in favour of its institution at a special ministerial conference called by Stürghkh on 24 August 1915 (Riedl 1915b). Their arguments were linked to concerns and interests served by their respective governmental departments (industry, trade, transport, etc.): the potential advantages for Austro-Hungarian industry from the itinerant transfer of technology, an ability to participate in wider market for producers and better possibilities for modernisation of railway network.

\textbf{4.7.6 The 1867 Compromise renegotiations and the Polish question}

In November 1915, Alexander Spitzmüller, an outspoken advocate of the Central European project, became Trade Minister in Stürghkh’s government and things immediately looked up for the plan. (Baumgartner 1967: 109) However, not only did Stürghkh continue to frustrate Spitzmüller’s effort to mobilise speedy negotiations (Müller 2001: 195) but the opposition of Hungary still

\textsuperscript{110} Finance Minister Engel, Agriculture Minister Zenger, Railway Minister Forster and Trade Minister Schuster
remained to be overcome as the main precondition to inaugurating negotiations with Germany.

Many proponents of Central Europe noted in 1915 that after it has been linked to the renegotiations of the 1867 Compromise, the project of closer union between the monarchy and Germany was essentially stalled. (Baernreither 1915b, Marchet 1915, Redlich 1953: 14)

The renegotiations of the Compromise started in late January 1916. Stürgkh’s baseline was the maintenance of the *status quo* and a 20-year duration for any resultant new treaty, so as to provide a more stable basis for negotiations with Germany. (Burián 1916, Stürgkh 1916b) Tisza pushed for more effective Hungarian autonomy, changes in agreed internal duties and quotas as well as the formal attachment of Bosnia-Herzegovina to Hungary - conditions that Austrian negotiators saw as an opening gambit in negotiations rather than a realistic demand. (Gratz and Schüller 1925: 18) Both sides fell under German pressure to conclude the negotiations as soon as possible (Burián 1916b); however, given the gap in both trust and demands between the two sides, this was always unlikely. So it was that both Tisza and Stürgkh agreed that negotiations with Germany could be pursued parallel to the Compromise renegotiations (Stürgkh 1916b, Tisza 1916).

This allowed commencement of preliminary German-Austro-Hungarian negotiations in late April 1916. The agreement on a customs duty scheme was achieved within a month. (HHSA 1916) The negotiated scheme was to be taken into account in renegotiations of the Compromise as well. However, this first success in negotiations was not to be the vanguard of things to come.

Renegotiations of the 1867 Compromise were not the only issue that complicated dealings with Germany; another hurdle was the question of Poland, which had been a point of contention since early on in the war (Naumann 1916, Jagow 1916 Auswärtiges Amt 1916) German officials
expressed their concern that if Russian Poland was awarded to Austria, the strengthening of the Polish ethnic group would further erode the standing of Austrian Germans within the monarchy (Baernreither 1915c: 9 November). Moreover, Austria demanded influence in the Balkans (Burián 1915). Yet Germany now also was demanding power in the Balkans and a strong strategic case was made in Berlin for attaching Russian Poland to Germany (Lersner 1917) The issue frustrated negotiations in the period (Schérer and Grunewald 1962: doc no. 227, 251, 261, 267; also Auswärtiges Amt 1916) leading up to the November 1916 declaration of future Polish state on the initiative of the Germans. However, the issue of whether and what form Polish state should take, or who was to have an upper hand was never really resolved, even though, Germany essentially agreed that Austria could have Poland during November 1917 in exchange for the admission of German influence over Romania (AA PA 1917b).

4.7.7 Negotiations within the souring alliance

The end of 1916 brought with it events that promised to speed up the negotiating process. After Stürghkh’s assassination in October 1916, Ernst von Koerber – an advocate of Central Europe – became his successor, shortly followed in January 1917 by Heinrich von Clam-Martinic111, whose cabinet included several Central Europe enthusiasts in key positions.112 Germany’s invitation to the main negotiations followed almost immediately and Foreign Minister Czernin wasted no time in accepting it. (Czernin 1917)

In February 1917 the Compromise renegotiations were finally concluded (Gratz and Schüller 1925: 21) – with the Austrians achieving their desired 20 year duration for the renewed Compromise and the Hungarians winning a reduction

111 For more details on dates for changes of prime ministers, please see Appendix 15
112 The position of Trade Minister was occupied by Karl Urban, Alexander Spitzmüller took Ministry of Finance and Joseph Maria Baernreither became a minister without portfolio. The position of Foreign Minister went to pro-German Ottokar Czernin.
in contributions to a common budget. Moreover, the governmental crisis in Hungary in May 1917 brought to power the foremost of Central Europe advocates in Hungary – Sándor Wekerle, the chairman of the Hungarian Central European Economic Union (MEWV). With Wekerle now the prime minister, many supporters of the Central European project rejoiced at the prospect of a speedy conclusion to negotiations. (Redlich 1953: 232)

However, the new Compromise treaty entailed changes in the levy of customs dues that were directed decidedly against German competition; such as livestock duties or various protective industrial duties. It was these changes in duties that set a very high hurdle for the main negotiations of the customs union with Germany. (Müller 2001: 255) These would be hurdles that were almost impossible to overcome in the context of faltering support for the customs union in Germany and rising opposition to the plan in Austria.

Clam-Martinic fell from grace due to his perceived inability to handle the intensifying nationalist tensions in the Empire, lasting only something over five months in the office. This short period brought substantial and visible progress in negotiations of the alliance with Germany, but many Central Europe advocates lost their decision making powers and much political access with Clam-Martinic’s downfall. Only Czernin and Riedl managed to hold onto their positions.

The alliance was gradually souring by the winter of 1917/18, as German peace negotiations with Russia pushed the question of German-Austro-Hungarian ties into the background. The haggling over Poland, the growing personal animosity between officials on both sides\textsuperscript{113} and finally the Sixtus Affair in April 1918 were indicative of an increasingly difficult relationship between Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Austrian government was aware of changing attitudes in Germany. Burián, now a finance minister, opined that Germany would readily abandon the plan, should there be a realistic prospect of return to free trade.

\textsuperscript{113} Hindenburg was recorded as threatening Austrians with waging war on them, should they oppose German interests in February 1918 (Kühlmann 1948: 516)
after the war. (ÖMRP 1917) While Czernin, as foreign minister, insisted that closer ties with Germany were essential for the monarchy; the weakening strategic, economic and internal position of the Austrian government increasingly exacerbated concerns over a loss of independence in the relationship with Germany. (Gratz 1918: 23 and 26 January) These concerns were exacerbated, when Germany raised a whole host of new conditions in exchange for agreeing to Austria having upper hand in Poland in late 1917. (AAPA 1917b)

The Sixtus Affair fatally undermined Emperor Karl’s authority and he eventually submitted to the political (as well as economic) union with Germany in May 1918 (Broucek 1979: 463, Krizman 1970: 102). The set of agreements was hailed by the concepts advocates as the definitive fruition of Central Europe. Though there was no denying its significant political weight, the Austrian Emperor had committed to a project he essentially did not agree with only in the aftermath of his failed negotiations of a separate peace with France. The capitulation of Austria-Hungary to German domination seemed all but complete.

Politically at least, Central Europe advocates might have regarded their dreams fulfilled. Yet Germany’s priority was now very obviously to renew the pre-war status quo. The union with impoverished and internally unstable Austria-Hungary might have been forsaken, should it complicate the peace negotiations.

### 4.7.8 Ultimate failure

Enthusiasm for economic union with Austria-Hungary was gradually abating in Germany by early 1918 (see section 3.7.3.5), with many starting to argue that any return to a free international market would be more convenient for Germany than union with an impoverished neighbour, a proposal that was attracting stark opposition from the Allies. Yet, the return to a status quo ante
looking at any post-war global market seemed unlikely. So negotiations continued, but with much less enthusiasm on the German side.

Ironically, enthusiasm for union with Austria-Hungary had declined considerably by the time Emperor Karl signed the much trumped up and celebrated agreements with Emperor Wilhelm II. The monarchy was becoming increasingly instable internally and Germany’s preference returned to renewing pre-war free trade levels and aspirations. Moreover, this political gesture still needed to be followed up with final a conclusion of the negotiations towards a customs union agreement, which had been dragging on for a good year or so.

Despite the signing of agreements in May 1918, position of the new Austrian government under Ernst Seidler (23 June 1917 – 27 July 1918) was in favour of a more limited system of preferential custom duties, rather than the originally envisaged fully-fledged customs union. (Gratz and Schüller 1925: 63)

The last talks over the projected customs union took place during the summer of 1918 in Salzburg. The Austrian side was led by Gustav Gratz and Richard Schüller. Agreement was ultimately reached in the form of a document, ‘Guidelines for Customs and Economic Union’, that stipulated the closest possible economic and customs union between the two empires (Gratz and Schüller 1925: 93). Richard Riedl led parallel civil servant’s conference in Vienna and noted that Austria-Hungary had no real alternative other than to enter this union. (Riedl 1918) Yet only three months later, an alternative would offer itself in a form that represented the worst possible outcome for the monarchy – its very dissolution!

4.8 Conclusions

This chapter clearly advanced the argument presented in the second part of the hypothesis: that conceptualisations of regional identity do exercise an impact on the behaviour of political actors and that perceptions of the Self and Other
play a major role in this. The narrative presented shows a mostly negative impact of Central Europe on decision makers in Vienna, who perceived the notion as the concept that would likely formalise Austria’s subservience to the German Empire. Pan-German authors pushing the concept were viewed as representatives of the Other rather than the Self by Stürghk and his government. In sharp contrast (and with no little irony), the shortlived government of pro-Central Europe enthusiasts in the early 1917 provided a substantial boost to customs negotiations. This period marked the high tide of influence of Central Europe proponents in the period of the core research.

The highlight of this chapter is Masaryk’s active use and nuanced presentation of the notion to influence great power policy makers. Yet, the evidence of concepts impact on the international structure remains ambiguous as the plans for close alliance of the German and the Austro-Hungarian empire were ultimately quelled by the result of the result of the First World War.

To sum up, conceptualising Central Europe in Austrian and its imperial environs clearly developed in parallel to the shaping of the discourse in Germany. The main thrust of the formulation of the notion in the late 19th century was carried by the pan-German movement, which presented Central Europe as a replacement notion for ‘Deutschland’ itself, an area belonging by rights to the greater German nation, whose branches needed to be brought together in one economic and political unit. However, the Austrian debate was necessarily moderated by specific socio-political conditions in Austria-Hungary.

First of all, the proposed union with Germany was characterised predominantly as an economic and the assured sovereignty of Austria-Hungary within such a block was overemphasised. The idea of an economic union seemed natural, given the history of a customs union build-up of German states in the 19th century. After Austria was ousted from the process in 1866, the possibilities for customs union resurfaced several times, especially in the 1880s and 1890s,
when its contextualised mention was frequently labelled ‘central European’ by the Austrian media. The problem of maintaining Austrian sovereignty had been the main issue in 1848 and, of course, remained the main concern of Austrian policy makers involved in negotiations with Germany even going into the First World War. Such insecurities had only increased, however, as the German Empire was infinitely more intimidating to a declining Austria-Hungary at the time of the Great War than Prussia had been in the days of the Frankfurt Assembly.

Second, as was highlighted in the short analysis of wartime Austrian German concepts (section 4.5.4), many authors preferred to employ alternative notions to Central Europe. It was important to show, if only nominally, that Austria-Hungary was an equal partner to Germany in the proposed economic union. Similarly, the capacity and presumed responsibility of the dual monarchy in projecting the power of the union towards the Middle East was highlighted. The censor’s hand would come down heavily on any publications that might suggest (or even admit) subjugation of Austria to the German Empire (a fate many of the pan-German authors privately aspired towards). As Central Europe was being increasingly interpreted as the new articulation of the pan-German project, many authors went to great lengths to avoid depicting such an image; and on the other, they highlighted ambitions they naturally held for their own country.

Third, literary Austrian German conceptions of Central Europe also betrayed a preoccupation with a perceived decline in the socio-political standing of Germans within the monarchy and consideration of the likely painful implications of any internal reforms that were required for its survival. Central Europe was presented as a union that would foster the standing of Austrian Germans in their own country and, moreover, present them with the upper hand in its reform.

However, the Franz Josef governments did not necessarily strive to foster the German social element within the empire; their foremost concern was to ensure
the survival of empire itself. While they could rely on Austrian Germans to be their most loyal and reliable subjects, changing demographics and the increasing national consciousness of Slavs had to be addressed at least partially to avoid an inevitable exacerbation of tensions. And that was to say nothing of the Magyars, who had won virtual sovereign recognition back in 1867. The undertones of Central Europe as a German-dominated union were sure to upset the delicate equilibrium and successive governments understandably strove to keep public discussion to a minimum, especially since a surge in pan-German empathy and increasing calls for union with Germany had largely coincided with the outbreak of war. The exhaustive efforts of Stürgkh and Tisza to keep a lid on things illustrate this delicate predicament only too well.\textsuperscript{114}

Significantly, archival research has unveiled Stürgkh’s concern that the leading role of Germans in conceptualising Central Europe was likely to mean a leading role for the German Empire in practice, curbing Austrian sovereignty. This realisation resulted in a strong personal opposition to negotiations on the express topic of Central Europe and also made him weary of customs union negotiations. The German memorandum portraying Austria as an eastern German mark (border march) certainly worked only to increase such concerns. Emperor Franz Josef also considered the Central European plan a danger to the sovereignty of Austria-Hungary – claiming that proposals for a Nationalverband would reduce the standing of Austria even below Bavaria (Redlich 1953: 91), a concern that had been shared by his successor Karl, who was set against the customs union, never mind any grander political scheme. Moreover, Burián was convinced that the Entente would use Mitteleuropa as a pretext for an economic offensive, depicting it as another hostile move (Kapp 1984: 132).

\textsuperscript{114} In addition to Gross episode quoted earlier in the chapter, the Austrian government also warned Gustav Marchet that it did not wish for any public debate on Central Europe at that particular point in time, i.e. 1915, when the enthusiasm for such political project was at its peek in Germany. (Hohenlohe 1915b, Burian 1925: 263) Similarly, István Tisza imposed strict censorship of Central Europe debate in Hungary and suggested that activities of private individuals in this regard should held back as much as possible in both parts of the monarchy (Tisza 1915b, Tisza 1915c, Baernreither 1915c: 19 April, Stresemann 1916)
As regards the influence of Central European advocates in Austria-Hungary, Baernreither himself noted that with regards to the mindsets of either PM Stürgkh or his Foreign Minister Burián, it was negligible (Baernreither 1915c: 9 February). Both of them, as well as Tisza in Hungary, were keen to block public debate on Central Europe. The u-turn in the level of their influence came with Stürgkh's assassination in late 1916, leading to the fated Clam-Martinic government in early 1917. Clam-Martinic’s cabinet included several of the foremost advocates of Central Europe, most importantly Baernreither and Riedl. At the same time, another Central Europe enthusiast, Wekerle, came to power in Hungary. Such a formidable concentration of power in hands of the leaders of Central European movement led immediately to the restart of talks. However, this was soon stalled by the problem of aligning the renegotiated Compromise (due to complex internal customs duties) with the envisaged customs union, as well as the Polish question and faltering interest on the German side. Yet, this period marks the high point of the Central Europe movement in Austria, when its advocates were directly in policy making positions. That is, it was briefly empowered.

The break in negotiations, at the time considered as the final moment of creation of Central Europe, was the signature of the agreements on the economic and military union by the two emperors in the aftermath of the Sixtus Affair during May 1918. This political gesture was challenged only three weeks later, as the new Seidler government decided to push for a preferential customs agreement rather than a full customs union. This clearly showed a lack of government commitment to the political agreements signed by the emperor. Yet, Austria-Hungary lacked viable alternatives to closer alliance with Germany and reluctantly continued negotiations throughout the summer 1918.

The coup de grâce for a project none of the parties really wanted to participate in but nevertheless felt compelled to progress, was dealt by the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary in October 1918, less than six months after the Central European enthusiasts celebrated the realisation of their dreams.
Finally, one interesting line in the story of Central Europe in Austria-Hungary remains to be discussed: the opposition to the notion and the use of Central Europe in agitation of small nations for the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. Most of all, it was Masaryk, who portrayed Central Europe as a threat to what he considered the interests of individual allies. It was already noted that despite sophistication of this argumentation, it did not work too well – in the following chapter, we will discuss whether this was because the allies did not find Central Europe threatening, or otherwise.
Central Europe: Forging a Concept in Time and Space

Central Europe in Britain and the United States

Chapter 5
Chapter 5: Central Europe in Anglo-Saxon environments

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the side of the definitive discourse of Central Europe where the notion is theorized as a representation of the Other. The chapter also explores the impact of just such a constructed notion on the behaviour of political actors and suggests a significant impact, especially in the more distant United States. However, and importantly, the collected evidence goes against the supposition that Central Europe could have driven great power endorsement of the break-up of the Dual Monarchy.

The chapter maps out the use and development of the notion of Central Europe in the Anglo-Saxon world. After initial observations about the prevailing fuzziness of the concept during the late 19th century, the chapter divides into two larger sections, one focusing on Britain and the other on the United States. The chapter observes that in both environments, the pan-German interpretation of Central Europe was gradually adopted and policy makers in both countries defined their policies in opposition to this supposed plan for German domination of Europe and beyond.

5.2 A fuzzy concept

Anglo-Saxon literature from the late 1870s and early 1880s features fairly wide references to Central Europe in various academic and policy fields and branches of science. Yet, there seems to be disunity among authors as regards its territorial extent. Archaeologists delineate Central Europe to include Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, parts of France, Austria and Bohemia, based largely on their analysis of Palaeolithic settlements (Lubbock 1879: 141). Historians typically identify it on the basis of Teutonic settlement areas existing
in the 1st century BC (Stuart-Glennie 1879: 3, Stevens 1879: 160) Geologists estimate its extent on the basis of major Silurian fossil deposits, including Bohemia, Bavaria, Eastern France, Carpathian Mountains and surrounding areas. (Clough 1879: 280, Geikie 1885: 641) Even geographers cannot agree on a shape and size for Central Europe, presenting several versions ranging from limiting its extent to the plains between the Alps and the Baltic (Fisher 1886: 73) to considering the whole mainland rump of Europe (minus its peninsulas) as included in its designation. (Swinton 1875: 100, see Appendix 16)

Until the 1890s, this essentially fuzzy territorial definition for Central Europe was evident in authors both from the UK and the United States. However, from the mid-1890s, UK authors started to gravitate towards identification of Central Europe as consonant with the then contemporary German Empire and Austria Hungary. This was especially visible in the fields of transport, industrial management and engineering (e.g. look at periodicals such as *The Railway Engineer, or Engineering Magazine*115). In contrast, US authors, further removed as they were, seemed to sustain the fuzzy definition much longer.

### 5.3 The view from Britain

In the years preceding the First World War, the concept of Central Europe adopted in Britain essentially had been defined by the pan-German movement; a political project for unification of the area ‘naturally’ dominated by Germans. This interpretation found its way into the strategic considerations of policy makers and, as this chapter documents, exercised an influence in policy choices made during the war.

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115 For comparison with earlier understanding in this branch of academic literature see, for example, Hadley (1886), who prominently included Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark and other countries of mainland Europe into his understanding of Central Europe.
5.3.1 ‘The Seat of War’

British cartographers started to employ the notion of Central Europe in a consistent manner as early as the 1860s. The Austro-Prussian war of 1866, as well as the heightening Franco-Prussian tensions that culminated in their war of 1870–71, brought about a boom in the printing of maps carrying the label, ‘Central Europe’. No less than 34 such maps were printed between 1866 and 1874, as evident in the holdings of the British Library (Bacon 1866, Bacon 1870, Philip 1870). Typically these were maps documenting or related to the conflicts of 1866 and 1870-1 indeed, representations of the Franco-Prussian battlefields dominate the content.

These focused depictions seem relatively disconnected from the more varied output from other academics and scientists just discussed. The explanation perhaps lies in the fact that this boom in consistent cartographic representation of Central Europe was relatively short-lived, relating squarely to the conflicts just mentioned and not surviving long after their resolution. The majority of the maps were published between 1866 and 1873 and, unsurprisingly, at least two of these maps carry the expression, ‘The Seat of War’ as a suffix in their titles (preceding specification of ‘Central Europe’) (Bacon 1870, Letts 1870). The purpose of these maps had obviously been to visualise Germany’s expansionist ambitions and the increasing military threat it posed. Such a (rather simplistic) focus is also evident in later British depictions of Central Europe - its cartographic expression and their volume always seem connected directly to German activities and perceptions of its aspirations. An examination of the chart provided as Figure 5 (below) is instructive.
Source: own chart

British atlases – as opposed to individual topical maps – display three different tendencies in their treatment of Central Europe: they either present no map of Central Europe at all (Bartholomew ed. 1895, Philip 1902, Bacon 1908), they feature maps of ‘Central Europe and the Mediterranean Sea/Countries’ or else ‘Central and Southern Europe’ (Campbell 1885: 84, Bartholomew: 1890: 28, Nelson 1891a: 48 – 49, Nelson 1891b: 48). Interestingly, all the atlases in the last group feature maps prepared by the same cartographer – John George Bartholomew. Other than this sole, if very influential source, there was very limited exposure for the term ‘Central Europe’ in the bound cartographic volumes of the time. Loose individual maps offered more variety in their depictions of Central Europe with their correspondingly greater diversity of authorship.

The number of printed maps of Central Europe dropped significantly between the mid-1870s and the outbreak of the First World War, as the concept itself seems to have shifted. Before the turn of the century, a majority of cartographic works depicted Central Europe accordingly to frame the 1866 and 1870-1 wars, focusing upon the German Empire and its neighbours to the west and south (e.g. compare Johnston and Johnston 1866, Appendix 17, and Stanford 1895,
Appendix 18\textsuperscript{116}). However, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the maps tended to depict the whole of mainland Europe as 'Central Europe' (e.g., Cook 1909, Stanford 1911, Philip 1914). This tendency to 'zoom out' from the previous focus on the conflict-prone Franco-German borderlands is apparent in the cartographic productions of several authors (e.g., compare Stanford 1895 to Stanford 1911, or Philip 1870 to Philip 1914).

An explanation for this phenomenon can perhaps be drawn from analysis of successive map and atlas editions published by Bartholomew\textsuperscript{117}, probably the richest source material for tracing the development of Central Europe as depicted cartographically. Bartholomew's maps reveal that its location gradually shifted eastwards in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. His earliest map of Central Europe focused on France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany. (Bartholomew 1892, Appendix 19) Bartholomew's 1910 map is extended to cover Austria-Hungary as far as Budapest (Bartholomew 1910, Appendix 20) and then in 1915 to cover much of this empire. (Bartholomew, Appendix 21) Moreover, at the onset of the First World War, Bartholomew chose to present a wider continental view of the area, covering the full territorial extent of Austria-Hungary. (Bartholomew 1914, Appendix 22)\textsuperscript{118}

This depiction of Central Europe should be seen in the context of needing to map the possible extent of German territorial ambitions. The progressively full inclusion of Austria-Hungary on these maps reflected increasing perceptions of a strong link between the two empires and the later final 'zooming out' to a continental scale was consonant with the outbreak of the First World War, whereby a much wider map frame was needed to provide a visual context for its many battlefields.

\textsuperscript{116} Their early maps of Central Europe were printed in mutual collaboration – see Johnston 1866.

\textsuperscript{117} John G. Bartholomew (1860 – 1920) was a foremost Scottish cartographer of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Cartographer to the King, co-founder of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and its honorary secretary. (H. R. M 1920)

\textsuperscript{118} Bartholomew’s last map of Central Europe (Bartholomew ed. 1920) shows Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The total shift as compared to the 1892 version is more than 11 degree’s east.
So there may have been a slight disconnect evident in cartographic expressions of Central Europe and employment of the notion in academic writing - while cartographers were ‘zooming out’, eventually to a continental scale to frame the coming conflicts, academics increasingly and consistently ‘focused in’ on the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, having previously held no unanimity at all in their views about what the term connoted. Certainly, British geographical and historical works from the turn of the century exhibit a marked shift towards identifying Central Europe with Germany and Austria-Hungary, sometimes with the addition of Switzerland (Rose 1891) or Italy (Andrews 1896, West 1903, Fry 1908).

Both these tendencies can be explained by the same inter-related phenomena – the rise of Germany and its strengthening interconnection with Austria-Hungary. While consensus over using Central Europe as short-and for both empires strengthened, cartographers needed to provide a wider visual contextual frame for the territories that might be subject to their growing ambitions.

5.3.2 The influence of German Central Europe concepts

Essentially, Britain displayed no autochthonous conceptualisation of Central Europe. Understanding of the concept of Central Europe derived from the translations of the German works. The importance of Joseph Partsch’s *Central Europe* (1903), published under the editorship of Halford Mackinder, has already been described in detail (section 1.1.4). Partsch presented his British readers with a vision for Central Europe, a region that would be “willingly or unwillingly” dominated by the Germans (Partsch 1903: 142). The work drew detailed commentary in countless reviews and was often criticised for its less than subtle hints of a wider political agenda and was generally regarded as not constituting a serious geographic work (G. G. C. 1904). Yet, with this book, the
vision of a German-dominated Central Europe became the key interpretation transplanted into the British environment, an influence whose implications will be traced in later sections of this chapter.

There were, of course, alternative interpretations available as well. For example, the English translation of Hans Ferdinand Helmolt’s *The History of the World* reads:

“...under the heading of ‘Central Europe’ we include the common achievements of the Romance and Teutonic races in the heart of Europe subsequently to the decay of the Kelts. The histories of Germany, Italy and France before the Renaissance, and of Christianity from the age of migration to the Reformation...” (Helmolt 1907: 1)

Finally, reviews of works published in Germany also provided British readers with insight into the competing definitions for Central Europe, their extent and underpinning rationale. For example, *The Geographical Journal* carried George Chisholm’s review (Chisholm 1907) of Alfred Hettner’s *Grundzüge der Länderkunde*, with its definition of Central Europe (Hettner 1907). Yet, it was the understanding of Central Europe as a sphere of ambition for the German nation (as first presented to British audiences by Partsch), which resurfaced in the British policy making environment during the First World War.

### 5.3.3 Shifting threat perceptions

The combined threat of Germany and Austria-Hungary dominated the considerations of the British Government during the First World War (Foreign Office 1916), yet, this had not necessarily been a long-term trajectory of thought or opinion in Britain prior to the war.
At the turn of the century, the British government’s first and foremost concern was the potential threat of Russia to its imperial possessions and interests (Venier 2004: 331, also Green 2006: 33, Williams 1991). Germany was also perceived as a source of potential threat and concerns over its growing ambitions, military might and naval capabilities were rising. Yet, it was generally considered as but one of a number of potential sources of threat to the empire.

Indeed, Britain’s relations with Germany were not openly hostile at least until the First Moroccan Crisis of 1905. After all, the Salisbury government had approached Germany with offers of alliance over Far Eastern issues twice during 1900. (Williamson 1969: 3) Given that Austria-Hungary presented no real challenges for the British Empire – and was surrounded to the west and north by much greater security concerns, this country rarely entered into the government’s strategic considerations in this period. The Great Game was clearly still dominating the strategic outlook at Whitehall. In fact, concerns over Germany itself in foreign policy circles only built up incrementally, as reports of increasing German ambitions gradually coagulated into perceptions of a threat to the interests of the British Empire (Foreign Office 1905, Sanderson 1907). There would be a growing sense than German ambitions posed a challenge to Britain in the Middle East and, potentially, even in India.

At a popular level, Germanophobia erupted fairly regularly in Britain in the early years of the 20th century – generally over suspected connivery in complicating Britain’s relations with its allies (Tomes 2002: 134) to outright scaremongering over a potential invasion (Fontana and Edwards 1996: 39). The intensity of suspicions towards Germany had increased in the popular press for at least two decades prior to the First World War. These popular expressions of fear certainly did not go unnoticed in Germany (Lascelles 1905) and were largely mirrored in the Berlin press. Yet, the strong language of the own daily presses was not reflected in any real policy positions until the last five years or so before the outbreak of war in 1914.
5.3.4 Halford J. Mackinder

Mackinder is surely the most famous British theorist of European regional reorganisation, with his Middle Tier rivalling conceptions of German-dominated Central Europe. Mackinder’s Middle Tier of small independent countries was designed to divide two formidable rivals of Britain: Russia and Germany. It became synonymous with his famous dictum implying that whoever ruled this region, (would one day) rule the world (Mackinder 1919). Yet, this particular theory was not published until after the First World War. In fact, the first version of his heartland theory, published in 1904, displayed a surprising lack of concern over Germany.

Mackinder’s 1904 pivot thesis (Mackinder 1904) addressed the strategic concerns of Britain as a global power rather than just a European country. He clearly focused on any threat that might emanate from an area inaccessible to British naval power, the regions of continental and arctic drainage in Eurasia. (Mackinder 1904: 429) At the time of writing, this looked most likely to originate from the Russian Empire (Mackinder 1904: 437).

Germany only appeared in his essay four times - and these mentions were all on the same page. The third\(^\text{119}\) is perhaps the most interesting for our purposes and also in light of Mackinder’s future theorizing (Mackinder 1919 and 1943). Here Mackinder attested that:

“The oversetting of the balance of power in favour of the pivot state, resulting in its expansion over the marginal lands of Euro-Asia, would permit of the use of vast continental resources for fleet-building, and the empire of the world would then be in sight. This might happen if Germany were to ally herself with Russia”.

(Mackinder 1904: 436)

\(^{119}\) In his first mention, Mackinder remarked how Russia “in the world at large... occupies the central strategical position held by Germany in Europe”. The second identified Germany as a country of “a great inner crescent”.

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From this quote it follows that Germany would only be considered a threat if aligned with an expanding Russia, since this would lend fleet-building capacities as well as an oceanic outlet to the land-based power. Moreover, Germany was not the only power of the inner crescent that Mackinder considered dangerous if interconnected with the pivot area – for his references to China are unmistakable. (Mackinder 1904: 437)

A preoccupation with the German threat, so typical of his later works, and the emphasis on territorial measures to keep Germany and Russia apart, are both missing in Mackinder’s 1904 essay. In fact, the fourth mention of Germany in the 1904 text hinted that Germany should be allowed to develop its influence in South America (Mackinder 1904: 436).

It only remains to be commented that in this earliest version of the heartland theory, there was nothing inevitable about the forging of any alliance between Germany and Russia against the British Empire. Germany was not characterised within the geographical pivot of history and, indeed, did not even figure as a major independent threat to the British Empire. While Mackinder had acknowledged Germany’s rising power in his previous writings (Mackinder 1902), in this essay urging a fostering of unity for the global British Empire (Vernier 2004: 333, Heffernan 1998: 55, Toal 1992,), ‘the [European] seat of war’ (Letts 1870) was not as important as ‘the natural seat of power’ (Mackinder 1904: 435, Appendix 9) in the heart of Eurasia. Central Europe was not at all Mackinder’s preoccupation in his 1904 thesis.

5.3.5 Central Europe, Drang nach Osten and the Berlin-Baghdad Railway

The notion of Central Europe entered the British diplomatic record early in 1906 with Reginald Tower’s letter of 24 January to Secretary of State

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120 Reginald Tower was a Minister-resident in Munich 1903 – 1906.
Edward Grey, detailing the growing influence of the pan-German movement in Germany. Tower also described pan-German conceptions of Central Europe as visions for a unified economic zone spanning all Germans in Europe, with a distinct anti-British edge. (Tower 1906)

More than with any pan-German Central Europe designs, the British Foreign Office was preoccupied with the related notion of a German *Drang nach Osten* – a generic term for ambitions to expand power east of its international borders – and, more specifically, the Berlin-Baghdad railway, which had become a bone of contention from 1897 when Germany ousted Britain from the project. Henry Lansdowne (Viceroy of India 1888 – 1894, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1900 – 1905) thought that the project might afford Germany a threatening predominance in Asia Minor, rendering the scheme a challenge to British interests (Lansdowne 1903). By the mid-1900s, these perceptions were hardening with a clearly observable German naval build-up.

Amidst growing mutual suspicions, tensions between the two countries rose, if only gradually. While in 1906 Fairfax Cartwright\(^{121}\) considered that any differences between Britain and Germany could be settled without too much difficulty (Cartwright 1906), the same individual reported only two years later that the “foreign policy of the German government... seems to prefer to use crooked ways to attain its aims” - considering that it was now almost impossible to bring about an entente between the two countries. (Cartwright 1908) By the end of the decade, the German press was openly anti-British, typically characterising Britain’s opposition to its naval build-up as hypocritical and an obvious effort to maintain its undue advantage on the seas. (de Salis 1909a) These charges were typically levied by the liberal and pan-German national newspapers, then the main contemporary proponents of the idea of Central Europe (de Salis 1909b). By 1912 the tension was obvious (Goschen 1912) and Lord Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War, openly demanded

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\(^{121}\) Fairfax Cartwright was a Minister-Resident in Munich 1906 – 1908 and Ambassador to Vienna 1908 – 1913.
“retardation of the rate of construction” of German battleships (Goschen 1913) as Berlin was now clearly considered a significant threat to the British Empire.

5.3.6 Britain and Austria-Hungary

At the same time (from approximately 1910), increased attention was beginning to be paid by British diplomats to the relationship developing between Germany and its allies – namely, Italy and Austria-Hungary. Edward Goschen observed that Italy was an increasingly unreliable member of the Triple Alliance and that only “political reasons” were preventing it from breaking away completely (Goschen 1912). The relationship with Austria-Hungary also was not without its tensions and occasional shows of mistrust by the German public (Goschen 1910a). Speculation that Britain was trying to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany were floated for the first time as early as 1909, when King Edward VII visited Emperor Franz Jozef in Bad Ischl (Goschen 1910b).

The official line on the British relationship with Austria-Hungary in the late 19th century had been one of “close connexions” (Bridge 1972: 219) and cooperation in the complex situation arising from the Ottoman Empire’s faltering grip on the Balkans. The failure of Anglo-German talks in 1901 was a major disappointment for the Austrian government, which hoped that cooperation between Britain and the Triple Alliance could be established. (Goluchowski 1901) In the early years of the 20th century, British diplomats were also convinced that the Austrian government remained keen on maintaining friendly relationship with Britain (Plunkett 1905) and that Austria was solely concerned with maintaining the status quo in the region (Goschen 1905).

A deterioration in relations was effected with the conflicting policies pursued by both countries in Macedonia during 1906 – 1908 and, most notably, in their treatment of the Bosnian Crisis in early 1909. (Goschen 1907, Goschen 1908,
Cartwright et al. 1909, Cartwright et al. 1911) Interestingly, following the Bosnian Crisis, opinion shifted on Austria-Hungary within the Foreign Office. While until then, it was perceived as a weakening Empire, the Bosnian Crisis convinced many that Austria-Hungary was actually displaying signs of renewed strength (Hardinge 1909, Cartwright 1910) and an ability to emancipate itself from German influence. (Cartwright 1909) As Fairfax Cartwright (now Ambassador to Vienna) opined:

“A strong Austria-Hungary means an independent Austria-Hungary; a weak one means an Empire dependent for guidance upon Germany.” (Cartwright 1909b)

This premise would remain the essential guideline for British policymakers for years to come. British conduct in the wake of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) suggested that it saw a vested interest in maintaining a balance of power on the continent for fear of undermining Austria-Hungary (Crampton 1971: 208). The particulars of the outbreak of the First World War showed that Britain had no direct quarrel with Austria-Hungary. (Grey 1914)

However, concerns were raised by Cartwright over the role Austria-Hungary would play as an ally in German designs to expand their influence eastwards (Cartwright 1911b, 1911c). British diplomats had started to employ the notion of Central Europe as shorthand for Germany and Austria-Hungary since well before the First World War (Goschen 1910b), with their growing references to Berlin’s Drang nach Osten (Cartwright 1911b). In their view, Austria-Hungary was a vital piece in any German expansion strategy and only a strong, detached Austria-Hungary could stop the German march eastwards. But the dual monarchy was deeply dependent on its larger and stronger ally. As Cartwright put it, Austria was “completely supplanted by Germany” (Cartwright

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122 Interestingly, Cartwright drew much of his information in this regard from Karel Kramář, who was also the major source of information for Chéradame and other authors pointing out the danger of German east-ward expansion.
1911c). It was with these impressions that British policy makers entered the turmoil of the First World War.

5.3.7 The Foreign Office and Masaryk’s dismemberment plan

Very early into the war, the British government was approached by the leaders of the small nations comprising Austria-Hungary with a suggestion that the dismemberment of the dual monarchy would be to Britain’s advantage. In addition to Masaryk (Seton-Watson 1914), a number of Polish and Yugoslav representatives and organizations contacted the Foreign Office during the autumn of 1914 (Spring-Rice 1914, Clerk 1914, Rodd 1914). However, at this early stage, no great note was taken of any such representations – even if a similar, contemporaneous suggestion by Hungarian opposition representatives was acknowledged and its possibilities investigated further – though with no great affect. (Elliot 1914, Foreign Office 1914) In any case, suggestions that the break-up of Austria-Hungary be encouraged were rebuffed in spring 1915, even though consultations with representatives of small nations would continue thereafter (de Bunsen 1915, Clerk 1915a, Foreign Office 1915a), providing the British government with valuable intelligence (Clerk 1915b, Foreign Office 1915f). In addition to Masaryk, Yugoslav representatives, most consistently Franjo Supilo, also started to use the same tactical argument when advocating break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in their communications with the British government fairly early into the war (e.g. Supilo 1915), as did some Polish representatives later on (Dmowski 1917). George Clerk123, at that time a senior clerk at the Foreign Office and a member of the de Bunsen Committee124, thought that the break-up of the empire was well beyond practical consideration (Clerk 1915b). The so called Tyrrell-Paget report in 1916 was the first governmental document to suggest break-up of the empire as a possible

123 George Russell Clerk was a diplomat and privy councilor, later an Ambassador to Czechoslovak Republic.
124 De Bunsen Committee was set up to determine British policy towards the Ottoman Empire. The committee suggested federalization of the empire, a solution which the government also favoured in the case of Austria-Hungary until late in the war.
basis for post-war territorial settlement in Europe; however, the report did not gain much traction (Tyrrell and Paget 1916).

The argument that break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire would spell an end to the imperial designs of Germany did not seem to work - the British government seemed of the mind concerned that its break-up would simply result in the creation of small, weak and quarrelling nation-states (‘Balkanization’); which would thus become even more susceptible to German influence and dependent on Austria-Hungary. Yet, this did not signify that governmental officials necessarily held positive views about Central Europe as it was then understood – as a notional blue-print for German expansion. A memorandum, ‘What Germany Covets’ (Foreign Office 1916, FO 925/30277), was issued by the Foreign Office in 1916, using André Chéradame’s famous “Map showing the German schemes of Central Europe and Central Africa” (Foreign Office 1916). The text accompanying the map explained that Germany planned a world conquest. For this purpose, Germany needed to build a sufficiently strong territorial base to intimidate the British Empire:

“For this project, Germany must obtain domination over Austria, Serbia, Roumania, Greece, European Turkey and Asiatic Turkey. The scheme is termed ‘Mitteleuropa’.” (FO 1916)

A recognition of the threat posed by Central Europe to Britain’s imperial interests was certainly present within the Foreign Office; yet, the envisaged solution to prevent its rise would differ from the one offered by Masaryk.

5.3.8 Efforts for detachment of Austria-Hungary from Germany

The notion of Central Europe that regularly appeared in the dispatches and reports of Foreign Office (Beak 1917, Rumbold 1917a, Clerk 1917a) was a response to the context provided by Germany’s Drang nach Osten and its Berlin-Baghdad railway project. Central Europe was presented as only the starting
point of any German envisaged expansion to the east and as threatening to the interests of Empire. Austria-Hungary was considered the key to countering such plans; however, it was the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s detachment from Germany, rather than its break-up, that the Foreign Office decision-makers saw as their preferred enabler.

Robert Cecil’s comments on the Tyrrell-Paget report offer an insight into the thinking behind the British government’s reluctance to aid the break-up of the empire. In his view, any break-up would leave a collective of small, independent and weak states exposed to the potential overlordship of Germany, something they would not be able to resist. In contrast, should the allies manage to secure Austria’s defection from its alliance with Germany, this would greatly enhance their chances of victory in the war. (Cecil 1916) The idea was to convince Austria-Hungary to desert Germany and sign a peace treaty with the allies, its so called ‘separate peace’ strategy. This would, of course, only be achieved if Austria was promised protection of its continued existence.

At the beginning of the war, British officials insisted that “it was notorious that His Majesty’s Government was engaged in the struggle to a large extent for the rights of the smaller nations” (Spring-Rice 1914). Yet, his did not mean that the British government was supporting dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. In fact, by 1916 the possibilities for detachment of Austria-Hungary from Germany had risen to prominence in policy circles, as a way to deprive Germany of a key ally and win the war. Austria was increasingly viewed as suffering from war fatigue and internal tensions and therefore more likely to respond to offers of a separate peace (Patterson 1916, Rumbold 1918). Emperor Karl, who replaced Franz Josef in 1916, was seen as inclined to such thinking (Rumbold 1918d), an assertion proved with exposition of the Sixtus Affair in 1918.

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125 Robert Cecil was the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for much of the First World War (30 May 1915 – 10 January 1919).
126 Franz Josef I died in November 1916
The tradition of securing the balance of power, which had underpinned the system of European Concert in the hundred years leading up to the war was also a strong influence here. For decades the main guarantee of peace in Europe had lain with the striking of power balances through alliances and efforts to isolate members of the system that might potentially represent a danger – but the idea of removing an important member of this system from the political map altogether seemed destabilizing at best. (Amery 1918) The volatile and vulnerable Balkans of the early 20th century was highlighted as an illustration of what could happen, should a collective of small weak nations arise to replace Austria-Hungary. Masaryk's idea of forging a 'barrier' against German expansion to the east did not gain as much traction as his later one of Austria acting as a 'counterweight' to Germany after the war – perhaps significantly, Masaryk's later postulation was much more aligned with any policy-maker's notion of how European power relations worked. (e.g. Smuts 1917)

Moreover, Britain itself was an empire and its enemies could use the same tactics (promises of dismemberment and emancipation should Britain lose the war) to encourage its constituent nations to sabotage the war effort. Perhaps the best illustration was a series of Foreign Office minutes that likened CNC to Sinn Fein (Foreign Office 1918).

Finally, the group of politicians who rose to prominence in the Lloyd George cabinet (1916 - 1922), was not necessarily positively predisposed to the rise of small nation states. Described by some as 'new imperialists', this group led by Leo Amery and Alfred Milner strongly believed that the world was developing towards larger multinational political units rather than smaller nation states (Amery 1953: 162). In their view, the way to counter any potential German rise was to detach and restructure Austria-Hungary into a federal unit. Even as late as October 1918, when the demise of the dual monarchy was imminent, Amery argued that:
“The fact is that “Middle Europe” is an inevitable and necessary outcome of this war whatever the actual issue of the struggle or the terms of peace imposed by the victors.” (Amery 1918: 308)

His suggestion was to join German Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria in “a new Danubian Confederation” (Amery 1918: 307 – 308). He was pragmatic about its likely political geographic orientation;

“such a union would largely work in co-operation with Germany is also a fact which we should accept with a good grace. The cooperation will be of a very different character from the league between Hapsburg and Hohenzollern in the past.” (Amery 1918: 308)

This idea was eventually dismissed by his colleagues (Namier 1918, Cecil 1918b), but not before the suggestion had been widely aired, considered as it was by the War as well as the Political Intelligence Department. (Cecil 1918a)

This episode demonstrated the following: while any German-led Central Europe pitched against Britain would obviously be opposed, fears of a Central European ‘Balkanisation’ and any resultant disruption to traditional regional power balances were so strong as to lead to contemplations of a British-designed federation, even if it would ‘co-operate’ with Germany.

5.3.9 Separate peace efforts

In light of the above, it is not surprising that Masaryk’s seemingly binary choice between allowing development of a launch pad for German conquest of the world and enabling the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire did not convince many. Among the few who got on board with his arguments were members of the Intelligence Bureau of the Department of Intelligence led by Lewis B. Namier.
But within the Foreign Office, key decision makers remained unimpressed. The sceptics even included George Clerk, who was in frequent contact with many representatives of small nations (Clerk 1915a, 1915b, 1917a). Instead, the government worked towards achieving a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. In these negotiations, assurances of its non-interference in internal affairs were actually communicated to the Austrian government, suggesting that Austria-Hungary might become a stabilizing power in the region once liberalized.\(^{127}\)

The idea of conducting separate negotiations with the Austrian government had first been raised in the summer of 1916 (Foreign Office 1916b) and, by the end of the year, Lloyd George himself had become convinced that it was this strategy that possessed the strongest chance of success, as he learned about the new emperor’s negotiations with France (Lloyd George 1935: 1184). Talks with Austria-Hungary were conducted for much of 1917 and early 1918 (Smuts 1917, Rumbold 1918c, 1918d), although they would ultimately fail to deliver the separate peace that was being aimed for. The idea was to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany and develop a post-war counterweight to its east in Europe. It became clear during May 1918 with the announcement that new military and economic treaties had been concluded between the German and Austrian emperors that this idea would not materialize and Austria-Hungary would be tied firmly into the German orbit (PID FO 1918). As reported by Rumbold, the treaties on economic and political union represented “a step to the Mitteleuropa scheme” (Rumbold 1918a) which “might become a serious reality” (Rumbold 1918b).

