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Passage to a New Europe during the First World War

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Abstract

It is well known that the First World War marks a passage to a Europe of nation states. Four empires dismantled and a dozen of new states declared their independence. In this paper, I argue that the transition in the mind goes stepwise, but that it has path-breaking consequences that still defines the thinking of Europe. The outbreak of the war was by many literates understood as a loss of a unified culture, while others kept recognizing a European culture or a common civilization. In the paper, I pay attention to wartime visions of a future Europe, mainly in Central Europe and Britain. Especially is followed the notion of a New Europe and its different implications regarding national self-determination.

When H. G. Wells exclaimed 'Nationalities will out' during the First World War, the notion of self-determination was a controversial concept of key importance. Significantly, neither Wells nor many other supporters of similar declarations, backed wide spread national independence. Europe rather came out as a place of nation states only late at war and often reluctantly. However, some embraced it for offering an alternative to the Imperial system of Europe, hoping it should lay the ground for a new internationalism and for a Europe in peace.

The paper rounds up with further comments on the outcome of the war and its impact on thinking Europe in a broader sense as well as on the European idea of a shared federation.

Keywords: visions of Europe, New Europe, Mitteleuropa, self-determination, independence..

After only a few months of warfare, speculations began of what Europe would look like when the war was over. No doubt, it would not be the same as before. Many insisted that the old Europe was dead, that the visions of the Congress of Vienna finally had collapsed, and that neither the congress system of the Vienna treaty nor the coalitions system of the prewar years were possible to continue, as they were part of the problem. It was time to look for new principles of international relations and for a way to settle border issues that would not fuel new fires. New expectations of the future spread around, including hopes for new ethical standards and international law.ⁱ Some asked for a new way of thinking: 'The coming reformation of the European politics and culture can only emanate from a better philosophy, then the one that dominates our rulers', as expressed by the Swizz art historian who in 1914 defended German expansion but from war experiences had converted into a pacifist and socialist.ⁱⁱ However, the centerpiece for the discourse was the rights of nationalities and the rectifying of nationalities' dismemberments.

A hundred years ago, Europe had less than twenty states. In reality it was even less, as Belgium and Luxemburg were occupied by Germany. With the integration of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern Empires, it looked like Central Europe was moving in direction towards a large German lead state or federation. At the very same time, there were motions for a Europe of an increasing number of states encouraged by the Allies' demand of restored independence for the occupied countries. In the East, Ukrainian and Moravian nationalists exclaimed declarations of independence late in 1917. Nationalists in the Habsburg lands were on foot for independence. One outcome of the First World War is a period of declarations of independence in Europe, thus following the American examples from the early nineteenth century, as outlined by intellectual historian David Armitage (2013).

In this paper, I will focus on the breakthrough of the idea of Europe consisting of independent nation states. I will do this in three steps. Firstly, by looking on the prerequisites and from what ideas the transition took place. This includes the view that states could not survive if too small. Secondly, by taking a close look at the wartime

visions for a future Europe of national self-determination until the point when the notion of national independence was accepted. Thirdly, by focusing on the notion of a New Europe.

For the history writing, this change may look inevitable and as a prolongation of the nineteenth century nationalist movements. It may also appear, as the transition was easy to adopt. In reality, it came neither easy nor inevitable. For the history of ideas, it is not the treaties or political decisions that are emphasized. The idea of a Europe consisting of independent nation states is neither something that enters and defines Europe from the Versailles Treaty, nor is it a grand idea flying in the air ready for historical actors to take hold on. Instead, people design them while they are living in specific times and places. By looking at the ideas presented under the buzzword the New Europe we will see that the transition of the mind only set through reluctantly and only with limited scope. The segment of thinking Europe that is of special importance for this paper, comprise visions that programmatically considers the future of Europe. As my approach is to look for the transition in the mind, I take advantage of documents that reflect on the issue. Of special interest are the more developed elaborations in books and journals that mirrors visions of a new Europe.

Blessings of largeness

It is an easy task to count the states of Europe before and after the war. We will see that the number increased radically. If we move further back in time, we can see that the number of states decreased during the “long nineteenth century”. Of course, Greece and Belgium gained independence and so did Bulgaria and Romania as the Ottoman Empire stepwise was losing its grip on the Balkan. However, by the unification of Germany and Italy the main motion seemed to be towards larger states. This fitted very well together with a theological understanding of modern history that included a progress from small units to larger ones. XXX 1 PAGE XXX Historical philosophy XXX Nationalists of Austria

In Europe of the mind, dominating cultures need space and legitimate expansion could be called for. Britain had an empire across the oceans. France was in Africa and Southeast Asia, Russia had stretched out in the Fareast. Would not a significant culture like the German have the opportunity to do the same? Often acclaimed, was that German culture was of significance and as such, it had a legitimate right of expansion as the other leading European nations had done. One receipt offered to end the war was to make sure that Germany had some space for expansion. Even British pacifists expressed such an idea, to the vexation of H. G. Wells: ‘I cannot understand those Pacifists that talk about the German right to “expansion,” and babble about a return of her justly lost colonies.’ⁱⁱⁱ

The most noteworthy idea of a European Empire of the period takes the war to be a grand and powerful creator of a continent with less borders. It followed the historical trend of a thrift towards larger political units. It kept to the idea that smaller units are disappearing together with less successful national cultures. It envisaged a successful expansion of the German culture throughout a broadly defined ‘Mitteleuropa’.^{iv} The pleas for a federation of Austria and Germany together with some of its neighboring states had a renaissance from 1913 with a range of accounts and pamphlets written mainly by Germans and to some degree by Austrians.^v Some were conservative and some belonged to German liberalism. Generally, they confirmed the deeds of Prussia to unite Germany and argued that the German Emperor should take command of the new ‘Mitteleuropa’.^{vi}

