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Getting Back to Europe: An Analysis of a Possible Self-perceived Inadequacy of Czechs Towards the West

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I have written this diploma thesis solely by myself and I agree with its eventual publication in print or electronic form. All sources and literature have been properly cited. The work has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the concurrent role of Western hegemony alongside the lasting effects of communism in the challenges faced by post-socialist countries, with a specific focus on the Czech Republic. While communism is commonly seen as the primary cause, we argue that cultural ideas associated with Western hegemony predate communism and have deeply influenced Europe's identity. The thesis is divided into sections that examine the concept of progress throughout history and its relevance to Western European identity, followed by an exploration of hegemony through examples from post-socialist nations, including the Czech Republic. The thesis concludes by addressing potential criticisms and providing an exercise that applies the concepts of hegemony and progress to contemporary Czech society. This analysis aims to present an alternative perspective that acknowledges the simultaneous effects of both communism and Western hegemony in shaping the challenges faced by post-socialist countries during their transition.

Preface

The topic discussed in this thesis was inspired by my personal experience living in the Czech Republic. Since the beginning of my time residing in Prague, I became acutely aware of a peculiarity among Czech people. Whenever I was asked about my experience in the Czech Republic and why I chose it as my new home instead of countries like Germany or other Western European nations, I was consistently met with confusion and/or negative comments about the Czech Republic, coming from the country's own citizens. As I've looked more into the topic, I found polls stating that Czechs, unfortunately, repeatedly rank among the most negative people in the world when it comes to life satisfaction. While it is true that every country faces its own set of challenges, Czechs, at least in my experience, tend to hold a somewhat diminished view of their country and people, compared to many other European nations. Interestingly, as I've observed, there seems to be this feeling of inadequacy, particularly when comparing themselves toward the so-called Western European countries. However, when it comes to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the role is reversed, and Czechs tend to hold a more positive perception of themselves.

This observation became the driving force behind the topic of my thesis. However, I encountered some difficulties in pursuing this research, as the available literature on Czech attitudes was rather sparse, compared to other post-socialist nations such as Poland, Hungary, and the former Yugoslavian countries, which have been somewhat extensively studied. It might be possible that this lack of emphasis on Czech attitudes can be attributed to the prevailing narrative that portrays the Czech Republic as a success story in terms of transitioning from socialism to a market-based economy, which is a notion I've repeatedly come across when looking into the topic. It piqued my curiosity, leading me to ask deeper questions about why Czechs hold these unique perspectives about themselves and others around them. When discussing the matter with my Czech friends, a recurrent explanation was through the lens of Czech's communist past. But one has to ask, whether their self-perception is solely a result of the residual effects of

communism, or whether there are other/multiple explanations for this complex phenomenon?

Consequently, I embarked on a quest to explore whether the geographical context in which Czechs find themselves within Europe could offer an explanation. As I've come to understand, the Czech Republic, situated in Central Europe, represents both an ancient and modern construct, occupying various roles such as the heart of Europe, the periphery of the Western world and in some cases, stretching as far as the borderland of civilization. This multifaceted identity raises intriguing questions about how Czechs perceive their place within a greater European context, particularly considering their historical affiliation with the Eastern bloc. Does this unique geographical position influence their attitudes toward themselves and others?

By delving into these questions, I hope to showcase the intricate interplay between geography, historical context, and societal attitudes, ultimately contributing to a better understanding of the Czech Republic's complex self-perception within Europe.

Note of Terminology

Throughout this thesis, the term Western world is being discussed, referring specifically to Europe and the United States. Whenever mentioned, it refers to countries situated west of the Czech Republic and Austria. Regarding the concept of Europeaness or being European, it is primarily associated with Western Europe. While it is true that the understanding of Europe has expanded to include more than just Western Europe, historically, the continent was predominantly associated with its western part, particularly during the Enlightenment era, which is central to the argument presented in this thesis. Throughout this thesis it will be argued that the idea of Europe originated from those in the western region of the continent, and its center of power has remained there ever since.