\(^{127}\) J. C. Smuts, who negotiated on behalf of Britain wrote in his report on negotiations he assured his counterpart that “we had no intentions of interfering in [Austria’s] internal affairs, but we recognized that if Austria could become a really liberal Empire, in which her subject peoples would, as far as possible, be satisfied and content, she would become for Central Europe very much what the British Empire had become for the rest of the world… and she would have a mission in the future even greater than her mission in the past.” (Smuts 1917: 219)
5.3.10 A reluctance to see the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary

Only at this point, when the materialization of Central Europe as a union of Germany and Austria-Hungary seemed possible, did the voices and demands of its composite small nations start to gain traction. The Foreign Office now turned to a strategy of weakening Austria-Hungary by any means, and the allies stepped up their support to small nations capable of actively weakening the monarchy (especially propaganda and battle groups).

Throughout the war, the Foreign Office supported any disruptive efforts of the small nations in order to weaken Austria-Hungary and therefore Germany; yet, as has already been discussed at some length, their preference was for a reorganization of the empire that would end up weakening any alliance with Germany (mainly by increasing the clout of the Slavs), rather than effecting rupture. (Smuts 1917)

The ability of national representatives and their networks to disrupt enemy ranks through wholesale desertions (Clerk 1917a: 313) and targeted propaganda (Granville 1918) impressed the allies. Valuable intelligence was supplied (Clerk 1916) as sizeable companies of men ended up fighting on the side of the allies (Cecil 1918c, 1918e) and this motivated a growing sense of obligation on the part of British policy makers (Clerk 1917a, Hardinge 1918, Lloyd George 1918). Yet, even in the last stages of war, many Foreign Office officials wanted to keep the door open for the potential survival of Austria-Hungary, if at all possible. On 5 September 1918, almost a month after recognizing CNC, Robert Cecil minuted:

“Our recognition of the Czechs was very carefully worded and though it would undoubtedly be consistent with the dismemberment of Austria it does not in fact bind us to that solution.” (Cecil 1918f, Appendix 25)

What finally convinced the British government to grant CNC recognition was the armies that the CNC controlled in Siberia, which had become central to
allied plans to deal with Bolshevik Russia (Granville 1918, Cecil 1918c, Cecil 1918d). There was also the question of recognition by other allied states (Foreign Office 1918b). Beneš demanded recognition in return for the continuing involvement of Czech battle groups on the allied side in Siberia (Cecil 1918d), and he eventually got it (Foreign Office 1918, 1918b, 1918c). Masaryk's narrative of Central Europe did not seem to have made much of an impact.

The realisation of an anti-British Central Europe stretching down to the Middle East would certainly have been a nightmare of British policy makers; however, they did not ultimately believe that the break-up of Austria-Hungary would prevent it; quite the contrary, they believed it would leave Germany as the only great power in the region and enable it to dominate the region even more easily. Anyway, the crumbling of Austria-Hungary would come from within. The British government would have preferred establishment of a new federation in the area128, but the emerging regional picture was perceived as too unstable to predict or manage. So they chose not to bind themselves to any particular design or cause and essentially let things take their own cause (Namier 1918).

5.4 The view from the USA

A Pan-German interpretation of Central Europe would find its way into American academic and policy circles as well, though considerably later than was the case with Britain. Nevertheless, the concept was visibly present in the minds of policy makers at the most crucial junctures of the First World War.

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128 Beneš, aware of the British concerns over viability of small nation states, even submitted proposal of new ‘Pro-Entente Central Europe’ (Beneš 1918) consisting of two federations, a plan he would later return to during the Second World War.
5.4.1 Central Europe almost unknown to cartography

As compared to the UK, cartographic expression of Central Europe was all but missing in the United States, with perhaps one sole exception – the works of Arnold Henry Guyot, a Swiss-American geographer and cartographer\textsuperscript{129}. While his 1866 publication \textit{Guyot's Geographical Series} made no mention of Central Europe, instead discussing a German Confederation (Guyot 1866: 85 – 86) separately from Prussia and Austria (Guyot 1866: 89), Guyot did publish a wall atlas of Central Europe only four years later (Guyot 1870). Presumably, this development was consonant with the pronounced spike in map-printing of Central Europe during the Franco-German conflicts at the turn of the 1870s; yet, it did not show the same characteristics as British maps (see section 5.1.2). It offered a wide continental view stretching from Madrid to St. Petersburg. Other cartographic expressions of Central Europe originating in this period in the United States are rare - world atlases printed in the United States before 1900 do not feature Central Europe at all. (Cram 1887, Grant 1887, ELAS 1899)

While its cartographers largely ignored the term ‘Central Europe’, US academics in other relevant disciplines did not share the tendency of their British counterparts to gradually focus on German Empire and Austria-Hungary. Rather, US authors seemed to perceive a loose identification of Central Europe with the mainland of the continent, with France featuring as a prominent Central European country. (Cheyney 1907, Schwill 1907)

5.4.2 Central Europe in American political science publications

Only a handful of works from the turn of the century referred to Central Europe in the sense of an alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary.

\textsuperscript{129} Indeed, occasional mentions of Central Europe did appear as general and vaguely defined geographical description, such as in a work of A. T. Hadley on railroad transport history. (Hadley 1866)
An example was *World Politics at the end of the 19th century* by Paul S. Reinsch (1900), who was Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin. Reinsch viewed the idea of “central Europe under the hegemony of Germany” as the result of an anticipated future “struggle for existence on the field of commerce and industry” (Reinsch 1900: 292). He contextualised the concept within the commonly observed tendency towards emergence of ever larger political units, such as the British Empire (Reinsch 1900: 293). Reinsch concluded that rather than moving towards conflict, Britain and Germany were heading for an accommodative relationship since both now had a vested interest in the emergence of a global free trade order. (Reinsch 1900: 289)

Similarly, American reviews of (and responses to) Joseph Partsch’s *Central Europe* were more neutral and much less alarmist than the British ones. Robert E. Peary, a polar explorer, praised Partsch’s writing style and evaluated the book very positively overall in the *Society* journal. Unlike his British counterparts, Peary did not ponder over the intentions of the writer, but focused on his methodology, highlighting Partsch’s geographic determinism and his focus on economics, offering a well rounded review of the work itself rather than a judgment of the author’s proclivities. (Peary 1903: 418 – 419)

Yet, coverage of the concept in journals and even the daily media became more negative in the run-up to the war. Albert Shaw’s article ‘Progress of the world: Militarism in Central Europe’ (1911) pointed to the strategic threat that alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary presented:

“Germany and Austria-Hungary have become so closely allied as to be virtually, for all military purposes, one and indivisible. Austria continues to build her Dreadnoughts, and they become part of the defensive and offensive force of which Germany is the leader.” (Shaw 1911: 28)

A year later, Homer Lea seemed convinced of the inevitability of conflict between Britain and Germany, reasoning that Berlin had not yet realised its
destiny of national exaltation and was only about to begin such a quest, which "must of necessity result in a struggle with the Saxon race". (Lea 1912: 132 – 135)

Finally, the war itself solidified interpretations of Central Europe as embodied by the German – Austro-Hungarian alliance, as had been observed in Britain. The material existence of the wartime alliance, the influence of British thought and writings on the subject, with translations of seminal European works (e.g. Naumann 1916, Chéradame 1916) went a long way towards explaining the adoption of this interpretation. Appendix 12 shows an example of the prevailing understanding of Central Europe as depicted in Jacob Schapiro’s *Modern and Contemporary European History* (1918), edited by James Shotwell.

5.4.3 Central Europe in the documents of the Inquiry

Central Europe appears in the correspondence of war-time US policy makers (House and Seymour 1921: 3, Seymour 1928: 148 – 149, Lansing 1918a) as well as the staff of government departments and special commissions. Most remarkable was the frequent use of the expression by members of the Inquiry. The Inquiry was an analytical unit, which served as the Presidents personal staff preparing materials necessary to support American participation in the anticipated peace conference. It was constituted in September 1917 under the supervision of Woodrow Wilson’s confidante, Colonel Edward Mandell House.

In his account of the events of the Paris Peace Conference, House stated that

“The bulk of the work of The Inquiry dealt with Mittel Europa, indeed, with the distracted areas of Central Europe and the Near East on either side of the much-heralded Hamburg-Baghdad Railway, stretching from the North Sea and the Baltic to the
This view of what Central Europe meant and where it was headed was also projected in the very first document the Inquiry (The Inquiry 1918) submitted to President Wilson - this became instrumental in formulation of his Fourteen Points speech (Wilson 1918b, Appendix 28).

In The Inquiry papers Central Europe features interchangeably with Mittel-Europa (House and Seymour 1921), Middle Europe (Appendix 29) the Mid-European Economic Union (Kerner 1918d), while Mid-Europe (Kerner 1918c) also figures quite frequently, typically in connection with contemplation of Germany's Drang nach Osten (Hershey and Anderson 1918: 124–125) and the Berlin-Baghdad railway scheme (Beer 1918).

Interpretations of Central Europe carried in the Inquiry papers were typically premised on a re-reading of pan-German writings and interactions with opponents of the German – Austro-Hungarian alliance, namely Chéradame (Chéradame 1918), Masaryk (1918d, Shotwell 1937: 10 - 11) and Seton-Watson (Seton-Watson 1918). It was, in fact Masaryk, who provided the Inquiry with a recherche on pan-German literature dealing with Central Europe (Masaryk 1918d). Those involved in the project observed considerable staffing problems, as America lacked experts on the politics of the region and the Inquiry had to rely on experts from other fields (such as archaeology) and recent immigrants from Europe; the former lacking crucial insights, the latter burdened with biases. Reportedly, almost a half of all reports produced by the Inquiry were outsourced. (Gefland 1963: 132)

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130 This statement perhaps expresses House’s definition of Central Europe better than the bulk of the work of the Inquiry, as only about 500 items from total 1200 in the holdings of the Inquiry archives deal with areas included in this outline and the work focusing on Latin America was somewhat out of proportion to its involvement in the war. (Gefland 1963: 46 and 185)
A significant body of reports and memoranda featuring the notion of Central Europe in the Inquiry Papers come from the pen of R. J. Kerner, the Inquiry’s Austria-Hungary expert. Kerner displayed a strong pro-Slav bias (Kerner 1918b, 1918c) and passed negative comment on US policy towards the Slavs in his reports (Kerner 1918a).\textsuperscript{131} His portrayal of Mid-Europe (as he preferred to term it) was one of a pan-German plan to dominate and destroy Slavs (Kerner 1918c: 18).

Kerner presented his ‘nightmare scenario’ of Central Europe in ‘The German and Austrian Solutions to the Near Eastern Question’ submitted in March 1918 (Kerner 1918d). In this document he outlined a German plan to gradually dominate Austria-Hungary, Finland, former Baltic provinces of Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Romania, Yugo-Slav lands and, finally, Russia itself. The only obstacles to the “virtually complete domination of Europe” by Germany in such a Mid-European Economic Union were the Czecho-Slovaks and the South Slavs (Kerner 1918d). Kerner considered that the formation of such an “economic colossus” would hold dire consequences for the whole continent – Russia would become Central Europe’s economic vassal, Italy also, while France would only keep its status due to its colonial empire, but only “in a third rate economic position”. (Kerner 1918e: 14)

Besides Kerner’s memoranda, analogous Inquiry Paper documentation projecting this particular view of Central Europe – i.e., as a pan-German plot (quoting from Chéradame 1916) to dominate Europe – was submitted by representatives of the small nations in the United States. Most prominent was the memorandum submitted by the Bohemian National Alliance in America, which warned against Central Europe and Germany’s Drang nach Osten, somewhat predictably suggesting that any resultant “Bohemian-Slovak state [would be]... a strong barrier against German aggression” (BNAA 1918).

\textsuperscript{131} After the war Masaryk noted the Kerner was working “on our behalf” (Masaryk 1938).
After the war, House insisted that “Bohemia was looked upon as a bulwark against a resuscitated Germany, which might some time in the future plan a new drive to the east” (House and Seymour 1921: 4); however, the actual events of the last months of war suggest otherwise.

5.4.4 Preference for the survival of Austria-Hungary

In fact, Inquiry members could not agree on what to do with Austria-Hungary. Rather than opting for dismemberment, even Kerner had called for federalisation of Austria-Hungary, as in the self-determination he saw a danger (if not a German plot) that the small nations might be drawn into the German economic and political orbit under a bracket of Central Europe. (Kerner 1918d: 10) Seymour preferred trialism and the overall lack of consensus resulted in the Inquiry operating with a set of scenarios for Austria-Hungary rather than any concrete policy preferences (Gefland 1963: 200 – 203).

Yet, this was not because US policy makers somehow failed to understand the dangers of Central Europe portrayed by Masaryk and other small nation representatives (e.g. Dmowski 1917, LLCR 1918), quite the contrary: Wilson, House and his Inquiry were convinced that an eastwards expansion built on the foundations of pan-German Central Europe plans was exactly what Germany was after (Wilson 1917b). House informed Wilson as early as February 1916 that Frederic C. Penfield had (US ambassador to Austria-Hungary)

“...confirmed our belief that Austria-Hungary and Turkey are now but little more than provinces of Germany. The Central Empire runs from the Baltic to the Dardanelles and beyond.” (House 1916)

Some core members of the Inquiry were well vested in the idea of Central Europe, too; Isaiah Bowman, one of the key members of the committee, was a
Ratzel enthusiast and for a period of time served as an assistant to Albrecht Penck. (Martin 1980: 12–13)

Indeed, the first draft memorandum of the Inquiry submitted to the President started with a detailed analysis of how Germany had already created a Berlin-Baghdad axis, which would eventually – if successful – make it the master of Europe and Asia. However, measures to counter this situation – deemed as dangerous to the interests of the USA – did not focus on carving independent states out of Austria-Hungary. Instead, the recommendation was for the control of both ends of the axis by friendly powers, neutralisation of the Turkish Straits and increased democratization of Germany. As far as Austria-Hungary was concerned, the draft recommended its federalisation and extrication from German domination. (The Inquiry 1918) The memorandum was delivered to Wilson by House on 4 January 1918, and the two individuals spent the following two days hammering out the President’s famous 14-points speech. (Hodgson 2008)

Wilson’s speech differed from the Inquiry’s recommendations on several counts (compare The Inquiry 1918, Wilson 1918; also see Gefland 1963: 134–148) and did not mention Central Europe or Berlin-Baghdad axis; yet we know the Inquiry’s draft was considered, as Wilson personally asked for it (Mamatey 1957: 173) and added notes to the margins of the document, reformulating its recommendations (Gefland 1963: 139). At odds with what is often maintained (e.g. Chicago Tribune 1918, or Hacohen 2002), Wilson did not champion the independence of small nations in his speech. While he did call for a unified Poland (which was also a plan of German and Austria-Hungary) and evacuation of Belgium, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, with regards of “the peoples of Austria-Hungary” he suggested only that they “should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development” (Wilson 1918: 15).

If the Masaryk group was bitterly disappointed, the fact remains that Wilson actually gave Austria-Hungary assurances against dismemberment (Wilson 1917a, Page 1917) and expressed his approval that Britain had also delivered
similar assurances during the Smuts mission only days before his speech (Lloyd George 1937: 26, Lloyd George 1918b, Unterberger 2000: 91). This was to remain the President’s position until the summer of 1918.

Masaryk had to face down Wilson’s rebuff in May 1918, despite the fact that the meeting was arranged by Richard Crane\textsuperscript{132} assistant of the Secretary of State Robert Lansing. Let alone Masaryk’s propaganda based on othering from Central Europe, Wilson was not even convinced by the reports he had received from his own officials. The US liaison officers (e.g. Frasier 1918) and ambassadors (Page 1918, Stovall 1918) lobbied for official US recognition of the CNC as a provisional government of the future Czechoslovakia, reporting on the impact of small nation propaganda and forces on the course of war, or the role of Czech forces in Siberia. USA only recognized CNC on 3 September (Lansing 1918b), following recognition by Britain. While the later peace note response to Austria-Hungary demanded independence for its nationalities (Appendix 30), Wilson’s policy preference remained on the side of regional federation rather than realisation of new independent states.

5.4.5 The Mid-European Union

The staff of the Inquiry, like Colonel House (and, for that matter, Wilson himself) feared for the survival of a group of small independent nation states and feared a ‘Balkanization’ of Central Europe (Coolidge 1919, Heffernan 1999). Their concerns and preference for federation in the region motivated national leaders to acquiesce to the idea of a new multinational unit, provided they were first guaranteed independence (Masaryk 1918c). In late 1918, Masaryk wrote to Beneš:

\textsuperscript{132} Richard Crane was a son of Charles Crane - American industrialist, sponsor and friend of President Wilson -. who was Masaryk’s admirer. Richard’s sister, Frances, married Masaryk’s son Jan, future foreign minister of Czechoslovakia. Charles Crane also lobbied president in Masaryk’s favour; however, Wilson twice refused to see Masaryk, after reading his memorandum on Russia, which apparently displeased him. (Kalina 1982)
“House je v srdci pacifista, ale pochopil náš program a akceptoval. ...má zájem v Mid-European Union: rozbití Rakouska je jim jen negace, žádají pozitivní konstrukci.” (Masaryk 1918b)

The ‘positive construction’, as phrased by Masaryk, should have been the Mid-European Union, a regional structure that would become a “wall of free peoples against the German Drang nach Osten” (NY Times 1918). The project, which was intended to bring about a regional federation of small peoples, was supported by House, the Inquiry and the Committee on Public Information – the official US agency for wartime propaganda – and launched in September 1918, bringing together representatives of 12 different nations. The idea was hailed by the press as “a Safe Mitteleuropa... instead of the grandiose, imperialistic and predatory Mitteleuropa of which the two Kaisers dreamed” (Philadelphia Public Ledger 1918). However, the venture was in fact stillborn.

At its first meeting in September 1918, the objective of the union was formulated as

“a united front against the Central Empires, application of the doctrine of self-determination, the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, and a Mid-European federation of nationalities.” (Miller 1918)

However, only a month later, on 26 October, the Declaration of Common Aims of the Mid-European Nations signed at a rather pompous inaugural event at the Independence Hall in Philadelphia called only for self-determination and merely pledged coordinated efforts to safeguard liberty (Mid-European Union 1918). The very use of the word ‘Mid-European’ met with resistance of some delegates (May 1957) and the idea of federation was watered down into article 5, which stated:

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133 House, in his heart, is a pacifist, but he understood our program and accepted it... he is interested in Mid-European Union: the dismemberment of Austria is just a destruction for them, they demand positive construction. -

134 Only two days after US recognition of CNC, supporting the thesis that the recognition and promise of creation of a regional federation were in fact linked.
“...we believe our peoples having kindred ideals and purposes should co-ordinate their efforts to insure the liberties of their individual nations for the furtherance of their common welfare, provided such a union contributes to the peace and welfare of the world.” (Mid-European Union 1918)

Pushed by the US government as an outside actor, the whole venture only enlisted a half-hearted commitment on the part of nations that were supposed to partake centrally within it. The project soon fell apart owing to the ongoing clashes between individual national representatives (Masaryk 1938: 289)

Yet, the US government remained concerned over the viability of the new successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and especially the much territorially-reduced Austria. The possibilities for a ‘Danubian Federation’ (Coolidge 1918) were explored once again in late 1918, but unavailingly, owing to the opposition of the former small nations of the dual monarchy (House and Seymour 1921: 90).

5.5 Conclusions

This chapter documented conceptualisation of Central Europe from outside, as the Other, so to speak. Despite the substantial influence that this essentially negative and defensively-conceived concept had on the minds of policy makers, Masaryk’s ultimate failure suggests only a very limited impact of the notion on actual structure. Yet, the US effort to establish a ‘Mid-European’ union in the aftermath of the break-up of the Dual Monarchy suggests that policy makers may have had the ambition to bring territorial constructs (however theoretical) to fruition. In this case, such efforts were frustrated by contradictory realities on the ground. Yet again, the notion had failed to change the world map.

In the Anglo-Saxon environment, original conceptions of Central Europe were few and far between -their definition and cartographic depictions differed from
one another quite widely. In Britain, the notion started to coagulate into shorthand for Germany and Austria-Hungary considerably earlier than was the case in the United States, clearly evident in cartographic works. Publication of Partch’s *Central Europe* (Partsch 1903) introduced into the British environment a pan-German interpretation of the notion as a region to be ‘naturally’ dominated by Germans. Policy circles started to take note of the notion in similar vein by 1906, with reports of growing ideological support for the pan-German movement. While seminal points of departure in the USA are not as clear as they were in Britain, the same interpretation of Central Europe seems to only have settled upon during the war, despite the fact that it had been visible in American writing from the beginning of the century (Reinsch 1900). The evidence of the German role in Anglo-Saxon policy makers, academics and journalists arriving at an understanding of Central Europe comes in their frequent parallel use of the German term *Mitteleuropa* in English language texts.

In both environments, a negative view of the notion gradually developed as it was considered a challenge to the interests of both the British Empire and the United States. This threat perception was built on the presumption that the notion served as a political plan to form a strong continental base for wider German expansion, loosely defined as a march to the east (Drang nach Osten). The ultimate strategic concern of both was the envisaged plan of Germany to expand its influence along the so called Berlin-Baghdad axis.

Yet, despite the fact that concern over Central Europe was pronounced in both countries, Masaryk’s strategy of portraying the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary as the only way to prevent its rise did not really work. None of the allied powers was that keen on breaking up the Austro-Hungarian Empire\(^\text{135}\).

\(^{135}\) In France, Beneš’s work was aided by the fact that the French public was familiar with the idea of small nations as an ally in their anti-German fight through works of Andre Chéradame and other publicists (Abrams 1944: 189, Lefranc 1898, Chéradame 1900, Henry 1900) and the French government was eager to enlist émigré Czechs and Slovaks to foster her ranks at the front. (Unterberger 2000: 62) Negotiations for recognition of supreme authority of the CNC
Their preferred tactic was to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany, federalise it to increase the influence of the Slav element and turn it into a counter-weight for Germany in the region. In fact, they feared the break-up of the empire fresh in the memory of recent destabilisation of the Balkans in the wake of Ottoman decline. ‘Balkanisation’ and the ultimate demise of small nation states in the face of Germany was the envisaged risk if Austria-Hungary unravelled.

To sum up, both British and American policy makers preferred to resolve the dilemma of Central Europe within the established framework of balance of power equations within the European continent. Even after the collapse of the dual monarchy, officials in both governments sought to federalise the successor states, but these initiatives failed due to the opposition of the newly independent nations.

over Czech and Slovak soldiers were open as early as spring 1917. A letter intercepted by the British intelligence services suggests that this step was motivated by the fact that CNC offered the French government 40,000 men strong fighting power in summer 1916. (Masaryk 1916a) Yet, at the same time the French government, just like the British and the American one, was in secret talks with the Austrian Emperor on the possibility of separate peace. This would ensure the Empire's survival, likely in the federated form, and frustrate hopes of Masaryk and his colleagues.
Central Europe: forging a concept in time and space

Variations in Time and Space

Chapter 6
Chapter 6: Variations in Time and Space

6.1 The story of Central Europe

The chapter argues strongly that the processes identified in the core research were not accidental - they repeated themselves regularly as the notion of Central Europe was redefined in subsequent historical periods. The last decade of the twentieth century is highlighted as the key episode, which shows potential signs of indirect impact of Central Europe on the changes in international structure.

The primary objective of this chapter is to outline the development of discourses over Central Europe from the Paris Peace Conference until the present day, in order to map the usage of the notion, patterns in its employment and their recurrence throughout the twentieth century and beyond. Themes established in the core research period – the “narrative of the middle” (Bugge 1999), attempts to substantiate envisaged regional identity, the problem of inclusion or exclusion of Germany – will be followed through subsequent eras. The chapter will trace the fortunes of Central Europe as a deployed construct in the revisionist aims of various interest groups. Emphasis will be laid upon identifying the mechanisms of how and why definitions of Central Europe harnessed the support or opposition of various actors and in highlighting the resulting implications. The intent here is to introduce the reader to complexity of Central European discourse and to identify its operation at various levels.

At the end of the First World War Central Europe was a notion closely associated with the shattered plans for union between Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Paris Peace Conference confirmed the sovereignty of the nationally-defined successor states that would replace the dismembered
Austro-Hungarian Empire. But the solution would soon be proven far from ideal – instability, national tensions and economic impoverishment plagued the region, and caused many to think of alternatives. The erratic interwar period gave rise to a multitude of new conceptions for multinational union in the area, springing from the most diverse sources. Notion of Danubian Federation appeared as a competing term developed by authors wishing to leave Germany out of their framework. However, newly independent successor states resisted any real efforts for their integration despite growing indications that they might not be able to safeguard their ‘armed national sovereignties’. Indeed, the consolidation of Germany in the mid-1920s brought with it a new wave of theorizing Central Europe along earlier lines – consisting of Germany and successor states to Austria-Hungary. But with the hardening of German national ambitions in the early 1930s, the original concept was being moulded into an ever-more pronounced program for domination of the area by the German nation. This tendency continued until a term better suited for such a purpose was introduced – the Reich.

The beginning of the Second World War brought a virtual U-turn to theorising of Central Europe in many aspects. Treated as a mere tool of propaganda in Nazi Germany, Central Europe had ceased to be the primary term associated with German expansionism, replaced with the term Reich. Exiled leaders of the successor states, now finally convinced of the need for a stronger multinational union to counter the German threat, were thus free to develop the notion to denote their own plans of federalisation of a strip of countries between Germany and the Soviet Union. Encouraged and supported by the British and the US governments, they signed a series of treaties establishing the basis of future union and worked towards their implementation. However, power politics took precedence over promises extended to exiled successor states politicians and the Western Allies yielded influence over Central Europe to the Soviets. This decision dealt a devastating blow to any plans for federation in the area, as the Soviet leadership was fiercely opposed to any integration that
might strengthen its new satellites. When Yugoslav plans for a Balkan federation surfaced in 1948, the reprisals were fierce and uncompromising.

In the early Cold War period, some émigré thinkers living in the West presented plans for neutralisation of an area to buffer the spread of Communism – in line with the geopolitically substantiated paranoia of the time. However, the Western allies were not willing to risk yet another war over Central Europe and this new vision failed to gather substantial support. For over three decades, Central Europe was not talked about, save for some émigré theorists returning to the interwar discourse themes, since the division of Europe into the East and West made it redundant.

However, Central Europe made a surprise comeback in the 1980s. But the form in which it re-emerged seemed far removed from the Central Europe of earlier periods. In contrast to previous territorially defined political projects, Central Europe of the 1980s was an abstract, culturally defined conception. Formulated and promoted by dissidents of the Eastern Bloc, Central Europe was a spiritual escape, an antithesis of authoritarian regimes, a negation of the Eastern-ness ascribed to their countries. Idealised Austro-Hungarian past was invoked as a model of cosmopolitan culture and associated with all that was supposedly Central European – artistic creativity, cultural uniqueness, humanistic values, etc. Such a definition of Central Europe was enthusiastically embraced by Western audience attuned to grievances of Eastern dissidents. Central Europe became an intellectual project for those, who wished the Iron Curtain to disappear.

And disappear it did. From the moment the Berlin Wall was torn down, an imaginary mythical Central Europe came to being in the eyes of its 1980s constructers. It became a narrative of cultural approximation to the West, a means of othering from the East European past. As grand geopolitical theories assigned the region to German sphere of influence in the post-Cold War period, Central Europe was on its way to become part of the West. Central Europe became principally used in the context of European integration and associated
with the group of countries that were on the right track to achieve speedy inclusion into Western economic and security structures. In this context, the notion became a tautology in itself. Central European countries were on their way to become members of the EU and NATO and countries on their way to become members of the EU and NATO were Central European. Indeed, since the bulk of post-Communist countries joined the NATO and the EU, the frequency of the use of the notion substantially declined. It seems like once again, Central Europe has been made partially redundant by its inclusion, this time into the West.

The story documents the fine shape-shifting qualities of Central Europe. Its boundaries have been fluid – sometimes including Germany, sometimes not, sometimes stretching from Estonia to Greece, sometimes limited to Germany and Austria. Its opponents in one period changed into its primary proponents in the other. One day it was on the top of the strategic agenda and the next it was deemed irrelevant. What was the root cause of these erratic changes? In line with the suggested hypothesis, the chapter searches for answers by looking at the identities and interests of those who took part in the discourses over Central Europe, the character and contents of their concepts, and the change these brought to the substance of the notion. It looks into how some concepts gained more decisive influence than others and asks why. It analyses the contemporary international context, interests and behaviour of relevant actors on the international scene, and the influence the notion of Central Europe exercised upon them.

To foreshadow the tale told on the following pages, a comparison between interwar and Second World War notions of Central Europe is the most revealing. The interwar period witnessed gradually emerging monopoly of the notion concentrated in the hands of writers belonging to Haushofer’s *Geopolitik* school whose interests were moulded by the evolving ambitions of Germany. The Second World War witnessed a handover of the discourse to exiled political leaders of successor states, with – fairly obviously, their interests completely
opposed to the first group. The influence this handover exercised on the character of conceptions of Central Europe was profound. While in the 1930s, the Central European discourse subsumed a multitude of theoretical schemes envisaging German domination of the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire so as to realize their true potential as a major power; the writing of the next decade focused on discussion of concrete projects of (con-)federation of the strip of nations running north to south between Germany and Russia, so as to safeguard them from the threat presented by both and ensure their economic prosperity. The differences in concepts that constituted the main body of the discourse of Central Europe thus shifted the very substance of the notion in terms of geographical location, purpose and character.

Similar comparisons can be drawn for all subsequent periods discussed in the chapter. Moreover, implications of these divergent meanings of the notion resulted in differing influences being exercised upon the behaviour of various decision makers, whether they were aligned with their interests or not. The 1930s concepts were thoroughly exploited by the Nazi government for purposes of justification of German expansionist ambitions, while being vigorously opposed by the leaders of successor states. On the other hand, in the 1940s, the exiled leaders of successor states took an active part in reformulating the meaning of the notion and laid the legal foundations of the future Central European (con-)federation through international treaties. The governments of Great Britain and the United States provided material help for the groundwork conducted by representatives of exiled governments as they perceived the plan as furthering their own interests in preventing any future rise of Germany. However, the project went contrary to the power ambitions of the Soviet leadership, who opposed the potential construction of a strong political unit within what it already perceived as its own emergent sphere of influence. The great lengths to which the Soviet leaders went to succeed in preventing Central European federation from realisation is thoroughly documented in the chapter. Deprived of strength in numbers, nations planning
a common Central European state would remain divided and firmly anchored within the Soviet orbit for decades to come.

The discussion in this chapter will trace many other similar examples. Our aim here is to show how and why the notion of Central Europe was changing throughout the twentieth century and beyond, and what the implications of these changes were.

### 6.2 Interwar discourse of Central Europe

The trenches of rural France were not the only place were the First World War was fought. For numerous nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the battle for their future was also fought in the pages of books and journals, where various concepts of post-war political organization of the region were being put forward. They fought against the idea of *Mitteleuropa*, the German blueprint for unifying the territories of Germany and Austria-Hungary under a single flag. Its foremost war-time proponent, Friedrich Naumann, presented it as a federative plan of unification. (Naumann 1916) But for the resistance of the small nations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, *Mitteleuropa* would have been a synonym for plans to impose even heavier domination of Germans in the area. Independent nation states based on the principle of self-determination were the vision of post-war Europe that small nations of Austria-Hungary fought for in the corridors of power in London, Paris and Washington.

The Central Powers were defeated and so was the idea of *Mitteleuropa*. Instead of a multinational union, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was broken up into smaller nation states. Or so it would seem. However, Austria was established as an independent nation state separate from Germany and four-and-a-half million Hungarians found themselves living outside of Hungary. The feeling of differential treatment on the part of the nations of former Austria-Hungary was aggravated by a disproportional division of economic resources, again, to a significant disadvantage of Austria and Hungary. Mutual suspicion and

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136 Literally translated as Central Europe
resentment was pervasive among the successor states. Hungary was left internally unstable and Austria impoverished, Czechoslovakia jealously guarded its “armed national sovereignty”, while an enlarged Romania was struggling with internal integration.

A multitude of problems and their pervasive character soon began to challenge the wisdom of the nation state system in the area and projects for federation in Central Europe were soon back on the table.

6.2.1 Disenchantment of interwar years

The term Central Europe was used by British and American authors of the early interwar period as a short-hand for the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It appeared in the works of Malbone W. Graham (1924), Kenneth L. Roberts (1922), Leslie H. Guest (1921), George A. Schreiner (1920), Pantcho Doreff (1921) and many others. However, new conceptions of Central Europe comparable to Mackinder’s Middle Tier (Mackinder 1919) were not presented. The main feature of their writing was the description of changes established by the Paris Peace Conference and their apparently grave shortfalls. The creation of small isolationist nation states was blamed for a deterioration of the economic situation and persisting instability in the region. Central Europe was also becoming a synonym for post-war chaos, impoverishment and continuous petty clashes between the nascent nation states in the area. Many authors called for revision of the settlement and increased cooperation among successor states, but stopped short of suggesting a more concrete form for such cooperation.

A general disenchantment with the situation following the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was pervasive in the international community.

137 In the case of Schreiner and Doreff, the use of the notion of Central Europe is slightly inconsistent at some places; however, in general, they do equate it with the former territories of Austria-Hungary, sometimes including the Balkan states as well.
The United States entered into self-imposed isolationism and avoided entanglement in the complicated situation in post-First World War Europe. On the other hand, in Britain, interest in the fate of former Austria-Hungary was somewhat more lively. However, majority of observers presented a rather grim view of the situation in the area in the aftermath of the empire’s break-up. The most colourful representation of a condemnatory view of the dismemberment and its implications came from the pen of British journalist and war correspondent, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett.

Ashmead-Bartlett also identified Central Europe with the former territories of Austria-Hungary. He voiced his experiences and observations of nationalist tensions and economic chaos in the area in no uncertain terms. The title of his book *The Tragedy of Central Europe* (Ashmead-Bartlett 1923) suggested a thing or two about its contents and the views presented. In several places within the book he openly wrote that the dismemberment of the empire was

"a mistake... committed in an atmosphere of hate before the violent passions produced by the War had cooled down and before economic facts could be considered dispassionately and separated from the primitive instincts of revenge." (Ashmead-Bartlett 1923: 295)

Ashmead-Bartlett identified the discrepancy in the division of economic resources and capacities, as well as dissection of vital economic links, as roots of the desperate impoverishment of Austria and Hungary. He warned that widening the economic gap between the successor states would fuel hatred among the nations in the area, resulting eventually in further conflict. Even though his statements are sometimes confusing and contradictory\(^{138}\), his conclusions were surprisingly close to what was to transpire some fifteen years later. Quite aptly, Ashmead-Bartlett highlighted the pattern and eastward

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\(^{138}\) For example, on page 300 Ashmead-Bartlett wrote that "each State has, in fact become a watertight compartment of racial hate and economic ruin and chaos" (Ashmead-Bartlett 1923: 300), while he devoted several pages directly preceding this line to description of Czechoslovak economic prosperity and monetary soundness.
direction of German territorial ambitions and the mortal danger it presented to both Czechoslovakia and Poland. (Ashmead-Bartlett 1923: 306 and 310) He posited that as soon as Germany would emerge from its economic ruins, millions of Germans in Czechoslovakia would strive to be “restored to the Motherland”. (Ashmead-Bartlett 1923: 296) Austria, well beyond the economic point of no return in his view, had to be either incorporated into Germany or further subdivided among the surrounding states, “if she [was] to save her people from complete ruin”. (Ashmead-Bartlett 1923: 294) Yet of Hungarians he said that they would “never [to] rest until they have regained some portion of their lost territories and wealth, which have been filched by their neighbours”. (Ashmead-Bartlet 1923: 294)

In short, Ashmead-Bartlett thought that the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary was ill-conceived and a grave danger to the European peace. He called for revision of the settlement in order to avoid otherwise inevitable future conflicts. (Ashmead-Bartlett 1923: 294, 306 and 307) In early 1920s, this was the view held by many at the Foreign Office as well.

The fortunes and political career of the foremost of British analysts of Central Europe, Robert W. Seton-Watson, document the change of heart in official circles in the early 1920s. Seton-Watson was a vigorous champion of the cause of the small nations of former Austria-Hungary and a resident expert in the British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. Unlike Ashmead-Bartlett, Seton-Watson opposed any calls for the revision of borders of successor states. With rising concerns about the viability of the settlement established in the aftermath of the war, his standing with the British Government diminished dramatically. His lenient view of especially Czechs and Romanians caused much damage to his prestige as a foremost expert on the area. (Batonyi 1999: 1085 - 86) Even though he did return to active work within Foreign Office between 1939 and 1942, his influence on policy was limited due to a lack of access to decision makers.
Halford Mackinder’s career followed a similar path. His impact on the foreign policy of Great Britain in the interwar period was limited (Ó Tuathail, Dalby and Routledge 1998: 18), going little beyond his official duties as chairman of the Imperial Shipping Committee and short service as a privy councillor. (Blouet 1987: 182) Richard Grayson demonstrated that Britain’s cold relationship with the Soviet Union was based on mutual distrust and occasional clashes in the 19th century, rather than Mackinder’s interpretation of history. (Grayson 1997: 253 – 256) Moreover, the British government showed a growing preference for disengagement with continental affairs and an appeasement policy towards Germany (Mc Donough 1998: 19), seemingly rendering Mackinder’s confrontational concept redundant. Finally, the negative implications of the break-up of the Dual Monarchy contributed to the discreditation of Mackinder’s Middle Tier concept. In fact, the records of the Foreign Office from the early interwar period suggest that the British Government was inclined to encourage formation of regional union in Central Europe (Medlicott 1981: x, compare to sections 5.2.8 and 5.2.9) in direct contradiction to Mackinder’s 1919 treatise.

Records in the National Archives in Kew show considerable Foreign Office preoccupation with issues surrounding the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the years following the Paris Peace Conference. The main concern in the early interwar period seems to have been the complicated economic and political situation in Austria, to which much of the recorded communication was tied. Contemplation of the potential consequences of a possible Anschluss (Lindley 1921a and 1921b) were intertwined with problems of release of Austrian property, held as a lien for war reparations, to facilitate economic revival (Foreign Office 1921, Treasury 1921) and efforts to help Austria obtain loans from private sources. (Geddes 1921, Curzon 1921, Balfour 1921) Two unsuccessful attempts to restore the Habsburgs in Hungary (Hohler 1921a and 1921b), controversy over the Western Comitats and the Baranya handover, formation of the Little Entente and its occasional sabre rattling at
Hungary (Clerk 1921a and 1921b) provided further themes that kept telegraph lines to Foreign Office hot in what was evidently an uneasy year the 1921. Overall, the Foreign Office was greatly concerned about nationalist tensions, economic situation and general instability in the area, all brought about by the dismemberment of the former empire.

The favoured policy of the British Empire was to decrease the obstacles to international trade projection in the area, thus fostering economic recovery and stabilising the region. (Chamberlain 1925) However, isolationism, nationalist rivalries, occasional skirmishes and internal instability of many successor states hampered any such efforts. Some sources suggested that in the midst of serious economic problems, persisting national tensions and the petty rivalries of successor states, the British Government started to favour the creation of a federative union of states in the Danube basin under the leadership of Prague. However, Czechoslovakia was judged incapable of constituting and leading such a bloc due to prevalent anti-Hungarian sentiments there. (Steiner 2005: 289)

The impression left by the recorded communication between the Foreign Office and its representatives, is that of diminishing patience of the British government with the leaders of the successor states and their turf wars. Indeed, Britain was increasingly avoiding direct involvement in endless disputes of the successor states and favoured dealing with their problems through Allied institutions and the League of Nations itself.

The controversy of the French-sponsored Autonomous Government of the Palatinate in 1924 marked a watershed in the main themes of the Foreign Office records. The attention of foreign policy makers turned almost exclusively towards Germany. The Locarno Treaty and issue of terminating military control of Germany dominate the bulk of the European records of the Foreign Office for the years 1925 and 1926 respectively. It seemed that His Majesty's Government lost all enthusiasm for attempting to resolve the issues of successor states. Finally, in 1927, the main concern of the British government shifted back to the larger picture of security within Europe and tensions between the main powers.
Internal discourse within the Foreign Office was dominated by considerations of developments in Germany and her relations with other powers from 1927 until the Second World War. Central Europe only resurfaced as a major theme of British foreign policy concerns with the *Anschluss* in 1938.

To sum up, the system of nation states put in place of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire that was favoured by Mackinder and Seton-Watson fell into disfavour within official circles in Britain soon after the shortfalls of the settlement started to show. Considerations of Central Europe published in the early interwar period highlighted an unjust division of economic resources and industry among the successor states based on national principle, the negative impact of severing vital economic links between former parts of the empire, persisting nationalist tensions and the instability of nascent successor states. But these considerations did not result into new coherent plans for the reorganisation of Central Europe. Even though Mackinder and Seton-Watson remained influential in academic circles and within the anti-appeasement camp (Batonyi 1999: 1085 - 86), official circles started to favour creation of some form of federative unit in the area. However, these contemplations were frustrated by the growing differences between the successor states themselves. The British government preferred to distance itself from this issue in favour of the more pressing need to stabilise Germany and security in Europe. The events of the interwar period convinced many in Britain that the nation state solution was not suitable for Central Europe. As was to be seen, it would also fail to prevent resurgence of Germany and its alliance with Russia.

**6.2.2 Changing face of new *Mitteleuropa***

Henry Cord Mayer noted that in the early post-First World War period “the term *Mitteleuropa* for a time lost its broader emotional appeal” in Germany (Meyer 1946: 189). This was hardly surprising for Germany was humiliated,
devastated and impoverished. Contemplations of the creation of a regional unit headed by Germany could not have been seriously undertaken until the country's situation could be at least stabilised. As a result, the forging and prioritisation of the discourse of Central Europe and its prominence in the foreign policy debates in Germany resembles an inversion of the image just painted for interwar Britain. In a see-saw like manner, with the diminishing interest of Britain in successor states, contemplations of Central Europe started to reappear in Germany.

This process is demonstrable in the numerous concepts of Central Europe published in Karl Haushofer's Zeitschrift für Geopolitik (Journal for Geopolitics) during the interwar period.\textsuperscript{139} The journal was published for the first time in 1924, the year that British foreign policy makers started to lose interest in Central European issues and projects. The ascendancy of revisionist writers bent on the creation of a German-dominated political unit in Central Europe was epitomised by Martin Spahn's famous Volk und Reich in 1925. The new project of Mitteleuropa was conceived of as a way to reinstate Germany to its major power position through the unification of Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian territories.

\textit{6.2.2.1 The way out of strategic defeat}

The new contemplations of Mitteleuropa in Germany were conceived of as a way out of the strategic catastrophe suffered by Germany in the First World War.

\textsuperscript{139} Of course, the discussion of Central Europe in Germany was not limited to this journal. Notable works on the topic were published in other journals and as independent volumes. However, the Zeitschrift für Geopolitik offers the most concise discussion and high number of various concepts of Central Europe, allowing the comparison and analysis of development of the discourse across the interwar period. Moreover, the comparison of the list of authors publishing their concepts of Central Europe in and outside of the Zeitschrift für Geopolitik shows high level of similarity. This suggests that notable authors writing on Central Europe outside Zeitschrift für Geopolitik, would have been invited to present their views in journal, as it was the leading medium carrying the discussion of the topic.
The debate started with broad contemplation of the results of the First World War and discussion of the standing of Germany in the emerging new European economic and power structure. This discussion established the building blocks of subsequent conceptions of *Mitteleuropa*. Some of these themes were foreshadowed by Walther Vogel in the following paragraph:

"Die durch die Versailler Friedenserpressung hergestellte Internationalisierung der deutschen Flüsse speziell des Rheins, ist in der bisherigen Form auf die Dauer unhaltbar. Frankreich is am Rhein ein Fremdkörper, weil es ... naturgemäß der Rheinschiffahrt durchaus abträgliche Absichten verfolgen muss. Anderseits hat sich an der Donau gerade nach dem Verschwinden der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie die relative Lebensberechtigung dieses Staatswesens deutlich gezeigt. Die Donau-Uferstaaten werden im eigenen wohl verstandenen Interesse nicht dauernd im Zustand gegenseitiger argwöhnischer Missgunst verharren können. Ihre volle geopolitische Potenz aber werden Rhein und Donau erst dann entfalten, wenn sie einmal durch einen leistungsfähigen Kanal miteinander verbunden sind..."¹⁴⁰ (Vogel 1924: 144)

This paragraph essentially encompassed the idea of Central Europe that would be presented in following volumes of *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*. The unjust and unsustainable Versailles settlement had to be countered by the construction of a strong organic political unit in Central Europe. Defined by features of natural or human geography, the new *Mitteleuropa* would consist of Germany and the

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¹⁴⁰ - The internationalization of German rivers, especially the Rhine, imposed by the blackmail of the Versailles Peace, is in its present form unsustainable for long. France is a foreign body on the Rhine and it must naturally pursue intentions harmful to navigation on the Rhine. On the other hand, the relative right to life of this state entity on the Danube was clearly demonstrated right after the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In their own best interest, the states on the banks of Danube cannot permanently remain in the state of mutual suspicious resentment. The full geopolitical power of Rhine and Danube will only develop once they have been connected by an effective channel... -
territories of the former Austria-Hungary, and become a major power in world politics.

