

GERMANY AND ITS DIFFICULT SITUATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE / MITTELEUROPA

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Annotation. “Mitteleuropa” is a multi-faceted concept and as such difficult to handle. Its complexity derives not only from its origin as a German expression that cannot be translated properly, but rather from the fact that it contains implications on different levels – geography, economy and (geo)politics –, each of which is controversial and changing over time. This has not prevented Mitteleuropa from cyclical resurgence until the present, even though contexts have changed: Unlike in the 19th and early 20th century, it is no longer regarded an appropriate model for present political discussions. In fact, it appears to be a topic historians and politicians deal with in order to emphasize differences, especially in comparison with the European Union of today. Some good reasons account for this distanced treatment: first its amalgamation with powerpolitics and German hegemony, second its closeness to Friedrich Naumanns extensive concept of Mitteleuropa in the years before WWI and third its aggressive exaggeration and misuse by national socialism, the latter representing the peak of a development. Since then, all variants of Mitteleuropa have been discredited, and this holds also true for the idea as such, due to its potential to justify (or disguise) German supremacy on the continent. Given all that, it is hardly surprising that Mitteleuropa represents a kind of an infamous anti-blueprint to the peaceful process of European Integration after 1945.

Key words: Germany, Mitteleuropa, European Union, political discussion, hegemony, German supremacy.

In terms of scientific adequateness, however, this approach is not free from imbalances, since it underestimates the continuities arising from the idea of Mitteleuropa. It also tends to miss out some future-oriented elements within political concepts associated with this term. In order to illustrate these points, I will address the following three main aspects in this paper: - the formation of Mitteleuropa as an idea and a political concept since the 19th century and its rise to a central issue for public and political debates - the implications (in terms of geography, economy and politics) of different concepts and interpretations of Mitteleuropa - in my conclusion I will provide an overview and final evaluation of the unprogressive as well as future-oriented elements rooted in Mitteleuropa. The formation and rise of Mitteleuropa as an idea and a political concept since the 19th century There has never been a single, central discussion about Mitteleuropa, neither in the 19th century nor later. Rather, poets, intellectuals, journalists, geographers, economists and – of course – politicians developed various ideas in context of what they regarded as questions of their times and the future of the European continent especially [1].

The researcher Pieper exaggerates the continuity of hegemonic ideas and underestimates the unique character of the EU’s institutional setup and supranational character. At the same time, Pieper is unaware of the more tolerant concepts in

context with assumptions about the future of the Austrian-Hungarian double monarchy. shared, common and consensual concept of Mitteleuropa (not even -and especially not- in geographical terms). Therefore the question which and what kind of Mitteleuropa is in focus has to be answered specifically each time, taking various actors and their interpretations into account on the background of changing time and contexts. At first sight, one could say that the most significant characteristic of Mitteleuropa lies in its inherent German perspective: Either in the sense that the 'belated German nation' labelled its demand for territory with mitteleuropäisch considerations before the stage of statehood was reached, or in the sense that it served directly as a guiding principle for politics that seemed to arise naturally from a favourable geo-strategic position. However during the 19th century we witness the coexistence of this concept with another one: the Slavicinfluenced, Eastern- or Danube-Mitteleuropa, emphasizing a south-eastern perspective . This "dualism" of concepts – one western-oriented, one accenting the eastern or south-eastern perspective – continued to serve as main reference points in the 19th century. It is self-evident that both concepts bared diverging implications for geographic definitions of Mitteleuropa. In German language the term Mitteleuropa goes back to geographer Johann August Zeune (1778-1853), who used it in his book "Gea – Versuch einer wissenschaftlichen Erdbeschreibung" (Attempt for a scientific description of the earth). Published in 1808, Zeune tried to sketch a region between Europe's northern and southern part without at the same time emphasizing or insisting on a specific German role arising from its assumed central position on the continent. So in the first decade of the 19th century Mitteleuropa was as a term politically more neutral than ever after. But unlike Zeune, the awoken German national movement slightly began to transcend this neutral understanding. At this time, the German national movement was in statu nascendi, triggered and dialectically invigorated by the Napoleonic war of liberation (1813-15). Nevertheless, it set out to influence mitteleuropäisch thinking, even though a future German role and mission for Europe was still beyond the horizon of expectations. But soon there were other actors thinking more concretely about a future German nation state, its character, shape, size and relationship with the rest of Europe. Incorporated into these ideas was another aspect that became increasingly influential: the center position within Europe [2].