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1 Introduction

During the Cold War the world was divided into three sections, each constituted large portions of the world's territory. The First World comprised largely of the NATO alliance (United States, Canada, Western Europe, Japan and others), the Second World of Socialism (Soviet Union, China, Czechoslovakia, Cuba and others), and the Third World, represented by nations that didn't wish to partake in the dispute, which are also known as the non-aligned countries. The Cold War was mainly pitted against the nations of the First and Second worlds.¹ The eventual defeat of the Second World, led to the majority of those socialist nations, abandoning socialism altogether. Socialism still remained in pockets around the world, such as in China, Cuba, Vietnam to name a few, but the Second World Socialism's powerhouse, the Soviet Union, collapsed. The world moving to the end of the twentieth century would be a Unipolar World.² This unipolar world is reminiscent of the era before the world wars, where the Western hegemony was at its peak. Created with it many changes in the world for better or worse. The Unipolar structure for those of the non-aligned countries who had experienced colonialism at the hands of the Western World were fearful.

“The collapse of Second World Socialism, it should be pointed out, has not altered neo-colonial policies, and on some levels, has generated increased anxiety among such Third World communities as the Palestinians and South African Blacks concerning their struggle for independence without a Second World counter-balance.”³

The defeat of the second world allowed *Neoliberalism* to reign supreme.⁴ Which is an economic theory that posits that one's well-being can be gained through economic freedom and entrepreneurial enterprise.⁵ Neoliberalism headed by the Western World, especially that of the United States, carries on the legacy of colonialism, by proclaiming

1 Cite

2 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 42.

3 Ashcroft et al, *The Empire Writes Back*, 111.

4 Dzenovska and Genova, *Desire for the Political Aftermath*, 3.

5 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2.

many of the same themes as the key to the success of its system. Neoliberalism works by presenting an option of prosperity and progress, an option that seems to be ‘common sense’ (a concept will discuss in detail later), the focus on progress as a key to one’s livelihood is not an old concept in Western discourse, but instead is part of a long tradition dating back to the foundation of Europe.

While the lasting effects of communism are often considered as the primary cause for the challenges faced by post-socialist countries during their transition, we propose that another factor, Western hegemony, also played a significant role concurrently. This notion may initially seem unusual, given the exclusion of the communist bloc from Western hegemonic influence. However, we argue that cultural ideas associated with Western hegemony predate communism and are deeply ingrained in Europe's identity. In this thesis, we aim to explore the application of hegemony to the feelings of inadequacy exhibited by post-communist Czechs during their transition away from communism.

To accomplish this, our thesis will be divided into several sections. Firstly, we will examine the concept of progress and its relevance to Western European identity. Starting with ancient Greek perceptions of a dichotomy between civilization and barbarism, we will traverse different epochs of European history, ultimately reaching the modern era. This section will introduce key concepts such as binarism, geographical othering, progress, civilization, and othering, which are crucial to understanding how Central Europe and the Czech Republic fit within the context of a divided Europe. By focusing on the evolving understanding of progress over time, we will establish a link between hegemony and the experiences of Czechs.

Subsequently, we will explore hegemony by discussing various examples from post-socialist nations, including the Czech Republic, along with the actions taken by the Czech nation to position themselves as inferior to Western Europe. This examination will shed light on the influence of Western hegemony and its impact on their self-perception and aspirations.

In conclusion, the thesis will address potential criticisms and conclude with an exercise that applies the concepts of hegemony and progress to contemporary Czech

society. By undertaking this comprehensive analysis, we seek to present an alternative perspective that acknowledges the simultaneous effects of both communism and Western hegemony in shaping the challenges faced by post-socialist countries, particularly the Czech Republic, during their transition.