The backdrop to all contemplation was the perceived injustice and shortfalls of the Paris Peace Accords. Authors pointed to the injustice done to Germany by the harsh conditions of peace and the unsustainability of successor states created in the space of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bitterness towards France became an omnipresent feature. Authors would usually follow with considerations of economic chaos after the war and the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, leading to suggestions for a larger economic area based on traditional economic links. The historical role of German nation to create and lead such a unit would be asserted and the connection with Austrian Germans emphasised. Finally, the theories would be based upon and underpinned by tenets of geographic determinism and the organic theory of state.

Vogel's article laid ground for all features of German interwar Mitteleuropa concepts, with the exceptions of contemplations of economy and the historical role of the German nation. It should not be forgotten that at the very heart of all concepts of Mitteleuropa laid the aim of reinstating Germany as a major power. Therefore, the concepts and their main themes were continually developing with the changing situation in Germany as well as perceived international context. The outlined themes best played out and were developed in works published in Zeitschrift für Geopolitik.

6.2.2.2 Geographic determinism

Geographic determinism is not to be unexpected in a journal entitled Zeitschrift für Geopolitik, as it was one of the very building blocs of German geopolitics. (see section 1.1.5) Vogel's article presented the Rhine and Danube as the life veins of a Central European region, the German nation and its areas of
influence. Should these two rivers and their respective areas be interconnected and governed by the same political entity, they would constitute a major power in Europe stretching from the North to the Black sea. Similar lines of reasoning based on another geographical feature, the Danube basin, and its central role as the natural core of economic cooperation was used by Friedrich Papenhusen to justify the suggested union with Austria and close economic cooperation with the successor states. (Papenhusen 1927)\footnote{Essentially, in the late 1920s, geographic determinism was used to pinpoint the constitutive features of Mitteleuropa and establish it as an area of ‘natural’ unification. Certain geographic features – rivers, basins and areas surrounded by given mountain chains – were said to be ‘destined’ for political unification.}

However, by the 1930s, the employment of geographical determinism was changing. It was primarily being applied in contemplation of the strategic position of Germany. Gradually, it was becoming more aggressive in tone, finally taking a militant spin following the ascendancy of Nazism. Published articles carrying titles such as “Der Raum als Waffe” (Space as a weapon – Schenke 1938) or “Fromme Wünsche... Die slawische Idee der Absperrung des Deutschtums vom Osten” (Wishful thinking... the Slavic idea of blockading Germanhood from the East – Haushofer 1933). This pattern was to a certain degree developing in earlier articles as well, but only reached prominence within conceptions of Mitteleuropa after 1933.

The change was striking. While Vogel wrote of the state-building qualities of rivers, Schenke viewed geographic space as a weapon.

\textit{6.2.2.3 Organic theory of the state}

The expression ‘die Lebensberechtigung’ (the right to life) used in Vogel’s article (1924: 144) points to another characteristic feature – the organic theory

\footnote{Outside of the Zeitschrift für Geopolitik, Karl Haushofer’s Geopolitik der Pan-Ideen and its “shatter-belts” theory is the best representation of geographical determinism applied to the role of Danube and Rhine. (Haushofer 1931b)}
of the state, another constitutive part of geopolitical heritage. Vogel and other authors publishing in early volumes of *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* were building on the traditions introduced by Friedrich Ratzel (see section 1.1.5, compare with Maull 1931: 41142). They used notions borrowed from biology to present the spreading German influence and building a united bloc in Central Europe as natural processes.143

The front-runner in the application of organic theory of the state to the issue of Germany’s future within Europe was, of course, Karl Haushofer, whose works published in *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* carried subtitles such as “Geopolitisches Naturrecht auf Lebensraum” (-natural geopolitical right to living space - Haushofer 1934: 6) and operated with notions “Reichskörper” ( - body of the Reich – Haushofer 1931: 2), “fremde Lebensformen” (- alien forms of life – Haushofer 1934: 10) or “biologisch haltbar Vertrag” ( - biologically sustainable treaty – Haufofer 1934: 11).

In line with the growing tendency towards social Darwinism in Germany, the biological references in *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* articles gradually became more numerous and pronounced from late 1920s onwards. The organic theory dictated that Germany, as a young and strong state, should ‘naturally grow’ to establish its domination over larger territory. Embodiment of this natural growth should have been *Mitteleuropa*, or after 1933 simply just *Reich*.

6.2.2.4 German cultural uniqueness and historical mission

Contemplation of the history, settlement patterns and unique cultural characteristics of the German nations was another major common theme appearing throughout the volumes of *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*.

142 “…die Synthese zwischen Boden und Bevölkerung, die in der Staatsidee verkörpert wird, schafft den lebensfähigen Staat.” – …the synthesis of soil and population, which is embodied in the state idea, creates a viable state. (Maull 1931: 41)

143 “Eine europäische Staatenengemeinschaft muss von Innen heraus wachsen, muss sich organisch aufbauen wie ein Naturkörper.” – European community of states has to grow from the inside, it needs to build itself organically, as a natural body… – (Streeruwitz 1931: 30)
The German nation was portrayed as a bearer of distinct culture, the front-runner of civilisation to the east of the Rhine and west of Urals, the natural unifying force in the area. (Zillich 1929)\textsuperscript{144} Successive articles accentuated the historical mission of the German nation to unify the area identified with the realm of German influence and lead it to greatness and prosperity. The emphasis was shifting from explanatory forms intended to establish the uniqueness of German nation in the mind of the reader, through the more self-assured explorations of the realm of German nation, to rather pompous proclamations of historical mission to unify and dominate more or less a loosely defined area. Depiction of German nation shifted from the role of the leader towards the role of the ruler.

The notion of Deutschtum (German-hood) reappeared in 1927 (Sieger 1927: 630) and its borders were correlated with the borders of the envisaged Mitteleuropa.\textsuperscript{145} Various concepts in turn positioned these borders differently, on the basis of the percentage of German population (Maull 1931: 6), the geographical location of German settlements or use of the German language (Zillich 1929: 149, Trampler 1934: 25). Yet other concepts, such as the one fostered by Friedrich Papenhusen, identified Central Europe with unified Germany and Austria. (Papenhusen 1927: 320) Most predominant, however, was the linguistic approach, not least because it launched the boundaries of Deutschtum the furthest. Various versions of the Deutschtum principle were increasingly replacing the geographic determinism as the main tool for delineation of boundaries for Mitteleuropa.

\textsuperscript{144} Influential works on the civilisational exceptionality of the German nation and its mission were published all through the 1920s and 1930s. Most notably Arthur Moeller’s Das Dritte Reich (1923), Gisehler Wirsing’s Zwischeneuropa und die deutsche Zukunft (1932) or Albert Brackamnn’s Krisis und Aufbau in Osteuropa: Ein weltgeschichtliches Bild (1939).

\textsuperscript{145} ‘Die Grenzen dieses deutschen Kultureinflusses sind … in der Form einer der stärksten, einschneidend-sten Kulturscheiden Europas aufgeprägt… Mitteleuropa wird deutscher Kulturboden sein.’ - Frontiers of these German cultural influences were impressed in form of one of the strongest and the most incisive divides in Europe… Central Europe will be the soil of the German culture. – (Trampler 1934: 24 – 25)
An interesting feature of these considerations is their eastward orientation. Luxembourg and Switzerland are often conspicuously missing from these considerations, which are geared towards establishing the right of German domination over areas to the east of and south east of German and Austrian borders, where the German population was an obvious minority.

A careful reading cannot escape the fact that the eastward direction of cultural considerations was a repetition of the very same theme in Mitteleuropa concepts that had appeared during the First World War period. The interwar concepts repeat the very same lines of reasoning – settlement, cultural influence, use of German language, etc. In this regard, interwar concepts can be considered a direct continuation of their earlier counterparts.

6.2.2.5 Der Anschluss Österreichs

Papenhusen’s article ‘Geopolitische erwägungen zum deutsch-österreichischen Anschlussgedanken’ (- Geopolitical considerations of thought on German-Austrian union -), published in 1927, introduced another important theme that winds through Zeitschrift für Geopolitik – der Anschluss Österreichs.

Hinted upon by Vogel (1924: 144, see above), the theme started to develop in 1927 issue of Zeitschrift für Geopolitik and culminated in the special issue dedicated to Anschluss in 1931. This special edition was introduced by Albrecht Haushofer’s article titled ‘Ein Volk, ein Staat’. (= One nation, one state! - Haushofer 1931)

As this well known mantra of Anschluss advocates suggested, the basis of proposed unification was a common linguistic, cultural and historical heritage and destiny. (Maull 1931: 42, Steinacker 1931: 44) Supporting evidence to substantiate the claimed mutual advantages offered by Anschluss was drawn

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146 A union with Austria
147 Zeitschrift für Geopolitik, 1931, issue 1: ‘Untersuchungen zur Geopolitik Österreichs’ – Survey of Austria’s geopolitics, contains 13 different articles on history of Austria, her current affairs and envisaged a future tied with Germany.
from historical trading patterns, transport links and the geomorphologic characteristics of the area. The emotional appeal of necessity to unify the unnaturally divided nation was coupled by invocations of the dangers posed by external enemies. (Maull 1931: 42)

In a Mitteleuropa context, Anschluss was the logical continuation of the earlier concepts of unification between Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As noted above, Papenhusen identified unified Germany and Austria with the concept of Mitteleuropa (Papenhusen 1927: 320); others thought Anschluss would be the first step on the way to build a wider bloc. (Streeruwitz 1931: 34, Haushofer 1931: 3) But all changed with the political watershed of 1933. In articles published after this year, Austria completely lost its separate identity within the Mitteleuropa concepts presented and simply became understood as a south-eastern appendix of Germany. Editors of Zeitschrift für Geopolitik reclassified Austria as part of the ‘Raum der Deutschen’ (Realm of the Germans) from 1935 onwards.

6.2.2.6 Economic autarchy

Economic considerations overarched virtually all conceptions of Mitteleuropa. In early volumes of Zeitschrift für Geopolitik, the revival of economic cooperation and trading patterns of former Austria-Hungary were itemised as basic preconditions for the restoration of prosperity in the area and the achievement of economic self-sufficiency. Synergetic advantages of cooperation between Germany and successor states in the form of customs union were

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148 ‘…Österreich nicht Mitteleuropa, sondern deutscher Anteil am Südosten ist…’ – Austria is not Central Europe, but a German allotment to the South-east. – (Schumacher 1934: 239) Outside of the Zeitschrift für Geopolitik, the identification of Austria with an appendix of Germany was also prevalent. See for example Heinrich von Srbik’s Mitteleuropa: Das Problem und die Versuche seiner Lösung in der deutschen Geschichte (1938) or works of Harold Steinacker (1934, 1937) and Wilhelm Schüssler (1937).

149 From 1935, the Zeitschrift für Geopolitik section Mitteleuropa was renamed Raum der Deutschen and Austria was included into this section.
highlighted. The common aim of these articles was the creation of an autarchic economic unit with a large common market.

In the early 1930s the theme shifted – economic considerations typically reflected the isolation of Germany from world markets due to the trade barriers imposed by the British Empire, the USA and other countries. (Kreil 1932: 208) The common suggestion following from this observation was then a creation of Germany's own common economic area with the Central European successor states\(^{150}\), which would be able to compete with the USA or the British Empire. (Schmertz 1931: 182) ‘Die Grossraumwirtschaft’ (greater area economy), rather than national economy, was increasingly becoming the catch-phrase of these concepts. As articles became more self-assured, some authors went as far as to claim that the successor states were desperate for Germany to initiate such a bloc.\(^{151}\) By 1934, an autarchic economic unit in the form of a customs union was being presented as a necessity for the German nation under the threat of war from its enemies.\(^{152}\)

Yet the early version of this theme was reminiscent of the earlier concepts of Friedrich Naumann and other First World War period Mitteleuropa theories, which were based on similar contemplations of the links between Germany and Austria-Hungary. However, the projects for a greater economic area gradually developed into a tool of achieving economic autarchy for Mitteleuropa perceived as the personification of Deutschtum.

6.2.2.7 Revisionism of Versailles Peace Treaty

\(^{150}\) ‘mitteleuropäischer Gesamtwirtschaftsraum’ – Central European common economic area – (Scheffer 1931: 94

\(^{151}\) ‘Aktive Mitteleuropapolitik gilt auch heute noch … als “Imperialismus”… aber die Staaten donauabwärts warten auf eine deutsche Aktion.’ – Active Central Europe policy is even today still considered as “imperialism”, but states down the Danube are waiting for German action. – (Schmerz 1931: 181)

This view was also pushed in wider academic discussion in early 1931, see for example Steinacker’s ‘Vom Sinn einer gesamtdeutschen Geschichtsauffassung’ in 1931 volume of Deutsche Rundschau.

\(^{152}\) ‘Kriegsgefahr … bedeutet Autarkiestreben’ – The danger of war means striving for autarchy – (Trampler 1934: 69)
In early issues of Zeitschrift für Geopolitik authors focused on counting the losses of Germany and the gains of its rivals after the Versailles Peace Conference. Revisionism was an integral theorisation from the very beginning. Vogel had started by expressing his misgivings over the provisions of the Versailles Peace Treaty. In two sentences he suggested that these were unfair, unnatural and untenable, as well as intentionally hostile towards Germany. (Vogel 1924: 144) The very same take on the Versailles Treaty appeared in an article of Hermann Lautensach (1924), who focused on considerations of the unbearable burden of reparations, the unjust territorial losses, and direct bitter criticism of France and its conduct towards Germany.

Indeed, a revision of the Paris Peace Conference treaties, which had established an existing structure in Europe, was the very precondition of its reorganization. If Mitteleuropa was to be established, these treaties needed to be revised.

This theme gradually developed in all subsequent Mitteleuropa articles – through progressively more aggressive criticism. In 1932, Paul F. Lüdorf wrote that France was utilising the treaty of Versailles as a continuation of war by other means. By 1934, discussion of this topic culminated in open calls for revision of the Versailles Accords in favour of Germany. (Haushofer 1934, Trampler 1934)

6.2.2.8 Successor states – a mistake of history

Authors writing for Zeitschrift für Geopolitik could hardly be called ‘friends of the successor states’. Starting with Vogel quoted above (1924: 144), Zeitschrift für Geopolitik contributors shared the view that the system of small, isolationist and mutually suspicious states created at the Paris Peace Conference was

153 “Der Versailler Vertrag is kein Friedensvertrag im bekannten Sinne. Er ist ein durch Erpressung verbriefter, dauernder Eingriff in die Lebenssubstanz des Gegners. Mit dem ganzen Anhängsel seiner Ausführungsbestimmungen bildet er die Fortsetzung des Krieges zur Erreichung der im Vertragstext noch nicht festgelegten Kriegziele.” - The Treaty of Versailles is not a peace treaty in a known sense. It is a persistent interference in the opponent’s essence of life sustained through extortion. With all the appendices of its implementation provisions, it constitutes a continuation of war to achieve war aims not yet determined in the text of the treaty. – (Lüdorf 1932: 214)
unsustainable for economic reasons as well as the internal tensions between majority nations and their sizeable minorities. (Loesch 1930: 29) Highlighting the level of national (but predominantly German) minorities, they pointed to the fact that talking about nation-states in the area was misleading and it would be more appropriate to organize the area as a larger political unit. The case for abolishing the nation state principle in the area was built on references to economic necessity, national composition, geomorphological characteristics, transport links, (Haushofer 1931: 5) etc.

In concepts of the 1930s, authors were more or less openly concluding that it was a historical duty of the German nation to ‘reorganize’ the area. (Trampler 1934: 68) From calls for unification of the area the concepts gradually moved towards asserting the natural and necessary domination of the German nation.

The obvious aim of this theorizing was to substantiate the case for German leadership in the area. Indeed, this is another theme that evokes Naumann’s concept. The natural leadership of Germans in the area was a feature of earlier German Mitteleuropa concepts. Adaptation of this theme to contemporary conditions necessitated questioning the effectiveness and appropriateness of existing structures.

6.2.2.9 The threat of France

References to France as a threat to Germany were present in Mitteleuropa concepts since the very inception of the debate. (Vogel 1927: 144) Besides complaints about the injustice of Treaty of Versailles, German authors were particularly bitter about the successor states’ links with France. In fact,

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154 ‘Er ist ein schleichender Kleinkrieg, der mit ungleichen Kräften geführt wird – auf der einen Seite nur die Abwehrenergie einer zahlenmässig schwächeren Volksgruppe, auf der anderen der Staat als Kampfwaffe der Mehrheitsvolkes.’ - It is an insidious little war, fought with unequal forces - on the one hand, only the defensive energy of a numerically weaker ethnic group, on the other, the state as a fighting weapon of the majority people – (Trampler 1934: 41)

155 ‘Ganz Mitteleuropa, von den Ardennen bis zum Schwarzen Meere, is heute mehr oder weniger durch Frankreich fremdbestimmt, gleichgültig, ob es sich um Sieger oder Besiegte des Weltkrieges handelt… Dazu diente zunächst der polnische Vasall und im weiteren Verlauf das von Frankreich
France’s activities in the area provided a major rallying call for negative reference in virtually all concepts presented.

The involvement of France with the successor states was presented as a direct danger to the German nation\(^{156}\), which had to be countered.\(^{157}\) Any mention of a Danube Federation, a Danube customs union, let alone Pan-European ideas, was dismissed as French machinations to achieve hegemony over Europe. (Trampler 1934: 54 – 55) All these projects were branded as ‘illusions’, ‘meaningless’ or ‘bloodless schemes’, as they purportedly went against ‘geopolitical truths’. (Schmerz 1932: 229) Authors asserted that the task of organizing Central Europe should fall to Germany. (von Loesch 1930: 40)

Anti-French fervour and the resulting resentment at all its Central Europe schemes was at its highest in some early 1930s articles, with some articles even contemplating the option of war with France. (Ross 1932)

This particular feature of interwar *Mitteleuropa* concepts was not a usual feature of First World War period German concepts. Even though Naumann wrote at the height of the First World War, his misgivings about France were mostly historical. (Naumann 2009: 48 – 60) While the radical anti-French line seems to be a fresh inter-war addition in *Mitteleuropa* thought, the feature is reminiscent of writings of some of the earliest pan-German Central Europe authors, Paul de Lagarde and Constantin Frantz (see Chapter 3).

\(^{156}\) ‘Das Ideengut der Französischen Revolution, die Staatsidee der liberalen Demokratie wird den östlichen Völkern geradezu suggeriert als vorbeugendes Mittel gegen die Wirksamkeit der deutschen Volkstumsbilde, die im Osten Europas bedeutend an Boden gewinnt.’ – The ideas of the French Revolution, the state-idea of liberal democracy, will actually be suggested to eastern nations as a prevention tool against the validity of the German Volkstumsbilde, which in Eastern Europe gained significant ground. – (Trampler 1934: 55)

\(^{157}\) ‘Begriffe wie: Donauföderation, Donauzollunion und ähnliche, mussten blutleere Schemen bleiben…’ – Notions such as Danube Federation, Danube Customs Union and similar, must remain blood-less schemes… - (Schmerz 1931: 177)
6.2.2.10 From revisionism to hegemonic ambitions

So themes present in the *Mitteleuropa* concepts published in *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* were to a great extent a continuation of themes established by earlier German traditions. The organic theory of the state as well as geographic determinism stemmed from Ratzelian tradition. The German cultural uniqueness and historical mission to unify the area were well vested in First World War concepts of *Mitteleuropa* and reached back to the romanticism of the nineteenth century. So was the focus on economic considerations and the suggested extent of the future union. A certain level of adaptation to the older idea of unification with Austria-Hungary was necessary given its dismemberment. The questioning of the viability of successor states and an emphasis on Anschluss Österreichs became expressions of such adaptation. Bitterness towards France was surely rooted in contemporary experiences; however, such tradition can be traced back into 19th century Germany as well (Frantz 1861, Lagarde 1881). The only original theme seemed to be the revisionism of the Versailles Peace Treaty, obviously tied to the specific post-First World War situation.

Yet, even though these themes and characteristics remained essentially the same throughout the period, the gradual change in attitude the authors took to the area was striking. The 1920s articles mostly possessed a descriptive and exploratory character. They focused on contemplating the adverse effects of the Paris Peace Conference settlements on the economic and strategic position of Germany and situation within the area of former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Emphasis was laid on suggesting a model for alleviating such grievances through regional cooperation. Articles highlighted the uniqueness of German nation and presented it as a unifying force of multinational Central Europe. (Zillich 1929) Geographically and economically substantiated concepts stretched the spatial notion of *Mittleuropa* from north-western corner of Germany towards the Balkans, by accentuating the role of the Danube and surrounding areas for achievement of economic autarchy.
However, by the early 1930s, the accent changed, and conceptions of Central Europe were increasingly presented as blueprints for unification of a scattered German population (Trampler 1934: 27) and expressions of natural right of German nation for “living and breathing space, and equal rights”. (Haushofer 1934: 4) The Anschluss was portrayed as the first step in creating a Mitteleuropa that encompassed the realm of the German nation. Zeitschrift für Geopolitik introduced a section dedicated to Central Europe in 1932 and articles under this section put forward suggestions for creation of a geographical unit designed to accomplish German national ambitions, rather than to alleviate grievances caused by the aberrations of Paris Peace Conference. From 1933 onwards, articles took a marked anti-liberalist turn and emphasised the unique German form of society, as opposed to both western liberalism and eastern despotism. Militarist thought appeared the same year accompanied by numerous references to Adolf Hitler and Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP, The National Socialist German Workers’ Party).

Finally, the journal’s “Mitteleuropa” section was replaced by “Raum der Deutschen” in 1935. The areas of successor states were openly ascribed to the future rule of the German nation and divided into units defined on a geomorphologic basis, such as “Donauraum”, “Alpenraum” or “Mittelgebrige”, much in a way one would approach contemplations of sub-national units, rather than regional integration of sovereign states.

6.2.2.11 The mirror of changes

Early analysts of the German school of geopolitics ascribed a high public profile for Mitteleuropa concepts to the close affinity existing between Karl Haushofer and leading proponents of National Socialism (Rouček 1942: 183 – 187). Geopolitics was described as the “court theory” of the Nazi regime.

However, later commentators challenged this view and suggested National Socialists merely exploited geopolitical concepts for their own ends, or
disregarded and went well beyond them whenever suitable. Jürgen Elvert’s analysis takes the middle ground between the two extremes. He linked the extraordinary popularity of geopolitical concepts with wider philosophical and social developments in Germany. (Elvert 1999) Elvert pointed to the heritage of romanticism, irrationalism and tradition in 19th century German philosophy; to the peculiarities of the development of German statehood; an emphasis on the uniqueness of German culture; a perception of injustice of the Versailles Accords; feelings of encirclement and experience of economic hardship. The combination of these led to an increasing tendency towards rejecting all supposedly alien concepts (e.g. ‘French’ nation state idea or ‘Anglo-Saxon’ liberalism) and the search for a unique German way (Sonderweg). Elvert illustrated how German geopolitics was in line with these general trends, how it expressed its aspirations and how it led to a high identification of German public with its concepts, especially, the idea of Mitteleuropa.

The above discussion of themes present in German conceptions of Mitteleuropa suggests very similar conclusions. A majority of themes stemmed from earlier German traditions and their combination and was present in First World War conceptualisations as well. The only new themes were the ones connected to the specifics of the Paris Peace Conference settlements. Indeed the presented development of themes within concepts and a gradual change in overall character of concepts can be linked to ascending Nazi ideology in Germany during the period. This is not to say that all authors of Mitteleuropa concepts were Nazis, it only demonstrates that Mitteleuropa was being constructed within wider discussion in German society.

Mitteleuropa gained prominence as a possible means out of hostile encirclement, towards possible restoration of the mythical German Empire and its rightful place as a world power. The idea of restoration of the greatness of the German nation won support from all levels of society. Politicians both left and right of centre endorsed various concepts presented. But such link worked both ways and concepts were in turn influenced by the changing moods of the
public and the growing ambitions of the politicians. Mitteleuropa was a popular concept mirroring changes in popular mood.

If Mitteleuropa was an expression of ambitions for German society, it was indeed changing with them. A growing ambition for the German Reich rather than a dream of pluralist Central Europe shaped the concepts with increasing intensity. Contemplations of the role of rivers as state-building features changed into perceptions of space as a weapon. Mitteleuropa changed into a Raum der Deutschen. Following the Nazi rise to power, Mitteleuropa became an expression of Nazi ambition for hegemony over Europe.

### 6.2.3 Way out of desperation

Conceptions of Central Europe in Austria were developing very much along the main lines of German concepts presented in the previous subchapter. Indeed, many of them were printed in Zeitschrift für Geopolitik. One such example came from Ernst Streeruwitz, Austrian Chancellor in 1929.

Streeruwitz’s article entitled Österreichs Mission in Europa (Austria’s mission in Europe, 1931) portrayed Austria as a bridge between Germany and scattered German speaking population in the former Austro-Hungarian territories. (Streeruwitz 1931: 27) It built on a limited historical analysis of movement of nations from Asia to Europe, concluding that the German nation was weakened in comparison to French nation by the incursion of the Slavic nations, which split the German population. Streeruwitz avoided the issue of North-German Confederation and the exclusion of Austria from it and instead focused on the earlier historical role of Austria in its fight against the Ottomans. The familiar theme of condemnation of the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary carried the reader through to paragraphs vilifying any French-backed initiatives such as potential Danubian (Con)Federation or Pan-European Union. Finally, building
on the organic theory of state\textsuperscript{158} he suggested that unified Germany and Austria would become a core of Central Europe, which would grow further.\textsuperscript{159} Streeruwitz’s article presented the mainstream Austrian idea of Central Europe, which portrayed a unified Germany and Austria as the core area of the future strong economic and political unit, an area that would eventually expand to include surrounding areas on the basis of historical links as well as economic cooperation.

The most pressing issues in Austria of the day stemmed from economic impoverishment following the loss of territory, industry and virtually all economic links after the post-First World War settlements. Streeruwitz’s considerations were thus well vested in the practical problems of the country. In essence, the Austrian theorists of Central Europe saw it as a tool to achieve the very same aim as their German counterparts – alteration of the situation in which Austria found itself following the Paris Peace Conference. The notion of Central Europe became the new framework, which would help to renew the lost links and raise Austria from its ashes, even if it would be within a German dominated structure. In fact, the idea of one great German nation and Central Europe as its exaltation permeated geopolitical thought in Austria with relative ease. (e. g. Sieger 1927, Steinacker 1931)

A Mitteleuropa discussion was widespread in Austrian intellectual circles. A volume edited by Josef Nadler and Heinrich von Srbik contained the essays of sixteen well-known Austrian authors, presenting various aspects of the role of Austria in the history and future of Central Europe. (Nadler and Srbik 1936) All of them plotted the historical mission of Austria in context of Deutschtum, as did the works of Alois Jaschke (1934), Karl Wache (1933) and many others.

\textsuperscript{158} see footnote 8
\textsuperscript{159} “Wenn Österreich und Deutschalnd sich wirtschaftlich zusammenschliessen… wenn dann Deutschland die Brücke zu Frankreich zu schlagen vermöhöte und wir Österreicher die altgewohnte Verbindung mit dem Osten herstellen, dann könnte ein natürlich gewachsenes, gesundes Mitteleuropa entstehen, aus dem später Grösseres werden mag.” – When Austria and Germany are economically unified… when then Germany is able to bridge the gap with France and us Austrians able to establish the old link with the East, then the naturally grown and healthy Central Europe can arise, out of which something bigger can grow. – (Streeruwitz 1931: 30)
On the other hand, there were those in Austrian society that chose not to pin all their hopes on Germany. Among them an arch enemy in the eyes of German geopoliticians – Count Richard Nicolaus Eijiro von Coudenhove-Kalergi. Coudenhove-Kalergi viewed the future of global politics as belonging to five major powers: Pan-America, the British and Russian Empires, the East-Asian bloc (Japan and China) and Europe. With none of the other powers being as internally divided as Europe, the European nations needed to find a way to unite their powers to remain competitive in terms of business as well as political power. His proposal was for a gradual unification and federalization of Europe beginning with periodical conferences dealing with issues of common interest, through customs union, to the fully realised form of the United States of Europe. The borders of this concept were identified with the borders of Europe itself - cultural in the east and natural in all other directions. (Coudenhove-Kalergi 1924) He hoped that the Little Entente would be the first building cell of future United States of Europe and even relied on countries of the Little Entente to summon a Pan-European conference to unleash the process of unification. His concept, much detested by German geopoliticians as a covert attempt by France to gain hegemony over Europe, attracted widespread interest among European leaders. Over two thousand politicians (including heads of states) attended the first Pan-European Congress in October 1926. (Steininger, Bischof and Gehler 2002: 296) However, the devotion of the European leaders to construction of a United States of Europe was only half-hearted. Even though Coudenhove-Kalergi’s plans inspired admiration of Winston Churchill and the Kellogg-Briand Memorandum (Salmon and Nicoll 1997: 6), the goals of Pan-European Movement became even more distant in 1939 than they had been in 1923, as the European powers were yet again on collision rather than reconciliation course. (Coudenhove-Kalergi 1939) Germany would absorb Austria in a run-up for the Second World War on 12 March 1938.
6.2.4 Émigré Hungarian Danubian concepts

Hungarian émigré society also cherished the idea of Central Europe as a way to alleviate the conditions imposed on Hungary by the Paris Peace Conference. However, their Central Europe was somewhat different to German and Austrian notions of Mitteleuropa.

Instead of Central Europe, Hungarian writers developed the idea of a Danubian Confederation. Central Europe as a notion was negatively associated with the wartime proposals for union between Austria Hungary and Germany. Thus conspicuously Hungarian interwar concepts tended to leave the German element out.

The best known proponent of the idea for Danubian Confederation was Oszkár Jászi, who laid out a plan for its creation for the first time in 1918 in his book *The Future of the Monarchy: The Fall of Dualism and the United States of Danubia*. (Jászi 1918) In his original concept Jászi had suggested the creation of a United States of Danubia consisting of Hungary, Austria, Bohemia, newly united Poland and Illyria (South-Slav regions under Croatian leadership). However, his plans were disrupted by the results of the Paris Peace Conference and Jászi was compelled to gradually reformulate his concept and its basis, what he would repeat several times in the following decades.

Jászi criticized the successor states for their efforts to reach economic autarchy, their growing isolationism and particularly for their policies towards national minorities. Indeed, one of Jászi’s primary concerns were the fortunes of Hungarian minorities in the successor states, which put together accounted for 4.5 million people or about 1/3 of all Hungarians. In his view, the mixed nationalities of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire territories simply required something other than a nation-state solution and only a settlement that would respect the cultural autonomy of all nations in the area could bring lasting peace. (Jászi 1969: 231)
The second problem Jászi sought to resolve was the severence of economic links that had so adversely affected Hungary after the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Only the mutual cooperation of successor states, especially in the field of agriculture and trade of agricultural goods, could bring prosperity to all. In his view, some form of union of successor states would be much more desirable than a collection of „armed national sovereignties“. (Litván 1999: 233) Therefore, in the early 1920s, the goal of his concept was to overcome the notion of small states in Central European space and „to break down economic isolation while protecting a perfect political and territorial sovereignty of the new states“. (Litván 1999: 233) Ideally, the settlement of his new Danube Union of Nations would resemble the constitution of Switzerland with separate concepts for nationality and citizenship. In 1922 Jászi looked towards the countries of the Little Entente to take a lead in creating such a unit\textsuperscript{160}, however, he soon became disillusioned with their attitude to Hungarian minorities. (Congdon 1982: 397)

Another vocal call for the peaceful revision of the Treaty of Trianon\textsuperscript{161} came from the socialist writer Joseph Diner-Dénes in the form of his book *Hungary: Oligarchy, Nation, People* (published in French as *La Hongrie: Oligarchie, Nation, Peuple*, 1927). Diner-Dénes suggested that France should promote friendship between Hungarians and their Slavic neighbours and inspire a conclusion of series of bilateral treaties creating the mutual bond between the successor states. He also struck another note popular in French intellectual circles (see below, section 3.1.6) by hinting that such a conglomerate could become a building bloc for a future pan-Europe. Diner-Dénes thus appealed to the French

\textsuperscript{160} In his 1918 concept he advocated the leadership of Germany and he would have returned back to this approach in 1939. Eventually, during the Cold War, he even advocated the idea that cooperation of Soviet satellite states would bring them closer together and possibly gradually lead to their confederative settlement. Georgy Litván branded Jászi a ‘developmental optimist’ in reference to these changes in his idea of who should lead the unification of the area. However, observation of this researcher would be that there is a possibility that Jászi’s primary concern was with the security of interests of Hungarian compatriots, under whose ever domination might be more likely in the given situational context.

\textsuperscript{161} Peace treaty between the Allies and Hungary as a successor state of Austria-Hungary, signed on 4 June 1920.
public not only by acknowledging the complaints of the Hungarian nation (in Hungary and surrounding countries), but also by suggesting a process that would improve the situation and possibly create the model for a structure guaranteeing the peace in Europe.

Jászi and Diner-Dénes were not the only Hungarian writers who advocated creation of some form of Central European unit, there were many other individuals and groups (such as Tuz group in Bratislava or Vilagossag group in Paris), who had put forward their own concepts of cooperation in the area and ideas as towards how it should be achieved. Elemér Hantos (1933, 1935) and Gusztav Gratz\footnote{Unlike other Hungarian authors, Hantos and Gratz chose the notion of Central Europe to describe their concept, rather than the Danubian reference typical of other Hungarian authors. Both authors had previously taken part in the discourse of Central Europe during the First World War.} both suggested concepts very similar to that of Friedrich Naumann – gradual integration on the back of preferential economic cooperation. A rather unusual concept was presented by Miklos Makay on the basis of analysis of ‘historical experiences of subjugation’ – referring to the non-German speaking areas of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. He suggested political integration of these territories to build a future “continental United States”. (Romsics and Király 1999: 202)

However varied these concepts might have been, their common denominator was an attempt to uphold some form of unity of the Hungarian nation now scattered across several states. The injustice of the Treaty of Trianon for the Hungarian nation was decried and renewal of the historical links between the nations in the area called for. Concepts were presented to be in the interest of all successor (or even European) states, as regional cooperation should ideally promote economic prosperity and build a sustainable peace.

However, Regent Horthy’s regime would soon adopt a pro-German course and this friendship would have won the revision of territorial adjustments of Trianon in a manner that could hardly have been presented as in the interest of all successor states. Close links with Nazi Germany secured Hungary territorial
gains at the expense of Czechoslovakia (First Vienna Award, 1938) and Romania (Second Vienna Award, 1940), in exchange for its alliance with the Axis powers.

### 6.2.5 Armed sovereignties

The correspondence of the Foreign Office with its representatives in successor states during the interwar period suggests that interest of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes laid first in safeguarding their independence and borders against possible Hungarian or German revisionism. (Medlicott et al. 1981: x) Therefore it is not surprising that the efforts of their intellectuals (as well as statesmen) were directed towards this aim rather than the construction of a supranational unit in Central Europe.

Only a few politicians advocated the necessity of regional cooperation. Milan Hodža, a former member of the Franz Ferdinand d’Este Belveder Circle and a popular Czechoslovak agrarian, was one of them. In his lecture *Czechoslovakia and Central Europe* (1931), Hodža outlined a new geopolitical ground-plan for the troubled Central European space. He viewed Germany as part of the West European political and economic context and thus excluded it from his (Central European) considerations. His conception of Central Europe included the successor states and the Balkans. He advised economic cooperation especially in the area of agriculture and trade of agricultural products, which could eventually grow into closer economic and political links. This concept irritated German geopoliticians of Haushofer’s group, who had just reached the peak of their popularity. In discussion with these authors Hodža developed his concept of a political federation in Central Europe. Its backbone was to be the Visla-Danube-Vardar-Thessaloniki corridor. Central Europe would thus consist of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece – a belt of states between Russia and Germany spreading from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and the Adriatic. He was to present this concept in his book
Federation in Central Europe during the Second World War (1942). Interestingly, even though the title of his book carries the notion of Central Europe, Hodža often chose to refer to the “Danubian Federation” in order to distinguish his conception from interwar German Mitteleuropa projects.

Another interesting project was Jozef Pilsudski’s resurrection of the idea of an Intermarium, stretching from north-west Poland to the Black Sea. (Levy 2007: 165) The concept had originally been developed by Prince Adam Czartoryski in 19th century and brought back to life in the early efforts of the Second Polish Republic to incorporate Lithuanian territories. But this idea was still-born, given the regional rivalry of Poland and Lithuania and the Bolshevik ambitions to the east.

However, this is not to say that the successor states did not initiate or enter into regional cooperation. Quite the contrary. However, the aim of this envisaged regional cooperation was not to create a federal unit, but rather to ensure the continued existence of nation states.

Exceptionally active in this regard was Czechoslovakia and its prime minister, Dr. Edvard Beneš. Beneš’s aim was to create regional links that would guarantee the upholding of the peace treaties and bring about the necessary economic reconstruction. (Medlicott 1981: xi – xii) To fulfil the first aim, Beneš aligned Czechoslovakia with France, which was both in favour of the rigorous execution of the Versailles Treaty and looking towards the successor states to establish alliances encircling Germany. Series of bilateral military agreements among Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes signed in 1920 – 1921 established the Little Entente. The primary purpose of the Little Entente was to create a coalition against potential Hungarian revisionism. (Crampton 1994: 37) Subsequently, Poland was linked to the Little Entente by less comprehensive agreements with Czechoslovakia and Romania. Links with Poland provided for mutual assistance in case of unprovoked attack.
from the east and links with France\textsuperscript{163} were designed to establish a coalition against possible German resurgence.

Many diverse groups and statesmen, ranging from Hungarian émigré circles to advocates of Pan-European union looked upon the Little Entente as the cornerstone of a future integrated regional unit. However, rather than a starting point of any regional integration process, the Little Entente had essentially been designed to safeguard the national sovereignties of its members. Moreover, it soon became clear that its anti-Hungarian bias would most likely prevent any suggestions of a closer integration with the country at its midst. This became especially obvious in the aftermath of the two unsuccessful attempts of former Emperor Karl to take the Hungarian throne in 1921, when the Little Entente countries went as far as mobilization to prevent his ascendancy. (Young 1921, Clerk 1921b)

Nascent economic cooperation between the successor states (revisionist and non-revisionist alike) was further hampered by their enormous differences in economic strength and the value of their currencies. At the two poles of the monetary value spectrum laid Czechoslovakia and Austria. While Czechoslovakia was improving the exchange rate of its crown, the Austrian crown devalued beyond recognition, accompanied by hyperinflation, which took prices to 14,153 times their pre-war levels. (Schubert 1991: 49) Regional rivalries, mutual suspicion and efforts to build autarchic economies added more barriers than it was possible to remove. The situation was further complicated by the agrarian crisis of late the 1920s as well as the Great Depression, inducing a “\textit{suave qui peut} attitudes”. (Crampton 1994: 37)

To sum up, the limited number of concepts that sprung up in the non-revisionist successor states was stalled either by their rivalries and deep differences, or the fear of revisionism, and a determination to maintain their “armed national sovereignties”. (Litván 1999: 233) Nevertheless, the

\textsuperscript{163} Poland, Romania and The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes all had their respective defensive bilateral treaties with France.
experiences of the inter-war period and the failure of successor states to safeguard their independence would fuel talk of regional integration between exiled governments during the Second World War.

6.2.6 The battle of interests

Following from the discussion above, it can be concluded that the discourse of Central Europe as a notion in the interwar period was eventful. It started off from the ground prepared by the events of the last days of the First World War and the Paris Peace Conference. The project of a regional political unit in Central Europe, in its wartime Mitteleuropa sense, was defeated by the principle of the self-determination of nations. However, it soon became clear that the system of nation states was not living up to expectations. A multitude of problems that arose from the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the resulting instability of the region brought around many to thinking that something other than a nation state solution would eventually need to be found.

French diplomats became avid, if unlikely, advocates of construction of a new supra-national unit in Central Europe. Their motivations were rather transparent – to prevent any possibility of an Anschluss Österreichs and a German resurgence. Even as the concept of independent nation states was still being pushed through the negotiations of the Paris Peace Conference, the Paris government was working towards creation of a supra-national union of successor states. (Low 1974: 217) Avoiding the discredited notion of Central Europe, the term Danubian Confederation was selected to describe the proposed regional structure, designed to facilitate regional cooperation and provide a safeguard against German resurgence. Similarly, French scholars also argued that Central Europe was a non-entity, only existing in the minds of

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164 As discussed in Chapter 6, British and the US leaders attempted to force such a solution on successor states in the wake of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in mid- to late-1918; however, without much avail.
conquerors and likeminded writers. Instead, they wrote of Danubian basin successor states, using these notions interchangingly in a non-political context. (Lhèritier 1928: 47) However, besides favouring some form of Danubian Confederation, the French policies did not possess a coherent aim. Successive general secretaries of the Quai d'Orsay favoured once a pro-Hungarian approach then a pro-Czechoslovak one. (Bogdan 1989: 216) As a result, France failed to convince either side of viability of such a project. By 1921, it had become clear that the successor states would reject any form of political integration. (Low 1974: 264) The Little Entente became a backbone of French policy towards the region, which it remained until the fateful year of 1938.

However, plans for a French Danubian Confederation “gave rise to dark suspicions” in Rome (Burgwyn 1997: 9). Italy suspected a Habsburg link behind the whole plan and was ultimately worried that the Danubian Confederation might just be a new name for the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. In an effort to protect its territorial gains and regional positions, Italy worked tirelessly to prevent even the distant possibility of its formation: Italian manoeuvres complicated negotiations over restoration of trade links between the successor states, frustrated the transfer of agreed territories (Baranya) to Hungary, blocked economic help to Austria, etc. All to the significant irritation of the Allies, especially Great Britain. (Medlicott 1981: vi – vii)

The reality of nation state settlement in the area of former Austro-Hungarian Empire disappointed many at the Foreign Office and the influence of its wartime advocates’ diminished as a consequence. In the view of reports of the disastrous economic impact of dismemberment especially on Austria, Britain attempted to encourage economic cooperation in the area. The possibility of creating closer links among the states along the lines of the French sponsored idea of Danubian Confederation was contemplated. However, this hope was

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165 ‘Où commence et où finit l’Europe centrale? … Elle n’est en effet ni un Etat ni un assemblage d’Etats. Elle n’a vécu que dans l’imagination des conquérants où des écrivains.’ – Where does Central Europe start and where does it finish? It is neither a state, nor a group of states. She only lives in the imagination of conquerors and writers. – (Aulneau 1926: 8)
frustrated by the successor states’ strife to maintain their independence, frequent nationalist squabbles and growing economic disparities. British diplomats were growing increasingly impatient with the games played by the successor states leaders and eventually shifted attention to the stabilisation of Germany.

On the other hand, the idea of Central Europe was gathering support in Germany. New conceptions of Central Europe were being formulated by geopolitical theorists on the basis of earlier German plans for the creation of a political union in all lands inhabited by a scattered German population. Besides themes specific to the post-Versailles situation, the characteristics of the new German *Mitteleuropa* can be traced to the philosophic and cultural heritage of the nineteenth century German environment. The oft-mentioned influence of Halford Mackinder on German geopolitics of the time seems to have had exercised much less influence on concepts of *Mitteleuropa* than previously thought. Direct references are scarcely found beyond the works of Karl Haushofer and all the major themes that could be ascribed to his influence (e.g. geographical determinism or overwhelming concern with the territory east of the German borders) can be more reasonably ascribed to traditions already present in German thought. The lengthy discussion of German concepts presented in this chapter had one aim – to demonstrate that *Mitteleuropa* concepts presented in this period were largely exaltations of German national ambition. Based on a heritage of original German thought, rather than foreign geostrategic concepts, *Mitteleuropa* plans were developing with increasing self-confidence and radicalism until the moment when the growing emphasis on the superiority of German nation made any even remotely multinationalist concept redundant. The rise of Nazi ideology reinstated a notion of *Reich*, which was better suited to the new official line of natural domination of the German nation.

The German line on *Mitteleuropa* gathered substantial support among the proponents of Anschluss in Austria. The idea of a common German state in
preference to a truncated and impoverished Austria seemed plausible, to many. However, not to the other nations of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hungarian authors avoided reference to Central Europe in their calls for reunification of the Hungarian nation under the common banner of multinational confederalism. Instead, they chose to refer to a Danubian Confederation, which ostensibly excluded Germany.