Incorporated is a notion of a cultural community. Franz von Liszt, professor of law at the Berlin school of commerce, saw a specific German culture of language, art, science and technology that he places as the fundament of a shared culture of ‘Mitteleurope’. Hans Mühlstein, a Swizz art historian, envisaged Germany’s mission to spread its culture and to reach world power. He found legitimacy for this task in the spiritual renewal that Germany had already accomplished for Europe since the sixteenth century, with Luther and the Reformation, the music of Bach, the philosophy of Kant and the discoveries of Copernicus. That spirit has permeated the nations in the middle of Europe, Mühlstein writes in the weeks following August 1, and adds optimistically and high-pitched that its peoples is the heart of humanity that now has to manifest itself in the shape of a shared body.^{vii}

Friedrich Naumann’s *Mitteleuropa* was the best-seller in this literature during the First World War. Published 1915 it had within a year sold one hundred thousand copies and was, or would soon be, translated into Italian, French, English and Swedish. It became the most influential of all German writings on the subject.^{viii} Naumann

was a liberal of the Wilhelmine era that pleaded for social reforms, but also a theologian that favored a strong Germany and its expansion.^{ix}

For Naumann it is now or never: blood flows and nations are set in motion. Now is time to unite the states between Russia and the British-French allies. The war has given the opportunity for state men to show greatness. After it will be too late. Writing in the early war feeling of strong optimism, he urges to create 'Mitteleuropa'.^x

In the historical determinism of Naumann there is a development from the making of small states to larger entities. Just as gross production developed within industry, it would concern the organization of states. The world would not any more contain many states but continentl or world states like Russia, America and Great Britain, or large federations. Thus, it was necessary to form a federation of 'Mitteleuropa'. The smaller nationalities in the area did not have a future as independent states. 'It is painful, but that is how the world history wants it: political small business needs alignment.' There was still place for the small nations in the 'Mitteleuropa' of Naumann, he said that the Hungarian and some of the Slavic nations will not be possible to Germanize as there uniqueness was too developed, nonetheless they cannot be sovereign states. The very foundation for 'Mitteleuropa' would be the German people, with their superior culture, language and capacity to organize, but harmony could only come if the other languages had some space beside German.^{xi} Needed was a Middle-European spirit with a consciousness of a shared history and culture that had been made possible thanks to a historical process of the German awakening during the nineteenth century which was completed with the unifying of the German states.^{xii} From 'Germaneness will grow a Middle-European culture'.^{xiii}

Naumann argues for a new organization of a European region. He observes a historical movement towards ever larger unites of which he approves loudly. Still, he acknowledges the existence of smaller nationalities, sees a development among these towards more advanced culture and does not recommend their assimilation into German nationality; the Hungarian and Slavic nationalities are there to stay. He offers a twofold answer of how to organize the area. Firstly comes the creation of a federation, with one political leadership and a common economic block. Secondly, there will be many nationalities living within this federation among which the German is superior and will civilize the others.

The propagating for 'Mitteleuropa' continued after Naumann's book with many further publications. In Germany and Austria his work was mostly praised and the existence of 'Mitteleuropa' was considered as an accomplished fact as the realities of war had forged a unity of Germany and the Habsburg Empire.^{xiv}

Visions of self-determination

When H. G. Wells was forecasting the future in 1917, he saw the termination coming of European expansion. The Empires of Europe was first halted in America, now the extension was about to end in Asia and Africa would follow. The age of the empires was about to end. 'The days of suppression are over.'^{xv} In this he would be right even if not that soon as he foreshadowed, and the fall of the Empires was a theme that would haunt Europe in the mind for the coming decades. However, there were still grandiose plans for the Empires and not only for a German 'Mitteleuropa'. Wells himself was putting much effort in forecasting how the dominions would continue to be British in the age to come. Britain should release some of its grip on its territories, accepting that they have interest and need to develop relations with neighboring countries. Instead, the feeling of Britishness should develop, keeping Canada, India, the African and other territories together by a sense of community rather than by fierce power.^{xvi} In his deliberations, Wells reflects a growing attention to the conditions for political organization in the world and in Europe that many writers manifested. A central asset for this was the nationalities.

In 1917 Wells saw a new age dawning, an age of nationalities. He observed a fundamental motion of nations in a growth of maturation and estimated that once a nation had reached beyond a barbaric state, it wanted to make its own way, will not accept foreign suppression. 'Nations will out!', nations want to freely develop their possibilities. The consciousness of being Egypt and Polish will live on in spite of foreign dominion.^{xvii} For Wells the nationality principle was applicable in regions where there are homogenous nationalities. However on 'the natural map of mankind', he founds areas of a much more complexity. In some regions where religious and/or linguistic borders inter foliate the nationalities, it was better to adopt a canton system of the Swizz kind

that accepted some differences but still kept the state together. Moreover, some cities and regions are the homes for many nationalities and in effect international places. He wants those ruled in conjunction with the affected nations, in the form of a union between the peoples concerned.^{xviii} In Europe, he pointed out the region between Germany and Russia as troublesome, with nations neither mature nor big enough to stand by their own. The Poles and the peoples of the Habsburg Empire had unique nationalities that would not let them assimilate, but continue to cause much conflicts if left by themselves. A union between the west Slavic nations might be a solution for the region, but he evaluated it impossible to implement and retain it because of the interests of Germany and Russia to keep such a construction under its own rule.^{xix}

Obviously, Wells saw the end for an epoch of empires and the coming of a new one of nationalities. However, just as he was halfhearted when he rebutted the empires he could not believe in independence for smaller nations as a general pattern for Europe.