2 Europeanization

The end of the eastern bloc changed the landscape of Europe forever, before then Europe had never been united into one continent, now such could be a possibility. Although there was already a Europe existing in the Western part of the continent. Those countries formed a group known as the European Union. A union that was founded on the idea of European unification after the fallout of the First and Second world wars.⁶ This union, originally known as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was established in 1952, comprising of six founding members.⁷ Those members known as the Inner Six are Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, they were eventually joined by Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. After the end of the Cold War, many countries from the former Eastern Bloc joined, eventually totaling twenty-seven member states.⁸ Before the end of the Cold War, however, all of the member states except for Greece, resided in the Western portion of the landmass.

The Eastern bloc's eagerness to unify with the so-called West can be noted for a whole host of reasons. Importantly one must take into account the life of socialism, which was different for each state, and to use a blanket statement for all the experiences is an injustice to the good that came about it. Although one could safely say that there were some common elements at hand among the socialist states. These included various psychological effects of living under a totalitarian state.

Those psychological effects can be considered what the author and former Czech president Václav Havel called '*totalitarian syndrome*.' Such a syndrome is characterized by a series of "(...) specific patterns of cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors developed in order to adapt to life under totalitarian circumstances."⁹ The socialist government used copious amounts of state-sponsored propaganda in order to make their people think that

⁶ Clark and Jones, *The Spatialities of Europeanisation*, 301.

⁷ Bottici and Challand, *Imagining Europe*, 15.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Havel, *Audience*, 242.

there was no better alternative than the socialist system.¹⁰ Although we can safely assume that this sort of attitude was not believed by the entire society, it arguably still sowed the seeds of doubt within the general population regarding the contemporary reality of the world.

This doubt of reality coupled with the official narrative, created, what is called, a *double standard of morality* or *moral duplicity*, in which different versions of one's truth were practiced in completely different social situations. A person could not show what they truly believed in public if it came at odds with the official narrative. "One version of truth was practiced in public, at work, and at school, and was strictly enforced. The other was practiced in private."¹¹ Apart from the citizens' inability to trust one another, there was also the added element of government officials such as communist party activists or the secret police, under-cover among the general population, with the intention to spy and root out dissidents. Thus, the population, being anxiety-ridden, untrusting, and having the inability to express themselves authentically, resulted in the continuation of the system. The scholar Olshanskiy says that this continuation was not entirely a conscious action, but instead due to the population being so defeated, and in order to survive, it allowed the system's upholding. "(...) the general public . . . contributed, though subconsciously, to the maintenance of the social foundations of the regime."¹²

Although the continuation of a system like this could only go on for so long. Distaste for the socialist system varied by country, for instance within Czechoslovakia, initial enthusiasm for socialism was strong. Although it began to decline over the years, there were those in power who sought to reform the present system, namely Alexander Dubček who was the first secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1968.¹³ However, these attempts at reform would lead to disastrous consequences; in 1968 the event known as the Prague Spring occurred, in which the Soviet Union, paranoid that Czechoslovakia's reforms could weaken the position of the bloc in the Cold War, came

10 Klicperova, Feierabend, and Hofstter, In the Search for a Post-Communist Syndrome, 40.

11 Ibid.

12 Olshanskiy, Cogs in the Wheel, 91.

13 Panek and Tuma, A History of the Czech Lands, 596.

along with armies of the allied countries of the eastern bloc, to invade the nation, replacing the reformists with orthodox communists.¹⁴

Following the Prague Spring, there was a period of *normalization* characterized by strict control of the population, in which all of the reformists and anti-communist sentiments were snuffed out of the country. Czechoslovak communism was never the same after the period of *normalization*.¹⁵ The sour distaste Czechoslovaks had for socialism at that time never disappeared, although the decline would happen it would be slow and eventually culminate with demonstrators going to the streets chanting ‘We want another government’ and ‘We want change.’¹⁶

Though a unification amongst the European continent would not be seamless, as those countries of the European Union created certain parameters the post-socialist bloc had to adopt before being accepted into their ranks. This was the process of Europeanization or ‘returning to Europe.’ However, Europeanization can be seen as synonymous with the concept EU-isation, as it is up to the EU to create the conditions for accession.