But the other successor states had little interest in creating a Central European multinational union with or without Germany. They had only just concluded their fight for dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and established their nationally defined sovereignty, forged in direct opposition to wartime Mitteleuropa plans. Some concepts were being put forward by those who sought to overcome isolationism in the area on the basis of historical economic links (e.g. Hodža). Hardly by coincidence, these were usually the same politicians who had been involved with plans for federalization of former Austro-Hungarian Empire. (e.g. Hodža and Jászi) However, their arguments failed to gather substantial support among the successor states, suspicions that any kind of multinational union would eventually mean domination of one nation over another.166

To sum up, all the actors in this story were following interests based on their own identities. Britain, far remote from the area, was attempting to wash her hands of the complicated situation in the continent. It seemed that to establish regional cooperation and help the impoverished countries help themselves was the best way out. France was attempting to build a strong circle around Germany to prevent its resurgence by encouraging creation of a federation of states on its eastern and south-eastern borders. Italy was safeguarding its

166 Rare Soviet view of the aspects of potential integration in Central European area was published by V. I. Khorvatskij in 1933 as Pan-Evropa I Dunaiiskaya Federatsiya (Pan-Europe and Danube Federation, 1933). The volume focused on discussion of contemporary situation, persisting problems and aspects of various integrative plans, upholding the Soviet internationalist view specially applied to questions of agricultural production and trade.
territorial gains, while the countries of the Little Entente were guarding their national sovereignty. Meanwhile, the hands of Austria and Hungary were tied by peace treaties and a need for foreign help, yet calls for revisionism among large sections of society and the political spectrum were apparent. And, of course, Germany had embarked upon the quest of reinstating its position as a major power.

In this story, Central Europe started off as a notion connected to plans for unification between Germany and Austria-Hungary. The actors took their respective positions to it based on whether such a plan benefited or damaged their interests. France favoured the building of federation in the area, but both excluding and against Germany. French diplomats and academics chose to refer to a Danubian Confederation, as they addressed successor states opposed to the idea of Central Europe. Hungarian revisionists also avoided Central European reference and promoted the Danubian connotation, as it placed Hungarians at its heart and left out Germany. Italy dreaded having a strong neighbour who could challenge its recent territorial gains and opposed any integration in the area, however it was termed; Central Europe or Danubian Confederation. Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes adopted a similar stance for their own reasons – safeguarding their national independence. But for Germany and some elements of Austrian society, Central Europe was the very embodiment of their ambitions.

Therefore the discourse of the notion of Central Europe was driven by the German line of theorising as the French, Hungarian and other lines were diluted by references to the Danubian Confederation or a complete opposition to any integration in the area. As a result, Central Europe in interwar period was most of everything associated with the political project of exaltation of German national ambitions.

This meaning of the notion of Central Europe would be challenged during the Second World War – ironically by concepts put forward by those, who had been its most outspoken opponents in the interwar period.
6.3 The Second World War

In early 1938, the revision of the status quo established by the Paris Peace Conference started with the Anschluss Österreichs. Germany embarked upon its second campaign of the Drang nach Osten within 25 years. The height of appeasement was famously marked by the Munich Conference in September 1938, when Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier endorsed German annexation of the Sudetenland in exchange for a promise of no further territorial adventurism by Hitler. A false promise, indeed. The fate of Czechoslovakia was sealed in March 1939, when Hitler pushed Slovakia into a unilateral declaration of independence (Domarus and Romane 2007: 86, Špiesz, Čaplovič and Bolchazy 2006: 207) and proclaimed Bohemia as a German Protectorate (Ruthenia assigned to Hungary). Following the invasion of Poland and acquiring of the Memel territory, German territorial advances and its newly proclaimed vassals were approaching the borders of Mitteleuropa envisaged by the contributors of Zeitschrift für Geopolitik.

The stage was set for the Second World War... and backstage some had already started to plot an alternative Central Europe all over again.

6.3.1 (Former) successor states

The new debate, which started at the outbreak of the Second World War, was very much a ‘governmental’ undertaking. The main contributors to the debate were the members of governments in exile of the occupied countries located in London. Also very much involved were the Foreign Office, special offices and working groups established by the US government, and influential groups of émigré politicians and diplomats. The single most important factor driving the (former) successor states’ politicians to contemplate the creation of supranational unit in the area was the fact that none of the successor states had managed to safeguard its sovereignty and independence in the face of the resurgent German expansionism. It became a widespread conviction that in
order to protect their independence in future, creation of a larger and stronger federative union was necessary. Of course, provided that Germany did not win the war...

Milan Hodža, the former Czechoslovak prime minister now in exile in London, elaborated his concept of regional cooperation in the early war days publishing it in 1942 as *Federation in Central Europe* (Hodža 1942). Facing both German and Russian expansionism, the freedom and security of small nations in Central Europe could according to him only be guaranteed by their association in some sort of a federative unit. (Hodža 1997: 231) In his view, establishment of a strong union of nation states, even at the cost of giving up a part of sovereignty to the new union, was a better option for small states in the area than the enduring danger of being taken over by one or another power. When talking about a Central European federation, Hodža characterized it in the first instance as a regional economic association of agrarian states167, which would gradually develop into a political unit. Its members should have been Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia and Greece. He provided a detailed description of how his Central European Commonwealth should be constituted and how its institutions would operate.

On the other hand, another former Czechoslovak prime minister and president (also in exile in London), Edvard Beneš, thought that “it would be premature to deal with the question of Central Europe in all its details” before the war was over. (Beneš 1941: 1) Writing in 1941, he pointed out that all successor states, with the exception of dismembered Czechoslovakia and occupied Poland were in collaboration with Germany. Therefore, it would be hard to outline their future association, but:

“It would be in the interests of Europe if in the region between Germany and Russia there were created a large political formation of a federative type, powerful from the military point

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167 Hodža was a leader of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party in Slovakia between 1918 and 1938.
of view, which would yet have great political, economic, and cultural possibilities. Through co-operation between the Poles and the Czechoslovaks there would emerge a political unit with a sufficiently large population, and adequate industrial and economic wealth, a unit, which would become an important factor in the post-war political equilibrium of Europe.” (Beneš 1941: 2)

Beneš suggested that this Polish-Czechoslovak union could become the core of a future Central European Federation, which could include Austria, Hungary, Romania and possibly more “small peoples of Central Europe”. (Beneš 1941: 3) In more general terms, he called for establishment of a post-war order in Europe on the basis of national and religious freedom, and economic and social justice (Beneš 1941: 4), but refused to elaborate specifics, such as structures or mechanisms of the future union.

Whatever their differences, both Beneš and Hodža were working actively towards foundation of the Polish-Czechoslovak confederation. A declaration on the intent of future collaboration to this end was signed by both exiled governments in London as early as 11 November 1940. (Halecki 1948: 68) The Protocol on Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation was signed on 19 January 1942 (Central European Observer 1942) and set out the basic structural characteristics of the future union. This confederation was to be complemented by a similar structure in the Balkans168 that the exiled governments envisaged in their plan for the post-war reconstruction of the region. However, Soviet pressure, especially on Beneš, prevented its realisation.

The Polish-Czechoslovak plans did not please the Soviets. The Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov expressed opposition to the plan during his meeting with Beneš in 1942. (Táborský 1949: 389) In 1943 Beneš made a second attempt to obtain the Soviet blessing for the plan, which finally crashed

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168 This was presumably the Balkan Union envisaged by the Greco-Yugoslav treaty signed on 15 January 1942 (Bulletin of International News 1942)
with the establishment of the Soviet sponsored puppet government in Lubin. (see below, p. 32)

Oszkár Jászi also contributed to the wartime debate over Central Europe. In his 1941 article (written just days before the German attack on the Soviet Union), he considered various possible outcomes of the war and their potential implications for the region. The first possibility, in his view, was a victory for the German-Russian alliance[^169], which might result in a condominium of these two powers over Central Europe. On the other hand, a victory for the French-British alliance could lead to three different scenarios. The first would be the restoration of the status quo ante, which would be “absolutely necessary for a healthy new order in the Danube basin”. (Jászi 1941: 132) The second option was restoration of the Habsburg monarchy, which “none of the nations in question would accept voluntarily”. (Jászi 1941: 133) A final possibility was democratic federal structure built of restored nation states, which would guarantee “national autonomy for all the minority groups inside of the various states, the final elimination of the feudal estates, and the creation of a progressive and cooperative peasantry”. (Jászi 1941: 134)[^170] Only the last option could bring lasting peace to the Central European region and Europe as a whole. Jászi avoided making specific recommendations beyond this general principle, but underlined that without the wholehearted cooperation and support of Germany, the problem of Central Europe could not be resolved. (Jászi 1941: 137)

Jászi’s scenarios were, like many other wartime conceptions of Central Europe, dictated by the realities of interwar period of rising nationalism, the isolationism of successor states, their economic difficulties, respective turns to authoritarianism and, finally, recurrent German and Russian expansion. Two

[^169]: German-Russian alliance Jászi referred to came to end with the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. Jászi wrote his article before this date, though, ironically, it was printed in the July 1941 issue of the Journal of Central European Affairs.

[^170]: Similar compartmentalization of possible solutions appeared in Aurel Kolnai’s 1943 ‘Danubia: A Survey of Plans of Solution’ published in Journal of Central European Affairs, however, the potential outcomes under German and Russian domination were, indeed, listed separately. (Kolnai 1943)
motives dominate all Central Europe concepts deriving from the pens of successor state authors: first, the nations of Central Europe were unwilling to live in one multinational unit; second, small divided nation states could not guard their independence against German and Russian expansionism. Therefore, a majority of authors proposed some form of compromise, a federation or confederation in the Central European area, based predominantly upon economic cooperation. (Beneš 1941, Jazsi 1941, Feierabend 1942, Hodža 1942, Kulski 1942)

At an early stage of war, caution was an inevitable hallmark since reorganization of Central Europe was obviously dependent on the result of war. (Beneš 1941: 2) However by the end of 1942, concepts had evolved into structured plans for the creation of a Central European federation, premised upon expectations of an Allied victory (Ciolkosz 1942, Mühlstein 1942, Feierabend 1942, Hodža 1942, Baranski 1943). The compartmentalization of Central Europe into two or three federal units according to cultural and national affinities was also proposed (Vambery 1943, Pakstas 1942, Feierabend 1942). Even though some still advocated a return to the status quo ante, with minor modifications to facilitate regional trade (Tennenbaum 1942), the consensus of successor states scholars over the necessity of some form of political integration was clear. Even Austrian exile groups endorsed plans for regional federation on the stated basis of historical cultural and economic links. (Allina 1942, Müller-Sturmheim 1942)

An interesting report on a future Central and South-East European Union was published by the Danubian Club in October 1943. The union would have consisted of Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. (Danubian Club 1943: 6) The plan specified detailed workings for the future Union, including an electoral system, mechanisms for a bi-cameral parliament, power sharing between the union and

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171 The Danubian Club was a London based independent organization established by former members of the South-East Europe Committee of the Fabian Society and joined by many leftist émigrés
states, system of checks and balances, a rotational presidency, judiciary system, citizens’ rights, etc. The distinguishing feature of the plan was its emphasis on friendly relations with the Soviet Union (Danubian Club 1943: 5) and its prescription for a planned economy. For the plan envisaged central planning, agricultural cooperatives, centrally coordinated extensive industrialisation and controlled international trade – all modelled on the practices of Soviet Union. Given the leftist leanings of members of the club, these features are not surprising. But even this, essentially socialist plan, could not possibly satisfy the Soviets themselves.

As became clear when considering Polish-Czechoslovak collaboration, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the post-war organization of the Central European area would depend upon “the relation between the Western democracies, Soviet Russia and Germany” (Jászi 1945: 3), rather than the wishes of governments or population in the area itself. Specifically, it would depend “far more on the aims and methods of Russia than on those of the United States and the British Commonwealth” (Jászi 1945: 3). To continue the futile story of efforts towards a Polish-Czechoslovak confederation, the Soviets agreed to include the Polish government within the Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship and alliance treaty of 1943, thus potentially providing the basis for future confederation. However, they never said which Polish government it would be. Appeasing the Czechs, the Soviets put this matter aside until the opportune moment arrived with the establishment of a Soviet puppet government in Poland on 1 January 1945. By the end of the month, the Czechoslovak government in exile would, in any case, have severed diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile in London, and recognized the Soviet sponsored provisional government instead. The ousting of the Polish government in exile finally terminated any prospects for a wartime Polish-Czechoslovak confederation. Following this development many authors writing on the issues of Central European political integration started to observe that

172 The Soviet-controlled Lubin Committee, or more officially, The Polish Committee of National Liberation, was proclaimed the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland
the Soviet leadership had no desire to see regional groupings in Central Europe (Gross 1945, Jászi 1945) for that they might be strong enough to resist their intended post-war dominance of the region.

However, there were those, who refused to recognize the inevitability of Soviet dominance and called for federation in Central Europe even after the Iron Curtain had firmly fallen across Europe. (e. g. Kutschera 1948) Their calls would fall upon deaf ears for decades to come, of course.

6.3.2 Mitteleuropa = Das Grossgermanische Europa = Das Reich?\(^{173}\)

As is apparent from the evolution of the discussion of the 1920s and 1930s (see above, section 6.1.2), concepts of “Mitteleuropa” in German discourse were increasingly replaced by the concept of “Raum der Deutschen”, “Reich” and “Grossgermanische Europa”. (Elvert 1999: 309) Despite the fact that many advocates of “Mittleuropa” held key posts in the Nazi government prior to the Second World War (Gilbert 1947: 63), by 1939 it had become obvious that the realisation of any such economic or political unit was not an aim of Nazi foreign policy. With gradual German advances well beyond any previously envisaged borders of Central Europe, these outdated concepts lost their appeal and Mitteleuropa was now just loosely understood as a synonym for the living space of the German nation and the bedrock of a future Europe under the future German leadership. Reich rather than Mitteleuropa became the expression of German political ambitions.

Factual evidence for this assertion is voluminous – for example, the failure of Hermann Neubacher’s\(^{174}\) 1943 effort to reverse and steer Nazi policies towards a more constructive solution. He suggested that areas of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire should be organized and governed along the lines of earlier

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\(^{173}\) Central Europe = Great-German Europe = The Empire?

\(^{174}\) Hermann Neubacher was an active supporter of “Mitteleuropa” concepts throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and an Austrian in charge of political affairs of occupied south-eastern Europe.
conceptions of Central Europe, emphasising German leadership of multicultural area rather than racially pure dominion. Despite the fact that Nazi fortunes were already declining by this time, Hitler rejected any such plan. (Ritter 1975: 349)

So the Mitteleuropa plans all but disappeared. While, during the First World War, Naumann’s concept of Mitteleuropa had represented the exaltation of German nation’s ambition for political unification by joining Germany with Austria-Hungary, there was no need for such project during the Second World War. As already commented, the notion itself was increasingly being supplanted by such expressions as “das grossgermanische Europa” (the great-German Europe, Blume 1941), “das Neu-Europa” (new Europe, Muck 1940), or even simply “das Grossdeutschland” (Great-Germany, Leibrock 1941). As the emphasis shifted from politics towards economics, especially the questions of structuring the future economic system of the enlarged economic area – typically labelled “Grossraumwirtschaft”, (Predöhl 1941, Gablenz 1941, Funk 1944) the territory under German domination did not need to be conceptualised in political terms anymore, in order to justify expansion. The expansion was a fait accompli and theorising now focused on organization rather than definition.

Even though geopolitics was coined the “court science” of Nazi Germany, subsequent analyses showed that geopolitical theories were used for propagandist rather than policy making purposes. Even those few articles published in the early 1940s maintained the notion of Mitteleuropa lent it a new meaning defined by the Nazi expansion. Hassinger stretched its geographical remit along the entire flow of the river Danube and in north eastern direction by the inclusion of the Baltics. (Hassinger 1942: 176) Nazi ideological indoctrination was pervasive. Schäfer accused all earlier German authors of building their concepts of Mitteleuropa on the basis of undesirable liberal ideas, rather than natural spatial and organic theories. (Schäfer 1942: 59) Overall, the “influence of all these theories on the making of Hitler’s personal foreign policy
was nil” (Gilbert 1947: 65). Rather than informing the Nazi policy making, the new, rather mindless concepts of Mitteleuropa followed in its tracks.

For example, the attack on the Soviet Union was in direct contradiction with Karl Haushofer’s concept of the Kontinentalblock (Continental Bloc, Haushofer 1931b). Haushofer, the father of German Geopolitik, viewed the future of the world in terms of Pan-Ideas, political units of continental character. He understood Mitteleuropa simply as a living space for the German people and identified it with the former Austro-Hungarian Empire unified with Germany. Perhaps overestimating the influence of his role model, Halford Mackinder, he viewed the successor states as a mere strip of territories made independent for the sole purpose of preventing cooperation between German and Russian nations, due to the threat that this would pose to the interests of the British Empire. Should Germany gain the two main navigable rivers of Europe – the Rhine and the Danube – under its territorial control, it would form a strong continental unit with global strategic significance. Such a political unit would then become a core of the Pan-Idea of Europe stretching its influence over northern Africa. Its neighbour would have been Pan-Asia, with its core in the Soviet Union. (Haushofer 1931: 78 – 79) However, in the 1941 revision of his theses, Haushofer completely dropped the area originally assigned for the Soviet Union and split it between zones belonging to Germany and Japan. (Haushofer 1941) His profound change of heart followed fairly blatantly the change in Nazi policy and the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941.

It must be concluded therefore that Mitteleuropa concepts changed into one of many propagandist tool of the Nazi regime. Their interchangeability with notions such as the Great-German Europe suggests that Mitteleuropa was little more than yet another euphemism for German domination of areas delineated as living space of the Germans. It lost its emotional appeal in favour of Reich, what was essentially a culmination of processes of changing ambitions of theorists as well as politicians in the 1930s.
Nevertheless, the notion of *Mitteleuropa* – however vague its meaning during the war – was strongly associated with Nazi propaganda and fell into disgrace following the Nazi defeat. Even forty years later, Timothy Garton Ash wrote that in Germany, the word *Mitteleuropa* could only have been whispered if one did not want to be accused of harbouring expansionist ambitions. (Ash 1986)

### 6.3.3 The return of the Middle Tier

After the war broke out in 1939, British and American writers started to analyse its causes and to suggest steps to safeguard peace in the future. Halford Mackinder updated his theory of the clash of sea- and land-power in an article for *Foreign Affairs* in 1943. (Mackinder 1943) More importance was assigned to an Inner Crescent surrounding the Heartland and Mackinder advocated the necessity of British-Russian-USA cooperation in order to prevent the growth of Germany in the area. Now it was the cooperation of the sea- and land-based powers that was presented as crucial in order to prevent the rise of a hostile power in the Inner Crescent area and thereby safeguard world peace.

Given the fact that both world wars broke out in the same area, featuring the same malefactors, it does not come as a surprise that neutralization of Germany was the preoccupation of researchers in the West. Due to the eastwards pattern of the Reich’s expansion, many scholars made the association between neutralizing Germany and stabilising the former territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as preconditions for any sustainable peace of the future.

To resolve the question of how this might best be effected, Robert Dickinson, then the Reader in Geography at University College London, compiled an unusually elaborate enquiry into the problem of Central Europe. Dickinson not only explored various definitions of Mitteleuropa/Central Europe/Europe Centrale that had been published in German, English and French literatures, he also contrasted them with the notion of Lebensraum, Deutschland, Reichs-, Volks- and Kulturboden. The focus of his enquiry determined the character of
his work and its conclusions, as Dickinson’s book was one of very few wartime Anglo-Saxon conceptions of Central Europe that avoided taking up Mackinder’s Middle Tier theory as the basis of the proposed solution. In his view, Central Europe could be divided into three parts – West Central Europe (Germany, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Austria), Vistula Central Europe (Poland and the Baltic states) and Danubian Central Europe (with Bohemia as a sort of crossroads). Denouncing German domination, he also asserted that thereby to advance the creation of a federal union in Central Europe was admittedly “necessary, but quite inadequate” because of the internal fault-lines between nations and cultures. (Dickinson 1942: 210) Dickinson insisted that such solution could not ensure a lasting peace. So instead, he suggested this creation of three federative units consisting of sovereign national states in each of his respective parts of Central Europe. (Dickinson 1942: 211) It comes as a disappointing conclusion to an otherwise excellent analysis that Dickinson failed to resolve on the problem of Bohemia, as he could not decide into which one of the regional units to include it. (Dickinson 1942: 212) Similarly, he refused to delineate the borders of individual units more precisely, as he asserted it would all depend on the outcome of the war.

George Harrison’s and Peter Jordan’s Central Union (1943) was written at a much lighter level, as regards the evidence presented to the reader. On the other hand, it seemed much more confident in suggesting what needed to be done. Harrison and Jordan identified a ‘Middle Zone’ comprising Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece (see Appendix 35). The basic idea behind their Central Union was its proclaimed ability to resist any future Germany aggression, cast very much along the lines of ‘Divided we fall – United we stand’ idiom. (Harrison and Jordan 1943: 6 – 8) Harrison and Jordan suggested that the previously problematic ‘German wedges’ of Silesia and East Prussia within Middle Zone countries should be removed. This simply meant the assignment of both areas to Poland and repatriation of “only about one and a half million
Germans”. (Harrison and Jordan 1943: 11) They viewed the creation of their Central Union as a strategic goal for European security, whose importance “would be twofold: (1) It would collaborate actively with the democratic and peaceful powers, (2) by its very existence the Central Union would prevent any would-be conqueror from seizing the most vital strategic area of Europe.” (Harrison and Jordan 1943: 15)

An emphasis was laid on modelling the Central Union after the USA and making it a vanguard of European democracy. Even though the threat of Russian aggression was not spelled out explicitly, the maps and illustrations spoke almost as loudly. Harrison and Jordan denounced Danubian federative plans as they could “never be a complete solution of the problem”. (Harrison and Jordan 1943: 25) The argumentation ran along traditional Mackinderian lines, even though the authors avoided referring to Russia as a potential enemy and the necessity of keeping it apart from Germany. However, references to Poland as the keystone of the union and a country of “utmost political and strategic importance” since it was “the only country in the Middle Zone to have both Germany and Russia for neighbours” (Harrison and Jordan 1943: 21) clearly show the underlying basis of their thinking. The volume went to great lengths in trying to assure Russia that the Central Union would be an asset for her, featuring deliberately over-emphatically titled subchapters, such as the ‘Central Union – the friend of Russia’ (Harrison and Jordan 1943: 33) or ‘Russian doorways to the world’ (Harrison and Jordan 1943: 35).

Overall, Harrison and Jordan’s treatise feels like a propagandist peace of literature published at the height of the war. It was built on Mackinder’s original Middle Tier concept, but with a federative twist, given the glaring failure of the nation-state solution to prevent German resurgence. Despite its best efforts, the treatise betrays the view of Russia as potential enemy, present of course in Mackinder’s original concept.
An article by Reginald Lang, 'Central Europe and European Unity', published in 1946 is quite different both to Dickinson’s academic volume and the heavily illustrated political pamphlet of Harrison and Jordan. Dealing with the realities of post-war Europe, the argumentation is empirical and factual. Central Europe was again defined along Mackinderian lines, with conclusions presented to tackle both the underlying principles and pragmatics of suggested Central Europe. Lang had warned on earlier occasions of the dangers of keeping Europe divided along national lines. In his view, only a united Europe could be a guarantor of peace. Specifically, he pointed to Poland and Czechoslovakia, suggesting they would either fall into Soviet sphere of influence or face recurring future conflicts, if Europe remained divided. (Lang 1946: 27) Only a unified Central Europe could bring unity to Europe as a whole and thus guarantee sustainable peace. He concluded his article as follows:

“As long as Central Europe is disjoined, there can be neither unity in Europe nor peace in the world. When Central Europe is united with Western Europe in a European Federation, there will be unity in Europe and peace in the world.” (Lang 1946: 29)

Lang’s article would be one of the last academic contemplations of Central Europe for decades to come. In the post-war period, British writing on the topic of Central Europe shifted away from suggestions for political reorganization, towards the views epitomised by Felix Gilbert, who argued that rather than a political reality, “the term Central Europe is a descriptive, geographical concept, designating the area between Germany and Russia from Poland’s Baltic coast south to the Mediterranean”. (Gilbert 1947: 58) He reserved expression of any political aims to the underlying aims of the German notion of Mitteleuropa and stated that Central Europe had a purely geographical connotation. Given the situation on the ground, with the Iron Curtain now a depressing reality, it was not surprising that many writers placed a politicised Central Europe on the shelf of history.
In the United States, wartime period witnessed a boom-time for geopolitics. The perception was that its main thought had been proven right by two world wars. Its prominence in the foreign policy of Nazi Germany led US researchers to renew their study of geopolitical theory. Many authors therefore became interested in Central Europe during the course of the Second World War, analyzing earlier German concepts, as was the case with Henry Cord Meyer. In his paper, “Mitteleuropa in German Political Geography”, Meyer dealt with various concepts originating between 1880 and 1939. As Meyer himself admitted, his and other similar papers published during the same period, were more like “autopsies” of what had been written before rather than new treatises on Central Europe. (Meyer 1946: 178) A marked exception were the works of Feliks Gross (1944, 1945), who focused on proposals for reorganisation of Central Europe as presented and conceived by exiled government groupings in the United States and the Great Britain. His elaborate record of what was being proposed, planned and done in reality constitutes an invaluable source of information on the practicalities of federative plans. Gross himself favoured creation of an inclusive federation, stretching from the Baltic to the Aegean Sea. (Gross 1945: 34) He suggested that Austria had to be included in order to prevent any future Anschluss and that the union had to observe federative and democratic principles. In Gross’s view, the model should not have been the United States of America, as suggested by a number of other proposals, but rather the Swiss Confederation or the British Commonwealth. Gross’s application was based upon Mackinderian lines, with the addition of the federative principle but contained assurances for the Soviet Union that the East-Central European Federation would effectively work as a bridge between the USSR and Europe. (Gross 1945: 81) Finally, Gross placed his East-Central European Federation within a wider system of federations across the whole of Europe. (Gross 1945: 72)

With the defeat of Germany, of course, the United States emerged as a global power. The geographical scope of strategic policy was extended from the
western hemisphere to cover all possible theatres of global conflict. (Sloan 1988: 118) And the Soviet Union was expanding its influence over Central Europe and elsewhere, as foreshadowed again by Halford Mackinder. Classical geopolitics seemed to be the tool of choice for the US policymakers searching for an effective analytical yardstick to make sense of a complicated post-war international situation.

However, US political geographers other than Gross did not conceptualise Central Europe. The focus was on the reconstruction and regional integration of Western Europe, as countries to the east and south-east of occupied Germany and Austria went Communist and the envisaged buffer zone went to the Soviets. Political geography in the United States now took a strategic turn with its conceptualisation of global super-power rivalry, future potential conflict zones and the means of countering threat – only very few still believed the Middle Tier, now under Soviet domination, could be one of them.

6.3.4 Federalism versus power politics

The threat (and reality) of Hitler’s New Order had finally convinced the quarrelling politicians of the (former) successor states that in order to resist future threats, the creation of some form of union in the region was necessary. With Reich, rather than Mitteleuropa being the synonym for the new international nightmare, Central Europe could be theorized and ascribed independent characteristics and qualities. With introduction of Reich, Central Europe could be theorised in other than pan-German context and new conceptions started to emerge. Through the discourse driven by exiled governments and émigré politicians from occupied countries based in London and New York, a new vision of Central Europe was forming. It would designate a future partnership of equal nations along the area designated as the Middle Tier by Mackinder, either within one or more federations. Its professed
characteristic features would be freedom, democracy, respect for national identities, peace and cooperation.

The discourse of Central Europe differed from the interwar one in its much greater emphasis upon practical steps towards the realisation of federative plans. Exiled governments, émigré politicians and academics were busy elaborating the basis for compatibility in respective national systems of education, agriculture, transport, etc. Journals such as *New Europe* and the *Journal of Central European Affairs* were printing report after report, proposal after proposal towards this end. Agreements were being signed on partial areas of cooperation, especially agriculture (New Europe 1943) or education (CEEPB 1943a), as serious planning of post-war reorganization of Europe got under way on both sides of the Atlantic. These efforts, of course, assumed that Germany would not win the war.

As Feliks Gross, now Secretary of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board, observed, the proposed projects generally fell into three categories:

“(1) One inclusive federation of states from the Aegean Sea to the Baltic,

(2) Two federations: in the north a Polish-Czechoslovak union; in the south a Danubian federation of Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania

(3) Three federations: (a) in the north a federation of Poland and Czechoslovakia; (b) in the middle a Danubian federation of Austria, Hungary and Rumania; (c) in the south a union of Balkan States.” (Gross 1945: 29)

Gross posited that the all-inclusive federation was the most desirable option for the majority of exiled politicians and academics involved. (Gross 1945: 34) The other two options were only considered, should the one inclusive union prove unattainable. All official exiled governments’ work towards regional integration was being conducted with one union in mind.
In the United States, the first concrete steps were taken at the International Labor Organization’s meeting in November 1941, when delegations of the exiled governments of Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland and Yugoslavia issued a common declaration on regional solidarity. (Gross 1944: 170) Based on this agreement, the Central and Eastern European Planning Board was formed, consisting of representatives of these countries. (Lipgens 1982: 443) This body restricted itself to producing research, reports and plans on economic, social and educational questions (Gross 1944: 172), while the governments in exile in London based officials were busying themselves with overarching questions of the future Polish-Czechoslovak and Greek-Yugoslav federations. It was envisaged that these two base federative components would expand over time to cover an area stretching from Poland to Greece. (Beneš 1942: 12) Representatives of Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia were also included in the processes of the planned regional integration and took part in research, discussions and preparation of plans focusing on individual areas of future cooperation. (New Europe 1943, CEEPB 1943a, CEEPB 1943b) Research and planning work was conducted both in London and New York, with the financial and administrative help of the US Government. (US Committee on Educational Reconstruction 1943)

At first sight, it might seem that the British Government was also in favour of federation in Central Europe. Winston Churchill expressed his support for the idea in his speech to American audience on 21 March 1943. (UN Information Office 1943) The Foreign Office started up a Foreign Research and Press Service, tasked to analyze the ethnic, economic and political conditions of the successor states. Interestingly, the FRPS was the first body to designate the area as Eastern, rather than Central Europe. An FRPS report *The Reconstruction Of Eastern Europe II. International Relations* published in 1941, favoured the three federations solution. (FRPS 1941) However, the FRPS soon changed their minds after consultations with the exiled governments and in August 1942 published another report, this time entitled *Confederations in Eastern Europe*. (FRPS
1942) This favoured the creation of only two units in Central Europe. Finally, in 1943 FRPS published so-called Macartney Memorandum\textsuperscript{175}, officially entitled *The Settlement of Eastern Europe*, envisaging four possible scenarios: permanent Russian control, permanent German control, an independent Eastern Europe on either a selective or comprehensive basis. Despite its title, the report was not a suggestion for settlement, as the previous ones had been. Rather, it presented contemporary context and suggested possible future scenarios, running essentially along familiar Jászi-like lines. (Jászi 1941) However, none of this confusing and incoherent mesh of memoranda and reports was actually implemented as British policy. Power-politics would take precedence over federalist idealism.

Feliks Gross maintained as late as March 1944 that members of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board in New York possessed very little information on the attitudes of the Soviet Union towards their work:

"There is no official statement in this respect, but an opinion is expressed in a Moscow periodical, *War and the Working Class*, where an unfriendly attitude to any federal idea in Europe is taken by the author, Mr. Malinin." (Gross 1944: 175)

Conversely, the exiled governments in London, especially the Czechoslovak one, had more direct and specific knowledge of Moscow's opinion on the matter. Eduard Táborský published Beneš' diary notes taken during meetings with Vyacheslav Molotov and Alexander Bogomolov, during which it became obvious that Moscow was opposed to the proposed Polish-Czechoslovak confederation. (Táborský 1949: 389 - 390) However, continuing to inform the British Government and the exiled Polish government about their dealings, the Czechoslovak government also worked on plans that ought to have been much more to the potential liking of the Soviet Government. For in 1943, Beneš put

\textsuperscript{175} Named after its chief author C. A. Macartney.
forward another proposal, which envisaged the basis of confederation in a system of bilateral treaties of friendship tying both Czechoslovakia and Poland to the Soviet Union. The Soviets suggested agreement to this proposal in principle. (Táborský 1949: 391) Táborský noted somewhat bitterly that it might have been just a Soviet deception to appease Czechs, while planning for instalment of their own puppet government for Poland. (Táborský 1949: 393)

No matter how focused, organized and practically oriented the work on federative plans was, the reality at the height of the war dictated that Germany had to be defeated, before any kind of non-German dominated Central Europe could be created. For this purpose, the cooperation of the Soviet Union was vital. And the Soviets had nothing to gain from the federative Central Europe. Quite the opposite, they logically wanted to keep the countries on their western and south-western border divided and weak. All the hopes and effort put into the planning of a future federation in Central Europe in the west notwithstanding, the Moscow (October 1944) and Yalta (February 1945) conference deals sealed the fate of Central Europe, where the Soviets were dealt an upper hand.

Spheres of influence were soon to be divided by an Iron Curtain, cutting Europe into East and West. There was no space left for Central Europe.
6.4 The Cold War - the nonexistent concept

Talking a long view, the Cold War was a peculiar chapter in the history of Central Europe. Following all the feverish work on the plans for Central European federation during the Second World War, the geographic notion almost vanished in the following decades. As the following section documents, the cause of all this was the bi-polar structure of the post war world.

However, the same processes identified in the construction of the notion (formulation of identities, interests and actions) in earlier periods were equally complicit in its disappearance from daily parlance. The Soviet interests for domination in the area were in direct contradiction to any Central European integration project. Even a suggestion of such ambition met with fierce reprisal. On the other hand, new concepts of Central Europe continued to be formulated in the émigré communities in the West mostly in form of neutralised federation of buffer states between the East and the West, these plans failed to gather substantial support among Western policy makers as they were not willing to risk a conflict with the Soviet Union over this issue. Indeed, Soviet domination of the area was recognized in the period of détente, where recognition of respective spheres of influence became a precondition for any talks of limitation of nuclear arms race.

Thus the Central European projects of regional federation met with direct Soviet opposition and lack of support in the West. As a result, any concepts produced in the period were stillborn.

6.4.1 The story of the ‘Titoist Clique’

Soviet opposition to regional integration on its outlying flanks was real and fierce. In fact, it would trigger the first majors split and a tidal wave of purges that swept across Communist Parties in the region.
For in 1947, Josip Broz Tito picked upon his wartime plan for Balkan federation consisting of the six Yugoslav republics and Bulgaria. Tito also signed a string of treaties with other countries of Communist Europe (Meissner 1955: 30 – 35) and approached the Bulgarian leader, Georgij Dimitrov, with an offer to establish closer links and cooperation in the Balkans. Soviet suspicions over the nature and extent of Tito’s proposals were laid bare with Dimitrov’s statement at the press conference in Sofia in January 1948. He revealed that their talks by now did not consider whether a union stretching from Poland, to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece should be constituted, but that it was more of a question of when and how. (Lipgens 1982: 454) Yet it was obvious from his statements that no actual arrangements for such a comprehensive union had yet been made; however, the stated intention was bad enough in Stalin’s eyes. (Meissner 1955: 15)

The Soviet reaction was furious. The Bulgarian and Yugoslav leaders were summoned to Moscow immediately. Dimitrov was brought to heed, but Tito had sent a delegation headed by Milovan Djilas, Secretary of the Yugoslav Communist Party’s Politburo, instead. Djilas’s recollections of a showdown highlight that Stalin had spelled out that “no relations between the peoples’ democracies were permissible that were not in the interests and had not the approval of the Soviet government.” (Djilas 1962: 134) The non-compliant Yugoslav Federation would be outlawed by Comintern in June 1948 and all countries of the Soviet Bloc followed by denouncing existing treaties with Belgrade. Dimitrov mysteriously died upon his next visit to Moscow and all other leaders, who had showed signs of support for the plan were hit by an ensuing purge aimed at the ‘international Titoist clique’. Lucretiu Patrascanu, Laszlo Rajk and Traycho Kostov176 and many others paid with their lives.

176 Lucretiu Patrascanu was a prominent member of the Romanian Communist Party leadership and a Minister of Justice 1944–48. László Rajk was a Hungarian Communist leader, Minister of Interior (1946–48) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1948–49) Traycho Kostov was President of the Council of Ministers and a General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (until spring 1949).
There was no space for alternative structures within the Soviet Bloc!

6.4.2 The end of the multiple choice question

The fate of Tito’s plan suggested the very same thing to the West as it had to the East – that the Soviet leadership was afraid of the regional integration of their European vassals, as this might have challenged their domination of the area. The idea was picked up upon almost immediately.

A 1948 special edition of the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, *Looking toward One World*, featured two articles promoting federative plans for Central Europe from the pen of European émigrés. In his contribution to the volume, Joseph Rouček, a political scientist of Czech origin, pointed out that there were only two options – a divided Central Europe under Soviet rule or federative Central Europe integrated with the West. Rouček pointed out that Soviet rule was being tightened by the day (referring to the Soviet opposition to plans revealed by Dimitrov) and pointed to the danger of gradual Communist takeover in other European countries, especially France and Italy. He posited that the key safeguard against the spread of Communism in Europe was the liberation of countries of Central Europe from the Soviet zone of influence and building of a strong bulwark by their federalisation. Arguing along distinctively Mackinderian lines, Rouček advised that:

“the safety of America depends on her ability to defeat efforts of any powerful European nation to establish an imperialistic control over central-eastern Europe and subsequently over the whole continent.” (Rouček 1948: 64)

Even though Rouček did not present his own concept of what a desirable federal unit should look like or work, his references to the wartime efforts of exiled government groupings in London and the Central and Eastern European
Planning Board in New York are unmistakeable. Rouček did take part in the work of the CEEPB during the war and his article showed desire to return to these plans. In an attempt to sell the idea to the American scholarly public, Rouček made good use of the then popular concepts in political geography and presented the creation of Central Europe as a strategic interest for the West.

Similarly, an article by Oscar Halecki, a historian and a director of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, called for a return to wartime considerations of federative plans, starting with the Polish-Czechoslovak union. (Halecki 1948: 68) Focusing on the history of efforts for federalisation of the region, his goal was to turn readers’ attention to

“the right of the peoples of east-central Europe, who have suffered so much in the past, finally to organize their political existence according to their own wishes.” (Halecki 1948: 69)

Criticising the Soviet veto of federative plans, Halecki called for the support of the West in the fight to win such a right.

In another American journal, the Proceedings of the American Philoshopical Society, our ‘developmental optimist’, Oscar Jászi wrote in August 1948, that the Soviet domination of the region was unlikely to hold for long. “I doubt that this experiment will be successful” claimed Jászi (1949: 26) reasoning that:

“dissatisfied nations and suppressed nationalities are opposing the new state systems forced upon them. They revolt against the superstate which gives its orders to all the states and which protects or expels national units. Is there a possibility of avoiding a new catastrophe? I see only one. And this is the Marshall Plan, if duly supplemented... Federalism is the only possible means of reconciling state and nations and of liberating national minorities.” (Jászi 1949: 27)

Although still prioritising the theme of national minorities, Jászi made a radical departure from his usual Danubian concept and suggested a federal union of
the USA with all beneficiary states of the Marshall Plan. Such a federation would then “also give help to those unfortunate small nations who would like to federate, but who cannot, impeded by power politics”. (Jászi 1949: 27) In this way, Jászi not only brought the outside power into his Central Europe concept, but also contextually linked it to what was to become ‘the West’ during the Cold War period.

All three articles suggested, of course, that the discourse of Central Europe had become bi-polar. The multiple options for the future of Central Europe typical of earlier periods premised upon a number of competing concepts suddenly became an either-or question of belonging to either to the East or to the West – a zero sum game, if you like. Central Europe was not seen in its own terms as an entity that might deliver the best for all nations in the area by linking trade and building upon other potential complementarities. The threat and indeed leadership of Germany was out of the equation completely. Now Central Europe was portrayed as a strategic safeguard for the West in its fight against the East. All three articles had been written by émigrés from the area and asserted that the new Soviet satellites had been placed into the Soviet sphere of influence, whereas in fact they would prefer to be (and righteously belonged) on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Quite intriguingly, this was the very same theme that would be picked up thirty-five years later. (see sections 1.1.2 and 6.4.1) Moreover, Rouček’s, line of argument that an embrace of Central Europe into the bosom of the West was a strategic imperative would also resurface in post-Cold War discourse.

Rouček’s reasoning did not fall on entirely deaf ear in the United States (see section 6.3.5). However, the US establishment was not willing to risk yet another war over Central Europe. The uncompromising Soviet reaction to Tito’s plan for federation sent a clear message that for Stalin, prevention of such projects was a cause worth killing for... even his own comrades!
6.4.3 Brief resurrection

From 1948 onwards, the notion of Central Europe was slowly disappearing from daily parlance. ‘East-central’, ‘Central-eastern’ or even ‘Central-Eastern-Balkan’ (Rouček 1948) Europe entered the stage. Federalist plans published in the West could be represented as inconsequential outcries from émigré groups for “liberation from the Soviet and Communist yoke”. (Ripka 1953: 1) Even though occasional mentions of Central Europe were still appearing in the British press (e.g. The Times, 21 January 1952), the notion of Eastern Europe appeared ever more frequently, referring to all European countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain (e.g. Manchester Guardian, 7 May 1953).

In his article on meaning of the geographical term Central Europe Karl Sinnhuber (1954) noted that “in view of the great changes in the political boundaries and cultural landscape of Europe which have taken place during the recent past, we may need to modify our ideas as to the extent of Central Europe” (Sinnhuber 1954: 15). He asked whether it would “not be better to cease using this term altogether”. (Sinnhuber 1954: 16) Sinnhuber, indeed, concluded that even though Central Europe remained a relevant topographical term and physical region, it had “at least for the moment ... ceased to exist” as a political notion. (Sinnhuber 1954: 37)

However, the vitality of Central Europe seemed to draw fresh breath, if not particularly strongly, in the late 1950s, as the debate over potential superpower disengagement in Europe filled the pages of the daily presses and academic journals alike. Central Europe briefly appeared to possess potential as a demilitarized zone between the Eastern and the Western bloc in Europe.

This was the thrust of an article of James Warburg and Wilhelm Grewe, published in 1959, which suggested the disengagement of both the Soviet Union and the United States from the area, for the sake of German unification and easing of the tension between the blocks in Europe. They posited that in order to prevent a superpower confrontation in Europe, Central Europe would need
to be neutralized, demilitarized and its countries forbidden from entering into military alliance with one or the other superpower. (Warburg and Grewe 1959: 16) In Warburg and Grewe’s article, Central Europe as a concept independent of both East and West was effectively resurrected and restored to its role as Mackinderian buffer (minus the previously defining problem of Germany of course). Similarly, Central Europe also featured as a potential buffer zone in an article by David Dallin, who warned that “caution is necessary in any plan of disengagement in Central Europe, for a weak Germany would permit the expansion of Russian power over Germany and France.” (Dallin 1959: 1) Dallin maintained that withdrawal from Central Europe should be undertaken simultaneously by the West and the East and very carefully considered by the West, in order to prevent the spread of Communism. If this could not be assured, disengagement might bring more dangers than it would obviate, damaging the interests of the West.

Dallin’s views were of limited significance as either of the superpowers was not ready or willing to surrender its position. For Central Europe was now considered a political concept of the past.

6.4.4 No more Central Europe?

The recognition of the division of Europe into Eastern and Western was near universal by the late 1950s. The war time division into spheres of influence was confirmed and fostered by the creation of security and economic structures on both sides of the Iron Curtain respectively. There was no space left for Central Europe. In the words of Saul B. Cohen: “Europe outside of Russia is divided into two parts: West and East. Central Europe is no more. It is a mere geographical expression that lacks geopolitical substance”177. (Cohen 1964: 218)

177 Cohen viewed – now foregone - Central Europe as “lying between the Rhine on the west and Russia and the Balkans on the south and east”. (Cohen 1964: 218)
A significant drop in usage of the term suggests that Cohen’s opinion was shared by many. A simple, quantitative comparison of the number of publications, which the feature notion Central Europe in their title in the collections of the British Library during the period 1950 – 1959 with earlier and later periods shows that use of the notion in the 1950s halved as compared to the 1940s and even dropped below pertaining levels in the 1920s. On the other hand, use of the notion of East-Central Europe was in ascendancy in the 1950s (having been non-existent before the late 1930s). However, this rise and a doubling in the number of publications featuring this notion in the 1970s might be misleading, as pointed out below.

Figure 2: Number of books featuring ‘Central Europe’ and ‘East Central Europe’ in their title in collections of the British Library, 1920 - 1979

A qualitative comparison of the contents of books featuring both notions shows another interesting pattern. Only one book featuring Central Europe in the title published in the 1950s dealt with the potential reorganization of the regional power politics – Hubert Ripka’s A Federation of Central Europe (1953). In contrast, out of twenty-four books featuring Central Europe in the 1940s, nine
elaborated detailed concepts, while seven works were devoted to analysis of post-war situation in the area. In the 1950s, the notion of Central Europe featured predominantly in books on the history of the region and the fate of the European Jews both before and during the Second World War. Occasionally, the odd study on economics or a regional bibliography was published. Some solitary and somewhat obscure conceptions of federations in Central Europe did indeed appear under alternative names, such as Danubian Federation, however, without much recognition or even correlation to reality. For example, the work of Ferdinand Miksche, émigré Czechoslovak army officer, completely ignored the fact of Soviet domination and insisted that the only obstacle in creation of federation in the area was Czechoslovakia, which resisted integration projects. (e.g. Miksche 1953)

East Central Europe as a notion appeared during the late 1930s in the works of authors of Polish origin, who sought to counter the notion of Central Europe established by contemporary German discourse (Mitteleuropa), attempting thereby to construct an independent identity for the region of Mackinder’s Middle Tier and to emphasise the exclusion of Germany from such a context. (Janowski 1938, Gross 1945, Janowski 1945) The early Cold-War period revived this notion in reference to countries that had fallen under Soviet domination. So East Central Europe was a term preferred by authors writing about the post-war expansion of Communism and US foreign policy.