In other words, while for Zeune Mitteleuropa was primarily a term for geographical analysis and description, it contained for others a deeper and central meaning (in the double sense of the word). Given the fact of dispersed German settlements, regions and units on the continent, it was just a short way from here to a two-fold German 'mission' towards unification within Europe. Therefore the 'German question' was the core problem for any future concept of the continent, both in political and geo-strategic terms. Such interpretations became traceable soon after Zeune's book, in publications by e.g. K. Benecke (1810) or J.C.F. Gutschmuths (1821) [3]. The German publicist Ernst Moritz Arndt can be seen as one prominent representative for this position when he wrote: "We are set by god in the centre of Europe, we are the heart of our part of the world. Because we are in the centre, all the other peoples of Europe try to put us aside and try to wash us away. All

movements of the whole world seek to find their rest in our middle.” In this statement we see the seemingly objective analysis of geographical features transformed into a kind of objective task handed over to Germany, even though this task is not clearly defined in all of its consistencies yet. But in its consequence, the territorial unification of Germany was only the first step towards a wider unification of the rest of the continent. This makes Arndt’s position a telling example of the shift from an analysis to a concept with increasingly normative features. Economist Friedrich List was another influential voice in this debate. List made concrete assumptions about the economical situation of the ‘Deutscher Bund’ (German confederation) in his opus magnum “Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie” (The national system of political economics), published in 1841 [4]. Not only did List envision Germany’s future relations to the rest of the continent, far more, List saw an inevitable connection between economics and politics and its meaning not only for the formation of the German nation state, but for the continent and its position in the global competition for power and welfare.

In 1821, Johann Christoph Friedrich Gutsmuths edited (together with J.A. Jacoby) a historical ethnographical appendix to a geographical work on Germany under the title, „Deutsche Land und Volk“. In this book, Germany was described as „the Middle of Europe“.

In this context, List very emphatically argued for a customs union among the German Confederation in order to set up against economical pressure of the British Empire. List was convinced that Germany first needed to consolidate, politically and economically. Protectionism was the main strategy for achieving this aim; taxes, customs and border controls served as appropriate means. However for List this was only a transitional period before an economical strong Germany would be prepared and ready for trans-border cooperation, which would also allow for integrative forms of cooperation. Behind these assumptions stood the wide-spread expectation of emerging world empires that were believed to determine the future in global dimensions: The British Empire, the US, and Russia. Only a consolidated and strong Germany, lying at the heart of Europe, could act as a uniting force in and for Europe. This was essential for entering competition with the other world powers. List wrote: “As long as the centre of the continent has not reached its natural befitting position, a deeper unification of the European continent will be impeded (...) If Germany with its access to the sea, together with Holland, Belgium and Switzerland would constitute a strong commercial and political unit, this powerful national body would melt together all the institutions of the monarchist, dynastic and aristocratic interests and the institutions of the representative system (...). In this way, Germany could safeguard for a long time peace on the European continent and in the same moment constitute the centre of a lasting continental alliance”. What is remarkable in Lists argumentation is the close connection between economical and political aspects of a German leading role in Europe and Europe’s position in the global context. The accumulation of German power was regarded a natural precondition for general prosperity in Europe. Arising from a perceived power vacuum in the heart of Europe was the urge to settle Germany’s own affairs and those of the continent at the same time. In this context, List also supported the idea of establishing a system of

economic (and later political) cooperation with Austria-Hungary. South-Eastern Europe was widely believed to be a natural hemisphere of German influence, and the implicit consequences of List's argumentation went into the same direction. Moreover, List's similar proposal of a German-British alliance has to be seen in close connection with Germany's rise to power, because "Germany (...) would be able to fulfil its part of this agreement only if it dominated Mitteleuropa" [5].