“For many people in the region, EU-isation was part of, and even a prerequisite for, the wider Europeanization of their countries, which meant moving beyond communist legacies and regaining a full role in the European political and economic space.”¹⁷

The transition from a socialist economic system to a free-market capitalist economy caused social and economic hardships for many.¹⁸ The finance minister at the time Vaclav Klaus set into motion a form of neoliberal shock therapy understood as a ‘leap into the market economy.’¹⁹ Klaus’ methods required wholesale privatization policies, resulting in austerity measures among the population. Privatization efforts such as ‘voucher books’ led unknowing and inexperienced citizens to buy vouchers with the

14 Tuma, *Relics of a Cold War*, vii.

15 Klicperova, Feierabend, and Hofstter, *In the Search for a Post-Communist Syndrome*, 40.

16 Holy, *The Little Czech*, 55.

17 *Ibid*, 5.

18 Klicperova-Baker, *Post-Communist Syndrome*, 4.

19 Dale, *First the Transition*, 187.

guise that doing so is a smart choice in the free market.²⁰ Scams like this funded the government's continual privatization schemes.

“Some politicians even claimed that these funds practically saved the privatization process because the ‘stupid citizens’ had initially responded to the government’s privatization plans too reluctantly.”²¹

Klaus’ plans were backed by the IMF,²² an international relief fund supported strongly by the Western powers, the IMF albeit bleak record of aid to ‘developing’ countries from around the world.²³ After Klaus, reformist policies kept on such as tax and social benefit cuts under the Topolánek government.²⁴ During this time the act of tunneling was prominent. *Tunneling*, a concept unique to the post-communist Czech experience, refers to the wholesale seizure and selling of companies, banks, investments, and institutions.²⁵ This form of corruption was not technically illegal within the Czech system at the time and led to massive inequalities within the nation. It is curious to ask, if there was such economic turmoil during the transition, why did the country continue to support these pro-free market governments? I believe the answer to this question is twofold. First, the stigma of communism was still fresh in the hearts and minds of the people. The governments succeeding in communism were politically Right on the spectrum. The Left being associated with communism fell out of favor with Czech citizens, thus, when it came to a possible defense of the people against these reforms, the Left was quiet.²⁶

Apart from economic changes, a new Europe would require a change of the identity of Europe as a whole. As what it means to be European shifts to the histories of the whole continent. The key figures and nations involved in the EU's founding reflected the values and aspirations of Western Europe. There are three main facets that have been considered the roots of European identity: Greek philosophical tradition, Christianity, and

20 Ibid, 188.

21 Ibid.

22 International Monetary Fund.

23 Dreher, Jensen, and Nathan, *Independent Actor or Agent*, 106.

24 Dale, *First the Transition*, 191.

25 Altshuler, *Tunneling Towards Capitalism*, 116.

26 Ibid, 188.

Enlightenment ideas.²⁷ Considering the notion of European roots as Bottici and Chaland discuss there would have to be an overall notion of Europe.²⁸ We believe this was not the case, as the prevailing hegemonic notions stayed rooted in the process of Europeanization for the post-socialist nations.

²⁷ Bottici and Challand, *Imagining Europe*, 28.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 29.

2.1 The Ideal of Progress

In order to thoroughly understand the connection between hegemony and Europeanization that we are arguing for, we must explore the historical processes that led us there. In Particular, we must outline what ‘progress’ means for the Western tradition, and how such a notion permeates throughout the Western tradition.