Wells was illustrating a strand of thinking that was strong. Arnold Toynbee, the conservative historian, confessed to nationality as the prime form of organization in Europe. Still, he saw no possibilities for most nationalities in Central and Eastern Europe to exist as independent states. The Czech were to mixed up with Austrian and German economy, the Slavs on the Balkan will do best in a shared customs union, the nationalities of the North-East can only express themselves within the Russian Empire. Only few people were grown up to nationality and independency, most were 'undoubtedly unripe for it.'^{xx} Furthermore, the liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith attested Britain to the nationality principle and an imperialist minded London journalist defended the independence of 'many of the smaller nations'. However, when listing them they both just like Wells and Toynbee only addressed nation states that were in existence before the war.^{xxi} Similarly by an association of women from both warring and neutral countries. Already a Haag meeting in 1915 of the International committee of Women for permanent Peace, demanded in a declaration 'Respect for nationality /.../ recognizing the right of the people to self-government'. In the mind was Belgium, whose occupation roared the minds outside Germany and Austria, and the right of the inhabitants of South Tyrol, Alsace and Schleswig to choose themselves in a referendum to which state they wanted to belong.^{xxii} But of other nations they said nothing.

We can make the same observation in other discourses. There were many examples of writers and activists that considered imperialism a cause behind the war.^{xxiii} John Hobson, who had made the notion popular among leftists in the early years of the century, saw the war as the outcome of imperialistic policies by the European powers in the past and related to militarism and financial penetrations of foreign countries.^{xxiv} Wells pointed out Germany as the main representative of Imperialism with a policy he found aggressive, cowardly, undemocratic and without recognition of the rights of the nationalities.^{xxv} In such rhetoric, national independence and the right of people to determine their own future was essential for constructing a road to lasting peace. However, focus was on existing nation states while the nationality issue in Europe concerned many minorities without a state in the Austrian, German, Russian and the Ottoman Empires.

Both the Allies and the Central Powers used the nationality issue for their own cause and took steps to empower nationality movements that could disintegrate the resources of the enemy. From Germany and Austria-Hungary nationality rights and bodies were promised to Finland and in the Baltic region, for the Flemish in Belgium, to Ukraine and Moravia and the Poles in the former Russian government of Warsaw. Britain turned to the exiled Belgian government with guarantees for restored independence, to the nationalities of Habsburg with promises of self-determination and raised hopes among the Poles to reunite the divided nation. However, German policies for Poles within the Reich gave them no hope and the rulers in Vienna long denied more national rights to the Slaves and became hostile towards nationality movements as the war broke out. The rulers in London would neither listen to a Welsh campaign for federal autonomy, nor to the Irish demands for national rights. Instead Irish leaders were arrested and as protests against British rule escalated people were killed. The new Bolshevik regime of Russia accepted that the nations were free to decide whether to form a state with other nations or to be independent and this also addressed its own non-Russian nations. But in reality it intervened in one way or the other in Ukraine, Bessarabia/Moravia and Finland after their declarations of independence.^{xxvi} /KÄLLA/

A sign of the amplitude of the notion of nationality is that it entered the minds of socialists and social democrats and forced them to revise it as something to defend. Not only were they pleading for internationalism, as before the war. Not only did they support the governments in the declarations of war in 1914, as they during the war became more opposed to it. Even Lenin, who rallied against all talk, comments and noise made about nationality as capitalist propaganda, recognized the right of nationalities to liberation from oppressing states.^{xxvii} Some went further and took the standpoint that nationality was an issue of the same importance as class struggle, and

noticed that there are nationalities that does not have their proper states. Leaders of Social democracy in Germany and Austria wrote in length on the topic. Karl Kautsky underlined that freedom was crucial not only for the large or for culturally more advanced nations, but for all nations and treated their self-determination as a main issue for Europe's future. However, from this did not follow that he welcomed new states, as he made a clear distinction between self-determination and independence. His notion of a state included economic unity of trade with a free market and external customs and military possibility to defend itself behind borders. To form a nation state, he adds as essential to have community of language and indicates that some nationalities are simply too small to form one. In that case, a national culture and language are still important for democracy and minorities' rights to express themselves.^{xxviii} In line with these arguments declared his party in 1917 that occupied Belgium and Serbia ought to retain their freedom, besides that Poland, Finland and Ireland should be welcomed as independent states, while other minority nationalities should be settle with autonomy within their states.^{xxix}

The nationality question had a special resonance in Austrian Empire. Before the War, it lived through a long period of stability. Conflicts between nationalities did not threaten its construction, because nationalists with few exceptions wanted to keep the empire intact. It is true that the Pan-German movement of George Schönerer wanted the German parts of Austria to break out and join Germany, but they won only little support and remained a small fraction of the Austrian parliament.^{xxx} Slavic nationalists won supporters in their objective to expand national autonomy when they called for the right to use their vernaculars in administration, but the lion share of them were loyal to the state. The war, deliberately started by the leaders of the monarchy, changed the Austrian mind frame. The army did not live up to the standards of modern warfare and could hardly win a battle without support of German troops. The insight grew that the war was leading into a disaster for the Habsburg state. Soon it was both military and economically in the hands of Germany. A custom union was enforced and the monarchy was well on its way to become an integrated part of a German dominated 'Mitteleuropa'.^{xxxi}

These were all vain efforts to find ground for an Austria of nations that would have a future after the war, as the Dual Monarchy slipped in under German power which undermined its political and economic sovereignty. The dynasty with the new Kaiser lost influence to the German brother in arms. For the Slav nationalists to stay within the Austrian state, seemed to promise a future with weak possibilities for self-determination. The military offensive by the Central powers in 1918 ended in a grand failure and the state was breaking up. It was of no help that the young emperor Charles had initiated a plan for reorganization of the state after federal principles. The main nationalities declared themselves independent and the emperor had to abdicate.