Though List *expressis verbis* argued against open domination (and he was in fact an opponent to annexations or chauvinistic subjugation of Europe), he envisioned Germany as driving force behind the rise of Europe as a coming world power. In List's eyes, a German leadership position would be the natural result of economic dominance, leading – though not directly projected but appreciated – to a kind of indirect hegemony 'through the backdoor'. Especially the Balkans were seen as ideally suited for colonisation by Germany, and the cooperation with Austria-Hungary was the vehicle to bring about this silent domination by economical means. Needless to say that List, even in his comparably moderate argumentation, did not recognize the inherent tension between the principle of cooperation on one hand and the central position of Germany controlling the process as a main actor on the other hand. With remarkable implicitness the question why other European powers should accept or tolerate Germany as *primus inter pares* was left open. Another blind spot – though not unusual at that time – was the interpretation of the Balkan peoples as uncivilized, underdeveloped and incapable of self-administration: the sheer number and the (political as well as cultural) weight of Serbs, Bulgarians and Romanians was greatly underestimated, and with it the likeliness of urges and aspirations regarding national independence. In his concept, List argued for general positive effects of trans-border cooperation that could help legitimizing Germany's leading role – which is, in other words, output-legitimacy, arising from a moderate but nevertheless paternalistic approach towards the establishment of new economical and political structures. The preconditions and consequences of German dominance – may it be benevolent or not – was seen more clearly by other central actors in the German national movement like Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. Jahn alluded to the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation as a historical pattern when he wrote: "Our Reich may come!", creating a fusion of political, mythological and religious connotations in his plea for an extensive Germany – extensive in territory and power. With this perception of German speciality the existing ambivalence within Mitteleuropa – the inner tension between analytical and normative elements – became even more imbalanced: the rights of other nations for self-determination – still positively acknowledged by List – tended to be dwarfed by the almost objective German position and future role. Hardly surprising, chauvinism could connect with considerations such as Jahn's. In 1849, Friedrich Engels described Slavic peoples as „lacking history“ and „Barbarians who are not able for self-government“ [6].

An assumed cultural supremacy towards other nations, especially towards Slavic peoples in Europe, seemed to justify the cultural mission of Germans in Eastern and SouthEastern Europe, which Jahn and others supported; needless to say that the economical and political side effects from which Germany would profit most were also much appreciated by them. List and Jahn, different in their approaches but

both arguing for a strong future position of Germany, either through/by indirect effect and, finally, hegemony by economic and political strength (List), or by acting out cultural and military supremacy directly (Jahn) were two sides of the same coin: the assumption of a German mission not only for itself but also for the better for the rest of Europe, due to its geopolitical position. Vorschlag? List's and Jahn's approaches were two sides of the same coin: the assumption of a German mission not only for itself but also for the better for the rest of Europe, due to its geopolitical position. While List came up with /argued for an indirect effect and, in the end, hegemony by economic and political strength, Jahn was in favour of carrying out cultural and military supremacy directly. During the course of the 19th century, "Mitte", middle, center – seemingly objective attributions at first sight- became constricted and tapered as a label for political programmes with distinct normative features. This programme also found supporters in the German national movement and the parliament in the Paulskirche of Frankfurt in 1848/49. Liberals with großdeutsch aspirations still followed the Mitteleuropa narrative, since it seemed to go along well with a future (prosperous and powerful) German nation state: Before 1871, the großdeutsch concept combined the Habsburg Empire as well as the non-German parts of Austria, and this could be regarded obviously as a solution to the 'German question' beyond the concept of a single nation-state. As mentioned before, this understanding of Mitteleuropa competed with another concept in the same period. Czech Historian Frantisek Palacky¹⁸ lobbied – without success for a replacement of this German-centric view by an Eastern pendant, focussing on Austrian Hungary and especially on the smaller nations within the double monarchy. Palacky argued for the transformation into a federative system that was respecting the rights of selfdetermination. Of course the main objective here was to concede Czechs the same rights as the other nations of the Habsburg monarchy, and its second direction of impact was protection [7].

Against the thread of a future Germany becoming too powerful in Europe. However, neither its defensive nor its national and democratic implications could be realized under the given circumstances: Simply speaking there were no advocates amongst Europe's great powers of that time¹⁹, especially not for the democratic reforms this concept premised. So, for the time being, the German-centric view on Mitteleuropa prevailed. But soon after the battle of Königgrätz (Hradec Králové) in 1866, this mental connection began to dissolve. Bismarck's realization of the kleindeutsch option for a German nation state (without inclusion of Austria-Hungary) put an end to any further considerations about Mitteleuropa. The political and societal elite of the Kaiserreich accepted more and more the realities of that time which left little space for changes on the European map. But even then a mental connection to Mitteleuropa stayed attractive, in that sense that it continued to serve as a reference point for intellectual justification of the Reich. Even though reality – in terms of German territory – was disappointing großdeutsch and kleindeutsch actors alike, the pre-existing idea of cultural hegemony and supremacy began to flourish anew. Hence, on a cultural level, the 'German mission' for Europe found supporters, especially among the academic and intellectual elites of the Reich, and in this interpretation the spacious imagination of Mitteleuropa was able to survive