One of the themes integral to the study of Historical sociology is the notion of progress. Furthermore one can say that it is a theme that Western thought has been long preoccupied with. As Piotr Sztompka says, the idea of progress is almost considered as common sense within our society.²⁹ Its influence on the West is immense, and as Robert Nisbet said: “No single idea has been more important than, perhaps as important as, the idea of progress in Western civilization for nearly three thousand years.”³⁰ Social progress can be considered under the umbrella of *social development* which is one of two major social processes within the sociology of social change, the other being *social cycle*. Social development explains that history moves in a forward direction towards some end ideal. It usually implies that history consists of stages, going from primitive to advanced, and that the push for advancement comes from within the system. Social development is not without its negatives Sztompka explains:

“The notion of development carries some strong assumptions: the inevitability, necessity and irreversibility of the process it describes. It easily degenerates into a fatalistic and mechanistic view of change, as running independently of human actions, somewhat above human heads, towards of predetermined ultimate finale.”³¹

Social progress differs from social development by being more subjective, considering history as steadily moving to a directed goal. In the field of sociology the concept of progress can be traced back all the way to Auguste Comte, who is known as the father of sociology. In his *law of three stages*, Comte views progress as an inevitable

29 Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, 25.

30 Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 4.

31 Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, 8.

process, in which each stage is successively better than the last.³² Comte wasn't the only scholar who characterized history into different stages of progression, from *classical evolutionists* to *modernization* theorists, the theme of progress made an appearance in much of Western scholarship.

The stress on progress helped manifest another theme prevalent within Western history, and that was the process of *othering*. Due to each progressive stage being more advanced than the last one, perspectives of the past stages were that they must have been inferior. As Western societies progressed, those peoples still in the 'past' were needed to 'catch up' in order to be on an equal playing field with the Europeans. *Othering* resulted in the Europeans comprising explanations of why they are ahead, and others are not. This mindset led to a whole host of social, cultural, religious, economic, historical, and political assumptions to be made of non-Europeans. For example, the theory of *geographical determinism*. Which is the idea that social and cultural differences are determined by the physical environment in which people originate.³³ The idea was supported by Euro-American scholars, who believed that due to the temperate climate of much of Europe "(...) produced vigorous minds, hardy bodies, and progressive societies, while tropical heat produced races marked by languor and stupefaction."³⁴ For the geographical determinists, the geography of Europe also allowed for a coherent culture throughout the continent, which was different to; for example Asia, whose multiple climate zones led to isolated civilizations. The eighteenth century French Geography wrote of this comparison.

"Nor does it, like Europe, present the great advantage of geographical unity... Asia may have given birth to many local civilizations, but Europe alone could inherit them, by their fusion raising them to a higher culture, in which all of the peoples of the earth may one day take part... Isolated from each other by plateaux, lofty ranges or waterless wastes, the Asiatic populations have naturally remained more distinct than those of Europe."³⁵

32 Subrt, *The Perspective of Historical Sociology*, 71.

33 Lewis and Wigen, *Myth of Continents*, 42.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Reclus, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 18.

The enlightenment scholar Jean-Jacques Rousseau, when arguing the subject, said that the geography of the continent is one of the things that make it “(...) so special.”³⁶ It is true that geography does play a very important role in human civilization, but the idea, that a culture’s destiny is predicated on geography alone, can lead to some alarming consequences. Geographical determinism creates, what is known as, a *geographical other*. Before discussing a geographical other, it is important to understand the concept of an *other* first. We discussed previously that the progress narrative can lead to the creation of an *other*. This is due to the nature of an *other*, as it is a tool for self-identification. When an individual or a group attempts to identify themselves, a common tactic is to define themselves in opposition with the people who *they are not* - their *other*.

“The category of the Other is as original as consciousness itself. The duality between Self and Other can be found in the most primitive societies, and in the most ancient mythologies.... No group ever defines itself as One without immediately setting up the Other opposite itself.”³⁷

The act of *othering* (creation of an *other*) creates a hierarchical difference between two groups. *Othering* often requires a difference in power dynamics. The *other* of an individual or group is defined by what is opposite from them, although commonly they embody many of the negative traits that the dominant group perceives as below them, in order to create space between the two groups. An *other* is natural in its essence, as it has served as a tool of self-protection but as well for control in many societies. To a lesser degree on an individual basis, we can refer to what Freud considers the *Object Relations Theory*.