Looking for a New Europe

The notion of a new Europe became a buzzword that mainly appeared in the allied countries and with focus on the statues of nationality as a fundamental asset for a coming political order in Europe. In 1915, the new Europe of Arnold Toynbee consisted of interconnected nations unified in culture and language. In some cases, a nation represented an economic unity by itself and otherwise it had to belong to a group of nations. The mature nationality is for Toynbee a phase in the social evolution and each nation may reach that state of being in due time. He echoes a stagist theory of history when he offers immature nations to follow the most advanced ones in Europe and calls for the responsibility of the latter not to cause damage by mere economic interests or by conflicts over foreign territories. However, he also adds elusively that nationality is not the final stage and hopes for a future with an international authority by which nations transcend nationality.^{xxxii} Apparently, the early talk of a new Europe was vague and shadowed behind the effort to discredit Prussianism and the present German regime. For Toynbee Germany was not fit for a new Europe. Its Prussian code and dynastic ambitions found less appeal in a democratic minded public and was not applicable to a political organization of Europe build on nations. Its concept of nationality only represented brute power and domination and was 'a menace to our civilization' as it turned to German glory in the Medieval past and focused on territorial inclusion, while the British represented all a modern nation should be; 'a spiritual experience and self-expression of a human society' that represented democracy and co-operation.^{xxxiii}

Without a doubt, there were quite some talking about a new Europe from different angles; "The expression 'New Europe', which is used daily, is very vague, it covers territorial Europe, social Europe, political Europe", wrote the socialist inclined journalist Paul Louis.^{xxxiv} In *L'Europe Nouvelle*, which is also from 1915, he stated that French, Germans, British and neutrals alike rejected a return to the order of pre August 1914; the Germans

aimed for expansion, while the others ruled out Germany from being in such a position. For Louis the war was a historical moment of the same magnitude as the French Revolution, when an old era is left and a new one is to begin. In the new Europe, the will of the people and the nationality principle should rule such that 'there were no more oppressed, despoiled mutilated peoples.'^{xxxv}

This makes him another example of a socialist that put much weight on the nationalities, although he does neither make language define it nor religion or historical memory, but the accord of the people. For instance, one nation can consist of more than one language and one language may exist in several countries. The new Europe will discard the order from the treaty of Vienna and the Prussian, Bismarckian and Pan-German doctrine of territorial expansion, whose 'monstrous ambitions' have tortured the French in Alsace-Lorraine, the Danish in Schleswig and Holstein, and most of all the western Poles. Some plebiscites can be accurate to let the people decide where to belong, but Louis sees only Poland as capable to form a new independent state. Finland should have autonomy within the Russians state. Austro-Germans, Czechs and Hungarians were to form a tripartite state with equal rights of its three nationalities. Other parts of Habsburg would be included in the expanding territories of Italy, Serbia and Romania. A reoccurring argument is that nations must be large and populous enough to form a state. Logically, Louis dismisses the prewar independency of Luxemburg and includes it in Belgium. This he concludes, will be a Europe with nor more enslaved people, because each nationality has its freedom, and that would increase the guarantees for peace.^{xxxvi}

Neither by Louis, nor by his ideological antipode Toynbee was the new Europe an opportunity for new nation states to step forward. However, they resonated a changing mind regarding the significance of small nations. A Swedish envoy in Paris late 1915 commented in his diary after meeting representatives of the government and leading politicians that they looked with new eyes upon the small states and had begun to appreciate their importance. Not only were they interested in closer economic ties with Sweden, but testified their willingness to support the Finnish claim for self-determination or even independence.^{xxxvii} Louis argues that these nations – representing states of the second rank - without the power and grandeur of the main European powers nonetheless have an important part to play in establishing buffer zones. When the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland, Switzerland and Denmark are free, they constitute passages between the states of the first rank and reduce the risk of their direct confrontation. The small nations have nothing to win from starting wars they are bound to loose. Instead, they fear war and their peacefulness contributes balance in Europe. They are leaning towards democratic and liberal governance, concerned of the freedoms of its citizens and have giving exile to expatriates. They are progressive in many aspects regarding both their own countries, for civilization and for the international relations. Louis' song of praise concludes that in the rejuvenated Europe, small states will be of greater importance than before.^{xxxviii} But he does not see that new states can be erected. In spite of all tribute paid to their literature, art, science and innovative minds, the postwar European states of Louis will keep to almost exactly the same nations as before. A reorganized Europe with changed territorial borders? –Yes. A Europe with more nations holding states? –No.