and be ready for new influences arising from political and societal developments during the Kaiserreich. In other words, the culturalnational elements as well as the dimension of emancipation, rooted within traditional national thinking, came under pressure and became more and more threatened by an ideological 'roll back'. Some of these developments can be briefly described with the term imperialism. The nation state began to be inflated to a mythological, if not religious, entity, and this opened up space for chauvinism towards other nations and peoples. The pre-existing idea of German cultural influence in Europe – still alive in the early years of the Kaiserreich – grew stronger on the background of European nation states entering a competition for power, prestige and supremacy. However, in practical terms, in the final years of the 19th century this had little effect on politics or economy, because the German industry did not concentrate on Mitteleuropa due to the transatlantic orientation of its trade relations (especially those of the new and powerful branches like the electrical, engineering or chemical industry). By the Austrian-Hungarian balancing act (Österreich-ungarischer Ausgleich, 1866) the double monarchy emerged as a multi-ethnic state, in which in both of its parts differences continued to exist, e.g. in constitutional law, electoral law. The pre-existing problem of national and ethnic minorities and their role remained unsolved, creating centrifugal forces which –in the long run– undermined the stability of this political construction[8].

Nevertheless ideologically and culturally, the feeling of superiority gained influence, and it was a question of political and economical circumstances if this would bring about changes on the level of official politics of the Reich as well. Until then, the debate about Mitteleuropa had close connections to an inner-German debate also, especially at the turn of the century: „The German Mitteleuropa debate was becoming embroiled in a larger conflict over the future development of German society. The key question was: should Germany become an 'industrial state' or try to remain an 'agrarian state'? It was a debate over Germany's social and political structures as much as over its economic policy”. The government of the Kaiserreich therefore did not act as an official supporter of mitteleuropäisch concepts in order to keep its balancing position and to ease the existing antagonisms within the German society.

This did not prevent Mitteleuropa from being increasingly associated with elements of imperialist thinking, and even for anti-semitism it served as an appropriate projection screen. When in 1904 the 'Mitteleuropäischer Wirtschaftsverein' (Middle European Economical Association) was founded, it acted as a pressure group towards informal imperialism in South-Eastern Europe by economical means: in a step-by-step-approach, the Balkans, then the Near East and finally the Far East could be addressed as the next regions for silent domination, first in economical, later in political and military terms. However, this never reached the stage of official politics, besides concrete plans for the establishment of the Bagdad-railway. But it illustrates the continued popularity and publicity of Mitteleuropa in German public. The rise of publications dealing with mitteleuropäisch themes and topics reached its peak just before the First World War. The infamous "Septemberprogramm" (September Programme) of 09.09.1914, which was a memorandum by the Reichkanzler (Chancellor of the Reich) Bethmann-Hollweg,

tried to answer public demands for German continental expansion in anticipation of a short and victorious World War. It sketched agreements on customs and trade between not less than the countries of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria-Hungary and Poland – all of them neighbouring countries of Germany, and eventually also Italy, Sweden, Norway. On the surface of this construction, each of its members should have equal rights, but – as the text declared in stupendous frankness – “actually [this union] should stand under German [9]. Agreements on customs and traffic, direct foreign investments were seen as the instruments, by which – over time – also a political and military dependence from Germany would surely follow. See also “Der Erste Weltkrieg” of Volker Berghahn, who in this context also uses the term „informal empire“ in context with the Balkan region, leadership and secure economical supremacy of Germany in Mitteleuropa” [10]. The status of this document is disputed among historians. It seems to carry defensive character in order to counteract the by far more outreaching and extensive plans for domination of the extreme right on the political spectrum (whose representatives argued for open and direct annexations by military force). Nevertheless, if it would have been realized, the ‘September programm’ would have changed the map of Europe in the sense that Germany – being in a semihegemonic position already – would have become the dominating power in Europe. Again, a little echo of List’s conception can be perceived here: The indirect effects of economic influence were now used by intention as a strategic instrument in order to hide German ambitions for power. Other differences arose from the geographical focus of these plans and concepts: While List was more oriented towards South-Eastern Europe, the ‘Septemberprogramm’ put North-Western Europe into focus, partly as a reaction to assumed developments on the military level (frontlines etc.).