“Object relations theory assumes that from birth, the infant engages in formative relations with ‘objects’- entities perceived as separate from the self, either whole persons or parts of the body, either existing in the external world or internalized as mental representations.”³⁸

36 De Rougemont, *Idea of Europe*, 150.

37 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 6.

38 Kahane, *Object Relations Theory*, 284.

In regards to *geographical otherness*, George Herbert Mead's concept of '*the generalized other*' provides a better explanation than that of Freud's *Object Relations Theory*. As *the generalized other* puts the self in a cultural and social context.³⁹ A common understanding of a *generalized other*, is in the role of stereotypes. These stereotypes can be positive as well as negative, but in positive forms they are usually mystical/fantastical and not based in reality.⁴⁰ David Sibley uses the example of Romani people's positive/negative stereotypes to better explain this. Positive stereotypes of *Romani* people usually allude to a carefree bohemian lifestyle and travelers from a distant land bringing all manners of trinkets. But at the same time there are the negative stereotypes such as being thieves, their lifestyles consisting of only vices and passions, lazy, and ignorant.⁴¹

Otherness is a form of *binarism*, which is a concept coined by the French structuralist linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who explained that signs and symbols in discourse do not derive their meaning from their reference to an object they represent, but instead to their opposition to other signs.⁴² A binary oppositions are a common construct amongst human society, although the focus on extreme opposites can lead to completely black and white explanations of constructs, excluding any intersecting qualities or gray areas.⁴³ Much of the Western tradition is laden with various binaries, such as white/black, civilized/primitive, advanced/simple, good/evil, beautiful/ugly, human/bestial, etc. This tradition is said to have originated with the ancient Greeks, whose world-view revolved around the city-state (*polis*).⁴⁴

The city-state was a center of civilization, a place of progress and culture for the ancient Greeks, whereas the periphery was a place of nature. The Greeks viewed the humans above nature. Aristotle, who in his travels studied the local flora and fauna of Anatolia, saw many similarities between humans and animals, but in each of these

39 Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*, 9.

40 Staszak, *Other/Otherness*, 2.

41 Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*, 15.

42 Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 25.

43 *Ibid.*

44 Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, 24.

similarities man surpassed animals.⁴⁵ For him ‘culture’ was a creation of man, it put man above nature, allowing them to leave nature. Aristotle believed leaving nature was the only logical course of action, as the creation of civilization would allow man to continue to improve themselves.

“Aristotle consistently brings in the brute/savage/civilized paradigm to emphasize the difference between man and animal, between the barbarian and civilized man. According to Aristotle, unlike brute, the civilized man is able to make choices towards civilized behaviour, i.e. to choose to control, submit one’s desire to Reason and not to be aroused by passions or animalistic drives.”⁴⁶

Those humans that still lived amongst nature were considered *barbarians* by the Greeks. A perspective that can be connected to the earlier discussed notion of progress. Certainly the Ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras followed this line of thinking, explaining that the progression of culture leads one from a barbaric state to civilization.⁴⁷ With Greek culture being centered around the city, a barbarian, which is someone who is not part of the Greek culture; I believe is a good example of a *geographical other*. As Staszak writes,

“A Barbarian was a person who did not speak Greek and thus had not mastered the *logos* (and was not familiar with democracy.) His culture was lacking and he belonged to another civilization. If his otherness comprises a geographical dimension, it is because cultural surfaces are divided into supposedly homogeneous spatial bloc (countries, zones, continents, etc.)”⁴⁸

We can note that the word Europe derives from the ancient Greek word Europa; the words Asia and Africa (Libya in ancient Greek) have the same origin. These continents were originally coined by Greek sailors traveling throughout the Aegean sea. “(...) the Aegean Sea lay at the heart of the Greek conception of the globe; Asia essentially denoted those lands to its east, Europe those lands to its west and north, and Libya those lands to the south.”⁴⁹ Although territorially Ancient Greeks originated in

45 Makolkin, Aristotle’s Idea of Civilized Man, 370.

46 Ibid, 376.

47 Sztompka, The Sociology of Social Change, 24.

48 Staszak, Other/Otherness, 3.

49 Lewis and Wigen, The Myth of Continents, 21.

Europe, many of them did not identify as “European”, this definition was at least originally used as more a geographical distinction. Most Ancient Greeks identified with a middle position, hailing from the Aegean which for them was the center of the world.⁵⁰ Being at the center of the world, it is no surprise they might have seen themselves favorably amongst the rest.