One origin of the pleadings for new nation states was by the Czech nationalist Thomáš Masaryk. It was as an alternative to Austrian, German and Russian dominance of the West Slavic nationalities that he began to talk of a Central Europe of free and democratic states. In his earlier books on Czech nationality he neither talked about a Central Europe, nor put the future of the Czech people in connection with other nations of a Central European region, nor pleaded for an independent Czech state.^{xxxix} However, from 1912 he became more opposed to the governance of Austria and expressed indignation at the throne, the aristocracy and the Czech elites. He called the Czech and the other minor Austrian nations to reach out as far as possible for cultural and political self-determination. Even at that time, he considered it impossible to form an independent Czech nation outside the Austrian Empire. Only the war and the possibility to gain support from the allies made him change his mind.^{xl}

The war forced Masaryk into exile and he arrived to England in March 1915, where he set out to campaign for Czech independence by establishing influential contacts, writing petitions to the minister of foreign affairs and collaboration with the weekly *The New Europe*. He took every opportunity to plea for freedom for the peoples of Central Europe and tried to convince the British public that such an aim was in line with the interest of the allies to win the war. He contended that the allies would soon defeat a disintegrating Habsburg Monarchy, which would open the path for a victory over Germany. This strategy had a certain response in the British government and ministries, but became part of official British policy only in 1918.^{xli}

From January 1917 he edited *The New Europe* where he accordingly pleaded for democracy and independence for the nations of Austria-Hungary. This weekly was a stronghold in Britain for pleas of national self-

determination, with collaborators from all the allies including occupied Belgium and the Bohemian Masaryk. The journal voiced the right for all people to decide by themselves whether to be independent or to stay together with other nations and what degree of autonomy they should have. The Macedonian people should have the right to hold a referendum regarding their partition between Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. The three and a half million Romanians of Transylvania had the right to an autonomous province within a federalized Hungary.^{xlii} For Luxemburg an article asked for a restitution of the assurance for independence.^{xliii} One article informed of the Icelandic strivings to find acceptance in Denmark for extended the self-rule.^{xliv} One article paid attention to the Ålander's petition after the Finnish declaration of independence to be part of Sweden.^{xlv} In addition, the journal notified every concession by any Ally to concede to self-determination. Such as the new Russian regime's proclamation of autonomy for all non-Russian peoples, the French recognition of Finnish independence in January 1918 and the allies recognition of a Czech legion within their ranks. Or the recognition by Russian delegates of Ukraine as an independent state four months later in May, or the promises of the British, French and Italian Premiers to stay favorable to nationalistic aspirations of Poles, Czechoslovaks and Jugoslavs in June the same year. All in contrast to what *The New Europe* described as the Central Power's insisting 'upon restricting its [self-determination's] applications to *states*, not nations, and leaving existing frontiers unimpaired.'^{xlvi} With the motto 'Pour la Victoire Intégrale', *The New Europe* aspired to offer a program for the outcome of the war, prompting for a 'victory on the democratic idea, and for peace without annexations and on the basis of complete self-determination of nations'.^{xlvii} Democracy and national self-determination was their formula for the new Europe.

In late 1917, the national self-determination and even sovereignty became an option in Eastern Europe. Ukrainian nationalists had from the beginning of the war declared that their nation had a culture of its own, with the richest music and poetry traditions in Europe, which expressed a strong sense of being unique and a nation of its own. Their independence from Russia would be for the good of all Europe, it should weaken and even disintegrate Russia, free its subjects from the tsarist yoke and Germany and Austria from the eastern threat.^{xlviii} So they said, and after the October revolution, Ukraine proclaimed independence from Russia as did Moravia and Finland. In the Baltic region, occupied by Germany, national bodies were allowed to develop in order to alienate them from Russia. Early 1918, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declared themselves independent. In Austria-Hungary, a radicalization of nationalism set through as the Empire was on the brink of collapse with food shortage, strikes and breakdown of transportations, with an army that was short of men and materials as production of supplies dropped sharply, and with Slav troops that refused to fight against the Entente. January 6, Czech deputies of the Reichsrat and Diets of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia affirmed a program for Czechoslovak independence.^{xlix} The willingness to stay loyal to the Central- and Eastern European empires was rapidly decreasing.

The process towards disintegration of the continental Empires received further fuel when from America arrived a manifest for the future organization of Europe. Paul Louis is a witness:

No document, since 1914, has had any more resonance than Mister Wilson's message dated January 8, 1918. The words of the American president always have the gift of catching the attention of men, because one feels there firm will, a clear and at the same time audacious thought, a rather rare disinterestedness; but this time, it is not an exaggeration to say that they have provoked a profound chock in both belligerent and neutral countries.¹

The ideas of national self-determination were fundamental for the American president Woodrow Wilson. In his address to the Congress about the conditions for settling peace, he set out 'the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak.' America was in his eyes representing a historical development away from Empires towards nation states, while Germany and Austria were the utmost examples of outmoded imperialism.^{li} Detesting dynastic and authoritarian rule, he frankly declared his belief in democracy and the possibility to improve the world order: 'what we seek is the reign of law based upon the consent of the governed, and sustained by the organized opinion of mankind.'^{lii}

Even if his inspiration was mainly from the independent movement in North- and South America, he was aware that the European discourse of the war voiced aspirations for national self-determination and even independence.^{liii} The declaration was all clear upon the demands of independence for Poland and the Balkan states but was more restrictive concerning the Habsburg nationalities only offering their self-determination. That limitation was not of much importance for its effect, Wilson had already made himself a name as an ardent

protagonist for moral principles that favored peace and his new declaration was further boosting national sentiments. For many Wilson stood out as 'the recognized prophet of the Allied cause.'^{liv}

April 10, the non-German nationalities of the Habsburg Empire gathered in Rome at the 'Kongress der unterdrückten Völker Österreich-Ungarns' and on May 17 they could gather again in Prague. There met Slovaks and Croats, leaders of the Yugoslav movement, Serbian dissidents, Bosnians, Italians, Romanians from Transylvania and Bukovina, Slovaks, Poles from Galicia and Silesia, apart from representatives of all the Czech parties. Their declaration conjured up an oppression of centuries and a future perspective of a peace that would bring independence and overall 'a better future of the nations'. Aggressive imperialism would be exchanged for a system with free and equal nations. In their resolution Wilson's principles left their mark; the new future would be 'assured by the world democracy, by a real and sovereign national peoples government, and by a universal League of Nations, endowed with the necessary authority.'^{lv}