The total number of volumes (twenty-five) in the British Library collections featuring Central Europe in their title that were published in the 1960s, might suggest a resurgence of the notion. However, eleven volumes focused on the subjects of history and archaeology and dealt mainly with pre-history and middle ages more than recent past. Even though four featured publications atlases with divergent delineation of the area and five volumes contemplated Communist takeovers and institutional design, there were no new conceptions of Central Europe among the books to be found in the British Library. The understanding of Central Europe as a political entity or project was completely
diluted. Instead, the notion was being used in a very loose geographic manner by authors writing on subjects unrelated to its earlier use (such as the typology of Baroque churches or survey of sites where Roman coins were discovered). Even the notion of East-Central Europe was losing its political appeal in 1960s and it featured in titles of books dealing with ecology, geology or agriculture.

This pattern was even more pronounced in the 1970s, when seven out of eleven books featuring East-Central Europe in their title were on history, two on foreign trade, two on aspects of early 20th century US diplomacy and one on urbanisation. As for Central Europe, twenty-five out of fifty books were again works on history and archaeology. The next highest category involved consideration of the characteristics of the balance of power in the area (five volumes), closely followed by work in zoology, botany and geology (each three volumes). The appearance of strategic considerations should be put into context of the ongoing SALT I and II negotiations and other efforts to curb the superpower arms race. It should not be forgotten that substantial conventional forces were deployed by both sides in the wider borderlands of the Iron Curtain and the strategic considerations of Central Europe appearing in 1970s dealt precisely with such matters. Rather than suggesting neutrality of the region or a change in political organization, they focused on the challenge of ameliorating the prospects of a East-West stand-off in the area.

As is apparent from the following chart, the region was increasingly being conceptualised in terms of bipolar power struggles and references to Eastern Europe rocketed from three in 1930s to four-hundred-and-nineteen in the 1970s. The notion of Central Europe now trailed significantly behind references to Eastern Europe.
Figure 3: Number of books featuring ‘Central Europe’ and ‘Eastern Europe’ in their title in collections of the British Library, 1920 - 1979

Even though this short survey cannot claim to be representative of the whole volume of publishing, it does offer an idea of how usage of the notion changed in comparison to earlier periods. While in the 1940s actual conceptions of Central Europe accounted for almost 40 % of all works published and considerations of political situation in the area for another 30 %, this type of work would all but disappear in the following two decades.

The drop in use of the notion of Central Europe, the short-lived rise in the number of East Central European references and the changing pattern of use of both suggest that even thought references to Central Europe were increasing in the academic literature, they were not tied to any political concept. In fact, and allowing for some exceptions, they were not tied to politics at all. Understanding of Central Europe as a political concept was marginalised. Instead, it became increasingly associated with history and arts produced within a vaguer geographic identity.

Lacking the political support for reinvigoration on both sides of the Iron Curtain, Central Europe was just a political chimera of the past. But, contrary to
Cohen’s assertion that Central Europe was no more, it would perhaps be more appropriate to say that it now was in a deep coma and only being maintained by hopeful émigré groups. (see section 6.4.5)

6.4.5 Pax Sovietica

As is apparent from section 6.3.2, there were significant changes in the debate over Central Europe in early Cold War period. First of all, its continuation had been limited to the works of émigré authors (Rouček, Halecki, Jászí). Second, argumentation in favour of creation of a new Central Europe was cast within the prevailing global bi-polar conflict rather than regional context. Central Europe was referred to as a part of the West by mistake on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain, strategic buffer against the Soviet Union or safeguard against spreading of Communism rather than a significant regional context in its own right. Third, published concepts were designed to influence mainly the US academic and public establishment, as the decision making power over the destiny of the region now lay in the hands of superpowers rather than local politicians. Fourth, concern over a defeated Germany disappeared.

Initially, the idea of a Central Europe being included within the Western sphere of influence enjoyed the support of the US Government (Gross 1957: 367 and 369). Continuing within a war time pattern of cooperation with the US Government and imitating the First World War Mid-European Union initiative, émigré representatives in the USA signed The Declaration of Liberation in Philadelphia’s Independence Hall in 1951.178 Signed by “exiles from Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia loyally united and single in thought” (NCFE 1951: 12), the declaration called for liberation of these countries from the Soviet sphere of influence and their inclusion into the integration processes under way in

178 Also called The Second Philadelphia Manifesto in the context with the 1918 Mid-European Union Declaration (Gross 1957: 367)
Western Europe. (NCFE 1951: 14) The declaration was sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe, an American anti-Communist organization founded by Allen Dulles, that supported nine further panels examining the preconditions and actions necessary to achieve it. The activities sponsored by NCFE intentionally aimed not only at the creation of a Central European union of some form, but at the inclusion of these countries within a common European union. (NCFE 1954: 6) The declaration also had portrayed the Soviet designated European countries as ‘captive countries’ for the first time – thus introducing two major themes that would be heavily picked up at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s - the ‘kidnapped West’ concept; and the need, even right, for a speedy integration into the Western structures.

But declarations, the formation of assessment panels and the establishment of Radio Free Europe would be the limits of official US support for the cause of Central Europe. As peaceful transition from Communism failed to materialize and the Soviet Union tightened its control of European satellites following unrest in 1953 (East Germany) and 1956 (Poland and Hungary) unrests, the support of the US government dissipated.

Indeed, to the great frustration of émigré groups, even the short-lived renewal of the debate over the topic of Central Europe as a demilitarized zone failed to galvanize more robust support, as neither of the superpowers was willing to unilaterally cut their military presence in the area. One of the very few federalist initiatives remaining was the project of Hungarian émigré groups in the United States – in the shape of their Studies for a New Europe journal. The journal articles gravitated towards concepts envisaging Swiss type canton confederation and neutrality, later suggesting a buffer role between the East and West and UN supervision of the area. (Dreisziger 1983: 548) Another similar medium with a wider breath of contributors was the New Europe journal, effectively the continuation of the periodical started by R. W. Seton-Watson during the First World War.
However, a further disappointment for émigré groups would come in the form of superpower détente from the mid-1960s. The US government would now abandon projects that could potentially cause irritation to the Soviets for the sake of establishing a dialogue aimed at maintaining global peace. The early Cold War Western claim that Soviet satellites in Europe would be used as a springboard for aggression against the West started to look like overstretched propaganda. The threatening image of the USSR in the West would be minimized and President Johnson pragmatically accepted the existence of spheres of influence in Europe as a projected starting point for any dialogue. (Borsody 1980: 225 - 6)

Reality and the Western recognition of this *Pax Sovietica* frustrated any hopes of Western support in bringing about the creation of Central Europe as a political reality. The limited writing on the topic during the period shows how the geopolitically charged argumentation introduced in the early Cold War was dropped in favour of a return to older interwar themes. For example, Hungarian émigré authors returned to the criticism of the Trianon Treaty and contemplations of issues of Hungarian minorities in successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Only two volumes considered the future reorganization of Central Europe during the 1970s in the English language. (Varsanyi 1976, Wagner 1970) Both of them were edited volumes featuring the works of the Hungarian émigré academics. Concepts picked upon themes resonant in 1920s Hungarian writing on Central Europe, such as injustice of the Trianon settlement (Kardos 1970: 161), the problem of Hungarian minorities (Gallus 1970: 294) and the need for a solution other than the nation-state regional re-organisation. (Koszorus 1970: 245) A certain level of traditional ‘Greater Hungarian’ bias is evident in some contributions in the volume edited by Julius Varsanyi. On the other hand, concepts were rooted in the Cold War context – the ‘liberation’ of captive nations and their necessary integration into West European structures. Rather than suggesting why the West should support the creation of Central Europe in
one or another form; both volumes built their respective cases on the specific discussion of regional context, the commonalities among countries and their shared history. While a minority of authors still advocated neutrality for their constructed Central European union (Wagner 1970: 21), a majority anchored it firmly in the Western camp (Ionescu 1970: 71). In both cases, the call for liberation of these Western-oriented nations from alien Eastern domination was loud and clear. (Wagner 1970: 5)

However, these were rare and lonely voices in defence of Central Europe as a political concept. The lack of support for such plans in the West and the complete ban on their contemplations on the other side of the Iron Curtain muffled any possibility of a realistic debate of Central Europe in political terms. (Borsody 1980: 225) Instead, Central Europe acquired the character of a loosely defined geographical notion, applied apolitically most usually to history and arts. In conditions of Pax Sovietica, it was the notion of Eastern Europe that experienced a steep ascendancy in discourses within international relations.
6.5 The breaking of the ice

So, towards the end of the Cold War, émigré proponents of the idea of Central Europe had found their cause abandoned by the West for the sake of peaceful coexistence. By the early 1980s, the advocates of Central European (con)federation and constructers of helvetized neutrality had all but died out.

Stephen Borsody was one of the last ones to advocate such a federative solution in 1980. (Borsody 1980: 221) However, he was also quick to observe that those on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain were not as ready as those on the Western side, to accept the “European status quo as final”. (Borsody 1980: 224) Now dissidents in the East would seize the discourse of Central Europe from the hands of the émigré groups in the West, who had dominated it for the previous thirty years. The divorce from the idea of neutral buffer was now obvious and decisive:

“Myšlenka neutrality, popřípadě neutrálního pásma ve střední Evropě je absurdní, ovšem nikoli zjevně. Je asi tak nenápadně absurdní, jako by byl pokus vyřešit neutralitu mezi koncepcí archy a nebezpečím potopy přísným zákazem plaveckých kurzů.”179

Instead of offering definitions and blueprints for those who hoped to challenge the status quo, Central Europe turned into an intellectual refuge of despair, a metaphor of anti-politics.

6.5.1 Metaphor of anti-politics

To return to the discussion foreshadowed in the Introduction, in April 1984 The New York Review of Books published an English translation of an article ‘The

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179 - The idea of neutrality, if need be, a neutral zone, in Central Europe is absurd, though not conspicuously. It is just about as inconspicuously absurd, as would be the attempt to resolve neutrality between the concept of the Ark and the threat of the Flood by strict prohibition of swimming courses. – (Preisner 1984: 280)
Tragedy of Central Europe' by Milan Kundera (Kundera 1984: 33 - 38), originally published in émigré journal 150 000 Words.

Kundera defined Central Europe as “a culture or a fate” with “imaginary” borders, containing „an uncertain zone of small nations between Russia and Germany“ (Kundera 1984: 35). He picked upon the Cold War depiction of Central Europe as an area of small nation states „culturally in the West, politically in the East” (Kundera, 1984), desperately seeking a political comeback into its native European cultural region. However, Kundera did more than that. He recast this depiction in a new light. His language was not the one of the academic conceptualizing the historical and political facts of the Cold War, but the one of an artist depicting the unbearable suffering of his native region under a foreign yoke.

Kundera’s essay was tailor-made for a Western audience, aiming once again to raise support for repressed nations under Soviet domination. He employed crude civilisational and cultural overtones and painted a doomed picture of tragically fated nations condemned to the heavy-handed rule of an alien power. Interestingly, Kundera counted the Jews among the native nations of Central Europe. He described the Jewish nation as a “Central European nation par excellence”, delving deeply into their recent historical fate, and drawing a vivid parallel between their suffering and the fate of other nations in the area. This emotional portrayal of the highly cultured and civilized nations of a “kidnapped West”, suffocating from the Soviet rule, engendered a strong response from the educated public, especially in the USA. Even though Kundera’s essay was criticized for its exaggerated emotionality and lack of serious argumentation, it is widely credited for bringing the notion of Central Europe back into everyday parlance.

However, Kundera did not start a new discourse over Central Europe. Rather, he utilized the idea already present in underground dissent within the Eastern Bloc (Špetko 1982: 81 – 85) and gave it a popular, artistic form, which captivated the imagination of his Western audience. Indeed, dissident writers
were critical and sceptical of many aspects of Kundera’s article, especially his depiction of Central Europe as a bridge between the East and the West. (Šimečka 1986a, Šimečka 1986b, Jehlička 1986, Hauner 1989)

When the Czechoslovak samizdat, journal *Střední Evropa* was established in 1984, it was not under Kundera’s influence, but rather the perceived need of dissident intellectuals to define their own vision of Central Europe to counter Kundera’s depiction. (Mlejnek 2009) The introduction of the first issue summarized the alternate notion of Central Europe:

“Vytyče Střední Evropu jako duchovní prostor proměnlivých hranic. Chceme-li ho vymezovat, hledáme zároveň svoje místo v Evropě, k níž se kulturně hlásíme... Tenhle sborník nespatřuje Střední Evropu v žádných rigorózních hranicích. Vymezujeme ji spíš instintivně... Nemáme na počátku žádnou syntetizující ideu Střední Evropy.” (Ulrich 1984: 3)

As is apparent from this quote, Czechoslovak dissidents had by now abandoned the federative programs or projects of neutrality typical of the Second World War and the early Cold War period. Now they turned to an abstract idea of Central Europe as an independent cultural unit within a (Western) European civilisational context. Art, literature and music became common denominators of any 1980s’ dissident definition of Central Europe. (Zagajewski and

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180 ‘Když jsme s Rudolfem Kučerou a dalšími přáteli zakládali samizdatovou revue Střední Evropa, nebylo tomu tak pod vlivem Milana Kundery - spíše jsme cítili potřebu se vůči němu vymezit. Tak vznikl i můj text o Kunderově eseji nazvaný Hodnota jednoho svědectví. Nemohl jsem mimo jiné souhlasit s Kunderovým konstatováním (z pařížského exilu), že „střední Evropa zmizela”. Střední Evropa se pro nás naopak stala ztělesněním určitých návyků, zvyklostí a společného dědictví, které nemohli nikdo jen tak vymazat...” - When we established the samizdat revue Central Europe with Rudolf Kučera and other friends, it was not done under influence of Milan Kundera – rather, we felt a need to define ourselves in contrast with him. This gave rise to my comment on Kundera’s essay, titled ‘The Value of One Witness Account’. I could not, among other things, agree with his statement (formulated in Paris exile) that ‘Central Europe disappeared’. On the contrary, for us, Central Europe became an embodiment of certain tendencies, traditions and common heritage, which no-one could erase just like that...’ - (Mlejnek 2009)

181 - Let’s define Central Europe as a spiritual territory of unsteady boundaries. If we want to define it, we are at the same time looking for our place in Europe, for which we put a cultural claim in... This anthology does to see Central Europe within any strict borders. Rather defines it instinctively… we don’t have any synthetic idea of Central Europe to start with. – (Ulrich 1984: 3)
Kolakowski quoted in Weidenfeld 1988: 88) Scepticism, mysticism and irony were its hallmarks for Central Europe was a fictional territory of liberty, cosmopolitan culture and all-human ideals. Central Europe was a fate. Moreover, an unrealised, aspirational fate. Central Europe was not where they wanted to be, but who they wanted to be.

Central Europe thereby became a metaphor of anti-politics (Konrád 1984), an intellectual outcry for change in the existing systems within Eastern Bloc as well as for the deliverance from the oberbearing dullness and restraint of the Eastern Bloc itself. György Konrád openly wrote that Central Europe was nothing more than a dream, a cultural-political Antihypothesis (Konrád 1984: 90 - 91). Yet others maintained that the dream they harboured could become reality. (Busek 1988: 17) But this dream was not a neutral, ‘neither East nor West’ federative structure in Cold War context. It was an abstract cultural concept increasingly connected with what the notion of West stood for – democracy and freedom.

The departure from a project aiming at neutrality between the two blocs was associated with the spreading belief (or was it just wishful thinking) that the days of the Eastern bloc were numbered. Milovan Djilas, a Communist himself, famously published an article entitled ‘Decay of Communist Systems’ where he highlighted notorious corruption, inefficiency and weakening of ideology in Communist states. (Djilas 1984: 150) In his view, the Soviet dominion over its European satellites was coming to an early end and its fall was the precondition of their revival.\footnote{182 \text{...und [ich] kam zu dem Schluss, dass diese Systeme zu verfallen beginnen. Und dass sie um so schneller und tiefer verfallend, wenn der Expansionsimus der Sowjetunion gezügelt wird: Der Verfall ist die Vorbedingung von Wiedergeburt und Erneuerung.} – and so I arrived to the conclusion that these system have started to decay. And that they will be decaying faster and deeper when expansionism of the Soviet Union is curbed: the decay is a precondition of rebirth and renewal. (Djilas 1984: 150)}

Observing the weakening grip of the Soviet Union on its European satellites, Zdeněk Mlynář asserted that the future of Central Europe directly depended upon its inclusion within the Western European integration processes and
upon a willingness to extend Western economic structures over the whole of Europe. Still sceptical about the Soviet reaction towards such a possibility, he advised military neutrality for the Central European countries, while pursuing economic integration. (Mlynář 1986: 71) Yet others, such as Miroslav Kusý argued that the polarity of Western and Eastern Europe actually did not exist. He substantiated this claim by demonstrating the superficiality of integration within the Eastern Bloc, reminding the reader of the region’s long ‘European past’. (Kusý 1989: 91) Kusý asserted that Central Europe only started to move away from a European identity when its nations turned their backs on their common heritage and interests; namely, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been dismembered, falling a prey to one or other of the expansionist powers to the West and East. (Kusý 1989: 95) An early return to the (Western) European civilisational context was thus not only desirable, but also natural and inevitable.

6.5.2 Imperial hangover?

The romantic fiction of Central Europe to denote an abstract, borderless and free community connected by a shared history and culture often found its personification in the idealistic imagination of the Austro-Hungarian society in the 1980s.

Idealisation of the cosmopolitan culture of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire was implicit in many Czech, Polish and Hungarian texts contemplating Central Europe in the twilight years of the Warsaw Pact. Ferenc Fejtő, a Hungarian socialist living in France, even suggested the dismemberment of the empire had been an “incorrigible mistake” (Fejtő 1989: 20) and praised the achievements of the “often enlightened Habsburg governments”. (Fejtő 1989: 27) This aspect of dissident writing was often criticised for its selective take of history. It was suggested that the imagined past was just a mirror of the aspired future. (Bugge 1999)
Of course, not all dissident writers were longing for reinstatement of the old monarchy. Indeed some authors were highly critical of the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These included Slovenian author Viktor Blažič (1989), Hungarian Péter Hanák (1989) and Mostar born Predrag Matvejević (1989).

On the other hand, there were those who took the imperial hangover a step further still and dreamt of a reinstatement of the pre-Versailles order. András Hegedüs presented his concept for a Carpathian Basin federation, which would include all regions inhabited by the Hungarian population (Hegedüs 1988: 57), essentially reviving the Great Hungarian ambitions of some elements of the Hungarian society. This was in certain respects a continuation of ideas cultivated by émigré Hungarian groups in the 1960s and 1970s and of interwar revisionists before them. And Hegedüs was not the only individual embarking upon such endeavours in the 1980s. With the declining legitimacy of official state ideology, nationalism was on the rise in all countries in the region. In Hungary, concepts and manifestations of Greater Hungary started to spring up, some of them even making it into manifestos of nascent political parties. One such example would be the Great Hungary Plan of the Patriotic Popular Front presented in the mid-1980s. (Scott 2006: 72) However, these and similar concepts were marginal within the wider context of the Central Europe discourse.

Defying its tainted connections with German expansionism, Mitteleuropa was revived in Austria. Austrian discourse over the notion shared many characteristics of the dissident vision that has been commented upon above. It was largely an intellectual endeavour driven by writers and artists, promoting Central Europe as a concept expressing regional cultural affinity. In spatial terms, Central Europe was identified with the general territorial shape of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, with Vienna depicted as its unifying focal point. Peter Bender’s quote of Vienna’s mayor: “Wien ist Mitteleuropa und
Mitteleuropa ist Wien”\(^{183}\) (Bender 1988: 77) speaks for itself. Vienna was portrayed as a natural centre of a region with shared history and cultural heritage, artificially divided by Iron Curtain. References to former empire were unmistakeable.

Given the connotations of the discourse rising east of the Iron Curtain, a certain level of ‘k.u.k nostalgy’\(^{184}\) in 1980s Austrian contemplations of Central Europe was probably inevitable. Writers in the countries that used to belong to the Austro-Hungarian Empire were themselves idealizing its cosmopolitan past and the same theme would resonate in Austrian writing. (Busek 1988) While the negatives of the old monarchy could not really be denied, they were usually both admitted and condemned. Even though some imperial ideas appeared in the margins, the emphasis was typically placed on art and culture, resulting in a modification of the old imperial abbreviation to ‘K.u.K – Kunst und Kultur’. (art and culture - Busek 1986: 9)

Austrian interest in the Central Europe debate was defined in terms of its ambition to move from the position on the periphery of Europe into a position of regional centre. In his introduction to the anthology *Aufbruch nach Mitteleuropa* (1986) Erhard Busek asserted:

> „Wir müssen die geschichtliche Vernetzung mit Mitteleuropa und unsere geopolitische Position zu einer aktiven Gestaltung unseres Schicksals nutzen. Verzichten wir auf diese Chance, werden wir tiefste Provinz.”\(^{185}\) (Busek 1986: 9)

A number of independent organizations sprang up to support the idea of Austria becoming a centre of revived regional cooperation. For example, ‘Club pro Wien’ established in 1986 had the specific goal of contributing to Vienna

\(^{183}\) - Vienna is Central Europe and Central Europe is Vienna – (Bender 1988: 77)

\(^{184}\) - k.u.k. – kaiscrlich und köninglich” – imperial and royal – refers to the Dual Monarchy 1867 – 1914, when the abbreviation expressed the fact that the Austrian Emperor was also a Hungarian king and was used by all joint authorities and institutions, such as the army or the treasury.

\(^{185}\) - We have to use our interconnection with Central Europe and our geopolitical position to actively shape our fortunes. Should we renounce this opportunity, we will remain the remotest of provinces – (Busek 1989: 9)
becoming a “metropolis of Central Europe, a metropolis of minds”. (Busek 1986: 9)

However, some authors were deeply sceptical about Austria’s ability to become a focal point and a future leader of the region. (Blažić 1989: 63) They were also pointing out that should the Central Europe come to shake off its Eastern yoke, it would need to think long and hard about its relationship with accelerating processes of European integration, rather than historical and cultural ties. (Rudolf 1988: 143) Nevertheless, Austrian corroboration of the dissident narrative of Central Europe reinforced its fundamental tenets of cultural affinity. Moreover it also offered an outside endorsement of the concept as well as additional channels for its construction and promotion.

6.5.3 The western option

West German writers were understandably very conscious about the past connotations of the term Mitteleuropa. They pointed out that it was not a historically innocent notion and observed its linkage with the earlier hegemonic ambitions of Germany. (Rovan 1988: 6) Nevertheless, they chose to view it in a more pragmatic and contemporary context, in this case with a meaning constructed by the dissident authors in the Eastern Bloc (Schwarz 1989: 154). Of course, it was also a useful instrument for ongoing German unification efforts. (Papcke 1988: 133) The espoused version of Central Europe included a divided Germany and contemplations of Central Europe were predominantly centred on its problems.

Karl Grobe-Hagel and Egon Schwartz reviewed the history of Mitteleuropa in a German speaking environment and highlighted its strong association with expansionist policy and aggression in the past. (Schwarz 1989: 143 – 152, Grobe-Hagel 1988: 103 – 118) Grobe-Hagel observed that given the then contemporary geopolitical situation, there was no space for Central Europe as an independent bloc. (Grobe-Hagel 1988: 119) West Germany had already been
incorporated into western economic and security structures and Grobe-Hagel saw both its future and that of a unified Germany and Central Europe in this context.

Schwartz on the other hand noted that Central Europe in its latest incarnation did not look for construction of a territorial unit, rather it was a programme of:

“universalism, anti-racism, sympathy for all ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences, the right to criticize, the renunciation of aggression, the abandonment of ready-made ideologies, respect for the human being, the control of harmful illusions in oneself, the spiritual resistance against lies and hypocrisy... protection of the environment... social justice, equality between men and women, raising living standard of the Third World, support and propagation of the cultural activities.” (Schwarz 1989: 154)

These were all essentially the values ascribed to the notion of the West and Schwarz suggested that such a value defined program was relevant and plausible. So what both Grobe-Hagel and Schwarz were saying was that there was no space for Central Europe as a territorial unit. However, Schwarz claimed that in the European countries of the Eastern Bloc, associations of the wider public with a value based abstract definition of Central Europe would give it “ipso facto the power of existence”. (Schwarz 1989: 154) What they were not saying, but clearly had in mind, was that should these countries ever emerge from the Soviet influence, they would become the part of the West.

A cautious approach was typical of the West German authors of the day, who resented the Austrian ‘Friede, Freunde, Eierkuchen jetzt!’-type enthusiasm for a new Central Europe. Several authors, with a touch of Cold War paranoia, suspected that the whole Central Europe debate revival could just be a Soviet deception to neutralize parts of Western Europe, weaken their links to the rest of the Western bloc and then establish their own dominance. For Joseph Rovan

186 - Peace, friends, crumpets, now! – (Papcke 1988: 135)
wrote that “Central Europe is today a weapon against Europe”\(^\text{187}\) (Rovan 1988: 14) and warned that the risk that West Germany could fall into the hands of the Soviets were still the same as at the beginning of the Cold War. On the other hand, he also suggested that a Central Europe aligned to the West could weaken the Soviet position. Rovan therefore suggested that these countries should be swiftly embraced within the West European structures, should such a chance arise.

More pragmatic writers also observed that the new Central Europe debate would aim at delivering Eastern bloc countries, and especially East Germany, straight into the arms of the West. (Weidenfeld 1988: 95) However, they came to the very same conclusion as sceptical authors of Rovan’s persuasion – inclusion into Western structures should be favoured over any kind of neutral block in Central Europe. An obvious reason for such assertions was the fact that West German authors were primarily interested in Central Europe in the context of German unification. Given the fact that West Germany harboured no intentions of leaving Western structures, Central Europe (or at least a unified Germany) would need to be included within them as well. Moreover, some authors saw the Central Europe project as a convenient framework for fostering of Germany’s future role in Europe and a tool for emancipation from under the American influence (Rovan 1988: 12).

Whatever their reasons, the verdict of German authors was almost unanimous – Central Europe, as an intellectual project, was designed to lead the countries it contained into the West European structures.

### 6.5.4 Complementary interests

The development of the story of Central Europe in the 1980s is somewhat puzzling in the context of earlier debates. The new phase in the construction of

\(^{187}\) ‘Mitteleuropa [ist] heute eine Waffe gegen Europa’ (Rovan 1988: 14)
meaning represented a decisive break with the political bloc building projects of the past. Instead, Central Europe as a notion shifted to an abstract level.

Those who seized control of the discourse, were almost invariably writers and intellectuals of dissident Eastern Bloc groups and their attitude to the notion was very different to the one taken by exiled governments or émigré politicians of the past. The idea of a buffer zone or a neutral bridge between the East and the West was losing its appeal, but above all it relevance, as it increasingly seemed that there might not be anything to buffer or bridge. Instead, authors writing of Central Europe aimed at fostering an abstract cultural identity that interlinked it with the West.

The narrative of Central Europe that would dominate the discourses of the 1980s had been developing (especially in the Czech intellectual environment) since the late 1970s. The interest behind this effort was one of othering from whatever the East stood for – Soviet domination, imposed regimes, the dullness or the uniformity. Central Europe was being constructed as a distinct cultural identity expressing dissociation with the political realm of the Eastern Bloc. Originally built on an idealized past with overtones of self-proclaimed uniqueness, Central Europe was being increasingly cast in values typically ascribed to the West – freedom, liberalism, individuality, etc. Following the success of Kundera’s article, this aspect of the Central European narrative was intentionally cultivated as a means of approximation to the West. The message was clear – Central Europe was yearning for its lost freedom. In simple binaries of the divided Europe, this was associated with becoming a part of the West.

Central Europe found many enthusiasts in Austria, as it offered a way out of the peripheral role it had played in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The concept of Central Europe identified to a high degree with former Austria-Hungary, a device that would allow Austria to reinvent itself as a regional leader. Austrians were keen to embrace it. (Busek 1989: 9)
Less enthusiastic and a bit more suspicious than the Austrians, German politicians also saw Central Europe as a useful concept. In their case, in efforts for German unification. The uncertain borders of an increasingly abstract Central Europe became an advantage, as dissident writing contemplating Germany allowed it to buy into the concept. *Mitteleuropa* became a motto of new phase of Ostpolitik introduced by the SPD in 1986. (Bugge 1999: 26) Indeed, non-German authors were suspicious of German motivations in the revived use of the term *Mitteleuropa*. (Blažić 1989: 54) However, it was exactly the addition of German question into the equation that ensured that Central Europe was talked about as a natural part of the West, due to the West German interest in unification and its obvious unwillingness to sacrifice its Western links.

Thus the 1980s version of Central Europe would be the one that finally managed to gather support among all interested parties. But what did it have in common with its earlier versions and variants?

### 6.5.5 A not-so-obvious link

So Timothy Garton Ash seemed to be onto something, when he proclaimed that Central Europe was back in 1984. However, it did not return from obscurity in the form of the academic (con)federative concepts typical of earlier periods. It was revived as an abstract lament of intellectuals and artists against the totalitarianism of the Soviet dominated countries.

The difference between the discourse over Central Europe and its earlier versions is striking. As compared to, for example, the Second World War period, it differed in terms of main actors shaping the discourse, their motivations, the nature of concepts put forward, the audiences addressed, the aims and the envisaged reconstruction of Central Europe. While during the Second World War the discourse was in the hands of exiled governments, working towards the creation of political union to safeguard their countries from expansive...
neighbours. Research on the integration potential of systems of education, transport and agriculture was carried out for the purpose of future federal planning. The main partners in the discourse were the US and the British governments, who were viewed as guarantors of realisation of these plans. As a result, Central Europe was clearly defined along the lines of ongoing federalisation plans. On the other hand, at the end of the Cold War, Central Europe was being constructed predominantly by writers and intellectuals persecuted by uniformly authoritarian regimes, yearning to see their fall. The aim was to assert values of individuality, creativity, independence, freedom and high culture against the uniformity, dullness, restraint and domination of the authoritarian regimes and the Soviet Union. The audience was the foreign public as much as the domestic one. Central Europe was the means of othering from purportedly alien and implanted (Eastern) political regimes and asserting a largely imagined authentic (Central European) culture. (Bugge 1999: 27) Central Europe was an abstract cultural entity with, often intentionally, blurred geographical boundaries. (see Ulrich 1984: 3)

So it would seem that the construct of Central Europe in the 1908s could not get any more far removed from what the notion meant in the interwar or early Cold War period. Did it have anything at all in common with any of its precursors?

On first sight, it did not. Comparing the characteristics of the discourse and its results would suggest that 1980s Central Europe had hardly anything in common with the Central Europe of earlier periods. However, analysis of the antecedents of ideas expressed by dissident writers brings a surprising result. The discourse of Central Europe driven by Eastern Bloc authors drew on essentially the same sources as the first German conceptualisations of Central Europe in the late 19th century. (Bugge 1999: 31) Moreover, there was a recurrence in underlying ideas and the pattern of their employment in the construction of Central Europe.

Some theorists (Bugge 1999, Macura 1997) have claimed that this was in large part due to the prominence of Czech authors in the construction of 1980s
Central Europe. Vladimir Macura pointed out that the Czech romanticists of the 19th century were obsessed with the myth of a ‘middle’ as the ideal between the extremes in all forms (geographical, cultural, linguistic, etc.). Being middle or in the middle, meant achievement of the ideal – the best of both extremes without their negative excesses. One step further was the perception of the middle as a mediator of values, influences and culture. Yet another step was the perception of this mediator as unique and central to everything. 188 Macura (1997) suggested that this self-perception of an idealised central uniqueness devised by the 19th century romanticists was fairly faithfully replicated in Kundera’s Tragedy of Central Europe. The very same theme of the ideal of the centre is present in the German romanticists tradition, from which the first proto-ideas of Central Europe drew their origins (replacing the notion of Deutschtum). The notion of “Mittelvolk” (the central nation) appeared in German writing in 1817 as a synonym for the German nation. (Jahn 1817: 11) Such parallels are numerous and include perceptions of the West, a radical othering from Russia, an emphasis on culture (as different from civilization), and a suspicious attitude to modernity, etc. (Bugge 1999: 32) The search for a shared identity seems to be a common denominator of both periods in formulation of their abstract, culturally-defined Central Europe.

Therefore, despite all the differences between the process and the result of construction of the meaning of Central Europe in 1980s and earlier periods of the twentieth century, it is to be concluded that rather than being independent of these discourses, the Central Europe of the 1980s returned to their very fundamentals.

188 Both ‘middle’ and ‘centre’ are in Czech and German expressed by a single word: in Czech ‘střed’, in German ‘die Mitte’. It is the root of both ‘Střední Evropa’ and ‘Mitteleuropa’ – the respective Czech and German version of the notion Central Europe. ‘Centrum’ and ‘Zentrum’ used in Czech and German are derived from Latin, just like ‘centre’ in English language, but used less frequently. The original versions are preferred in construction of adjectives and words with the shared root, such as respective words for mediator, medium, means etc.
For we might speculate that it was the return to the shared narrative of the middle that induced a general support of the 1980s version of Central Europe, but it seems more likely that many just found the narrative convenient and flexible enough to further their own interests. The real opportunity to do so would come with the much anticipated break-down in Soviet control of its European satellites.
6.6 Brand new game

In 1999, Robin Okey posited that the notion of Central Europe as conceived by 1980s dissident intellectuals failed a decade later because it had no instrumental value for the emergent transitive countries.

“Not surprisingly, the anti-politics of this Central Europe of the mind had little to contribute to the real politics which broke out after November 1989. The nationalist masses have spoken, but not about Central Europe. They share with the intellectuals of the 1980s a commitment to the idea of Europe. But it is a commitment which books no Central European mediation, whether as power bloc, federal or cultural pluralist model, or Viennese metropole.” (Okey 1992: 129)

However, in this statement, Okey seems to be mixing two very different approaches to Central Europe – the intellectual project of the 1980s and the political programs of earlier periods. More plausible seems to be Peter Bugge’s analysis, in which he identified the utility of the construct of Central Europe, in terms of identity building, bloc building and means of othering. (Bugge 1999) His conclusion was that

“If perceived as a tool for escaping from ‘Eastern Europe’ (from the Soviet grip of course, but also from the stigmatizing connotations of the label), Central Europe certainly served its purpose”. (Bugge 1999: 33)

To some degree, the intellectual project of Central Europe started to be realised with the fall of the Berlin Wall, yet, following the break-up of the Eastern Bloc, no Central European political unit was constituted. Okey considered it a betrayal of the strong revival of the notion in the 1980s and its past regional integrationist connotations. Bugge pointed out that realisation of Central Europe as a political entity was never really on the agenda in the 1980s. In every case, when the Central European Free Trade Area, the Central European
Initiative and many other intergovernmental organizations came to being in 1990s, they covered different areas and countries. Frustratingly for Bugge, Okey and other researchers, none of these organizations became personification of the political project of Central Europe envisaged in earlier decades of the 20th century.

6.6.1 Central Europe as a fuzzy fact

The discussion in the previous subchapter showed that not only did the Central European discourse in the 1980s represent a marked departure from the project of political bloc building, but it also increasingly steered its context towards ongoing Western European integration processes and structures. The very point of employing the notion of Central Europe was in an effort to differentiate oneself from the ‘Eastern’ context. Claims that the notion failed to create a regional block (Bugge 1999: 33) because it was not in line with the wishes of the masses (Okey 1992: 129) seem to be missing this point.

For it seems fair to say that, following the fall of the Iron Curtain, those who took part in the construction of the notion in the 1980s, behaved in a way that suggested that they took the existence of Central Europe (however fuzzily delineated it may have been) as a fact. The 1990 volume of Střední Evropa was not a samizdat anymore. It was printed as a publication of the Institute for Central European Culture and Politics. It did not feature any more contemplations of Central Europe. Instead, it presented articles on histories of Czechoslovakia, Germany, Lithuania and Slovenia; translations of works by Francis Fukuyama and Zbigniew Brzezinski; and contemplations of scale of forthcoming economic, social and political transitions. In short, the volume printed articles on various aspects of a Central Europe that was presumed to exist.

The mythical contemplations of Central Europe typical of 1980s dissident writing disappeared as the need for assertion of cultural identity was clearly
diminishing. Their place was taken by the much more practical theorizing of transition, internal reforms and the foreign policy direction of post-Communist countries. As is apparent from the following chart, references to Central Europe more than doubled in the 1990s. This increase is to be explained by Central Europe's new found centrality in the EU and the NATO integration.

**Figure 4: Number of books featuring ‘Central Europe’ and ‘East Central Europe’ in their title in the collections of the British Library, 1940 - 1999**

But, as has already been mentioned, the concept of Central Europe in the immediate post-Cold War period essentially remained fuzzy and confusing for many. First of all, it did not designate any kind of politically or economically unified area, or even connote a recognized group of independent countries. Second, the definitions of Central Europe presented by hundreds of authors varied from one another wildly. Robert Jervis and Seweryn Bialer defined Central Europe as consisting of Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. (Bialer and Jervis 1991: 159) The editors of *Střední Evropa* conceived of it in terms of former Austro-Hungarian territories, while Csaba Kiss’s Central
Europe extended from Finland to Greece and from Germany to Ukraine. (Kiss 1989: 128)

In practical terms, Central Europe was treated by academics, statesmen and journalists from the transitive countries as an existing concept, aligning their countries to the West. Invocations of cultural and historical proximity became instrumental in their efforts to achieve speedy inclusion into Western economic and security structures. (Kuus 2007, Bugge 1999, Ash 1998) Central Europe was also used as a point of internal self-identification, as a means of othering from the ‘East European’ past and affirmation of the new quality of society. This understanding of Central Europe is clearly a continuation of the 1980s theme of othering, however, with a more pronounced practical than philosophical twist.

Yet, the question remained, whether the ‘West’ thought Central Europe was or should become a part of it... and what the ‘East’ had to say about it. Discourse over Central Europe had to an extent been placed back in the hands of geopolitical theorists and a Western audience.

6.6.2 The big picture

As Fukuyama-like euphoria over the global predominance of the liberal order soon evaporated in the West, conceptualisations of future geopolitical confrontation started to appear. Confrontation on a global scale was said to be a persisting feature of new international context. Consolidation of Western gains in Europe became an imperative. ‘Central Europe’ had to become the part of the West, as a requisite safeguard against a future global confrontation. Thus after decades of Cold-War silence, Central Europe was again the topic of the day in geopolitical considerations.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, formerly national security advisor to President Carter and a known quality in geostrategy, proposed measures that would anchor the post-
Communist countries in Europe firmly within the democratic camp. To ensure the penetration of the sea-power (the West) within the inner parts of Eurasia, the western world ought, in his view, to take advantage of the land-power’s retreat and incorporate the abandoned territories within its own structures.

„The main goal of the United States in Europe is to strengthen the American bridgehead on the Eurasian continent, so the enlarging Europe could become the spring board for the penetration of an international order based on democracy and cooperation into Eurasian mainland.” (Brzezinski 1997: 92)

However, Brzezinski questioned the ability of the European nations to achieve this goal on their own, arguing for an enduring need for American protection. The expansion of the European Union into vacated space of the former Eastern bloc should therefore be institutional by an enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The eastern borders of NATO and the EU should, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, be fully consonant. Thus the transitive countries would simultaneously become part of the economic, political and defence structures of the democratic bloc, thus ensure its enduring international orientation towards the West. Needless to say, it would also better foster an enduring US influence over European affairs.

Brzezinski defined Central European space loosely, as the “historic area of constructive German cultural influence... the area of German urban and agricultural colonization...” (Brzezinski quoted in Krejčí 2005: 367), thus extending the limits of this influence well into the territory of the Russian Federation. Hence Brzezinski positioned Germany firmly within his Central Europe and Central Europe firmly under the influence of Germany. He identified Germany as the most reliable and unflinching ally of the USA in Europe, striving to achieve historical rehabilitation and pose as a model European country. This effort would logically impel Germany to extend the highest possible level of support to Central European countries pushing for membership of the European Union. Consequently, Brzezinski saw “Germany in
the role of patron of the final formal incorporation of this new Mitteleuropa into the European Union and NATO”. (Brzezinski quoted in Krejčí 2005: 367) Under the leadership of Germany, Central Europe would thereby be securely included into the western camp through its economic and security ties.

Despite the criticism Brzezinski’s ideas received for their overt promotion of US hegemony, they were enthusiastically received by establishments of Central Europe (even academia itself), since the message was consonant with the Central European aims of achieving membership of EU and NATO. His writings became a starting point for many subsequent definitions of Central Europe produced in the area itself.

Another work enthusiastically embraced in the transitive countries was the somewhat ‘unorthodox’ geopolitical essay of Samuel P. Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilisations’ (1993). In his opinion, the world comprised of dynamic civilisations defined as “the highest cultural groupings” of people (Huntington 1993: 23). These included Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and, possibly African civilisations. The differences among civilisations for him were not only real, but were basic, and would inexorably lead to confrontation. The fault lines between the civilisations that replaced the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War would become flashpoints of crises and bloodshed.

Owing to Western civilization’s extraordinary relative power to other civilizations, the assertive promotion of its basic values and its self-portrayal as a global culture, other civilizations would inevitably become opposed to it and the pattern of future conflict would be ‘the West against the Rest’. In this global fight launched by ‘the Rest’, the Central European space would occupy a crucial strategic location in the borderlands of the Western and Slavic-Orthodox cultures. According to Huntington, as the Cold War ideological division of Europe disappeared, a historical-cultural division mirroring the lines of the
limits of Western Christianity in the sixteenth century might logically re-emerge. Such a line could separate Finland and the Baltic States from Russia, then cutting through Belarus and Ukraine, separating Transylvania from the rest of Romania, and Croatia and Slovenia from the rest of the former Yugoslavia. Countries to west and north of this line would lie within Western culture, characterised by Protestantism or Catholicism, a common experience of European history and a higher degree of economic development, thus separated from the Orthodox and Muslim populations on the other side. (Huntington 1993: 30)

Moreover, this region was identified as the only place where Western civilisation shared land boundaries with Muslim and Slavic-Orthodox civilisations, suggesting that its control was critical. Re-emergent patterns of violent interaction between the three cultures (Muslim, Slavic-Orthodox and Western) along the fault-line were, according to Huntington, likely to manifest themselves in the twenty-first century. On the grounds of what happened in Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s, he predicted a future of bloody conflict for the region along this boundary. The only way to avoid it would be to promote the greater cooperation and full integration of the Central European space into Western culture; and, concomitantly, to build a cooperative relationship with Russia. (Huntington 1993: 48 – 49)

Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilisations’ did not go uncontested; however, his view of Central Europe was received favourably in the region itself and adopted as standard textbook on international relations in many post-Communist countries. His civilisational narrative was a convenient concept for those attempting to forge new Western identities for states striving to join Western economic and security structures.

Brzezinski and Huntington had sought to reinstate Central Europe within Western geopolitical conceptualisation. Whether it was Brzezinski’s strategy of
moving into no-mans lands or Huntington’s unorthodox civilisational concept, Central Europe formed an integral part of their updated takes on the global power struggle. Meanwhile, the Mackinderian take on Central Europe would be most dutifully resurrected in emergent Russian geopolitics. (Kolossov and Turovsky 2001: 144)

Alexandr G. Dugin, a guru of Russian geopolitics, applied Mackinder’s 1904 theses directly to a contemporary setting. He identified the USA as the embodiment of a sea-power and forecast the reestablishment of Russia as its opposing land-power in alliance with Germany. He envisioned an early rupture of the modern European alliance with the United States and Great Britain, because of unspecified antagonism of European continental integration and the British interests. (Dugin 1997: 221) Russia would seize the opportunity presented by such a scenario to prepare the conditions for building a new Eurasian empire. This continental empire, counter-balancing the global sea-power of the United States, would consist of three different axes of continental power: Moscow – Berlin, Moscow – Teheran, Moscow – Tokyo. (Dugin 1997: 224)

Within this grand design, Central Europe represented a distinctive geopolitical entity, united strategically, culturally and politically. Within the Central European space he included all the nations of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany, with some areas of Poland and Ukraine. Dugin argued that the consolidating power here had always been Germany and the Central European ‘geopolitical conglomerate’ ought naturally to fall under its control. It was not only the natural tendency but also historic duty of the region to unify around this traditional core. Acknowledging ongoing processes of European integration, a German-led Central Europe, in alliance with France might create a European vector that was strong enough to offer Eurasia protection from potential attack by the sea-powers.
All of the integration processes in the European arena would have one basic aim: to foster a Berlin – Moscow axis. This axis would ensure the genuine autarchy of a Eurasian Empire and its superpower standing.

“Германия сегодня - экономический гигант и политический карлик. Россия с точностью до наоборот - политический гигант и экономический калека. Ось Москва - Берлин излечить эндуг обоих партнеров и заложит основание грядущему процветанию Великой России и Великой Германии.”