Another concept of this time was more related to a different geographical shape of Mitteleuropa. Liberal publicist Friedrich Naumann had a great success with his book “Mitteleuropa”, using the term prominently as a title. Published in 1914, it was – after the autobiography of Bismarck – in terms of publicity and sales the most successful publication during the Kaiserreich. Naumann envisioned a union between Germany and Austria-Hungary as forming a core, to which the smaller countries in the southeast should connect themselves, but based upon free will and motivated by the positive outcomes of economic cooperation. Even Poland and the Baltic states were in focus of this federation of states. Naumann was convinced that other countries should be won by conviction and free decision, not by force or indirect domination, and consequently equal powers of all of its members should truly be guaranteed and not just serve as a cover. Naumann’s model included the right for selfdetermination and religious tolerance – elements hardly to be found in other concepts, especially not in those of the extreme right. However, Naumann’s concept was based upon conditions that were neither given at that time nor likely to be established soon under present circumstances: Given the antagonisms in Germany, it was unrealistic to expect the development of a liberal policy from the authoritarian regime. Self-restriction was not the main pattern in which the Kaiserreich conducted its policies in the time of imperialism, and by its official ideology it rather raised than restricted public expectations towards German dominance and territorial

expansion. Even in the unlikely event of the emergence of such a policy change it would have had negative feedback effects by the influential chauvinist and imperialist groups within German society, which would lead to undermining the power basis of the German government [11].

Taking into consideration all this detail, Naumann's proposal was highly unlikely to be carried out, because it presupposed not existing framing conditions. It can also be doubted if the inherent tendency towards a German role of *primus inter pares* could have been prevented in the long run – as Naumann's concept suggested it could be done –, due to the economic strength and the overall powerful position Germany filled already. However a unique feature of Naumann's concept was the untypical reflection about and the acknowledgment of other nation's rights along with the intended guarantee of cultural as well as religious tolerance. This demonstrated Naumann – with the beforementioned limitations – to be a moderate representative of a *Mitteleuropa*-conception in the last years of the *Kaiserreich*. Trans-border cooperation, beginning from the small field of economic cooperation, was in fact a future-oriented pattern, even though it took two World Wars until it served as a guideline for the establishment of a lasting peace order in Europe. Conclusion *Mitteleuropa* is a historical-political term with spatial or geographical implications. During the 19th century it received influences from different sources, the German national movement as well as from assumptions made in context with the future of the Austrian-Hungarian double monarchy. In the early years of the 19th century, the term was widely undefined, undetermined in focus and function and therefore open to different uses and interpretations. Even at this time, it showed some ambivalent features that were decisive for its future transformation as a keyword in political discourses: Mainly the coexistence of analytical besides normative levels of meaning. This double characteristic served as a precondition for the peculiar use of the term and – finally – as a term used for disguising German ambitions for domination of Europe. During the course of the 19th century, these two levels became increasingly undistinguishable. In context with the German national movement, *Mitteleuropa* represented an ideal orientation for the expected and yearned for German nation state. Since then, the neutral, descriptive side of the term was constantly becoming weaker, and with it the future-oriented elements like respect for other nation's rights (self-determination), religious and ethnical tolerance and all concepts of trans-border-cooperation beyond the traditional pattern of hegemonic structures that were also characteristics of *mitteleuropäisch* ideas of that time. A late echo of some of these future-oriented elements can be perceived in Friedrich Naumann's *Mitteleuropa*, but it is also a telling fact that it had no chance of being realized due to contradicting framing conditions of that time. Another characteristic of *Mitteleuropa* is the difficulty to define its scope: Dependent on the concept dealt with (and with the different and always changing hierarchy of economical and political aspects within) and from the mode in which a cross-border-entity should be established (domination, hegemony and imperialism or - claimed (fictious/ artificial/pretended?) or real - cooperation of equal parties), each author had a different region in mind in terms of geography. Answers to the question "What is *Mitteleuropa*" were at no time consensual, and this also accounted for the role

Germany was supposed to play in these concepts. What remains from this historical discussion?

First of all, the long-lasting discussion about cooperation and – eventually- integration and unification of European states and regions. Implicitly, what we can perceive behind all these concepts is the conviction of numerous mutual interdependencies existing within Europe and determining its future. It is somehow tragic that it took two World Wars and the repeated devastation of Europe until those futureoriented elements were remembered and – in a changed context of time – carried out. Since then, Mitteleuropa as a term of art has lost its attractiveness, so it can no longer be used positively in order to lobby for an “ever closer union”²⁵ between European states, due to its inherent ambivalences and the distrust its use inevitably produces. The suspiciousness against this term by non-Germans is somehow justified by the dominating strategic use of the term especially in the public of the Kaiserreich. It is because of these ambivalences that Mitteleuropa continues to be associated only with its historically proved negative and destructive potential. Maybe it is time to become aware of its progressive elements as well. Thinking about Mitteleuropa may also help us to become aware of the close connection between economic cooperation and political and military power. Especially smaller nation’s present aloofness and fears would become comprehensible, and it would help us not to be blind towards the normative implications of political plans and actions in today’s process of integration. Historically well-informed self-reflection, therefore, seems to serve best as a protection against self-righteousness, paternalism and dominance of others, in its intended as well as in its unintended form.