The tide was quickly moving in the direction of the Slavic nationalists as the allies saw the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire as a possibility to weaken and isolate Germany. By the end of May, the British government and President Wilson approved to much of their ambitions, both declaring anxiety for them becoming independent and their liberty a matter of the allies' war aims. However, it was not full sovereignty for all the Habsburg nationalities they had in mind. It was still a matter of being large enough to live up to the standards of becoming a nation state. The British spokesman vaguely uttered something about gathering these nations in a Central European federation. Wilson's promise was for Czechoslovak and Yugoslav states, both comprised more than one nation.^{lvi} For such restrictions to the ideal of national independence, economic arguments came handy. In *The New Europe* it was explained that for economic development the southern Slav provinces needed the mountains, the plains and the coast lands. It required development of trade routes through all its parts, commerce and industry of the inlands needed connections with the Dalmatian coast towns to enable trade across the Mediterranean. Trieste and Fiume should be oriented towards the Yugoslav provinces instead of the Austrian centres in the north.^{lvii} Clearly, an independent state should have the right economic conditions.

In the autumn of 1918, expectations on ally victory were high as the Habsburg Empire collapsed and it became clear that it only was a matter of time until Germany would have to surrender. In Copenhagen was initiated another journal named the New Europe, or in Danish 'Det ny Europa', by leading Scandinavian cultural figures including the Danish critic George Brandes, the Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen and Swedish suffragist Ellen Key. They declared that a new Europe was in the making and they likened the European nations to be the sons of that larger common fatherland. When they promptly announced the coming of this new Europe to be their faith and took on the program to awaken love for it, they expressed the strong sentiments of hope that were all around.^{lviii}

Intellectuals enthusiastically embraced Wilson's principles, finding in them a representation of freedom for the peoples and peaceful arbitration of international disputes. The principles presumed a fertile engagement of nationalism and internationalism and further arguments were developed in the act and meaning to support a supra-national association. One professed nothing but historical determinism; in the beginning was love for the family, then grew compassion for the tribe, after that for the nation and the next step to take was to stretch out for a wider community. Another tried a pedagogical logic; nationalism and the feeling of belonging to one people was a necessary device for fostering internationalism. Only when one had understood the complexities of the national society was it possible to extrapolate to the complexities of interacting nations. 'Only from nationalists can one create internationalists.'^{lix} A third insisted on the experiences of war cooperation, with pooling of resources and unifying of military and to some degree economic actions through the War Council of Versailles. This council acted as a supra national authority and had come to signify a sense 'that only a certain voluntary curtailment of the sovereign right of each nation can avail to equip the common cause with the means of victory.' Not only did it serve the Allies in the war, it represented an embodiment of a supra-national body that showed what it would look like when it had authority to control sovereign nations for a shared aim. It put on the agenda 'the whole task of European reconstruction.'^{lx}

To conclude

Much as expectations on a new Europe grew, there were early signs of disappointment that followed the self-determination of nations. The new nation states had disputes of land and to which nationality people belonged,

as the nationalities of the former empires were no clear-cut entities. In Versailles, the victors were more interested in finding the best possible provisions for themselves than finding agreements that everyone could live with. It is no wonder that the delegates of the conference in Paris was mostly pessimistic about the accomplishment of the deliberations and often alarmed of the treaty that came out of it. A British delegate wrote in a letter that 'the total effect is, I am quite sure, quite indefensible and in fact is, I think, quite unworkable.' John Maynard Keynes felt 'deep and violent shame' and left the conference deeply worried about the economic chaos he meant that the treaty would bring.^{lxi}

To conclude, even if the number of European states radically increased, the ideal of nation state still met with restrictions in Europe of the mind. This had to do with the prerequisites for recognition as an independent nation that comprised of one or more factors like a population large enough, an economy diversified enough and in possession of cultural maturity. In the new Europe, the nationalities had different places according to their place in a hierarchy.

However, the passage to a Europe of nation states took place. Not only was it the end of a Europe of dynasties. No longer were small states like Sweden or Norway exceptions but part of a new normality. In thinking Europe, the motion towards more states replaced the notion of a Europe with fewer and fewer states. Thinking Europe included smaller states leaving the prerogative of largeness behind (or at least in doubt). A new context was set for the idea of European unification, with the needs of bringing many states together in a shared framework. This was troublesome to achieve during the inter war period with the many disputes between the states. However, from now on forecasts of Europe had to take into account an increasing number of states.

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ⁱ See e.g. Agorio (1917) op. cit. p. 23: 'Nos hallamos al borde de esta suprema transformación. Ya ha comenzado al gran proceso de todos los valores éticos, la gran revisión de todas las garantías jurídicas.'

ⁱⁱ Hans Mühlstein (1918) *Die herrschaft der Weisen*, Leipzig: Der Neue Geist, p. 3: 'Die kommende Reformation der europäischen Politik und Kultur kann nur von einer besseren Philosophie ausgehen.'

ⁱⁱⁱ H.G.Wells (1917) op. cit. p. 238.