(Dugin 1997: 228)

The strategic logic of a German sphere of influence and also the alliance with Russia had original basis in Mackinder’s concept, where it was identified as a region holding the key to world hegemony. The Berlin-Moscow axis suggested by Dugin corresponded to the alliance warned against by Mackinder. In fact, Dugin’s application of Mackinder’s thesis seems to be the least modified of all contemporary grand geopolitical theory. It lent a convenient theoretical basis for Dugin’s intended characterisation of Eurasian Empire pitched as the antithesis of Western liberal society. He portrayed Russia as the inheritant of Mackinder’s land-based power with its traditionalism, hierarchism, and religionism – and status!

Vladimir Kolossov and Rostislav Turovsky observed that Alexandr Dugin and post-Cold war Russian geopolitics more generally, have drawn heavily on the traditional geopolitics of the early 20th century, and accentuated the roles of physical space, natural resources and direct control of territory “as though the world has been frozen in a Haushoferian time warp” (Kolossov and Turovsky 2001: 146). The pivotal role of the area of Central Europe in its original deterministic sense has thus been embraced a good century on. Similar themes

189 - Today, Germany is an economic giant and a political dwarf. Russia is the exact opposite – a political giant and an economic cripple. Axis Moscow – Berlin heals maladies of both partners and lays foundation for the coming prosperity of Great Russia and Great Germany. – (Dugin 1997: 228)
can be found in German New Right circles, with geopolitical theory built on similar deterministic tenets including a desire for future regional arrangements between Russia and Germany (Lohausen 2001, Schiedel 1998, for more insight see Bassin 2003) However, the events of the post-Cold War decades will, of course, highlight that actual developments in the region followed Brzezinski’s prescriptions much more closely than Dugin’s.

European Community introduced its PHARE program (Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies) as early as 1989 to assist in the transformation of the centrally planned economies of Poland and Hungary into market economies. This program was later extended to cover Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. It was also accompanied by two further programs – SAPARD (Special accession programme for agriculture and rural development) and ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession), which were aimed at aiding the restructuring of agriculture and development of infrastructure. Eventually, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia shifted into CARDS programme in early 2000s. PHARE became the main tool of pre-accession help for countries with good prospects for early membership in the European Union. By the mid-1990s, all of the countries remaining in the program would have applied for the membership in the EU, joining in 2004 and 2007.

The integration of Central European countries into the EU was foreshadowed by their inclusion into NATO. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined NATO in 1999, followed by Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia in 2004. The latest round of enlargement of NATO involved Croatia and Albania in 2009.

Brzezinski’s vision certainly seems to be being realised – more so than the visions of his contemporaries.
6.6.3 Within the big picture

Geopolitics has been on the rise in the transitive countries as well and theorisation of the notion of Central Europe has mirrored the mainstream grand theory of Western geopolitics. Predictably, authors usually chose to incorporate their concept of Central Europe into either Brzezinski’s or Huntington’s vision. Two exceptional examples are the writings of Zoltán Pásztor, a Slovak historian of Hungarian origin and Oskar Krejčí, advisor to the last Communist government of Czechoslovakia and generally acknowledged as the highest authority in Czech geopolitics.

Pásztor defined Central Europe on the basis of morphological characteristics. (Pásztor 2000: 4). It consisted of areas formed by Hercynian and Alpine-Carpathian folding. His Hercynian Europe extended from Calais to Lviv and from the Jutland peninsula to Basel; while the Alpine-Carpathian area stretched from the western foothills of the Alps to the eastern ridges of the Carpathians. Pásztor’s definition embraced all the states located in the outlined region and the borders of his Central Europe coincided with the current national borders of these states. (Pásztor 2000: 5) Thus his concept interlinked what was commonly understood as Western Europe and the post-Communist countries, establishing a geographic claim for their closer integration.

In support of this definition, Pásztor laid great emphasis on characterising the cultural identity of Central Europe and dealt with specific characteristics of and stages in the historical development of the region at length. In an effort to define the unique features of Central Europe, he engaged with a lengthy analysis of German historical context and its legacy, relying heavily upon historical determinism. The result was a geopolitical approach that saw Central Europe cast as a “boundary culture”, based on geographical data and historical evidence. He saw the future of Central Europe within the European Union and under the regional stewardship of Germany (Pásztor 2001: 239 - 250). The last pages of his book showcased two main characteristics of contemporary
regional writing on Central Europe – the emphasis on identity and culture, and a Huntingtonian vision of future.

Krejčí observed that in 1990s, the contemporary definition of Central Europe crystallised along the lines of integration and globalization processes. (Krejčí 2000: 10; see section 6.5.4) He presented a fusion of an intellectual project of the 1980s and earlier territorially defined conceptions, characterising Central Europe as a notion encompassing “both objective geographic and power characteristics as well as spiritual judgements”. (Krejčí 2000: 13) Interestingly, Krejčí used the very same approach as Mackinder in defining Central Europe by its accessibility from the sea through navigable rivers. (Krejčí 2000: 20) Then he divided Central Europe into a:

- Northern zone – a Central European or Polish-German lowlands, extending into the East European Plain, surrounded to the south by the Czech and Slovak mountain chains,

- Inner zone – a Carpathian-Alpine zone, its borders defined by the Bohemian forest, the Czech and Slovak mountain chains, and the Prut, Kupa, Sava and Danube rivers,

- Southern zone – the Balkans, including Greece and European the part of Turkey.

Krejčí excluded Germany from Central Europe, and essentially, kept more strictly to the Mackinder’s Middle Tier area. Krejčí characterised the area of his enquiry as East-Central Europe, even though the title of his book was the *Geopolitics of Central European Space*. Yet, he followed a similar path to Pásztor in arriving at conclusions about the mid-term future of Central European space and also saw the future of his East-Central Europe as heavily under the influence of Germany; however, very much within Brzezinski’s framework. (Krejčí, 200: 241-242) In Krejčí’s view, it was a necessary and desirable development, one that would firmly anchor East-Central Europe into the orbit of the West. (Krejčí, 2000: 242)
6.6.4 The integration tautology

These two examples document how very different the basic tenets of concepts of Central Europe in post-Cold war period could be and yet how similar their conclusions usually were. Myriads of other definitions and theories arose in the period (Volner 2004); however, they all shared some peculiar distinguishing features. Allowing for occasional nationalist or pro-Russian concept, theorists generally viewed the future of their countries within the EU and the NATO. As a consequence, very few new conceptions of Central Europe as a political unit have emerged and the writing has generally focused instead on descriptive treatises exploring the positioning of the region in regard to its intended integration context. In many respects, this was a continuation of the intellectual projects of the 1980s. For being included within Central Europe meant positioning oneself on the right track for speedy membership of the West. The process of othering from the Eastern European legacy continued as theorists busily established Central European credentials of their countries to ensure they were not left out of the concept. These feverish efforts to demarcate Central Europe according to one’s particular interests, led Timothy Garton Ash to comment: “Tell me your Central Europe, and I will tell you who you are.” (Garton Ash, 1999: 384)

As suggested in the introduction, the main part of the discourse over Central Europe would not be found on the pages of dense academic volumes, but was present in daily parlance. Use of the notion became the tool that academics, statesmen and journalists of post-Communist countries alike used to express the new democratic quality of their governments, the liberal openness of their societies and the Westwards orientation of their foreign policy. Central Europe, loose and undefined in its territorial definition, but well crystallized in its contextual aims, became a measurement of the approximation to the Western liberal ideal. It appeared in the daily media, journal articles and countless books, as well as the names of regional organizations, institutes and NGOs.
The works of Merje Kuus, an Estonian scholar living and working in Canada, offers a worthy retrospective analysis of how Central Europe was conceptualised during this period. Central to Kuus’s work are the notions of identity and otherness. Europe derives its self-identification from being different from the East. In her words:

“...much of East European studies [during the Cold War] represented not an engagement with but a disengagement from the complexities of East Central Europe in favour of simple binaries such as West versus East.” (Kuus 2004: 45)

The situation changed with the fall of the Eastern bloc, when the post-Communist countries raced for the support of the West in their transition towards hoped-for integration within western international structures. Central Europe became the expressed means of approximation to the ‘Western’ ideal and was invoked predominantly in the context of integration. Central Europe was then in turn associated with the group of post-Communist countries racing for membership of EU and NATO.

The concept of Central Europe, as presented here, is thereby the product of a deliberate effort of East Central European countries to differentiate themselves from „the East“ in order to identify with (Western) Europe. On the other hand it is also a product of the EU’s and NATO’s eastward enlargement that has “fuelled a threefold division of the continent into the European core, the Central European applicants not yet fully European but in tune with the European project, and an eastern periphery effectively excluded from membership.“ (Kuus 2004: 475) This characterisation of Central Europe is very flexible in identifying “various shades of Easternness and Europeness”, as evidenced by Kuus’ conspicuously functional move to extend her original Central Europe (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia) by two more countries – Romania and Bulgaria – following their accession to the EU in 2007. However, the bottom line for use of the notion was to express how ‘Western’ European the countries were becoming, by labelling
them ‘Central’, rather than ‘Eastern’. Kuus posited that Central Europe was like a waiting room for inclusion into Western economic and security structures. The notion of Central Europe became tautological – being called Central Europe meant the country was perceived to be a good way along to achieving all the necessary benchmarks for either EU or NATO integration and countries perceived as being some way down such a trajectory were called Central European.

The tautological character of the Central Europe narrative was enhanced by the use of the notion in the West. Jason Dittmer’s research of the use of the notion between 1993 and 2003 suggests that journal articles used designation of ‘Central European country’ for those countries that were viewed as on a good way to joining either the NATO or the EU. For example, no article in the researched database designated Romania or Bulgaria as Central European in the period of 1994 to 1997, but up to 15 of them do so between 1998 and 2003, when it became obvious both countries would soon join the EU. (Dittmer 2005: 90 – 91) Even more peculiar was the case of Slovakia that managed to fall out of the Central European group in articles on NATO expansion following the decision of the alliance not to include it in the first round of expansion. (Dittmer 2005: 88) While it was often designated as Central European between 1993 and 1997, it disappeared from lists afterwards. Thus Central Europe worked in reverse as well – those countries, who were not approximating themselves to the Western ideal fast enough, were left out.

Even though Dittmer’s research was limited by its exclusive focus on English language newspaper articles contemplating issues of either NATO or EU integration, it offered a valuable insight into how Central Europe was being constructed in the daily parlance. It documents, how the post-Cold War notion of Central Europe became a self-fulfilling prophecy.
6.6.5 The rise and fall of the tide

The above discussion has documented how Central Europe became a major preoccupation for those who were trying to conceptualise the geopolitical implications of the collapse of bi-polar global power structures, as well as those who were trying to find their place within the new ones. The discussion represented to varying degree the interests of the various involved parties – the transitive countries were striving to be included within the economic and security framework of the West, Russia was coming to terms with loss of empire, while the United States was attempting to foster and secure the position of a hegemon. Within these tensions, Central Europe again became a battlefield of competing concepts, however, its contemporary positioning was more or less agreed – it was to be included in (Western) Europe.

The post-Cold war discourse of Central Europe in the post-Communist countries carried forward the theme of othering developed in the 1980s. With it went a lack of territorial exactness. As a means of othering from the East and approximating to (Western) Europe, Central Europe became intertwined with efforts to integrate within its structures. Innumerable definitions of Central Europe were put forward by academics as well as politicians in the transitive countries. Their common denominator was the positioning of Central Europe as an area that should be included in a Western context whatever the justification afforded by geography or history (Pásztor 2000 and 2001), and whatever the contemporary political situation of individual countries provided (Krejčí 2005).

The reformulation of classical geopolitics provided a handy tool and often a framework for analysis of emergent concepts. Huntington and Brzezinski offered superpower endorsement for inclusion of Central Europe into the Western realm, Dugin provided a necessary other to distinguish from with his contemporary inversion of Mackinder.

In the context of the daily politics of integration, Central Europe became a virtual tautological designation for countries that had reached the set
benchmarks for inclusion within EU and NATO. Dittmer's research showed that a designation of Central Europe as those countries that were well on their way to join either the NATO or the EU was widespread. Not only could countries be included within the concept, they could also fall out.

Germany and Austria were rarely talked about as Central European in the context of integration, but both of them were often included in various presented concepts of Central Europe. In the end, it was the perceived connection with either one of them, which gave substance to the very idea of Central Europe in 1980s. Lack of inclusion of Germany into Central European integration debate is understandable - East Germany became a part of both NATO and the EU in 1990 through unification with West Germany. Austria never attempted to join the NATO due to its neutral status, but joined the EU in 1995 with Finland and Sweden. This singled Austria out of the common integration context of post-Communist countries. Moreover, Austria had been perceived as a part of the West and did not need the narrative of Central Europe in the context of its inclusion within the EU. However, both Germany and Austria were referred to as Central European in other than integration contexts. (Bugge 1999)

Overall, discourse over Central Europe was dominated by processes of European economic and security integration, therefore the association of the notion with an uncertain regional group of countries, who were becoming Western was widespread. This association also meant that once the given countries were included within EU and NATO, the rising tide of writing on Central Europe suddenly subsided.
One could argue that a certain parallel with the period of the early Cold War could be drawn. The need as well as opportunity to conceptualise the near future of the region diminished following the Communist takeovers of the late 1940s, as it did in following waves of the EU and NATO integration at the turn of millennia. The volume of writing on Central Europe markedly diminished after 2005, suggesting that immediate future of the region is regarded as settled for the time being. However, it is hardly the end of Central Europe as a notion.
6.7 Conclusions

This chapter documented that processes of definitive discourse of Central Europe identified in the core research are present in subsequent periods of redefinition of the notion. Consistently, the notion has been reformulated by changing groups of authors with varied geopolitical aims in mind; typically targeting the change of the international structure through definition of an overarching regional identity transcending established national boundaries.

The notion also reflected changes in identity of authors and the interests they represented. Typically formulate as a sense of Self, interpretations of the notion as the Other outside the envisaged boundaries of the region also exert the influence on policy makers, if the notion was consonant with their own perceived interests.

Yet, it seems to be a pattern than unless all active political players bought into the same discourse of the notion and did not oppose its aims, Central Europe failed to have a clear impact on the international structure. The key period, which suggests Central Europe may have contributed to the changes on the ground, is the period of western integration of the former Eastern Bloc countries in the 1990s. The following chapter will suggest that future research should focus on this particular period to examine archival evidence supporting or rejecting this thesis once the relevant archives are open for this period.
Central Europe: forging a concept in time and space

Findings and Conclusions

Chapter 7
Chapter 7: Findings and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

By late 1918, Central Europe was in disarray. Germany had been decisively defeated, the Dual Monarchy had fallen apart, Austria was impoverished and Hungary was descending into chaotic and uncertain political disorder. Meanwhile, conflict was looming between newly-established Czechoslovakia and Poland over the border town of Teschen.

The ‘Central Europe’ Naumann had dreamt of only three years earlier had thereby collapsed in the worst possible way. US and British policy makers still hoped for its ultimate replacement by a regional federation with Mackinder optimistically foreshadowing his Middle Tier. But the successor states were not interested. Their hard-won sovereignties were evidently to be fostered, not diluted in any new regional construct.

If, indeed, the purpose of theorizing Central Europe was to bring about a new regional identity and structure, it had demonstrably failed. Yet, none of this negates the hypothesis set out at the beginning of this research, to which we now return.

7.2 Findings: Comparative analysis of 1880 – 1918 concepts

In drawing together our research conclusions, we ought first to return to the thesis’ opening hypothesis:

Conceptualisations of regional identity are exercises in geopolitics, which through the definitive discourse of ‘self’ and ‘other’ exercise influence over the behaviour of political actors, thereby indirectly impacting upon international structure.
The following sections will present the findings of the core research vital for examination of the hypothesis focusing on its individual parts. First of all, features of the definitive discourse will be presented, followed by the outline of dominant interpretations of Central Europe. Finally, findings in regards to the influence of the concept on political actors and the international structure will be summarized.

7.2.1 Definitive discourse of Central Europe

This first subchapter summarizes the findings of the core research into development of the Central European discourse in individual regions, identifies its shifts and changes, and observes the clear domination of German notions, generally adopted in the other countries of the region.

7.2.1.1 Germany

The oft-repeated myth that theories of Central Europe in the form presented by German authors during the First World War reach as far back as the early 19th century was largely dispelled through the research presented in the Chapter 3. It was demonstrated that, not just Karl Ludwig von Bruck but also Friedrich List – along with significant other purported Central Europe theorists - were in fact rather theorising a notion of Germany.

While the expression Central Europe was present in daily German parlance during this period, it was a generic and vague geographical reference more than anything else. The political entity under construction in the period before March 1849 was Germany itself and overarching precursor of any Central European idea only really entailed the *grossdeutsch* program for Austrian inclusion within Germany. While many conceptions of Central Europe were essentially a continuation of this *grossdeutsch* program, it does not mean that *grossdeutsch* theorists had been developing Central European concepts
themselves. Yet, the link was considered strong enough to allow later Central Europe theorists to draw upon the historical authority of the *grosseutsch* authors. Many commentators on Central Europe also adopted this misleading narrative, positioning *grosseutsch* authors as theorists of Central Europe (e.g. Meyer 1955, Brechtefeld 1996). The original writings of these authors examined in this thesis (e.g. Bruck 1949a, b and c in Appendix 1, 2 and 3) suggested otherwise.

It has been demonstrated that Central Europe was chosen as a replacement notion for Germany by the *grosseutsch* authors after the founding of the German Empire with Austria obviously now a definitive, separate entity. Austria’s parting with the rest of the German states was not a sudden event. In fact, it happened gradually and certain levels of othering were already apparent by 1848, especially in Bruck’s writing. The widening gulf between Austria and other German states, the solidifying structures of the *Zollverein*, the war of 1866 and, finally, the year 1871 brought the realisation that Germany as a notion had come to mean the German Empire, not any wider area of German speaking settlement. The need for a replacement notion therefore arose with authors now advocating the need for alliance between Austria and a separate Germany – this became the new Central European project (Frantz 1879, Lagarde 1881).

Yet – contrary to the version insisted upon in so many later analyses of Central Europe - this research showed that the development of Central Europe as a notion did not follow directly from the works of these two authors. Neither Constantin Franz, nor Paul de Lagard, were mainstream authors during their lifetime - their works were rather rediscovered and thrust into the spotlight by Central Europe advocates during the early 20th century. Many German authors of the late 19th century conceptualised the notion but on widely varied bases (Wagner 1883, Bretano 1885, Penck 1887, Ratzel 1898a and Volz 1895). The definitive discourse crystallizing Central Europe as an overarching political project aiming to unite Germany and Austria-Hungary took at least two decades to develop and was not necessarily linear.
The discourse was increasingly shaped by the broader influences of German geography, political science and philosophy – geographical determinism, the organic growth theory of the state (Ratzel 1895, Hözel 1896) and imperial rivalry with the perceived build-up of other large empires (Frantz 1879, Ratzel 1895). Christian universalism translated into a belief in the historical mission of German nation (Frantz 1882, Lagarde 1881, Partsch 1903) and nationalism a conviction that nations should be unified under one political roof (Ratzel 1898b). Meanwhile, romanticism presented German exceptionality (Partsch 1903) and the narrative of Germany as the land of the middle (Frantz 1882) fostered by self-concentrated cartographic visualisations.

The result of this debate was still a fairly vaguely delimited Central Europe (broadly positioned between France and Russia), but with relatively settled characteristics: it was identified with the area of German settlement, where Germans would supposedly fulfil their historical mission to organise and lead other nations by virtue of their superior civilisation qualities and organisational vigour. Put simply, since Germany was a young vigorous state in the middle of Europe, it would expand into a *Mitteleuropa*, encompassing the whole of the German nation, thereby dominating the continent.

An integral part of theorising Central Europe became its definition as a larger political unit as well as othering from other empires of the day. In one go, authors presented an imperial construct for Germany and delimited it positionally by referencing other empires – it was to lie between Russia and France, keeping a check on French expansionist ambitions and ultimately rivalling the global domination of Britain. Virtually all Central Europe authors envisaged a place for Germany among the great imperial nations of the day, and, what is more, a privileged place among them. The theoretical frameworks underpinning Central Europe – the belief in a future world organized into large territorial units (especially), German exceptionality and the organic theory of state – called for such an outcome. The ideal being aimed for was the United States, a continental political union stretching from one ocean littoral to
another. Such a continental extent would allow Germany to take advantage of the diverse and more robust production afforded by a larger economic area, buttressed by a greater variety of naval transport routes to facilitate global trade. Corresponding political clout was envisaged to come with increased economic power.

Strong economic lines of reasoning had entered into conceptions of Central Europe by the early years of the 20th century (e.g. Sartorius 1902). The main reasoning behind the plan to unify a still vaguely-defined territory was the economic interest of Germany. It was envisaged that the future of the world lay in ever fiercer competition between larger economic areas, partitioned from one another by high customs duties barriers. The construction of an economic zone beyond German borders came to be seen as a vital economic necessity, drawing upon the earlier inspiration provided by the customs union of German states in the 19th century. Theories retained their original underpinnings, but economic considerations gained predominance in the discourse – evidenced not only by the multitude of written works espousing their significance, but the materialisation of a variety of organisations aiming to realise such plans. The most prominent among them was Der Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsverein (MEWV) proposed by Julius Wolf. Conceptualising Central Europe economically blurred its boundaries once again, stretching it to the west to cover the main German river mouths. The authors were also convinced that it would be difficult to imagine any of the countries involved (except for Austria-Hungary) willingly joining any German economic bloc. Yet, the addition of this economic line of reasoning helped to extricate Central Europe from the narrow confines of a pan-German discourse and thereby potentially communicate the notion to a wider public.

Economic theorising of a Central Europe would be the norm until the outbreak of the First World War, but its popularity always remained relatively limited. The breakthrough for Central Europe as a genuinely popular concept only came with the experiences of war, the consequent economic blockade and political
alliance with Austria-Hungary. The overtones of shared identity, historic mission, narrative of unique destiny and the vision of the future great power status all lined up in the early period of the war. Pan-German nationalism would make its inevitable comeback in a situation when Germany and Austria-Hungary were surrounded by enemies. Central Europe became synonymous with a plan to break out of encirclement and project German power to the south-east, perhaps as far as the Persian Gulf, providing an attractive alternative prospect centring on expansion. In the difficult realities of war, Central Europe provided a vision of purpose, victory, conquest and future power status.

Of course, it was Naumann’s *Mitteleuropa* that would become the centre-piece of the hectic wartime discourse over Central Europe, as is discussed below (in section 7.2.2.1).

7.2.1.2 Austria-Hungary

The discourse of Central Europe in Austria-Hungary was intertwined with shifts in the dynamics of the relationship between its nationalities. Austrian Germans felt cut off from their brethren in the ascending German Empire – with the 1867 Compromise having reduced their kingdom by half territorially, they remained a minority in the re-constituted monarchy. Austrian German nationalism was born out of the feeling of insecurity was repeatedly irked by the perceived lack of support from the side of the court, which had to balance the interests of its growing Slav population at the expense of the traditionally dominant position of its Germans, who in turn viewed it as an attack on their natural rights. Self-help clubs mushroomed and a pan-German movement quickly emerged.

The notion of Central Europe as a political concept rather than just a vague geographical reference materialised in Austria-Hungary at the same time as it did in Germany, the late 1870s to the early 1880s. While various groups of authors entered the discourse over the notion, it was relatively swiftly
subsumed by the pan-German movement. The Viennese government had considered pan-German ideas a challenge to Austria’s sovereignty as well as a clear potential threat to the country’s fragile ethnic balance, so publications that emanated from such quarters were subjected to strict censorship. Thus, the formation of the notion was heavily influenced by pan-German publications smuggled in from Germany, through those of Austrian authors in German journals and through the direct international influence of prominent German authors themselves (e.g. Albrecht Penck).

Pan-Germans essentially presented Central Europe as a shared strategic, economic, cultural and historical space and vision for all Germans, one that was to be brought together under one political and economic umbrella to overcome its unnatural divided state - thereby providing the basis for realising Germany’s great power potential. The main underlying concepts (nationalism, romanticism), theoretical frameworks (organic theory of state, geographical determinism) as well as the envisaged purpose of Central Europe (to unify German nation and provide for expansion of its influence) basically copied the pan-German discourse in Germany. Allowing for some exceptions in the literature (e.g. Peez 1895), Central Europe came to mean the combination of Germany and Austria-Hungary for Austrian pan-Germans. This is consistent with their efforts to re-establish and safeguard German predominance in the Dual Monarchy, or at least Austria. Such conceptualisation of Central Europe provided for a German majority within the envisaged political and economic construct and addressed underlying grievances, painting a cosy picture of natural German leadership and romanticising ahistorical mission to lead the region and achieve greatness.

The near complete domination of pan-Germans in the discourse effected a relatively swift settlement on a notion of Central Europe along these lines. It was often employed by the daily press to describe attempts to finalise a customs union during the 1880s and 1890s.
Yet, until the First World War, the pan-German movement remained essentially fringe and Austria's citizens of all national denomination stayed relatively loyal to the throne. The influence of the economic line of (Central European) theorisation would be felt through the activities of MEWV; however, baseline definitions remained focused on Germany and Austria-Hungary. Just as with the case of Germany, the war represented a big break-through for Central Europe, when the notion transcended its relatively narrow discourse boundaries and became a household term within society.

7.2.1.3 Anglo-Saxon

In British and American writing, the notion of Central Europe had appeared occasionally by the late 19th century, though it was a rather fuzzy and loosely defined notion, which authors tended to mould to their individual liking.

British cartography presented the first consistent depictions of any designated Central Europe in the period of late 1860s and early 1870s, focusing on Germany. The underlying purpose of these maps was to provide visualisation of Germany's ambitions in its contemporary wars. Later cartographic representations of Central Europe demonstrate a shift to coverage of larger areas of Europe and a significant eastwards shift to cover Austria-Hungary, documenting wider, changing perceptions of how Central Europe was perceived, and basically linking the two empires together. In the USA, maps of Central Europe were virtually non-existent before 1900, reflecting a pronouncedly lesser concern about developments on the continent as compared to Britain. The Central Europe discourse was properly introduced to English-speaking audiences with Partsch's 'Central Europe' in 1903. This work also remained the single most important English language treatise, guiding interpretation of Central Europe in Britain until at least the start of the First World War. Partsch presented Central Europe as a region to be “willingly or unwillingly” dominated by the Germans (Partsch 1903: 142), feeding into the
popular Germanophobia of the day, seemingly confirming Germany's expansionist ambitions. Interestingly, Mackinder, who was an editor of Partsch's volume, did not pay much attention to Germany in his celebrated essay of 1904.

Early US reviews of Partsch's work were somewhat more neutral and dispassionate than their British counterparts. Eventually, the limited coverage devoted to the Central Europe debate in Germany also turned into something altogether more negative, reflecting rising militarism and expansionism in the run-up to the war.

Overall, the narrow discourse over Central Europe in existence in the Anglo-Saxon environment entirely reflected interpretations of the notion as it was developing in Germany. It was a mirror to the new Self being constructed in Germany - alternatively, it could be seen as observations of the emerging Other.

7.2.1.4 Central Europe before the outbreak of the war

It follows from this discussion that the discourse was very obviously dominated by German authors, who used it as a concept to articulate growing German ambitions.

While the notion first appeared as a simple replacement term for 'Germany' reacting to the unsuitability of the latter for any pan-German project after the establishment of the empire, German authors forwarded a wide array of definitions for the notion in the following two decades; and a variety of influences besides nationalism underpinned its development. Rather than a mere continuation of *grosseutsch* ideas, Central Europe gradually coalesced as a project articulating the German ambition to assume its place among the leading imperial nations.

Meanwhile, in Austria-Hungary, pan-German authors had led the discourse since its inception. Central Europe had been built on *grosseutsch* ideas, drawing on developing Austrian German insecurity, this group's feelings of
exclusion and its hope that a closer relationship with Germany might shore up its dominant (if potentially withering) position. Austrian authors eagerly had already bought into the developing discourse in Germany by the end of the nineteenth century, pushing their definition of Central Europe as Germany and Austria-Hungary combined, underlining the position of Germans as the leading nation.

This definition and vision of Central Europe was directly transplanted into the Anglo-Saxon environment with Partsch’s *Central Europe* (1903). The book presented its readers with a concept that centred on the possibilities for German domination of vast swathes of the European mainland and fitted well with the then contemporary Germanophobic mood. The economic discourse in the early 20th century naturally placed a stronger emphasis on the economic interests of the German Empire, rather than the supposed national ambitions of all Germans, but other characteristics remained broadly the same. With the boundaries of the concept widening to cover strategic areas on the basis of economic complementarity, Austria-Hungary became more of a transit territory than the sole strategic ally. Yet, perceiving their own vulnerability, Austrian pan-Germans bought into this concept as well. They aimed at restoring their own position within the own monarchy with the idea that the strength in numbers provided by union with Germany would confer a strategic advantage.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the dominant and largely pragmatic definition of Central Europe in place was one of a German-led customs union, providing the basis for the further expansion of the German economy. The war would signal a sudden comeback for pan-German awareness and aspirations.

### 7.2.2 Dominant definitions of Central Europe during the war

This section focuses on the defining characteristics, the implicit geopolitical imaginaries and the philosophical and theoretical concepts underpinning dominant definitions of Central Europe harboured during the First World War.
in the individual environments examined in our core research chapters. Let us remind ourselves of the dominant definitions in existence before we reflect upon their influence on policy makers and emergent international structure.

7.2.2.1 Germany

The Central Europe discourse during the First World War transcended its previously limited boundaries and became part of a much wider social debate about war aims. While earlier on, the discourse had been dominated by pan-German authors and later economists, now a great variety of authors entered into a debate that was carried widely in European daily parlance.

This development spelled not just a wider variety of Central European concepts but a huge increase in authorship. Chapter 3 identified two broad streams:

a) A narrow mainstream of strategic and economic concepts arguing for a union of Germany and Austria-Hungary built on pan-German nationalist rhetoric focusing on the elaboration of institutions and mechanisms of any envisaged future union.

b) A lesser assembly of wider concepts, where Germany and Austria-Hungary represented only a core of Central Europe and the basis for the future expansion of Germany's influence – generally couched in notably more muted nationalist rhetoric.

Both streams showed the influence of themes developed earlier in the Central Europe discourse from the late 1870s onwards – the organic growth theory of the state, geographic determinism, nationalism, a belief in historical mission and the superiority of the German nation, the vision of a future world composed of large economic and political units, as well as an economic line of reasoning. Many of these themes themselves echoed ideas already developed by the mid-19th century, as witnessed in the writings of Friedrich List and others (see section 3.3.1). Both streams constructed an identity for Central Europe to contrast with the various Others that could be seen to confront it Imperial
Russia, France and Britain. In fact, the othering from these three was often presented as a very reason substantiating the need to constitute Central Europe – so as to withstand and counterweight their pressures (see e.g. discussion of Naumann in section 3.6.1).

The difference between the two streams lay in a subtle difference in interests, which individual authors followed in their conceptions of Central Europe. Mainstream authors essentially returned to the pan-German project, aiming for unification of the German nation through the union of Germany and Austria-Hungary. In sharp contrast, the authors of the wider concepts generally sought to further the interests of the German Empire within the development of a core Central Europe bloc and its subsequent expansion and projection south eastwards towards the Middle East.

In the mainstream of definitions that prevailed in the discourse, Central Europe became identified with a plan for the military, economic and political unification of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Germans would reach the final stage of their unification by reasserting control over the smaller nationalities of the Dual Monarchy and achieve great-power status within an increased territorial power base. Friedrich Naumann’s concept became the embodiment of the dominant definition, driving perceptions of what Central Europe was about among the Entente powers as well as the small nations of Austria-Hungary.

Yet, as was demonstrated in Chapter 5, the lesser stream also played its role in shaping perceptions of Central Europe among its adversaries – concepts which suggested that German expansion to the Middle East sat well with the strategic concerns of imperial rivals, especially the British Empire. However, interestingly, both streams ultimately exercised remarkably little influence upon political decision making in Germany itself.
A flurry of pan-German Central Europe conceptions calling for union with Germany started to be published as early as August 1914. In an outburst of empathetic proclamations between the two German empires, Austrian pan-Germans called for union in order to help re-establish their internal dominance. Two streams in theorisation developed.

In the first one, internal reform of Austria occupied the major parts of essays yet, even then, only Central Europe was discussed. The names of both states were used to highlight their nominal equality. Yet, revealingly, the German nation was considered to be one unit and the role of Austria as “a bearer of German culture” or the “medium of German supremacy in the East” was repeatedly underlined.

The second one was fully in line with the established understanding of Central Europe as a replacement notion for Deutschland. Much less attention was devoted to internal reforms of Austria-Hungary, but its sovereign status and role within the envisaged military and economic unit was duly emphasised. The reasoning behind the necessity of the realisation of Central Europe was the envisaged future of a world consisting of larger economic areas and political units.

While, generally the second stream copied the discourse in Germany, the first one was unique to Austria. As was the case with Germany, a clear distinction could be drawn between the identities of authors in both streams - those seeing themselves as primarily Austrian or German in the first instance. Authors in the first stream strived to remodel Austria to reassert its German character through their enactment of Central Europe, drawing on the strength in numbers that would be realised through union with Germany. Authors in the second stream were simply continuing a pan-German project, with some concessions made to provide for the interests of the Austrian throne and government.
Publication of Naumann’s *Mitteleuropa* somewhat derailed the Austrian discourse: the number of works published on the topic soared and many bought into Naumann’s specific plan for elaboration and implementation. Naumann’s proposal aligned with the ambitions of many Austrian Germans since it provided a well reasoned basis for the creation of a political and economic union for a strong majority of the German population, while at the same time being (at least on the surface) attuned to the sensitivities of the other nations of the Dual Monarchy. Naumann’s concept had a profound impact on the Austrian discourse and pushed alternative proposals to the fringe. Naumann’s followers enumerated key figures in the Austrian Central Europe movement, including Josef Maria Baernreither, assuring its continued prominence within the discourse. Under his influence, the Central Europe discourse spilled over into wider society and became equated with a plan essentially for economic union between Germany and Austria-Hungary. Highlighting the economic foundations of the plan, Central Europe was firmly paired with synonyms such as *wirtschaftliche Vereinigung* (economic union), *wirtschaftliche Annäherung* (economic rapprochement), *Zollunion* (customs union).

Naumann’s concept was opposed from some notably diverse points of view – Karl Renner due to his alternative vision of Central Europe, pan-German radicals for being an insufficiently ambitious proposal, Austrian Slavs for the very idea of such a construct, while Albrecht Penck refused to use the notion from then on in. Nonetheless, even these critics engaged with Naumann’s concept, thus entering into the very same discourse. The dominant interpretation of Central Europe until the end of war was to be tied with the plan for economic and then political union of Germany and Austria-Hungary, as portrayed by Naumann.

Hungarians as well as Slavs took a mostly negative view of Naumann’s plan, even though they were willing to listen to him at first. One of the very few Hungarians convinced of the usefulness of the plan was Sandor Wekerle, who would crucially later become the Hungarian Prime Minister in 1917. But among
Slavs, the idea of Central Europe would become the anti-pole of what was desired. For them, Central Europe presented a plan for the perpetuation of German domination as opposed to strived-for equality.

Evidently, the leader of the Czechs, Tomáš G. Masaryk, made good use of the Central European hype following publication of Naumann’s book. He adopted the dominant definition of Central Europe as the union of Germany and Austria-Hungary and skilfully used its various portrayals to depict the dangers such a plan would present for allied interests. He used these narratives to try to convince allied governments that Austria-Hungary should be dismembered, if their interests were to be safeguarded from the danger Central Europe presented. This consistent narrative was also broadcast by several other members of his group in communication with various governments. Polish and Yugoslav representatives occasionally used the same argument in their efforts, too. To what degree of success, we will discuss below.

7.2.2.3 Anglo-Saxon

The concept of Central Europe prevalent in Anglo-Saxon environments derived from translations and interpretations of contemporary German writing. Friedrich Naumann’s Mitteleuropa was published in English language in 1917 and was preceded by translations of André Chéradame’s works – all of which highlighted the dangers of the concept as a plan for German expansion across Europe.

In both Britain and the United States, interpretations of Central Europe thus solidified along the lines of a German-Austro-Hungarian alliance, whose purpose was to provide the basis for an increased role and presence of the German nation in the world. In Britain, the concept was viewed as directly opposed to the interests of the empire, as it sought to challenge the existing status quo in Europe. Moreover, Central Europe was understood to comprise the basis for a wider German plan to expand influence into the Middle East (a la
Berlin-Baghdad railway project), posing a direct threat to British interests there.

The US view of the concept might have been somewhat less alarmist, but certainly no more favourable. Many viewed it as a continuation of the Prussian expansionism of the 19th century and the notion had predominantly negative connotations.

Central Europe, in many aspects, became the negative Other Britain and later also the United States fought against in the unprecedented conflict that was the Great War.

7.2.2.4 The wartime definition

The outbreak of the war brought about a resurgence of pan-German feelings, giving Central Europe a new momentum and vesting it with a new cloak of German solidarity. Pan-German plans for the union of Germany and Austria-Hungary, to be forged through the tested means of a customs and military union, quickly overtook the remnants of any pre-war economic debate over wider union in Germany. In Austria-Hungary, the definition of Central Europe was firmly linked to this new interpretation, while two strands formed in its theorization, depending on the primary loyalties of authors. Overall, Central Europe came to mean an alliance of the two ‘Germanic’ empires, which was to be brought about by the war, with an ambition to eventually project its power further, especially to the Middle East.

Friedrich Naumann’s book clearly dominated the wartime discourse and definitively became ‘the concept of Central Europe’, a centre-point for any debate. The book brought Central Europe to the peak of its popularity, various authors in Germany and Austria-Hungary engaging with it by suggesting details for its possible implementation, either proposing alternatives to or outright opposing Naumann’s blueprint. It was published in allied countries as the articulation of the ultimate war aims of Germany. Masaryk portrayed Central
Europe negatively, tailoring its description to match the strategic concerns of the British, French and US governments so as to maximise threat perceptions and thereby further the prospects for independent nation states to take the place of Austria-Hungary.

It now remains to be explored what impact the discourse and dominant definition of the notion had on policy-makers on both sides of the fence.

### 7.2.3 Influence on policy makers

The final part of the research hypothesis proposes that the definitive discourse of Central Europe exercised an influence on policy makers and potentially impacted on emergent international structures. This section examines the gathered evidence before contemplating any potential structural effects.

#### 7.2.3.1 Germany

While Bismarck was certainly not the passionate advocate of Central Europe as is often depicted, the files of the *Auswärtiges Amt* showed that the notion of Central Europe found application in policy making considerations during the 1880s and 1890s. However, it was different to the pan-German concepts produced by Franz and Lagard: for the German Foreign Office associated Central Europe with the plan for a wider customs union in mainland Europe, then pitched as an alternative to bilateral arrangements with Austria-Hungary. It was a proposal for the reorganisation of the European trading relationship, with specific ambition to include France. The same use of the notion can be traced in the Caprivi period as well. Owing to a multitude of barriers, this idea was never realized.

Central Europe resurfaced in the early months of the war. Crucially, it was again connected with the question of reorganisation of trade relations in Europe after the war. Delbrück’s commission observed that many trade relations had been
either severed or significantly reduced due to the events of war and could be renegotiated at the same time as the expiring trade agreement with Austria-Hungary.

The use of the notion thus remained aligned with the idea of a wider customs union for mainland Europe and Delbrück’s commission explored the possibilities for trade and cooperation with several of its neighbours, including France and Russia. The considerations of the commission were remarkably devoid of any pan-German language and the value of Austria-Hungary for customs or economic union was actually estimated to be very low, if not negative. The commission’s final proposal, presented to Bethmann-Hollweg in April 1915, was for a customs alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Italy and Switzerland. The creation of this Central European union was to start with a customs alliance with Austria-Hungary (as the only state that would join it willingly), later to be expanded with the inclusion of other states at the time of peace negotiations.

The members of the cabinet were not too impressed with the idea, many of them (including Delbrück) opposed to any alliance with the Dual Monarchy. Yet, the omnipresent conviction that the days of free global trade were over and Germany would be shut out from all markets if it failed to build its own larger economic zone, became the decisive guidelines in any argument. Eventually, the government decided to pursue negotiations for economic rapprochement with Austria-Hungary.

Negotiations were kept to a technical discussion level and their record remains remarkably devoid of any nationalist language. The only manifestation of resurgent pan-German thought arrived with a memorandum of 13 November 1915, which, ironically, did not go down well with the Austrians (Jagow 1915, Austro-Hungarian Embassy 1915). This memorandum was likely motivated by the advice of Tschirschky, who was himself a pan-German Central Europe advocate. However, the sharp rebuff delivered to such language by the Austrian side discouraged further use of the same rhetoric in following communication.
The language of a pan-German Central Europe was apparently not successful, even as a rhetorical exercise.

The evidence that even the most famous proponents of Central Europe exercised any influence on the German government was at best limited. Even Naumann’s advances towards the German government only received the odd, occasional appreciative letter. Quite the contrary of his Central Europe being a contemporary guiding force for German foreign policy, many in the government started to think that his activities actually damaged Germany’s external interests. As the alliance with Austria-Hungary started to look an increasingly bleak prospect, a preference for a return to free trade conditions resurfaced. German ruling circles were only too aware that the proposals for a German-led customs union were viewed negatively among the allies (Luxburg 1915, Kühlmann 1916) and that the aggressive pan-German rhetoric of many Central Europe concepts was fostering the view that such a bloc would present a threat to their interests. At least one member of the cabinet openly expressed his opinion that the activities of ‘Naumann and his friends’ blocked any potential return to free trade (AA PA 1917).

The one organisation the government followed closely was Julius Wolf’s MEWV (Bundesarchiv R43/405-407). This is in line with observation that the government files use the notion of Central Europe as a reference to the plan for a customs union in the territory mainland Europe, akin to pre-war economic concepts. This would align well with the timeline of the considerations of Delbrück’s commission, as this was set up before the pan-German mainstream wartime interpretation of Central Europe started to take shape in 1915.

Government files used the notion as a label extensively in this early period. For example, the file classification, ‘Central European State Union’ (German Federal Archive, R 2593 – 2598) was set inaugurated. However, the notion rarely appeared in subsequent files recording actual negotiations with Austria-Hungary, since Central Europe was associated with a wider customs union. This observation is consistent with pre-war economic conceptions of Central
Europe, which sought to establish a wider union starting with Austria-Hungary. The German government’s aims were also in line with this understanding of Central Europe. While trade and customs unions were being negotiated, the German government was clearly interested in striking a deal that would bolster the transport capacities of the Danube and Austro-Hungarian railways looking south-east to Asia Minor and the, eventually, perhaps the Middle East.

On the other hand, none of the governmental considerations show a significant influence of geographic determinism or organic growth state theory, so prominent in all conceptions of Central Europe originating in the pre-war economic discourse. In fact, the only shared characteristic is the belief in the future organisation of global trade into mutually exclusive and protectionist larger economic zones. Moreover, the notion of Central Europe is relatively consistently associated with the idea of a wider customs union in the governmental files starting in the 1880s (e.g., the files in the Archive of the German Foreign Office, AA PA, Austria 83, R 8690). Therefore, it would be difficult to insist that the use of the notion in the early wartime period was in some way motivated by the pre-war economic discourse of Central Europe.

Rather it is likely that the formation of the interpretation of the notion was parallel to the economic discourse in the early years of the 20th century and may even have predated it, placing first use of Central Europe within the late 19th century (e.g. Reuss 1885), when its use in wider public was relatively unsettled, but among other things associated with such a plan.

This would place the institutional definition of Central Europe within the German Foreign Office into the lesser stream of the wartime discourse as an independent concept, developed on the basis of earlier institutional interpretations reaching back at least three decades. Thus rather than being influenced by the discourse and its dominant definition of Central Europe, the German Foreign Office was an independent (if fringe) contributor to the debate. The notion of Central Europe developed as a proposal for a multilateral customs alliance in Europe and resurfaced several times in the 1880s, 1890s
and early 1900s; until it was finally fully utilised in the early days of the First World War. Thus, in direct contrast to what outside observers and commentators assumed, the German government was under very little (if any) influence from “Mr Naumann and his friends” (AA PA 1917: E569131).

7.2.3.2 Austria-Hungary

Following its defeat of 1866, the monarchy was in decline, torn by clashing ethnic ambitions and increasingly conscious of its seemingly ever stronger neighbour to the north-west. The main preoccupation of the Viennese throne was to safeguard the sovereignty of its now Dual Monarchy and keep a lid on simmering national tensions. Central Europe, a notion appropriated by the pan-German movement was thus necessarily seen as a suspect notion when harboured among courtiers and cabinet members. It was designed to enhance the standing of the Germans at the expense of the Slavs and almost certain to cause a backlash among them.

From the 1880s the government firmly associated Central Europe with contemplation of a closer relationship with Germany, in which Austria-Hungary would clearly become a junior partner. In this sense, the idea of Central Europe worked head on against the interests of the throne – it would curb Vienna’s sovereignty and upset the fragile national peace balance at the same time. Thus if the Austrian government took account of Central Europe, it was in a negative sense. In fact, the heir to the throne was plotting a comprehensive internal reform, which would see Austrian German (and Magyar) standing significantly reduced.