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ГЕРМАНИЯ ЖӘНЕ ОНЫҢ ОРТАЛЫҚ ЕУРОПАДАҒЫ ҚИЫН ЖАҒДАЙЫ / ОРТА ЕУРОПА

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Аңдатпа. "Орта Еуропа" - бұл көп қырлы тұжырымдама, оны шешу қиын. Оның күрделілігі оның неміс өрнегі ретінде пайда болуынан туындайды, оны дұрыс аудару мүмкін емес, бірақ оның әртүрлі деңгейлердегі салдары бар – географиялық, экономикалық және (географиялық) саяси – әрқайсысы бір-біріне қарама-қайшы және уақыт өте келе өзгереді. Бұл Орта Еуропаның осы уақытқа дейін циклдік қайта туылуына кедергі келтірмеді, дегенмен контекст өзгерді: 19-шы және 20-шы ғасырдың басынан айырмашылығы, ол қазіргі саяси пікірталастар үшін қолайлы модель болып саналмайды. Шын мәнінде, бұл тарихшылар мен саясаткерлер, әсіресе қазіргі Еуропалық Одақпен салыстырғанда, айырмашылықтарды атап өту үшін айналысатын тақырып. Мұндай алыстатылған көзқарасты кейбір жақсы себептер түсіндіреді: біріншіден, оның билік саясатымен және неміс гегемониясымен бірігуі, екіншіден, оның бірінші дүниежүзілік

соғысқа дейінгі жылдардағы Орта Еуропа Фридрих Науманның кең тұжырымдамасына жақындығы, үшіншіден, оның агрессивті асыра сілтеуі және Ұлттық социализмді теріс пайдалануы, соңғысы дамудың шыңын білдіреді. Содан бері Орта Еуропаның барлық нұсқалары беделге ие болды және бұл идея үшін де жарамды, өйткені оның құрлықтағы Германияның үстемдігін ақтау (немесе маска жасау) мүмкіндігі бар. Осының бәрін ескере отырып, миттелеуроптың 1945 жылдан кейінгі еуропалық интеграцияның бейбіт процесінің өзіндік антипроектісі екендігі таңқаларлық емес.

Тірек сөздер: Германия, Орта Еуропа, Еуропалық Одақ, саяси пікірталас, гегемония, неміс Үстемдігі.

ГЕРМАНИЯ И ЕЁ СЛОЖНОЕ ПОЛОЖЕНИЕ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ / СРЕДИННАЯ ЕВРОПА

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Аннотация. «Срединная Европа» - это многогранная сложная концепция. Её сложность проистекает не только из её происхождения как немецкого выражения, которое не может быть переведено должным образом, но скорее из того факта, что оно содержит последствия на разных уровнях - географическом, экономическом и (географическом) политическом – каждый из которых противоречив и меняется с течением времени. Это не помешало «Срединной Европе» циклически возрождаться до настоящего времени, хотя контекст изменился: в отличие от 19-го и начала 20-го века, она больше не считается подходящей моделью для нынешних политических дискуссий. На самом деле, это, по-видимому, тема, которой занимаются историки и политики, чтобы подчеркнуть различия, особенно по сравнению с сегодняшним Европейским союзом. Некоторые веские причины объясняют такое дистанцированное отношение: во-первых, его слияние с политикой власти и немецкой гегемонией, во-вторых, близость к концепции «Срединной Европы» Фридриха Науманна в годы до Первой мировой войны и, в-третьих, её агрессивное преувеличение и злоупотребление национал-социализмом, последний представляет собой пик развития. С тех пор все варианты «Срединной Европы» были дискредитированы. И это справедливо и для идеи как таковой из-за её способности оправдывать (или маскировать) шосподство Германии на континенте. Учитывая все это, неудивительно, что «Срединная Европа» представляет собой своего рода печально известный антипроект мирного процесса европейской интеграции после 1945 года.

Ключевые слова: Германия, Срединная Европа, Европейский союз, политическая дискуссия, гегемония, немецкое превосходство

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