- ^{iv} The following section on 'Mitteleuropa' builds on Mats Andrén (2001) *Att frambringa det uthärdliga: studier till idén om Centraleuropa* [The Discourse about Central Europe], Hedemora: Gidlunds förlag, pp. 149-156.
- ^v Henry Cord Meyer (1955) *Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action 1815-1945*, Haag: Nijhoff, pp. 145-159 charts the relevant newspaper and magazine articles.
- ^{vi} Franz Klæin (1915) *Die Kulturgemeinschaft der Völker nach dem Kriege*, Leipzig: S Hirzel. Franz von Liszt (1914) Ein Mitteleuropäischer staatenverband als nächstes Ziel der deutschen auswärtigen Politik, Leipzig: S. Hirzel. Hermann Loch (1914) *Der mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftsblock und das Schicksal Belgiens*, Leipzig S. Hirzel. Karl Mehrmann (1915) *Grossdeutschland: unsere Stellung in der Weltstaatengesellschaft*, Dresden: Das Grössere Deutschland. Hans Mühlstein (1914) *Deutschlands Sendung*, Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer. Eugen von Philippovich (1915) *Ein Wirtschafts- und Zollverband zwischen Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn*, Leipzig: S. Hirzel. Albert (Winterstetten) Ritter (1914a) *Berlin-Bagdad: neue Ziele mitteleuropäischer Politik*, München: J. F. Lehmann, Albert (Winterstetten) Ritter (1914b) *Nordkap-Bagdad: das politische Programm des Krieges*, Frankfurt an Main: Neuer frankfurter Verlag. From 1913 there was only one major 'Mitteleuropa'-book being openly critical towards the policy of Bismarck and the Prussian unification of Germany, that is the agrarian conservative Otto Schuchard (1913) *Der mitteleuropäische Bund*, Dresden: Zahn & Jaensch.
- ^{vii} Liszt (1914) op. cit. pp. 16, 42. Mühlstein (1914) op. cit. pp. 10-21, 45ff.
- ^{viii} Theiner (1983) op. cit. pp. 129-159.
- ^{ix} Theiner (1983) op. cit. p. 50. Cord Meyer (1955) op. cit. p. 195. Friedrich Naumann (1964 [1900]) 'Deutschland und Österreich', *Werke 2: Politische Schriften*, Köln: Westdeutsche Verlag.
- ^x Friedrich Naumann (1964 [1900]) *Mitteleuropa*, in *Werke 2: Politische Schriften*, Köln: Westdeutsche Verlag, pp. 496f and quote p. 523: 'Mit diesem krieg im Rücken können wir Berge versetzen. Jetzt oder nie wird die dauernde Einheit zwischen Ost und West, wird Mitteleuropa zwischen Russland und den westlichen Mächten.'
- ^{xi} Naumann (1964 [1900]) op. cit. pp. 492f, 578f, 586f, 595f, 663ff. Quot from p. 586: 'Das ist schmerzlich, aber so will es die Weltgeschichte: politische Kleinbetriebe bedürfen der Ahnlehnung.'
- ^{xii} Naumann (1964 [1900]) op. cit. pp. 523ff, 533, 543, 548, 550.
- ^{xiii} Naumann (1964 [1900]) op. cit. p. '...um das Deutschtum herum wächst die Kultur von Mitteleuropa'.
- ^{xiv} Heinrich Theodor List (1916) *Deutschland und Mittel-Europa*, Berlin: Reimer, pp. 107ff. Arthur Dix (1916) 'England und die Mitteleuropäische Verkehrseinheit', *Das Grössere Deutschland* 1916:3, pp. 73ff. Jacques Stern (1917) *Mitteleuropa: von Leibniz bis Naumann über List und Frantz, Planck und Lagarde*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt. Battaglia (1917) op. cit. pp. 726f, 732ff
- ^{xv} Wells (1917) op. cit. pp. 239ff. Quote from p. 242.
- ^{xvi} Wells (1917) op. cit. pp. 38-44.
- ^{xvii} Wells (1917) op. cit. p. 254.
- ^{xviii} Wells (1917) op. cit. pp. 192ff.
- ^{xix} Wells (1917) op. cit. p. 207.
- ^{xx} Arnold Toynbee (1915) *Nationality and the War*, London: J. M. Dent and Sons, pp. 476f. Toynbee (1915) *The New Europe: some Essays in Reconstruction*, London: J. M. Dent and Sons, pp. 61f.
- ^{xxi} Edward Tyas Cook (1915) *Britain and the small Nations: Her Principles and her Policy*, London: Wyman and Sons. Asquith is quoted by Sydney Brooks (1914) 'The New Europe', *The North American Review*, pp. 667f.
- ^{xxii} *Report of the international Congress of Women: The Hague – The Netherlands, April 28th to May 1st, 1915*, [Chicago]: Womens Peace Party.
- ^{xxiii} John. A. Hobson (1902) *Imperialism: a Study*, London. James Nisbet & Co.
- ^{xxiv} John. A. Hobson (1917) *Democracy after the War*, G. Allen & Unwin.
- ^{xxv} Wells (1917) op. cit.
- ^{xxvi} About the Russian case, see R.W. Seton-Watson (1918) 'The Musings of a Slavophile', (1918) *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 73, 7 March, London: Constable & Co, pp. 248f..
- ^{xxvii} Lenin (1915) *The Imperialist War: The Struggle against Social-Chauvinism and Social-Pacifism 1914-1915*, London: Martin Lawrence, pp. 91, 190.
- ^{xxviii} Karl Kautsky (1917) *Die Befreiung der Nationen*, Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, pp. 6, 27f, 31, 38, 42, 46.
- ^{xxix} 'Memorandum of the German Majority Socialists' (1917), in Emily Green Balch *Approaches to the Great Settlement*, New York: B. W. Huebsch, pp. 174f.
- ^{xxx} Alan Sked (1995) *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815-1918*, London: Routledge, pp. 218-239.
- ^{xxxi} Sked (1995) op. cit. pp. 255-261.
- ^{xxxii} Arnold Toynbee (1915) *The New Europe: Some Essays in Reconstruction*, London: J.M. Dent and Sons, pp. 61-73.