Prime Minister Stürgkh and his Hungarian counterpart Tisza both imposed strict censorship and actively sought to limit debate on the topic within political circles during the early days of the First World War. The government was unsuccessful in stopping ‘pilgrimages’ of Central Europe enthusiasts into Berlin, but it was successful in stifling any brewing internal debate. The lack of
coordination was the key to their inability to formulate common proposals and engage meaningfully with the Berlin government.

Stürgkh’s government drew a clear distinction between the contemplated customs union and the idea of Central Europe as a virtual union with Germany. Several cabinet ministers voiced sharp opposition even to the idea of customs union due to the perception this would drive Austria-Hungary into ever deeper dependency on Germany. Naumann personally tried and failed to convince the Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza, who remained one of the staunchest opponents of the plan. Finally, practical considerations and a persistent belief the world was heading for a global system of large exclusive economic zones, motivated the reluctant agreement of the government to the commencement of negotiations with Germany in August 1915. The label of Central Europe was purposefully avoided and replacement notions, such as economic rapprochement (wirtschaftliche Annäherung) were employed in the official documentation instead.

It was only under the short-lived cabinet of Heinrich von Clam-Martinic (1916 – 1917) where the Central Europe program got any kind of head-start and could be seen to exercise a strong influence on policy-making. Clam-Martinic’s cabinet featured a notable group of strong Central Europe enthusiasts, including Baernreither, Riedl and Czernin. Stalled negotiations were immediately reopened. At the same time, Sándor Wekerle, the chairman of the Hungarian branch of MEWV and the foremost of Central Europe advocates in Hungary, became Hungarian Prime Minister in May 1917. However, Clam-Martinic’s cabinet fell after only six months in the aftermath of rising nationalist tensions in the reopened Austro-Hungarian parliament.

The subsequent Seidler cabinet retained some of these Central Europe advocates group in its inner core (especially Czernin, who held onto his foreign

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190 This distinction is also visible in treatment of the eventual negotiations with Germany, which remain filed as trade agreement negotiations, in sharp contrast to German filing of same documents under ‘Central European State Union’.
policy portfolio); however, their success in realizing any idea of Central Europe must be questioned carefully. The accords signed by two the emperors in May 1918 represented a political capitulation of Karl to Wilhelm, rather than the summit of successful negotiations. Czernin was sacked in June 1918 and the Seidler government started to immediately press its preference for a customs arrangement rather than full union. The coup de grâce for the ill-fated project was dealt by the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary late during 1918.

7.2.3.3 Anglo-Saxon

The notion of Central Europe appeared in British governmental correspondence as early as 1906 as a distinctively anti-British pan-German plan to unify Germany and Austria-Hungary, and expand German influence to the south-east (Tower 1906). Many adopted the use of the notion in its German original – ‘Mitteleuropa’, using it in English language texts. ‘Drang nach Osten’ and ‘Berlin-Baghdad’ swiftly became bywords for Central Europe, as British officials identified it with a perceived strategic threat to the British Empire, even its Government of India. From the British point of view, Austria-Hungary was a key link in this plan and detachment from its stronger ally would hopefully ruin any prospects for its materialisation. A strong and independent Austria-Hungary was from the British point of view by far the best safeguard against expansion of German influence into the Middle East. (Cartwright 1909b)

This premise remained the British policy baseline well into the war, even though there was little doubt that the Dual Monarchy was firmly under the influence of Germany. Masaryk’s proposals for dismemberment thus fell on deaf ears in many quarters. The first official consideration of dismemberment was the Tyrrell-Paget report (Tyrrell and Paget 1916); however, this proposal did not gain much traction. The main concern was that the break-up would leave behind a group of small states exposed to German over-lordship. In contrast,
Austria’s defection would greatly enhance the chances of an allied victory and provide a counterweight to German influence after the war.

These assessments were based on prevailing concepts of the balance of power and rooted in the pre-war system of the European Concert. The idea of Austria-Hungary as a counter-weight to Germany was better aligned with policy makers’ mindsets than Masaryk’s proposal of a Slav barrier. Moreover, the group of New Imperialists in the cabinet of Lloyd George also believed the world would in future develop towards larger political units, not small nation states. Their preferred tactic was to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany, ensure its restructuring - to give equal status to all nationalities (therefore weakening any German element) - and turn the area of the formal empire into a regional counter-weight against Germany. The British government believed that Austria would be willing to agree to such solution, due to its perceived war-weariness and its attempts to negotiate a separate peace.

It was only the material signature of protocols on economic and military union between Germany and Austria-Hungary of May 1918 that convinced British policy-makers that this scenario was dead. Horace Rumbold, British Ambassador in Switzerland, interpreted the protocols as a step towards *Mitteleuropa* (Rumbold 1918a and 1918b), warning that it could become a reality. As a result, the Foreign Office switched gears and started supporting the propaganda activities of the small nations of the Dual Monarchy to destabilize it.

However, this did not imply a commitment to dismemberment. It was not any concrete fear of an emergent Central Europe that convinced the British Government to recognize the Czech National Council as the provisional government of a future Czechoslovak state. A much more convincing argument lay in the army that the CNC controlled and the allies needed. Even after recognition, as late as September 1918, Robert Cecil was convinced that Britain should not bind itself to dismemberment (Cecil 1918f); however, the Dual Monarchy would ultimately collapse anyway of its own accord. The Foreign
Office was anxious not to witness avoid Balkanisation of the region and considered supporting the creation of a regional federation but ultimately decided to stay out of the matter and let it matters take their own course.

In the USA, Central Europe featured in the writings of key policy makers, typically as ‘Mitteleuropa’. In the Inquiry papers, it appears interchangeably with ‘Mittel-Europa’, ‘Mid-Europe’ and ‘Mid-European Economic Union’, along with ‘Drang nach Osten’ and ‘Berlin-Baghdad’. The Inquiry’s interpretation of Central Europe was built upon the re-reading of pan-German writings and its interactions with significant opponents of the plan (Chéradame, Masaryk, Seton-Watson). The key analysts of the Inquiry (Kerner, Seymour) adopted the view of Central Europe put forward by Masaryk – i.e., it represented a German plan to dominate the Slavs and make headway eastwards to establish their rule over vast swathes of Europe. Masaryk presented the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary and establishment of a collective of independent Slav states as a potential bulwark against future spread of German influence. After the war, House asserted that the US government had always believed that an independent Bohemia could be considered such a bulwark. However, the evidence suggested otherwise. In fact, it took a long time to convince the US government to recognize the CNC at all and, even after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, American representatives insisted on formation of a new regional union.

House claimed that the bulk of the Inquiry’s work focused on ‘Mitteleuropa’, which he defined as stretching from the North and Baltic seas to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, identifying it with a purported Hamburg-Baghdad plan of German expansion; this had been a view undoubtedly adapted from re-reading works such as Chéradame’s *The German Plot Unmasked* (1916), interactions with British policy makers and activist opponents of the concept. This view was also presented in the very first document of the Inquiry, which became instrumental to the formulation of the famous 14 Points speech of President Wilson.
However, the Inquiry was not keen on dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. In fact, the Inquiry was disunited over the question of what should be done with the Dual Monarchy, leaning towards its federalisation in general terms. Just like the British government, the Inquiry did not believe small nation states could resist Germany, considering these would eventually be drawn into its orbit under some Central European pretext.

Already in 1916, both House and Wilson believed that Germany hankered after a stable continental base, which would help it to project power towards the Middle East. Since the plan was deemed a threat to US interests, the Inquiry proposed democratization of Germany and the federalisation of Austria-Hungary as the best safeguard against it (The Inquiry 1918). Dismemberment was evidently not on the cards and Wilson actually delivered assurances of the continued existence of the empire after the war to the Austrian government. His 14 points speech did not call for the break-up and establishment of independent nation states. History generally take House’s post-war line that the US was a supporter of Czech independence (House and Seymour 1921); yet, in point of fact Wilson had actually refused to see Masaryk as late as May 1918. Even after recognition was extended to the CNC on 3 September, the US preference remained for regional federation.

To this end, the government offered to finance an initiative for a Mid-European Union, adapting the notion to cover its own regional reorganisation plan. Masaryk confirmed that it was the US establishment that had put forward the very idea of the regional federation (Masaryk 1918b). Yet, the attempt to realise a ‘safe Mitteleuropa’ was a stillborn plan. This federative concept imposed by another outside actor – the US government in this case – did not even find support among the very nations it was supposed to unify.
7.2.3.4 Government views of Central Europe

To sum up, the German government maintained its own definition of Central Europe – one that it had used fairly consistently from the 1880s. This was of a wider customs union in continental Europe, often cast as the alternative to closer relationship with Austria Hungary rather than something likely to foster it. This definition of Central Europe was also projected into the German governmental debate in the early days of the war. The government’s considerations were largely unscathed by the nationalist discourse developing in wider society. The fact that the outcome of the internal debate – relating to the opening of negotiations on a customs union with Austria-Hungary – coincided with the public discourse of Central Europe, was a result of the observed necessity to start a build-up of the envisaged bloc as soon as was practically possible. The only country that would be willing to join it was the Dual Monarchy, even though its value as a market for Germany was highly doubtful.

On the other hand, the conduct of the top Austrian and Hungarian politicians was profoundly affected by the Central Europe discourse. In these state territories, the notion was developing as a pan-German notion, presenting a challenge to both the sovereignty of the Dual Monarchy and its fragile national and ethnic balance. Both Stürgkh and Tisza imposed strict censorship on debating Central Europe, clamping down on even internal pan-German debates through their personal connections with Central Europe proponents (e.g. Gustav Gross). The government consented to negotiations towards a customs union with Germany, but drew a clear difference between the two concepts. There were many powerful advocates of Central Europe in Austria-Hungary, but it took Stürgkh’s death and Tisza’s resignation to bring about a breakthrough in their influence on policy making. The short-lived cabinet of Clam-Martinic included several of the foremost advocates of Central Europe together directly in key positions. This six months episode represents the highest degree of influence on policy making the notion of Central Europe had
ever affected. The Seidler government somewhat muffled the influence of Central Europe enthusiasts but some of them remained in influential positions, working towards conclusion of negotiations. Unfortunately for them, their term in office coincided with the faltering commitment of Germany.

Policy makers in the allied countries also kept the notion of Central Europe in view. In both Britain and the USA, Central Europe was equated to the Berlin-Baghdad project, represented as the spring-board for German expansion to the Middle East and beyond, and considered a strategic threat. The notion was derived from observations of the discourse in Germany and its interpretations by authors opposing the notion. In fact, Central Europe often appeared in governmental correspondence in its German original, ‘Mitteleuropa’. However, policy makers in both countries refused to accept Masaryk’s insistence that it could only be countered by dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. Dismemberment did not sit well with US and British policy mindsets rooted in pragmatic balance of power conceptions and underlined the persistent belief that small countries could not resist German pressure. Instead, after the Dual Monarchy collapsed, sections of policy making circles in both countries put forward their own concepts for Central Europe, which would have seen construction of a new federation from the successor states of Austria-Hungary. Eventually, the British government decided to turn down Leo Amery’s proposal of just such a construct. The US government pushed ahead with its Mid-European Union; an attempt doomed to failure by the lack of commitment of those it was supposed to unify.

To sum up, all key policy makers except for the German government – who alone maintained its own definition of Central Europe – were affected by the wartime discourse and the dominant interpretation of Central Europe as a pan-German plan to expand its power. Seen as an attempt at forging a new regional identity envisaged by ambitious pan-Germans, the British and US governments opposed it, as did the small nations of Austria-Hungary, whose representatives
tried to exploit these negative feelings to bring about their recipe for structural change in the region.

7.2.4 Influence on international structure

Overall, concept of Central Europe as an attempt to define regional identity – and as a pan-German project of a German-Austro-Hungarian alliance – failed to exert an influence on international structure.

The German government had a different idea of Central Europe than that represented in the dominant public discourse stipulated and – to state the obvious – it lost the war. On the other hand, the Austrian government under Stürgkh was opposed to the notion, while the cabinet of Clam-Martinic fell apart before it could bring the negotiations with Germany to completion. Central Europe enthusiasts in the Seidler cabinet might have rejoiced temporarily at the signing of the accords in May 1918. However, after Czernin’s resignation, the government changed its course profoundly, negotiating a much looser customs arrangement. Sovereignty and protection of a hard-won internal bargain took precedence over pan-German brotherhood.

British diplomats interpreted the May 1918 accords struck between the two emperors as the long-promised arrival of Central Europe and policy changed accordingly,. . Support lent to the propaganda activities of small nations gained momentum, though the British government could not bring itself to support a dismemberment of Austria-Hungary until it fell apart on its own. The recognition of CNC certainly boosted confidence in the rebels lined up against Vienna, but, of itself, did not bring about the break-up of empire.

The story of Masaryk in all of this is curious. He operated with a complex definition of Central Europe - invoking German domination of the region, the suppression of self-determination rights and the possibilities for a Berlin-Baghdad axis - tailored to its chosen audience, to induce a threat perception in
ruling circles of the Entente countries. Central Europe was presented as an emerging regional identity harmful to the interests of individual allied countries, one that could only be countered by the break-up of Austria-Hungary. This negative othering failed as well. While Masaryk’s portrayal of Central Europe was broadly in line with perceptions of his intended audiences, the remedy he suggested to this threat was not. He won recognition of CNC due to his POW army, not his portrayal of Central Europe.

The two governments he was most keen to get on his side, the US and the British one, devised their own versions of Central Europe by the war end. In Britain, Amery’s extraordinary proposal that Britain should accept a German-friendly Central Europe defined as a federation of successor states, was turned down. The US initiative, which heralded a creation of a Mid-European Union as a federation pompously announced at the Independence Hall, fell apart within less than two months. This failure to construct new regional identity was due to the lack of commitment on part of the nations involved.

Thus the concept of Central Europe failed completely. There is no doubt that the pan-German advocates of the notion, the German government and the small nations of Austria-Hungary had a change of international structure in mind, but all of them fell short of seeing their ambitions delivered. The Austro-Hungarian government was torn between the protection of its sovereignty and the pan-German ideas, only to be torn apart by nationalist tensions. The US government failed miserably in its attempt to engineer a new Central Europe.

This succession of failures came down to the fact that each and every actor in this game pushed for interests diametrically different from their intended partners. Pan-German Central Europe advocates were out of synch with the German government and clashed head on with Austrian interests, particularly. The Austrian government was not interested during the early days of war in being a vassal of Germany. The German government was later not interested in taking on responsibility for a troublesome Austria. Masaryk pushed for a solution that was alien to US and British policy makers, while the US
government was intent on acting directly against the wishes of the would-be successor states.

Yet, had the set up have been only very slightly different, one of the Central Europe concepts might have come to fruition. Had Clam-Martinic’s cabinet been in place at the beginning the war and Wekerle the Hungarian prime minister instead of Tisza, the story might have been very different. But instead of constructing alternative histories, it seems more profitable to examine the later development of the notion to establish whether Central Europe at any point impacted pertaining international structures during the twentieth century. Our Chapter 6 presented ample materials for such an exercise.

### 7.2.5 Lessons learned from the core research

The study of original writings that have been used as evidence for the development of the notion of Central Europe exposed the manifold misinterpretations carried by later analyses. The deliberate return to the original sources referred to in works of subsequent authors, rather than just sustaining their interpretations, has proved revealing.

Similarly, the extensive archival research undertaken has pointed to inconsistencies in conventional historical narratives. To name but one example, the image of President Wilson as a champion of independence for the small nations of Austria-Hungary is challenged by the best available record of events.

The last observation also suggests the value of our elected methodological approach. For the studied archival documentation suggests that the observed behaviour of ‘states’ was the result of the often complex decision-making of individuals, built on their perceptions and proclivities, to some degree constrained by existing international structures.
7.3 Discussion of findings in the context of following historical periods

Our Chapter 6 documented the varied discourses that have existed over Central Europe, whose substance shifted significantly as one or another group of authors with their distinctive identities and interests entered the debate and gained an upper hand with their definition of the notion.

7.3.1 Discourse and characteristics

At the end of the First World War Central Europe was a notion closely associated with the shattered plans for union between Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Paris Peace Conference confirmed the sovereignty of the nationally-defined successor states that would replace the dismembered Austro-Hungarian Empire. But the solution would soon prove to have been far from ideal – instability, national tensions and economic impoverishment plagued the region, and caused many to think of alternatives. The erratic interwar period gave rise to a multitude of new conceptions for multinational union in the area, springing from the most diverse sources. Notion of a Danubian Federation appeared as a competing term developed by authors wishing to leave Germany out of their framework. However, the newly independent successor states resisted any real efforts for their integration despite growing indications that they might not be able to safeguard their national sovereignties. Indeed, the consolidation of Germany in the mid-1920s brought with it a new wave of theorizing Central Europe along earlier lines – again involving Germany and the successor states to Austria-Hungary. But with the hardening of German national ambitions in the early 1930s, the original concept would be moulded into an ever-more pronounced program for domination of the area by the German nation. This tendency continued until a term better suited for such a purpose was introduced – the Reich. The rise of
this notion, better suited to express German ambitions at the end of 1930s, made Central Europe redundant.

The beginning of the Second World War brought a virtual u-turn in the theorising of Central Europe. Treated as a mere tool of propaganda in Nazi Germany, Central Europe had ceased to be the primary term associated with German expansionism, now replaced with the term, *Reich*. Exiled leaders of the successor states, now finally convinced of the need for a stronger multinational union to counter the German threat, were thus free to develop the notion to denote their own plans for the federalisation of a strip of countries between Germany and the Soviet Union. Encouraged and supported by the British and the US governments, they signed a series of treaties establishing the basis of such future union and worked towards their implementation. However, power politics took precedence over promises extended to exiled successor states politicians and the Western Allies yielded influence over Central Europe to the Soviets. This decision dealt a devastating blow to any plans for federation in the area, as the Soviet leadership was fiercely opposed to any integration that might strengthen its new satellites. When Yugoslav plans for a Balkan federation surfaced in 1948, the reprisals were fierce and uncompromising.

In the early Cold War period, some émigré thinkers living in the West presented plans for neutralisation of an area to buffer the spread of Communism – in line with the geopolitically substantiated paranoia of the time. However, the Western allies were not willing to risk yet another war over Central Europe and this new vision failed to gather substantial support. For over three decades, Central Europe was not talked about, save for some émigré theorists returning to the interwar discourse themes, since division of Europe into East and West made it redundant.

However, Central Europe made a surprise comeback in the 1980s. But the form in which it re-emerged seemed far removed from the Central Europe of earlier periods. In contrast to previous territorially-defined political projects, Central Europe of the 1980s was an abstract, culturally defined conception. Formulated
and promoted by dissidents of the Eastern Bloc, Central Europe was a spiritual escape, represented as the antithesis of authoritarian regimes, a negation of the Eastern-ness ascribed to their countries. An idealised Austro-Hungarian past was invoked as a model of cosmopolitan culture and associated with all that was supposedly Central European – artistic creativity, cultural uniqueness, and humanistic values. Such a definition of Central Europe was enthusiastically embraced by a Western audience attuned to the grievances of Eastern dissidents. Central Europe became an intellectual project for those who wished the Iron Curtain would disappear.

And disappear it did. From the moment Berlin Wall was torn down, an imaginary mythical Central Europe came to being in the eyes of its 1980s architects. It became a narrative of cultural approximation to the West, a means of othering from the East European past. As grand geopolitical theories assigned the region to German sphere of influence in the post-Cold War period, Central Europe was on its way to becoming part of the West. Central Europe became principally used in the context of European integration and associated with the group of countries that were on the right track to achieve speedy inclusion into Western economic and security structures. In this context, the notion became tautological in itself. Central European countries on their way to becoming members of the EU and NATO and countries on their way to becoming members of the EU and NATO were Central European. Indeed, since the bulk of post-Communist countries joined the NATO and the EU, the frequency of the use of the notion substantially declined. It seems like once again, Central Europe has been made partially redundant by its inclusion, this time into the West.

In all cases, Central Europe was conceived of as a regional identity, which had a particular geopolitical aim – the change of an international structure to accommodate interests embodied in the notion. In the inter-war period, these were the interests of resurgent and aggrandizement-seeking Germany, which shifted with the growing ambitions of the Nazi regime, finally outgrowing the
notion itself. During the Second World War, Central Europe was conceived of as a regional federation, protecting the interests of countries who fell prey to Germany and its allies. In the early Cold War, it was theorized as a neutral buffer between the East and the West. In the 1980s, the idea clearly was the escape from Soviet domination for its European vassals and in the 1990s to make the case for their speedy inclusion in the NATO and the European Union.

Thus, Central European concepts are definitions of a regional *Self*, seeking to replace that which already exists with something that is desired – a humiliated Germany with a new, larger and stronger German-led entity rivalling the declining empires of its peers; a patchwork of weak isolated states with a federation offering safety in numbers; the East with the West. Yet, what evidence is there to support the idea that definitive discourses of Central Europe as a *Self* or the *Other* have had an influence on political actors and international structure.

### 7.3.2 Influence on policy makers and international structure

For the interwar period, our Chapter 6 documented the way in which geopolitics followed the whims of policy makers rather than the other way round. However, during the Second World War, the idea of Central Europe as a federated strip of countries separating Germany and Russia was both developed by the top politicians of their exiled governments and followed through by them (with obvious material support from the US government) with the clear intention of changing the international structure. Treaties of federation were signed by the Czechoslovak and Polish governments in exile, as well as by the Greek and Yugoslav ones. Yet, such plans remained unrealized because of pressure from the Soviet Union. Their opposition to any such structure was fierce indeed. The story of ‘the Titoist clique’ underlined the fierce opposition of the Soviet leadership to such a regional structure. Stalin would go as far as to dispose of leaders even remotely supportive of the plan,
unleashing an international witch-hunt for traitors and expelling Yugoslavia from the bloc.

It would seem that the concept of Central Europe exercised influence upon policy makers where their interests were in line with those served by the concept (e.g. the exiled governments in the period of the Second World War, or US support for the idea of a buffer zone in the early Cold War), but also maybe where they were deemed to be in direct opposition (e.g. Stalin’s reaction to Dimitrov's announcement in 1948). However, when the concept became an inconvenience to the interests of policy makers, it would fall upon deaf ears (e.g. in late 1930s Germany).

The strongest evidence for such a lack of interest and influence was the period of the Cold War. In a starkly bi-polar world, there was no interest among policy-makers on either side in any version of Central Europe and the concept was understandably proclaimed as redundant (Cohen 1964). In an unexpected reverse, the concept was picked up in redefined form by the German government in pushing for re-unification at the end of the Cold War. Central Europe would serve as a symbolic hallmark for the integration period that followed, a notion found on the tip of the tongue of any regional statesman.

Yet, for all the variations in time and space and its supposed purpose of changing the international structure, Central Europe consistently fell short of the ambitions it represented. The only exception was the integration period of 1990 – 2007, and perhaps, to a more limited degree, the late Cold War\textsuperscript{191}.

In the 1990s the notion was used to articulate and express the proximity to the region it hoped to become part of – the West. The ambition was to amend international structure by the inclusion of former Eastern bloc countries within the economic and security structures of the West. This ambition was certainly achieved. However, the role the notion of Central Europe played in bringing this

\textsuperscript{191} It would be a stretch too far to claim that it was the concept of Central Europe that brought down the Iron Curtain. Yet, the concept can perhaps be credited with exercising some influence through new West German Ostpolitik or debate of the notion in leading Western media.
result about will need to be further examined, as secondary research presented in this thesis still needs to be confirmed by primary sources.

It follows from these observations that for Central Europe to succeed as a regional identity, a more significant and sustainable confluence in the interests of political actors in the region or involved with its shaping will need to be observable than was the case for any of the definitive points examined. Only in the 1990s were regional politicians, NATO and EU policy makers agreed on a shared identity for the region, with crucially no significant actor opposing it\textsuperscript{192}, creating the conditions for the new identity's realisation.

\textbf{7.4. Conclusions}

The first subsection below focuses on the overarching contribution of the research undertaken in this thesis, together with its conceptual conclusions. The following three subsections then examine the research findings in even greater detail, framed by the hypothesis presented at the beginning of this chapter.

\textbf{7.4.1 Original contribution and conceptual conclusions}

This research examined historical geographic ideational constructs of Central Europe and their impact; therefore, it falls into fold between critical geopolitics and historical geography. This interdisciplinary cross facilitates the main original contribution of this work: the findings challenge the perception of constancy of regional identities, which underlines the modern geopolitical literature overwhelmingly guided by contemporary concerns. In contrast, this research engaged directly with historical variations of the notion are examined, avoiding their interpretation through the lens of the present.

\textsuperscript{192} Of course, Russia would have opposed, but was politically impotent at the time.
Thus, the presented work challenges the mainstream approaches to Central Europe and contributes conceptually to both studies of regionalism and geopolitics of Europe in general. In contemporary scholarship, authors typically pursue one particular interpretation of a given notion and examine the evidence within its given framework. In sharp contrast, the core strength of the research is the empirical depth of its examination of the notion across its long history since 1840s; an exercise rarely attempted for any geopolitical concept. Such an approach allowed for examination of the contents and impact of the concept in individual periods of its formulation, avoiding the utilization of any particular and predisposed historical lens.

This process exposed significant differences in interpretations of the notion across various periods. These findings underscored the ambiguous and untidy character of demarcations of Central Europe, and other regional identities in general. Moreover, the research showed that while regional identities are conceptualized with intention to change the existing international structure, they often struggle to make a real impact. This suggests that geopolitical imaginaries need to be analyzed in the complexity of their empirical context, rather than reduced to single interpretation and linked to practical politics directly.

7.4.2 Concepts of Central Europe are exercises in geopolitics

The research showed that conceptualizations of Central Europe were indeed constructions of regional identity conducted as exercises in geopolitics. In line with Rorty (1999: xxvi), it was observed that the notion was defined by individual authors based on their interests and perceived needs, which were in turn informed by their socially constructed identity.

Naumann theorized Central Europe to bring Germany and Austria-Hungary under one roof to create a larger economic area. Austrian German authors put forward the idea of Central Europe as a larger German-led entity in an attempt
to counter the relative decline in the standing of this dominant (if waning) national group within their own empire. Masaryk defined Central Europe as a German plot to tighten domination over the smaller nations of Austria-Hungary and painted this as a threat to the strategic interests of the Entente countries, whose support for an independent Czech nation state he was trying to gain.

They theorized Central Europe from their distinctive positions as German members of parliament, insecure Austrian Germans or disgruntled leaders of small nations, attempting to further their distinctive interests. All these concepts had a definite purpose – changing realities on the ground and furthering the interests a given author was following. In this sense, concepts defining the notion of Central Europe were exercises in geopolitics, envisaging future changes in international structure. As has been observed several times in this thesis, the notion was ascribed with certain characteristics, with the actual territory in question usually serving as a dependent variable.

The Chapter 6 confirmed the same processes at work in succeeding periods of conceptualisation of Central Europe, pinpointing the changing identity and interests of authors as the main drivers of visibly erratic changes in definitions of the notion. Yet, what remained constant was that all proposals for a Central European regional identity were in all instances effectively proposals for a change in the geopolitical situation in the region. During the Second World War, the proposal had been to replace nation states with a regional federation; in the late 1950s it was to institute a neutral buffer between the East and the West; in the 1980s it was an intellectual project of othering from the dullness and restraint of the Soviet bloc.

7.4.3 Definitive discourse is an evolving process

The theorisation of Central Europe does not comprise a series of isolated pieces of writing; it was the process of a definitive discourse of Self (in Germany and Austria-Hungary) or Other (in Britain and USA). Definitive discourse was the
workshop in which the defining features of Central Europe were hammered out over time. The discourse in Germany was the most instructive in this regard, perhaps because it was also the most robust. The interplay between individual propositions gradually helped to construct a dominant definition of the notion. It was built on geographical determinism, organic growth state theory, belief in historical mission and superiority of the German nation and the vision of a future world organized into larger territorial units, the narrative of Germany as the land of the middle and an inherent interconnection with economic considerations. The development of the discourse also showed that the dominant definition of Central Europe had shifted over time, as some lines of argument gained more influence in the discourse than others. The entry of a multitude of economists into the discourse in the early 1900s and their intrinsic lead in the public promotion of the regional construct fostered the economic line of Central Europe theories, the dominant discourse until the outbreak of the Great War. The pendulum only shifted back to its pan-German dimensions as the war started with an inevitable nationalistic surge.

Observations of the Central Europe discourse confirmed the relative strength of the dominant definition depends on how closely it coincides with the interests of participants in the discourse. (Bowker and Star 2000: 108) This process accounts for the sudden surge in popularity of the notion of Central Europe as well as a decisive swing back to a pan-German line early in the course of the war. The dominant definition shifted to an understanding of Central Europe as a customs and military union of Germany and Austria-Hungary, underpinned by strong pan-German nationalistic rhetoric and often accompanied by an ambition to project its influence further to the south-east. This portrayal of Central Europe, especially somewhat hybridised version advanced by Friedrich Naumann, was adopted into discourses in Austria-Hungary, Britain and USA.

Again, similar processes were identified and established in our Chapter 6 more recent for more recent periods. Evolving definitive discourses, shifting dominant definitions as construction of Self or Other were traced and their
relative influence assessed. Two periods stood out – the Cold War, when discourse over Central Europe could be measured at no more than a couple of entries per decade - where concepts put forward fell completely flat as they were not aligned with the interests of any relevant actor; and the 1990s integration period, when Central Europe surged to the top of its historical popularity and seemed to be in line with the interests of everyone but a crumbling Russia.

7.4.4 Overall, ideational concepts struggle to make an impact

Finally, it was proposed that the definitive discourse of Central Europe as Self or Other exercised an influence over the behaviour of political actors, thereby indirectly impacting upon international structure.

Interestingly, the most likely suspect, a largely pragmatic German government displayed a significant degree of isolation from the definition of Central Europe that dominated the press. This does not necessarily mean that our hypothesis is incorrect. In fact, the government itself thus participated in the definitive discourse of the notion, even if it remained on its fringes. It is an interesting to observe that as a consequence, the influence of the foremost proponents of Central Europe on the government’s interpretation of the notion or policy making was only very limited.

On the other hand, the Austro-Hungarian government showed both extremes in its reaction to the dominant definition of Central Europe – first a heavy censorship was imposed on the merest public mention of the notion under Stürghkh and Tisza; then, after Clam-Martinic had packed his cabinet with pan-German advocates of the notion, the government effected a swift volte-face and worked swiftly towards its fruition - alas, they were quickly timed out by events. Finally, the US and British governments were also influenced by the dominant definition, considering Central Europe a threat to their own interests.
Yet, successive Central Europes of whatever vintage failed to bring about their intended changes on international structure. In all cases, there was a significant actor, whose interests were opposed to what the particular concept of Central Europe represented.

However, the Chapter 6 showed that there was at least one period in which we can plausibly argue that the concept of Central Europe might have contributed to the change in international structure – the 1990s integration period. The concept of Central Europe showed influence on policy makers in other periods as well: federative plan motivated exile governments to start working on its preparations, Dimitrov’s announcement of similar structure infuriated Stalin, US government supported the neutralisation plan in early Cold War. But none of these plans was eventually brought into reality, bar the Central Europe of the 1990s.

It remains a suggestion for future research, to examine the influence of the notion and role in played in policy making over EU and NATO integration of former Eastern Bloc countries. This might, however, only be possible after the archives from the period have been opened in future.

### 7.5 Post-script: Central Europe is back. Again!

So maybe Cohen was wrong (Cohen1964). Central Europe is still there, even now. While the Chapter 6 observed a decline in references to the notion post-accession in recent years, Central Europe has recently resurfaced in the world media.

The familiar context of an economic crisis, the search for redefinition of a *status quo*, with Germany in the middle of it all has returned - this time in the form of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis. Germany took a leading role in convincing unwilling European governments to employ policies of austerity and give up
another slice of their sovereignty to establish common fiscal frameworks and banking supervision.

As France elected a leftist government in early 2012, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was left alone to bat for these unpopular policies. In the absence of any other large European Union state supporting her, she found herself surrounded by a very familiar group of supporters – the fiscally disciplined governments of the small states lying to the east of German borders. The reaction of political analysts to this new incarnation of Germany driving polices and Central Europe accepting them was almost immediate. Douglas Rediker and David Gordon wrote the following:

“In many ways, "new Europe" harks back to the old "Old Europe."
The newfound centrality of Central Europe is a return to the Concert of the 19th and early 20th centuries, with the continent’s geographic core setting the tone for the periphery. It bears reminding that the last European transnational currency to collapse was the Austro-Hungarian crown after World War I, which eventually set in motion the geopolitical dynamics that led to the euro. Stresses on the eurozone could reorient Europe back toward Mitteleuropa, leaving the Visegrád countries as the crisis’s surprising winners.” (Rediker and Gordon 2012)

Others were quick to follow. The BBC’s Andrew Little described Central Europe as a new driver of European integration centred on Germany (Little 2012) and similar references started to appear in media and political commentaries across the board.

It remains to be seen whether this newly-perceived application will be sustained in the public discourse, though its appearance suggests that Central Europe has not exhausted its shape-shifting potential or relinquished its relevance to structural changes on a European scale just yet.
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Appendix

Appendix 1: K. L. Bruck: ‘Vorschläge zur Anbahnung der Oesterrechisch-Deutschen Zoll- und Handelseinigung’ (1849a)

Appendix 2: K. L. Bruck: ‘Wien’ (1849b)

Appendix 3: K. L. Bruck: ‘Denkschrift des keiserlich österreichischen Handelsministers über die Anbahnung der österreichisch-deutschen Zoll und Handelseinigung’ (1849c)

Appendix 4: E. Plener article, *Fremdenblatt*, 20 July 1915

Appendix 5: K. Renner ‘Zollunion und Zwischenzoll’ (1915)

Appendix 6: ‘Delbrück to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 12 April (1915a)

Appendix 7: ‘Delbrück to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 23 April (1915b)

Appendix 8: ‘Tschirschky to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 1 September (1914a)

Appendix 9: ‘Tschirschky to Foreign Office’, 9 November (1915a)

Appendix 10: Memorandum from 13 November 1915

Appendix 11: Austro-Hungarian Embassy, ‘Note’, 24 November 1915

Appendix 12: ‘Tschirschky to Foreign Office’ 20 January 1916

Appendix 13: 11 November 1917 report on dealings with Austria Hungary (excerpt)

Appendix 14: Comparison maps of Austrian Empire and Austria Hungary

Appendix 15: List of Austro-Hungarian prime ministers

Appendix 16: William Swinton’s Central Europe (1875)

Appendix 17: Johnstons’ Map of Central Europe (1866)

Appendix 18: Stanford’s Map of Central Europe (1895)
Appendix 19: Bartholomew’s Map of Central Europe (1892)
Appendix 20: Bartholomew’s Map of Central Europe (1910)
Appendix 21: Bartholomew’s Map of Central Europe (1915)
Appendix 22: Bartholomew’s Map of Central Europe (1914)
Appendix 23: Letts’s Map of Central Europe (1870)
Appendix 24: Mackinder’s Natural Seats of Power (1904)
Appendix 25: Robert Cecil on agreement with CNC (1918)
Appendix 26: The Inquiry’s maps of spreading Prussianism
Appendix 27: Shapiro’s Map of Central Europe
Appendix 28: Wilson’s 14 points from the New York Times, 9 Jan 1918
Appendix 29: December 1917 inquiry document
Appendix 30: American reply to the Austro-Hungarian peace note
Appendix 31: Contemporary map of Europe app. 1879
Appendix 32: Map of Europe 1914
Appendix 33: Archives visited and groups of materials used
Appendix 34: Andre Chéradame’s ‘What Germany Wants?’ map
Appendix 35: Illustrations of Harrison and Johnson Central Union pamphlet
Appendix 1: K. L. Bruck: 'Vorschläge zur Anbahnung der Oesterreisch-Deutschen Zoll- und Handelseinigung' (1849a)

(Documents Bruck's lack of use of the Central Europe notion, here used only once a general geographical reference)
472

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Die Kritik der Abend-Beilage, die Neben der für vorrück
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Bruck, K. L. (1949a) 'Wien', Wiener Zeitung – Abend-Beilage, 9 November, No. 268, pp. 1–2


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Appendix 3: K. L. Bruck: 'Denkschrift des keiserlich österreichischen Handelsministers über die Anbahnung der österreichisch-deutschen Zoll und Handelseinigung' (1849c)
(Document's Bruck's use of 'Anschluss Österreichs' rather than Central Europe)

Attached on a CD
Appendix 4: E. Plener article, Fremdenblatt, 20 July 1915

(suggests that discussion of a customs union is premature)

476

Wien, 20. Juli 1915

Fremdenblatt

Verleihung der diplomatischen Ehrenämter

Dr. en. Leopold Gumprecht, der als von der Deutschen Gesellschaft für die Förderung der Künstlerfreundschaften in Osteuropa erbeten wurde, wurde von der Wiener Hofkanalbehörde mit der Aufgabe betraut, die Verleihungen der diplomatischen Ehrenämter in Osteuropa durchzuführen. Die Verleihung der Ehrenämter erfolgte in der Wiener Hofkanalbehörde, wo Dr. en. Leopold Gumprecht persönlich anwesend war.

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Die Verleihung der Ehrenämter erfolgte in der Wiener Hofkanalbehörde, wo Dr. en. Leopold Gumprecht persönlich anwesend war.

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Plener, E. (1915) 'no title', 20 July, Fremdenblatt, vol 69, no. 199, pp. 2–3
Appendix 5: K. Renner 'Zollunion und Zwischenzoll' (1915) (Sample of Renner's early writing on customs union)

Der amtliche Schachbericht.

Arbeiter-Zeitung.

Centralorgan der Deutschen Sozialdemokraten in Österreich.

Erscheint täglich am 6 Uhr morgens, Wendung um 2 Uhr nachmittags.


XXVIII. Jahrgang.

Nr. 208.

Zollunion und Zwischenzoll.

K. Renner.


Seit einigen Jahren ist die Frage der Zollunion und Zwischenzoll eine der wichtigsten Themen der politischen Debatten in Österreich. Die Abwesenheit einer Zollunion würde für die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Landes eine große Hemmszahl bedeuten, während die Einrichtung von Zwischenzöllen nur zu den Nachteilen der Bevölkerung führen würde.

Die Abhandlung von K. Renner zeigt, dass die Zollunion die beste Lösung für die Probleme der Wirtschaft im Lande ist. Durch die Zollunion würde die Wirtschaftsfreiheit der einzelnen Länder erweitert, während die Einrichtung von Zwischenzöllen nur zu den Nachteilen der Bevölkerung führen würde.

Zurückblickend auf die Abhandlung von K. Renner, kann man feststellen, dass er frühzeitig auf die Bedeutung der Zollunion hinwies und dass er die Einrichtung von Zwischenzöllen als eine negative Entwicklung für die Wirtschaft im Lande ansah.
Appendix 6: ‘Delbrück to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 12 April 1915
(Delbrück's summary of his commission's deliberations)

Eure Excellenzen haben mir seit Beginn des Krieges wiederholt mündlich und schriftlich den Auftrag erteilt, zu prüfen, wie unsere wirtschaftspolitischen Beziehungen zu unseren Gegnern und zu unseren Bundesgenossen beim Friedensschluß zu gestalten sein würden.


Eure Excellenzen haben der Meinung Ausdruck gegeben, daß durch den Krieg ‘wenigstens vorübergehend’ die Absatzmöglichkeiten auf den außereuropäischen Märkten für unsere Industrie verringert werden würden und hierfür auf den europäischen Märkten Ersatz geschaffen werden müsse. In letzterer Hinsicht dürften wir durch die Eroberung Belgien wohl in die Lage versetzt sein, beim Friedensschluß dort
Der Krieg der Wirtschaftskriege


Die Krieg der Wirtschaftskriege ist ein Beispiel für die Bedeutung von Wirtschaftskräften in der internationalen Politik. Sie haben die Möglichkeit, die Weltwirtschaft zu beeinflussen und so die Bedeutung von Wirtschaftskräften in der internationalen Politik zu unterstreichen. Es zeigt sich, dass die Wirtschaftskräfte die Möglichkeit haben, die Weltwirtschaft zu beeinflussen und somit die Bedeutung von Wirtschaftskräften in der internationalen Politik zu unterstreichen.
Alle Artikel vorhergehender Kanon wurden hierher in die Reihenfolge eingefügt, die sich für die deutsche Ostmark und insbesondere für siebe denkende in den polnischen Kriegsgefangenen ergeben. 

III. 

Die Politik der Ostmark und die Situation ihrer Bevölkerung.
Auszug aus einer Abhandlung der Verhältnisse der "Germania"

...
Delbrück, C. (1915a) ‘Delbrück to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 12 April, German Federal Archive, R43/404, folio 1b – 7
Appendix 7: ‘Delbrück to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 23 April (1915b)
(Detailing plans for wider customs union, reporting conflicting Austro-Hungarian preferences)
Delbrück, C. (1915b) ‘Delbrück to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 23 April, German Federal Archive, R43/405, folio 1d – 1f
Appendix 8: ‘Tschirschky to Bethmann-Hollweg’, 1 Sept. (1914a)  
(Refers to interests of Austrian Germans and uses expression ‘deutsche Ostmark’)
Tschirschky, L. (1914a) 'Tshirschky to Bethmann-Hollweg', 1 September, Archive of the German Foreign Office, AA PA Austria 83, R 8690, not bound, document no. A 20240
Appendix 9: ‘Tschirschky to Foreign Office’, 9 November (1915a)
(Introduces the question of Poland into the customs union negotiations)


Den

Sie hält es für wünschenswert, daß die beiden Reiche sich durch langfristige Verträge politischer, wirtschaftlicher und militärischer Natur noch enger aneinander schließen. Während die militärischen Abmachungen der Be- sprechung der beiderseitigen Armeein- stanzen vorbehalten werden sollten, gestattet sich die Kaiserliche Regierung hierbei allgemeine Gestehenspunkte für die Gestaltung des engeren wirtschaftlichen Anschlusses zu über senden, welche als Unterlagen für weitere Beratungen dienen.
gen und Beschlüsse dienen können.


Damit namentlich in wirtschaftlicher Beziehung die Völker der beiden Reiche sich besser in die neuen Verhältnisse einleben, manche anfangs vielleicht widersprechende Interessen sich ausgleichen können, damit auch den anderen Staaten gegenüber der Zusammenhalt der Zentralmächte als ein dauernder Faktor der internationalen Politik erscheint, ist die Kaiserliche Regierung der Ansicht, daß die Verträge auf eine längere Dauer, von etwa 30 Jahren, geschlossen werden müßten.

Die Kaiserliche Regierung glaubt aber in diesem für die Beziehungen der beiden Reiche für lange Zeiten bestimmenden
menden Augenblick noch auf ein Moment hinweisen zu sollen, welches ihr von ausschlaggebender Bedeutung zu sein scheint:


Nachdem durch den Verlauf des Krieges und die eventuell mit der Löstrennung weiter Gebiete verbundene Niederlage Russlands der Antagonismus zwischen den Zentralmächten und Russland
Version filed in Austrian State Archive

Der Bündnisvertrag vom 7. Oktober 1879 ist im wesentlichen ein lediglich gegen Rußland gerichteter

Durchaus wirtschaftlichen Besprechungen die Völker der beiden Reiche sich besser in die neuen Verhältnisse einleben, welche anfangs vielleicht widersprechende Interessen sich ausgleichen können, damit auch den anderen Staaten gegenüber der Zusammenhalt der Zentralmächte als ein dauernder Faktor der internationalen Politik erscheint, ist die Kaiserliche Regierung der Ansicht, daß die Verträge auf eine längere Dauer, von etwa 20 Jahren, geschlossen werden müßten.

Die Kaiserliche Regierung glaubt aber in diesem für die Bestehungen der beiden Reiche für lange Zeiten bestimmenden Augenblick noch auf ein Moment hinweisen zu sollen, welches ihr von ausschlaggebender Bedeutung zu sein scheint:

Als der Bund zwischen Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn im Jahre 1879 geschlossen wurde, geschah dies auf der Grundlage der Andrassy-Deutschen Idee einer Vorpherrschaft der Magyaren in Ungarn und der Deutschen in Österreich. Während in Ungarn dieses Prinzip sich durchgesetzt und fortentwickelt vermutlich hat, hat in Österreich im Laufe der Jahre dieser Grundsatz der Vorpherrschaft des Deutschtums viel-
Juch Einbusse erlitten. Durch eine politische Nachzelle
zusammen anderer Völkerelemente in den Ländern der
österreichischen Krone hat eine Entwicklung Platz
gegriffen, durch welche das germanische Element
dasselbe die ihm bei Abschluß des Bundes zugerichtete
Führung zum Teil verloren hat.

Nachdem durch den Verlauf des Krieges und die
eventuell mit der Löstrennung weiter Gebiete ver-
bundene Niederlage Rußlands der Antagonismus zwischen
den Zentralkräften und Rußland verschärft und neuord-
net wird, erscheint eine weitere Stärkung der
nichtdeutschen Elemente in Österreich den Grundzü-
gen unseres Bündnisses und den auswärtigen Interessen
beider Kontrahenten zuwiderlaufend. Die Kaiserliche
Regierung folgt demnach einem Gebot der Selbstver-
hältnisse, wie sie glaubt, ebenso in ihrem eigenen
wie im Interesse der Monarchie und des zu ersträben-
den weiteren und engeren Bundesverhältnisses, wenn
sie der K.u.K. Regierung zur Erädigung dringend unter
bietet, in der ihr gesteigert scheinenden Weise Vorschä-
kungen zu treffen, durch welche eine fortschrei-
tende Slavisierung Österreichs verhindert und dem
 germanischen Element die im Interesse Österreichs
als germanischer Ostmark zukommende führende Stel-
lung wieder zugewiesen wird.

gez. Jagow.

Das Zollbündnis muß auf eine längere Reihe von Jahren (etwa 30 Jahre) mit Revisionen fürist nach Ablauf von je 10 Jahren abgeschlossen werden, um die für die gegenseitige Versetzung der wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse gebotene Sicherheit zu gewährleisten.

Hierbei ist zu bemerken, daß die nach 10 Jahren mögliche Revision nicht die Tendenz von Zoll erhöhungen, sondern von weiteren Zollermäßigungen ver...
verfolgen soll.

Auch muß Vorsorge getroffen werden, daß die Zollhöhe im Verkehr der verbündeten Staaten festgelegt, jedenfalls ohne Zustimmung des anderen Teiles nicht verändert werden kann.

Im übrigen ist ein Zusammenwirken bei der Regelung der handelspolitischen Beziehungen der beiden verbündeten Länder zu außerstehenden Staaten anzustreben.


Eine weitere Voraussetzung für die Möglichkeit der Durchführung des Zollbündnisses muß sein, daß es beiden Ländern in den Friedensverträgen gelingt, von den Feinden die Anerkennung der vollen Meistbegünstigung zu erreichen, während sich Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn nur insoweit zu binden hätten, als es sich nicht um Vereinbarungen handelt, die sie sich wechselseitig auf Grund des Zollbündnisertrages eingeräumt haben.

Wie das Zollbündnis im einzelnen zu gestaltet sein wird, muß näherer Erörterung vorbehalten bleiben, hier folgend seien nur einige allgemeine Gesichtspunkte aufgestellt:
1. Abschluß eines Zollbündnisses mit Österreich-Ungarn.

a) Eine Zollunion zwischen Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn ist zur Zeit ausgeschlossen, eine wirtschaftspolitische Annäherung zwischen den beiden verbündeten Staaten aber geboten. Ihr wird die Form eines Zollbündnisses mit beiderseitigen Zollbevorzugsungen, die dritten Staaten nicht zustehen sollen, zu geboren sein.

b) Bei Durchführung des Zollbündnisses würde davon auszugehen sein, daß in beiden Staaten die derzeitige Zollhöhe nach den Vertragstarifen im allgemeinen nicht überschritten wird.

c) Waren, welche von einer Bevorzugung ausgeschlossen werden sollen, würden gegenseitig alsbald miteinander sein (Auschußliste).

d) Waren, für die Forderungen unter die derzeitigen Vertragszollsätze verlangt werden, würden gleichfalls gegenseitig alsbald mitzuteilen sein (Forderungsliste). (In der Herabminderung der derzeitigen Österreichischen Vertragszollniveaus müßte die Kompensation für unsere...
a) Um feste Zollverhältnisse für die Ausfuhr zu erteilen, würde die Bindung der Mindestzeit einzuüsten haben.

b) Dritten Staaten wäre der Beitritt zum Zollbündnis unter bestimmten Bedingungen offen zu halten.

c) Innerhalb des Zollbündnisses herrscht hinsichtlich der Zollverhältnisse vollständige Meistbegünstigung.


e) Verständigung über gemeinsames Vorgehen bei wirtschaftlich schädigenden Maßnahmen der Außenstaaten.

f) Möglichkeit der Annäherung der Zolltarife nach Schema und Sätzen.

2. Durchsetzung des Zollbündnisses in den Friedensverträgen.

Von den feindlichen Staaten würde die unbedingte Meistbegünstigung in den Friedensverträgen durchzusetzen sein. Deutschland und Österreich-
Österreich-Ungarn würden sich in dieser Hinsicht nur soweit binden dürfen, als es sich nicht um Vereinbarungen handelt, die sie sich wechselseitig oder dritten Zollbündnisstaaten auf Grund besonderer Abkommen als Sonderzusage geständnisse gegen besondere Gegenleistungen einräumen werden.

In enger Verbindung mit den wirtschaftlichen Interessen steht ferner eine Regelung der Verkehrsfragen, sowohl was das Eisenbahnwesen als die Wasserwege betrifft. Die Kaiserliche Regierung erlaubt sich in dieser Hinsicht folgende Vorschläge zu unterbreiten:

I. Eisenbahnverkehr.

Dauernde Aufrechterhaltung der Bestimmungen des Handelsvertrages über die gleichmäßige tarifartische Behandlung gleichartiger Güter auf denselben Strecken soll gegen seitig zugesichert werden; desgleichen die strengere Anwendung dieser Bestimmungen auch auf den Verkehr angeschlossener Werke. Aufgabe einer gemischten Kommission aus beiderseitigen Vertretern wird es sein, bald möglichst die Fälle zu prüfen, die bisher zu Zweifeln Anlass gegeben haben und die Durchführung der Bestimmungen in weiteinnigster Auslegung sicherzustellen.

II. Wasserstraßenverkehr.

Die vertragschließenden Staaten sagen sich gegenseitig zu:

Die Erleichterung und Förderung des Schifffahrtsverkehrs auf der Donau und der Elbe

d) durch Eingrenzung der ungehinderten Beförderung der Güter und Personen sowohl zwischen Plätzen beider Reiche, als auch zwischen verschiedenen Plätzen eines der vertragschließenden Teile als auch im Durchgangsverkehr mit dritten Staaten;

b) durch den Ausbau des Fahrwassers - u. a. auch des
Appendix 11: Austro-Hungarian Embassy, ‘Note’, 24 November 1915

(sharp rebuff of the 13 November memorandum language)
Zollbündnisses besteht ja in demselben Maße auch auf Österreichisch-ungarischer Seite und eine Versachlicherung der Verhältnisse muss auch für uns ausgeschlossen werden.

Zu den wichtigsten und schwierigsten Aufgaben wird die Durchsetzung unserer Zollausnahme-Abmachungen bei den feindlichen und vielleicht noch viel mehr bei den neutralen Staaten gehören. Stipulationen in den Friedensverhandlungen könnten da nur teilweise abhelfen. Wenn in unseren Verhandlungen das Prinzip der Zolleinigung auf Grundlage der Bevorzugung festgelegt sein wird, so müsste sogleich, und dies wäre dringender als die Ausarbeitung der einzelnen Zollsätze, über den Weg der Einvernehmen gesucht werden, welcher einzuschlagen sein wird, um die Neutralen zur Anerkennung unseres künftigen Ausnahmsverhältnisses zu bestimmen.

Ohne jetzt auf die einzelnen, in Promemoria berührten wirtschaftlichen Gebiete des Nächeren einzugehen, was den Fachverhandlungen vorbehalten bleiben muss, kann seitens der k.u.k. Regierung hier dennoch schon die gleiche Voraussetzung ausgesprochen werden, wie sie der kaisl. deutschen Regierung vorbehalten, nämlich die tatsächliche Verbesserung unserer Ausfuhrbedingungen nach Deutschland.

Die Möglichkeit des Beitrittes dritter Länder zu unserem wirtschaftlichen Verhältnis offen zu halten, liegt auch der
k.u.k. Regierung am Herzen und ihre Auffassung über die Bedingungen eines solchen Anschlusses deckt sich vollständig mit der deutschen.

der beiderseitigen vitalen wirtschaftlichen Notwendigkeiten zu beruhen hätte.

Wenn die kaiserl. deutsche Regierung in ihrem Promemoria schliesslich auch auf den Umstand hinweisen zu sollen glaubt, dass der Bund im J. 1879 auf der Grundlage der Vorherrschaft der Deutschen in Oesterreich und der Magyaren in Ungarn geschlossen worden sei, so dürfte hier doch ein gewisses Missverständniss vorliegen.

Von dieser Vorherrschaft ist in den Vertragsverhandlungen soweit die hier zugängliche Kenntnis reicht, niemals gesprochen worden und es wäre für Graf Andrassy auch vom Standpunkte der verfassungsgängigen Struktur der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie unmöglich gewesen, das Bündnis mit Deutschland auf die Zufälligkeiten im Gesetzte nicht festgelegter innerer Gruppierungen aufzubauen, anstatt auf die Gesamtkraft und den Gesamteinfluss aller gleichberechtigten Bürger der beiden Staaten der Monarchie.

Die hervorragende Stellung der Deutschen in Oesterreich beruht auf ihrem ziffermässigen und spezifischen Gewichte. Sie mag Schwankungen ausgesetzt sein, wie sie das politische Leben in einem Nationalitätentumstaate mit sich bringt, aber sie...
kann nicht gefährdet werden. Dafür sorgt Gesetz und die eigene Betätigung. Die Zunahme der Bedeutung anderer Völker-elemente ist eine Folge ihrer zunehmenden Kultur und kann nicht zurückgedrängt, sondern muss im Gegenteil mit Befriedigung begrüßt werden. Sie wird aber auch nie den auswärtigen Interessen unseres Bündnisses abträglich sein, wie sie dies auch bisher nicht gewesen ist.

Eine fortschreitende Slavisierung Österreichs droht nicht. Dem steuert die Kraft des Deutschtums.

Die so erwünschte führende Stellung der Deutschen kann sich nur aus politischen Gleichgewichtsverhältnissen ergeben und erhalten, für welche die realen Voraussetzungen vorhanden sind. Sie gesetzmäßig dekretiert zu wollen, hiesse dieser wichtigen Sache den schlechtesten Dienst erweisen.

So untunlich es also ist, die Deutschen in Österreich mit den Attributen einer Majorität auszustatten, so unzutreffend wäre es andererseits, in den Deutschen und Ungarn, im supprimierten Gegensätze zu allen anderen Nationalitäten, die alleinige Gezwär einer verlässlichen Bündnispolitik der Monarchie, die nicht bloß eine germanische Ostmark ist, zu erblicken.

Den Deutschen die ihnen gebührende Stellung in Österreich zu erhalten, ist ein Gebot unserer inneren Politik, auch für den im Bereich der Möglichkeit liegenden Fall der
Angliederung Russisch-Polens an Oesterreich. Die Deutsch-Oesterreicher selbst erblicken in dieser Eventualität keine Gefahr für sich, vorausgesetzt, dass die Polen nicht im Reichsrats Alt-Oesterreichs Sitz haben. Die Majorisierung durch das neue Element in gemeinsamen Angelegenheiten zu verhindern, würde die nicht unlösbare Aufgabe der zu treffenden Einrichtungen sein.

Appendix 12: ‘Tschirschky to Foreign Office’ 20 January 1916
(points out inconsistencies between the statements in the Austrian embassy's note and reality)
Bestehend seitens Deutschlands von vornherein verschiedene Ansichten. Doch entspringt diese Tendenz wohl in der hauptsächlich parlamentarischen und parteipolitischen Rückenblicken.

Wir sind von den Grundsätzen ausgegangen, dass unsere Interessen es erheischt, dass die Magyaren in Ungarn und die Deutschen in Österreich die Vorherrschaft haben. Wenn man sich hier — wie ich höre — mit dem Gedanken trägt, Bosnien und die Herrenschaft norwegische Teile Serbiens zu Ungarn zu schlagen, so genügt seine Erachtens ein Blick auf die Karte, um zu zeigen, dass Rückenblicken gegen Ungarn die Politik ist, die in unseren Interessen liegt.

Denn dann sind den ungarischen Einheitstaaten stärker und dessen Selbständigkeitserfordernissen mehr und mehr anerkannt, so leisten wir damit den von uns angestrebten Ehrgeiz einer Stärkung des Deutschlands in Österreich den besten Dienst, da die Magyaren, wenn sie bei sich zu Heide erhöhte Nationalitätenorgane haben werden, stärker anerkannt an Tirolerhänden brauchen, und besonders mit den Deutschen hier sehr Band in Band werden gehen müssen.

Nach Ablösung Bosniens und der Herrenschaften von Österreich wird der Rest Österreichs infolge des hierdurch bedingten Wortschatzes des Deutschlands zu einer unveränderten Anlehnung an Deutschland gedrängt werden. An der Tatsache, dass der Fortbildungsprozeß des Selbständigerwerdens Ungarns in Fortschritten begriffen ist, werden wir nichts ändern können, nachdem die Zeit vorüber ist,
so Wien in der Lage war, Ungarn mit Gewalt niederzuhalten.

Ich resümiere daher, dass keines Erachtens wir die Vorherrschaft der Magyaren in Ungarn mit allen ihren Konsequenzen hinnehmen müssen, wenn wir das Deutschtum in Österreich unterstützen wollen.


Der Passus in der Notiz, welcher sagt, es sei in den Vertrageverhandlungen von Jahre 1879 niemals davon gesprochen worden, dass als Grundlage des Bündnisses die Vorherrschaft des Deutschen in Österreich und der Magyaren in Ungarn gedacht sei, plateziert gegen eine Behauptung, die unsererseits niemals aufgestellt worden ist. Wenn aber zutreffen die bei Abschluss des Bündnissevertrages tatsächlich bestehende Vorherrschaft des Deutschtums in Österreich als eine «Sicherheit im Gedacht» nicht festgelegter innerer Gruppierungen bezeichnet ist, so tat es gerade diese Auffassung von der
Stellung des Deutschen in Österreich, gegen deren Geltung wir für die Zukunft Sicherehen haben müssen. Der obigen Satze von der "Zwölflichkeit" der deutschen Vorrang in Österreich dürfte aber lediglich theoretische, doktrinäre Bedeutung beizulegen sein, denn gleich darauf wird gesagt, dass "die hervorragende Stellung der Deutschen in Österreich auf ihrem sittensmäßigen und spezifischen Gesicht beruhen, und dass es ein Gebot der österreichischen inneren Politik sei, den Deutschen die ihnen gebührende Stellung in Österreich zu erhalten. Es wird also unumwunden anerkannt, dass tatsächlich die dominerende Stellung des Deutschen in Österreich keine bloße "Zwölflichkeit" sein kann.

Wenn, wie es in der Hotta beter heißt, diese Stellung der Deutschen in Österreich Schankungen ausgesetzt sein mag, aber nicht gefährdet werden könne, so ist dazu zu sagen, dass es gerade Schankungen in einem für die Deutschen ungünstigen Stande sind, von denen wir wünschen, dass sie in Zukunft ausgesolt werden. Wenn es besser heißt, das Gesetz sorge für die deutsche Präponderanz, so kann man das nach den Verhalten der Wiener Regierung seit der Aera Tausch nur als Ironie empfinden.

Die Bemerkung, dass die zunehmende Bedeutung anderer Völkerselemente die Interessen unseres Völkereises abträglich sein werde, sie die dies auch bisher nicht gewesen sei, setzt es in den Augenblick, wo ein Prozess gegen Hochverrat gegen einen Führer geschieht, der als
Führer des tschechischen Volkes stets in vertrauensvollersten Beziehungen zu den verschiederosten Wiener Kabinetten stand, sonderbar an.

Wenn es weiter heisst, eine fortschreitende Staatseinteilung Oesterreichs drohe nicht, dem steuere die Kraft des Deutschtums, so ist auch dies ganz unrichtig. Wie bekannt, befindet sich das Deutschtum seit langer Zeit in der Defensive; es ist ihm durch die Politik der Regierungen das Rückgrat gebrochen worden, so dass es sich, den deutschen Charakter leider entsprechend, in inneren Tatigkeitlosen noch sehr vermüht hat. Es ist unbestreitbar, dass die intellektuellen Kräfte der Deutschen ausserordentlich gross sind; es sind ihnen aber durch die Staatslehre bis zu einem gewissen Grade der eigene Pille und die Charakterfestigkeit genommen worden, die notwendig sind, wenn sie sich der slavischen Welt er- sehen sollen. Wenn die Wiener Regierung jetzt, so die letzten Deutschen in ihren durch den Krieg neu erwachsenen Zugehörigkeitsgefühl zur grossen deutschen Nation sich wieder aufzuraffen beginnen, nicht den festen Willen hat, dieses Bestreben mit allen ihren zur Gebote stehenden Mitteln zu unterstützen, so können weiteren Dinge geschehen. Entweder werden die Deutschen hier wieder - und leider ist dies die grösste Wahrscheinlichkeit - in ihre alte Passivität verfallen oder das Ries Felsenberg und die Wiener Regierung können eines Tages eine starke Propaganda für den Anschluss an das Reich und Straßensrassenkreuzier erleben.
Wenn in der Notiz behauptet wird, unsererseits lage die Ablehnung vor, die Deutschen in Oesterreich mit den Attributen einer Macht auszustatten, so ist auch dies wieder ein Kampf gegen Windmühlen. Von uns aus ist weder schriftlich noch mündlich jemals ein Ähnlicher Gedanke zum Ausdruck gebracht worden.

Der Satz, die Deutsch-Oesterreicher erblickten in der Einstellung der Annäherung Russisch-Polens an Oesterreich keine Gefahr für sich, vorausgesetzt, dass die Polen nicht im Reichsrat Alt-Oesterreichs Sitzen hätten, ist an sich richtig. Es konnt aber darauf an, ob der weitere Satz, dass die Majorität durch das neue Element – die Polen – in gemeinsamen Angelegenheiten zu verhindern, die nicht unlösbare Aufgabe der zu treffenden Einrichtungen sein würde, realisiert werden wird. Dies hängt davon ab, ob die Wiener Regierung von den Geisteswissenschaften, die Deutschen unbedingt zu stützen. Ist es das nicht, so bieten die gemeinsamen Angelegenheiten in der eventuell zu konstruierenden gemeinsamen Reichsregierung den Polen genügend Handhaben, um die Deutschen in den Hintergrund zu drängen.

Wenn es zum Schluss heißt, die Polen seien nicht ohne Stellen als Werkzeug einer aggressiven-antideutschen Tendenz unter ihren zukünftigen Mitbürgerern einzuwirken, so ist dieser Satz in allgemeiner genetischer Art richtig. Ich müchte hier aber noch eine darauf hinweisen, dass – nach unseren Erfahrungen in Kiew und in unseren polnischen Landesteilen – die Ein- oder Abtretung...
Appendix 13: 11 November 1917 report on dealings with Austria Hungary
(Excerpt)

Appendix 14: Comparison maps of Austrian Empire and Austria Hungary
(comparison of territory pre- and post- 1867 Compromise)

Austrian Empire in 1815

Map of Austrian (pink) and Hungarian (green) parts of the Dual Monarchy, Condominium of Bosnia and Herzegovina in blue
**Appendix 15: List of Austro-Hungarian prime ministers**
(for timing of their individual cabinets in the process of negotiations with Germany)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prime minister</th>
<th>in office from</th>
<th>to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count Karl von Stürgkh</td>
<td>3-Nov-11</td>
<td>21-Oct-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest von Koerber</td>
<td>29-Oct-16</td>
<td>20-Dec-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic</td>
<td>20-Dec-16</td>
<td>23-Jun-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernst Seidler von Feuchtenegg</td>
<td>23-Jun-17</td>
<td>27-Jul-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron Max Hussarek von Heinlein</td>
<td>27-Jul-18</td>
<td>27-Oct-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinrich Lammasch</td>
<td>27-Oct-18</td>
<td>11-Nov-18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 16: William Swinton’s Central Europe (1875)
(presents Central Europe as mainland rump of Europe minus its peninsulas)

Source: Swinton, W. (1875) A complete course in geography: physical, industrial, and political, Ivison, Blakeman, Taylor, and Company, p. 100
Appendix 17: Johnstons’ Map of Central Europe (1866)
(focusing upon the German Empire and its neighbours to the west and south)

Attached on a CD

Appendix 18: Stanford’s Map of Central Europe (1895)
(focusing upon the German Empire and its neighbours to the west and south)

Attached on a CD

Appendix 19: Bartholomew's Map of Central Europe (1892)  
(focused on France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany)

Attached on a CD

Appendix 20: Bartholomew's Map of Central Europe (1910)
(extended to cover Austria-Hungary as far as Budapest)

Attached on a CD

Appendix 21: Bartholomew's Map of Central Europe (1915)
(extended to cover whole Austria-Hungary)

Attached on a CD

Appendix 22: Bartholomew's Map of Central Europe (1914)
(a wider continental view of Central Europe at the onset of war)

Attached on a CD

Appendix 23: Letts’s Map of Central Europe (1870)
(presenting Central Europe as ‘the seat of war’)

Attached on a CD

Appendix 24: Mackinder’s Natural Seats of Power (1904)
(Mackinder’s understanding of the world order)

Appendix 25: Robert Cecil on agreement with CNC (1918)
(shows Cecil's lack of conviction on granting CNC recognition)

Appendix 26: The Inquiry's maps of spreading Prussianism
(shows the Inquiry's understanding of German behaviour and increasing territorial ambitions)
Appendix 27: Schapiro’s Map of Central Europe (1918)
(sample of American interpretation of Central Europe by the end of the war)

Appendix 28: Wilson’s 14 points from the New York Times, 9 Jan 1918

(references to widest possible autonomy for Austria-Hungary’s nationalities, rather than its dismemberment)

Text of President Wilson’s Speech

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8.—The President in his address to Congress today spoke as follows:

Gentlemen of the Congress:

Once more, as repeatedly before, the spokesmen of the Central Empires have indicated their desire to discuss the objects of the war and the possible basis of a general peace. Perhaps there have been no progress at Freetown between Russian representatives and representatives of the Central Powers, to which the settlement of all the Balkan states has been invited, for the purpose of ascertaining whether it may be possible to extend those talks into a general conference with regard to terms of peace and settlement. The Russian representatives presented not only a perfectly definite statement of the principles upon which they would be willing to conclude peace, but also an equally definite program for the concrete application of those principles. The representatives of the Central Powers, on their part, presented an outline of settlement which included the idea of a separate settlement for every territory, with full self-government and autonomy. We have not heard that the Russian representatives proposed an outline of settlement which would have any of the same features.

The whole issue is clearly in its fullest sense, it is also full of perplexity. With whom are the Russian representatives dealing? For whom are the representatives of the Central Empires speaking? Are they speaking for the majority of their respective nations or for the minority parties, that military and imperialist minority which has so far dominated their whole policy?

There is, moreover, a voice calling for these definitions of principle and of purpose which is, it seems to me, more thrilling and more compelling than any of the many moving voices with which the troubled air of the world is filled. It is the voice of the Russian people. They are oppressed and all but hopeless. It would seem, before the grim power of Germany, which has hitherto known no humanity and no pity, their power apparently is shielded. And yet their soul is not subdued. They will put their trust either in principle or in action. Their conception of what is right, of what is humane and honorable, is not altered. They have been acted upon by a frankness, a hopefulness of view, a generosity of spirit, and a universal human sympathy which must challenge the admiration of every friend of mankind; and they have refused to compromise their ideals or desert others that they themselves may be safe. They can do no more evil than what it is that we desire, in what it is that we demand, and we believe that the Russian people of the United States would have the war to end with other simplicity and frankness. Whether their present leaders believe it or not, it is in our heartfelt desire and hope that some way may be found whereby we may be privileged to assist the people of Russia to attain their utmost hope of liberty and ordered peace.

It will be our wish and purpose that the problems of peace, when they are begun, shall be immediately open, and that they shall involve and permit consideration of all nationalities of any kind. The day of compromise and adjustment is gone by; as is also the day of secret conferences entered into in the interest of particular Governments and thereby the world is about to undertake to upset the peace of the world. It is not only a question of the peace that we have made, nor of the peace that we must make, but of the peace that we must have if we are to recover the peace that we have lost.

We entered this war because violations of rights had occurred which touched us to the quick, and made the life of our own people impossible unless they were corrected and the world secured attempt to limit the sovereignty when we see

VIII.—All French territory should be freed and the French frontier restored to its old position before 1914

IX.—The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose state demands has been serviced, should be provided with an opportunity to autonomous development.

X.—The right of self-determination of peoples should be recognized.

XI.—The nationalities of the Austrian Empire should be guaranteed free and secure access to the sea, and the extension of the minimum guarantees of the League of Nations to the national minorities.

XII.—The nationalities of the Austrian Empire should be guaranteed the opportunity of a free passage to the lands and commerce of all nations under international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several nationalities.

XIII.—An independent Polish State should be created when the territories inhabited by indubitably Polish populations should be assured an unconditional security of life and an absolutely inalienable opportunity of autonomous development, and the Danubians should be permanently assured as a free passage to the lands and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIV.—A general assembly of nations must be formed under specific compacts for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to the
and controlled the affairs of Turkey and of the
separate States, which have been subject to become
their associates in this war? The Russian rep-
resentatives have been in conference, very firmly, very
willingly, and in the true spirit of modern democ-
acy, that the conference they have been hold-
ing with the Turkish and Austrian ministers
should be held with open, not closed, doors,
and all the world has been audience, as was di-
rected. To whom have we resigned these?
To those who speak the spirit and intention of the
resolutions of the German Council of the
last of July last, the spirit and intention of the
liberal leaders and parleys of Germany, or to
those who resist and say that spirit and inten-
tion and insist upon compact and constitution?
Or are we indignant, in fact, in both, uncer-
clined and in open and open-ended contradiction?
There are very serious and present questions.
Upon the answer to them depends the peace of
the world.

But whatever the result of the punitive at
Beersheba, whatever the conclusions of coun-
sel and of purpose in the severance of the associate
of the Central Empire, they have again
attempted to accomplish the world with their ob-
jects in that war and have again challenged their
advocates in what wish their objects are and
what sort of settlement they would deem best and
usurably. There is no great reason why that
challenge should not be responded to, and res-
sponded to with the utmost caution. We did not
wait for it. Nor once, but again and again we have
said our whole thought and purpose before the
world, not in general terms only, but each
with sufficient evidence to make it clear
what sort of definite terms of settlement must
necessarily spring out of that. Within the last
week Mr. Lloyd George has spoken with admir-
ably caution and in admirable spirit for the people
and Government of Great Britain. There is no
confusion of counsel among the advocates of the
Central Empire, no uncertainty of principle, no
equanimity of doubt. The only source of coun-
sel, the only lack of order in their machinations, the only
reason to make definite statement of the objec-
tives of the war was with Germany and her allies.
The war is about the life and death hang upon those def-
nitions. No statement who has the least con-
ception of the responsibility required for a moment
permit himself to continue that disastrous and
appalling overpouring of blood and treasure unless
he is sure beyond a peradventure that the objects of
the vital sacrifice are part and parcel of the
very life of society and that the people for whom
he speaks these right and impassive as he does.

peace for all against their renunciation. What we
demand of the world and the world has been hold-
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the vital sacrifice are part and parcel of the
very life of society and that the people for whom
he speaks these right and impassive as he does.

peace for all against their renunciation. What we
demand of the world and the world has been hold-

In regard to these essential formulations and
of wrong and assertions of right, we feel ourselves to
be intimate partners of all the Governments
and peoples associated together against the
imperfections. We cannot be separated in interest
or devoted in purpose. We stand together until
the end.

For such arrangements and covenants we are
willing to fight and to continue to fight until
they are achieved; but only because we wish the
right to prevail and desire a just and stable peace, such
as can be assured only by removing the chief
provocations to war, within this program does
range. We have no jealousy of German great-
ness, and there is nothing in this program that
involves it. We evidence its achievement or
distinction of learning or of specific enterprises
such as have made her record very bright and
very valuable. We do not wish to injure her or
to look in any way her legitimate influence or
power. We do not wish to fight her either with
arms or with hostile arrangements of trade, if
she is willing to associate herself with us and
the other peace-loving nations of the world in
arrangements of justice and law and fair dealing.
We wish her only to accept a place of equality
among the peoples of the world—the new world
in which we have lived instead of a place of
mastery.

Neither do we presume to suggest to her any
alternative or cohabitation of her humiliation.
But it is necessary, we must frankly say, and
necessary as a preliminary to any intelligent
diagnosis with her on our part, that we should
know what her standpoint might be for which we
speak to us, whether for the Bolschegor minority
or for the military party and the men whose
clerical and imperial domination.

We have spoken now, surely in terms too
explicit to admit of any further doubt or ques-
tion. An evident principle runs through the
whole program I have outlined. It is the prin-
ciples of justice to all peoples and nationalities,
and their right to live in equal terms of liberty
and safety with one another, whether they be
speechless and defenseless and powerless, or
whether they are mighty and powerful, and
attain power. Without them justice will have
no meaning. There is no purpose in a peace
which will not establish justice. The
The New York Times
Published January 19, 1918
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539
Appendix 29: December 1917 inquiry document (excerpt)

Inquiry Document No. 887

The Inquiry.—Memorandum Submitted December 22, 1917

The Present Situation: The War Aims and Peace Terms It Suggests

Our Objectives

The Allied military situation and Berlin-Bagdad.

The Allies have had various opportunities to destroy Middle Europe by arms, to wit: the Russian invasion of Galicia, the protection of Serbia, the intervention of Rumania, the offensive of Italy, the expedition at Gallipoli, the expedition to Saloniki, the Mesopotamian campaign, and the Palestinian campaign. The use made of these opportunities has produced roughly the following results: The Russian army has ceased to be an offensive force, and Germany occupies a large part of that territory of the Russian Empire which is inhabited by more or less non-Russian peoples; Rumania is occupied to the mouth of the Danube; Serbia and Montenegro are occupied; the Austrian and German are deep into Italian territory. As the Russian, Rumanian, Serbian, and Italian armies cannot be expected to resume a dangerous offensive, the invasion of Austria-Hungary has ceased to be a possibility. The Allies hold Saloniki, which they are unable to use as a base for offensive operations. There is danger that they may be driven from it. If they are able to hold it, and to keep it from Austrian hands, they have made a blind alley of one subordinate part of the Berlin-Bagdad project, which has always included a branch line to Saloniki, and then to the sea. By the cap-
tured of Bagdad they not only control the rich resources of Mesopotamia but have made a blind alley of the main Berlin-Bagdad line, so far as that line was aimed to be a line of communication to the Persian Gulf as a threat against India. By the capture of Palestine the British have nullified a subordinate part of the Berlin-Bagdad scheme, that is, the threat to the Suez Canal. By the almost complete separation of Arabia from Turkey, the Turks have not only lost the Holy Cities, but another threat to the Red Sea has been removed. Germany has therefore lost the terminals of her project, and if Saloniki, Jerusalem, Bagdad, and Arabia remain in non-German hands the possibilities of defense against the politico-military portions of the Bagdad scheme exist.

**The problem of Berlin-Bagdad.**

The problem is therefore reduced to this: How effectively is it possible for Germany to organize the territory now under her political and military influence so as to be, in a position at a later date to complete the scheme and to use the resources and the manpower of Middle Europe in the interests of her own foreign policy? She faces here four critical political problems: 1) The Poles; 2) the Czechs; 3) the South Slavs; and 4) Bulgaria. The problem may be stated as follows: If these peoples become either the willing accomplices or the helpless servants of Germany and her political purposes, Berlin will have established a power in Central Europe which will be the master of the continent. The interest of the United States in preventing this must be carefully distinguished before our objectives can become clear. It can be no part of our policy to prevent a free interplay of economic and cultural forces in Central Europe. We should have no interest in thwarting a tendency toward unification. Our interest is in the disestablishment of a system by which adventurous and imperialistic groups in Berlin and Vienna and Budapest could use the resources of this area in the interest of a fiercely selfish foreign policy directed against their neighbors and the rest of the world. In our opposition to Middle Europe, therefore, we should distinguish between the drawing together of an area which has a certain economic unity, and the uses of that unity and the methods by which it is controlled. We are interested primarily in the nature of the control.

**The chief binding interests in Middle Europe.**

The present control rests upon an alliance of interest between the ruling powers at Vienna, Budapest, Sofia, Constantinople, and Berlin. There are certain common interests which bind these ruling groups together. The chief ones are: 1) the common interests of Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest in the subjection of the Poles, the Czechs, and the Croats; 2) from the point of view of Berlin the
present arrangement assures a control of the external affairs and of
the military and economic resources of Austria-Hungary; 3) from
the point of view of Vienna and Budapest it assures the German-
Magyar ascendancy; 4) the interest that binds Sofia to the alliance
lay chiefly in the ability of Germany to exploit the wrong done
Bulgaria in the treaty of Bucharest; 5) the interest of Constantinople
is no doubt in part bought, in part coerced, but it is also in a measure
due to the fact that in the German alliance alone lies the possibility
of even a nominal integrity for the Turkish Empire; 6) at the con-
clusion of the war, the greatest tie which will bind Austria-Hungary,
Bulgaria, and Turkey to Germany will be the debts of these countries
to Germany.

The deestablishment of a Prussian Middle Europe.

It follows that the objectives to be aimed at in order to render
Middle Europe safe are the following:

1. Increased democratization of Germany, which means, no doubt,
legal changes like the reform of the Prussian franchise, increased
ministerial responsibility, control of the army and navy, of the war
power and foreign policy, by representatives responsible to the Ger-
man people. But it means something more. It means the appoint-
ment to office of men who represent the interests of south and west
Germany and the large cities of Prussia—men who today vote Pro-
gressive, Centrist, or Social Democrat tickets—in brief, the men who
stood behind the Bloc which forced through the Reichstag resolution
of July.

2. In addition to increased democratization of Germany, we have
to aim at an independent foreign policy in Austria-Hungary.

3. We must aim at preventing the military union of Austria-
Hungary and Germany.

4. We must aim at the contentment and friendship of Bulgaria
through a satisfactory solution of the Balkan frontiers.

5. We must aim at the neutralization and the internationalization
of Constantinople and the Straits.

6. We must see that the control of the two military terminals of
Berlin-Bagdad remain in the hands of an administration friendly to
the western nations.

7. As a result of the accomplishment of the foregoing, we must
secure a guaranteed autonomy for the Armenians, not only as a
matter of justice and humanity but in order to re-establish the one
people of Asia Minor capable of preventing economic monopolization
of Turkey by the Germans.

These being our objectives, what are our present assets and
liabilities?

Assets

[1.] Our economic weapon.

The commercial control of the outer world, and the possibility of
German exclusion both from the sources of raw materials and the
richer markets, and from the routes of communication, lie in our hands. The possibility of a continued commercial exclusion weighs heavily, in fact, most heavily of all, upon the German mind at present, because upon the conclusion of peace a successful demobilization is possible only as there are raw materials and markets for the resumption of German industry. Without these the army would become a discontented and dangerous body. If the possibility of exclusion from economic opportunity is associated with a vision of a world co-operation realized, the double motives of fear and hope can be used upon the German people. This is our strongest weapon, and the Germans realize its menace. Held over them, it can win priceless concessions. It should be noted that this weapon will be of special advantage after the peace conference has assembled. Our ability to protract the discussion at the industrial expense of Germany and to our own benefit, and [sic] will give us a bargaining power of great advantage. Skillfully handled, this asset can be used both to threaten and to lure them; and its appeal is wellnigh universal, as the utterances and comment from Germany clearly show. To the dynasty and the ruling classes, it presents the most tangible threat of revolution, because it is obvious that the danger of revolution will be enormously increased upon the conclusion of peace, when the patriotic motive subsides. To the commercial classes it presents the obvious picture of financial ruin and of disorder. To the army it presents the picture of a long period following the conclusion of the war in which government will not dare to demobilize rapidly. To the poorer classes generally it presents the picture of a long period after the war in which the present hardships will continue.

II. Our assets in Austria-Hungary.

In Austria-Hungary we have a number of assets which may seem contradictory at first, but which can all be employed at the same time. There is the nationalistic discontent of the Czechs and probably of the South Slavs. The increase of nationalistic discontent among the Czechs and the possibility of some kind of Poland will tend to break the political coalition which has existed between the Austrian Poles and the German Austrians. On the part of the Emperor and of the present ruling powers in Austria-Hungary there is a great desire to emerge from the war with the patrimony of Francis Joseph unimpaired. This desire has taken two interesting forms: 1) it has resulted in the adoption of a policy of no annexations, which is obvious enough; and 2) in the adoption, evidently with much sincerity, of a desire for disarmament and a league of nations. The motive here is evidently a realization that financially Austria cannot maintain armaments at the present scale after the war, and a realization that in a league of
nations she would find a guarantee of the status quo. It follows that
the more turbulent the subject nationalities become and the less the
present Magyar-Austrian ascendency sees itself threatened with abso-
luate extinction, the more fervent will become the desire in Austria-
Hungary to make itself a fit partner in a league of nations. Our policy
must therefore consist first in a stirring up of nationalist discontent,
and then in refusing to accept the extreme logic of this discontent,
which would be the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. By threaten-
ing the present German-Magyar combination with nationalist up-
risings on the one side, and by showing it a mode of safety on the other,
its resistance would be reduced to a minimum, and the motive to an
independence from Berlin in foreign affairs would be enormously ac-
celerated. Austria-Hungary is in the position where she must be good
in order to survive.

It should be noted that the danger of economic exclusion after the
war affects Austria-Hungary as well as Germany very seriously, and
no amount of ultimate trade in transit to Turkey will be able to solve
for her the immediate problem of finding work for her demobilized
army, of replenishing her exhausted supplies, and of finding enough
wealth to meet her financial burdens.

LIABILITIES

Balanced off against these assets are our liabilities. They are,
brihy:

I. The military impotence of Russia.
II. The strategic impossibility of any military operation which
will cut to the heart of Middle Europe.
III. The costs and dangers of a war of attrition on the western
front, and the improbability of anything more than a slow with-
drawal by the Germans, leaving behind them an absolute devastation
of western Belgium and of northern France.
IV. The possession by the Germans at this time of the occupied
areas.
V. The concentration of France upon Alsace-Lorraine, which opens
at least as a possibility an attempt by the Germans to cause an al-
most complete rupture of the western alliance by offering France
an attractive compromise solution. In case the Germans should
decide within the next few months that they could compensate them-
selves in the east, they may offer France enough in the west to force
either a peace or so keep a schism of French opinion as to render
France impotent.
VI. In regard to Italy, our liabilities are also heavy. There is the
obvious danger of social revolution and disorganization.
VII. Another liability lies in the present unwillingness of the
dominant opinion of Great Britain to discuss modifications of sea
power.
Austria-Hungary.

Towards Austria-Hungary the approach should consist of references to the subjection of the various nationalities, in order to keep that agitation alive, but coupled with it should go repeated assurances that no dismemberment of the Empire is intended, together with allusions to the humiliating vassalage of the proudest court in Europe. It will probably be well to inject into the discussion a mention of the fact that Austria-Hungary is bound to Germany by huge debts expended in the interest of German ambition. In regard to Austria-Hungary it will probably not be wise to suggest frankly the cancellation of these debts, as in the case of Turkey. Reference to their existence and to the bondage which they imply will, however, produce a useful ferment. The desire of Austria-Hungary to discuss the question of disarmament should not be ignored. The discussion should specifically be accepted and the danger of disarmament in the face of an autocratic Germany explained again.

Germany.

As against Germany the lines of the offensive have already been laid down by the President. There should be more explicit assertion that the penalty of a failure to democratize Germany more adequately must mean exclusion from freedom of intercourse after the war, that the reward for democratization is a partnership of all nations in meeting the problems that will follow the peace. This offensive should of course contain the explicit assurance that we do not intend to dictate the form of responsible government in Germany, and that we are quite within the justified limits of intercourse with nations if we take the position that our attitude towards a responsible Germany would be different from our attitude towards the present Germany.
Poland.

An independent and democratic Poland shall be established. Its boundaries shall be based on a fair balance of national and economic considerations, giving full weight to the necessity for adequate access to the sea. The form of Poland's government and its economic and political relations should be left to the determination of the people of Poland acting through their chosen representatives.

The subject of Poland is by far the most complex of all the problems to be considered. The present distribution of Poles is such as to make their complete unification impossible without separating East Prussia from Germany. This is probably not within the bounds of practical politics. A Poland which consists essentially of Russian and perhaps Austrian Poland would probably secure its access to the sea through the Vistula River and the canals of Germany which run to Hamburg and Bremen. This relationship would very probably involve both the economic subjection of Poland and the establishment of an area of great friction. If Russia is to remain weak the new Poland will lie in an exceedingly exposed position. The experiment must no doubt be made, however, but in order to assure it a fair start, it is necessary to insist at the outset upon a democratic basis for the Polish state. Unless this is loyally observed, the internal friction of Poles, Ruthenians, and Jews is likely to render Poland impotent in the presence of Germany.

Austria-Hungary.

We see promise in the discussions now going on between the Austro-Hungarian Governments and the peoples of the monarchy, but the vassalage of Austria-Hungary to the masters of Germany, riveted upon them by debts for money expended in the interests of German ambition, must be done away with in order that Austria-Hungary may be free to take her rightful place among the nations.

The object of this is to encourage the present movement towards federalism in Austria, a movement which, if it is successful, will break the German-Magyar ascendancy. By injecting the idea of a possible cancellation of the war debts, it is hoped to encourage all the separatist tendencies as between Austria-Hungary and Germany, as well as the social revolutionary sentiment which poverty has stimulated.
Appendix 30: American reply to the Austro-Hungarian peace note

(declines to accept mere autonomy for Austria-Hungary's nationalities)

Appendix 31: Contemporary map of Europe 1878
(sample of contemporary political map of Europe)

Appendix 32: Map of Europe 1914
(shows countries belonging to the opposing blocks)

Source:
http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/maps/europe1914.htm
Appendix 33: Archives visited and groups of materials used

Materials from following archives and groups were used in this research. The list only includes the groups of materials that were quoted or extensively consulted in the process of preparation of the presented thesis. Many other groups were researched, but found not relevant for the research presentation.

**Austria:**

**Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv**

Legacies:
Nachlass Gustav Gross
Nachlass Josef Maria Baernreither
Nachlass Rudolf Höfke

Administrative Registratur:
Fach 4 K. und k. Ministerium des Äussern, Index Fach 4 bis Fach 6: 1907-1918, Geographie (1907-1918)
Fach 34 Handelspolitik (esp. Karton 90 – 94)
Fach 37 Handelsverträge nach Staaten ab 1909 (esp. Karton 67, 91, 94 and 97)

Politisches Archiv:
Series PAI Allgemeines und Österreich-Ungarn, 1848 – 1918, Karton 476, 501, 842

**Algemeine Verwaltungsarchiv/Kriegsarchiv**

Nachlass Richard Riedl

**Nationalbibliothek:**

Newspaper archive
ANNO service

**Czech Republic:**

**Národní Archiv České Republiky:**

Archiv Akademie věd České republiky
- T. G. Masaryk private papers: 1999 Inventory Registry no. 5019 – 5022
Vojenský historický archiv - Vojenský ústřední archiv
- Czech National Association in America papers: 1993 Inventory Registry no. 296
- Czechoslovak National Council Paris papers:
  - received correspondence, box 22, 44
  - sent correspondence, box 13, 28
  - propaganda department, box 51

Germany:

Bundesarchiv:

Legacies:
Nachlass Friedrich Naumann: Akten N3001/29

Reichskanzlei Stammakten, Abteilung I:
Gruppe 11, Handel unde Gewerbe: Akten 403 – 407 Mitteleuropäischer Wirtschaftsverein

BA Auswärtiges Amt, Handelspolitische Abteilung:
Oesterreich: Gestaltung der deutschen auswaertigen Handels- und Wirtschaftsbeziehungen nad em Kriege, 1914 – 1918, R901/ 3988 – 3999

Auswärtiges Amt:

Politisches Archiv:
Oesterreich 83, R 9019
Oesterreich 70, Geheim, Botschaft Wien: Deutsch-oesterreichischer Handelsvertrag 1906 - 1916 (esp. R 8552)
Deutschland 180, Geheim, Europäischer Staatenbund (esp. R 2593 – 2598)

United Kingdom:

National Archives:
Foreign Office documents series FO 371 General Correspondence 1906 – 1966, files:
- 1900
- 2241, 2602, 2806, 2864
- 3002, 3133 – 3136, 3443, 3474

FO 925 Maps and Plans. 1700 to 1944. (The principal collection of maps accumulated by the Foreign Office), file 30277
War Cabinet and Cabinet: Memoranda:
CAB 23, files: 7, 43
CAB 24, files: 10, 17, 19, 42, 47, 49, 50, 55, 61, 145, 148, 149
CAB 29, file 1
CAB 22 file 2

Documents included in series British Documents on Foreign Affairs

United States:

US National Archives:
Group 256: Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace; Series Special Reports and Studies, 1917 – 1918; The Inquiry Papers:
roll 1
roll 5
roll 6
roll 9
roll 13
roll 17
roll 18
roll 21

Documents included in series
Papers Relating to Foreign Relations of the United States 1916 – 1919
Foreign Relations of the United States, the Lansing Papers 1914 – 1920
Appendix 34: Andre Cheradame’s ‘What Germany wants?’ map
(in holdings of Foreign Office, circulated to staff in 1917)

Source: National Archives, FO 925/30277
Appendix 35: Illustrations of Harrison and Johnson Central Union pamphlet
(graphic illustrations of implications of lack of regional unity in the second world war work suggesting federation in the region)