- ^{xxxiii} Toynbee (1915) *New Europe*, pp. 9-18.
- ^{xxxiv} Paul Louis (1915) *L'Europe Nouvelle* Paris: F. Alcan, p. 6 : 'L'Expression « Europe nouvelle », dont un use quotidiennement, est d'ailleurs très vague ; elle recouvre l'Europe territoriale, l'Europe social, l'Europe politique.'
- ^{xxxv} Louis (1915) op. cit. p. 7 : 'n'y avait plus de peuples opprimés, spoliés, mutilés.'
- ^{xxxvi} Louis (1915) op. cit. pp. 12-30.
- ^{xxxvii} Erik Palmstierna (1951) *Orostd I, 1914-1915: Politiska dagboksanteckningar*, Stockholm: tidens förlag, pp. 155-175.
- ^{xxxviii} Louis (1915) op. cit. pp. 122-131.
- ^{xxxix} Mats Andrén (2001) *Att frambringa det uthärdliga: studier till idén om Centraleuropa*, Hedemora: Gidlunds förlag, pp. 171-184. The following paragraphs on Masaryk builds on Andrén (2001) 168-171.
- ^{xl} Bruce M. Garver (1990) 'Masaryk and Czech Politics, 1906-1914', Stanley B. Winters (ed.) *Masaryk, T. G. (1850-1937): Volume I: Thinker and Politician*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 245-250. For a background to Czech policies for self-determination see Bruce M. Garver (1978) *The Young Czech Party 1874-1901 and the Emergence of a Multiparty System*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- ^{xli} R. W. Seton-Watson (1943) *Masaryk in England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 75, 154.
- ^{xlii} M. Rakovski (1918) 'Transylvania and Macedonia', *The New Europe*, London: Constable & Co, Vol. 6, No. 73, 7 March, pp. 255-257.
- ^{xliiii} Francis Gribble (1918) 'The War Aims of Luxemburg', *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 83, 16 May, pp. 110-113.
- ^{xliiii} 'Iceland and Denmark: A Protest' (1918) *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 84, 23 May, p. 135.
- ^{xliiii} Hugo Valentin (1918) 'Sweden and the Åland Islands', *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 71, 21 February, pp. 184-188
- ^{xliiii} Rubicon (1918) 'The Czechs and Austria', *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 70, 14 February, pp. 144f.
- ^{xliiii} 'Keep to the left!' (1918) *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 69, 7 February, London: Constable & Co, p. 98.
- ^{xliiii} Dmytro Dontsov (1915) *Die ukrainische Staatsidee und der Krieg gegen Russland: Hrsg. von der Ukrainischen Zentralorganisation*, Berlin: C. Kroll, pp. 65ff.
- ^{xliiii} Christopher Mick (2014) '1918: Endgame', Joe Winter (ed. 2014) *The First World War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 141, 158. Rubicon (1918) 'The Czechs and Austria', *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 70, 14 February, pp. 144-149.
- ⁱ Paul Louis (1918) 'Les idées wilsoniennes', *Revue Bleue*, 2-9 février, reprinted in Louis (1919) *Aspects politiques de la Guerre mondiale*, Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, p. 202: 'Aucun document, depuis 1914, n'a eu plus de retentissement que le message de M. Wilson en date du 8 janvier 1918. Les paroles du président américain ont toujours le don de saisir l'attention des hommes, parce qu'on sent une volonté ferme, une pensée Claire en même temps qu'audacieuse, un désintéressement plutôt rare; mais cette fois, il n'est pas exagéré de dire qu'elles ont provoqué une secousse profonde dans les deux combinaisons belligérantes comme chez les neutres.'
- ^{li} Woodrow Wilson (1918) 'The ideals of Democracy', Dickinson G. Lowes (ed.) *Liberty, Peace and Justice*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, pp. 115-123.
- ^{lii} 'The Very Stuff of Triumph' (1918) *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 91 11 July, p. 295.
- ^{liii} According to Lida Gustava Heymann the efforts of the womens peace movement and the Haag conference were of prime importance for Wilsons program for a new Europe. See Lida Gustava Heymann (1972) *Erlebtes – Erschautes: Heymann – Memoiren: Deutsche Frauen kämpfen für Freiheit, Recht und Frieden 1850-1940*, Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, pp. 130-134.
- ^{liiii} 'The Very Stuff of Triumph' (1918) *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 91 11 July, p. 295.
- ^{liiii} V. Noser (1918) 'Unrest in Bohemia', *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 86 6 June, pp. 180ff, quote p. 182.
- ^{liiii} Victor S. Mamatey (1989) 'Masaryk and Wilson: A Contribution to the Study of their Relations', Robert B. Pynsent (ed.) *T.G. Masaryk (1850-1937): Volume 2 Thinker and Critic*, London: Macmillan, pp. 192f. 'Lord Robert Cecil and the Rome Congress' (1918) *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 85 30 May, pp. 163f.
- ^{liiii} G. Djuric (1918) 'The Southern Slavs and Italy: An Economic Study', *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 85 30 May, pp. 156-162.
- ^{liiii} 'Et nyt Europa', *Det ny Europa: Internationalt Tidsskrift*, 1:1918, p. 2.
- ^{liiii} Desmond Shaw (1918) 'Nationalitet og Internationalisme', *Det ny Europa: Internationalt Tidsskrift*, 2:1918, pp. 27-31, quote p. 30.
- ^{liiii} A. F. Whyte (1918) 'The Versailles Mustard Seed', *The New Europe*, Vol. 6, No. 72 28 February, pp. 195f.
- ^{liiii} Neiburg (2017) op. cit., quotes from pp. 74 & 76.