“The peoples of Asia on the other hand are intelligent and skilful in temperament, but lack spirit, so that they are in continuous subjection and slavery. But the Greek race participates in both characters, just as it occupies the middle position geographically, for it is both spirited and intelligent; (...) The same diversity also exists among the Greek races compared with one another: some have a one-sided nature, others are happily blended in regard to both these capacities.”⁵¹

To say that this notion of *geographical otherness* was unique only to the Ancient Greeks would, however, be an overstatement. As there is evidence to show that similar perspectives were held by the Persian empire on Greeks. The historian Herodotus, also known as the ‘father of history’, wrote in his third of *Histories*, that the Persian king Darius also used such a dichotomy, but in this instance the roles are reversed, the Persians are portrayed more in a positive light.⁵² It seems that there is rivalry amongst peoples' continual comparison of one another. Taking their own negative traits or concepts they did not desire, and applying it to another. Such as the words Europe and Asia with time began to carry political implications, especially when rivals such as Persia came into the picture. For instance Arthur Toynbee argues that there were times when the Ancient Greeks associated negative traits with Asia, in order to disparage the Ionians who migrated back to Europe after being conquered by the Persians.⁵³

2.2 Roman Geographical Others

50 Aristotle, *Politics*, 565.

51 *Ibid*, 567.

52 Ginzburg, *Civilization and Barbarism*, 250.

53 Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 718.

The importance of Ancient Greek understanding of progress and binarism versus that of Persian or any other society for that matter, is due to its significant influence on European philosophy, culture, and history. As the Roman empire spread its wings across the Mediterranean, similar dichotomies became prevalent within their society. Some have argued that this may have been due to the Greek influence on Roman society.⁵⁴ The binary of civilized/primitive was thus important for their society as well. For the Romans, Europe was divided into *Imperial Europe*; which was the domain of Rome, which stretched out across the Mediterranean, North to the Danube, and East to Rhine. Outside of the Empire's borders these lands were considered *Barbarian Europe*.⁵⁵

Romans viewed all those residing on the fringes of the empire as barbarians. Historian John B. Friedman notes that such was due to the Greco-Roman belief that they themselves were the center of the civilized world, and the farther one's proximity from the center the less civilized they are.⁵⁶ In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he explains this notion further, "Defining the mean as 'a point equally distant from either extreme,' he argues that 'excess and deficiency are the mark of vice, and observance of the mean a mark of virtue.'⁵⁷ *Barbarian Europe* was composed of peoples of many different backgrounds, but those North and North-east of the empire, were mainly that of the Germani and Scythians cultures. Scythians fit well into Aristotle's narrative that those on the periphery are lacking virtue and are full of vice. As historian Peter Heather explains in this book *Empires and Barbarians*, 'Scythia' for the Greco-Romans referred to the land of the North-east European plain, but it also was used in a very broad sense, and was a stand-in term for a place on fringe resembling nothing like themselves.

"In the Greek geographical and ethnographic tradition, it was often portrayed as a chill wilderness, the archetypal 'other', the mirror image of Greek civilization. And the inhabitants of this world, every imaginable type of uncivilized behaviour

54 Trundle, *Greek Historical Influence*, 22.

55 Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, 18.

56 Friedman, *Monstrous Races in Medieval Art*, 35.

57 *Ibid*

was ascribed” blinding, scalping, flaying, tattooing, even drinking wine unmixed with water.”⁵⁸

For the Romans, creating *others* in these far off places, could have been used as a form of early propaganda, to legitimate their reasons for expansion. The Roman economy was in many ways a *slave-system*, and expansion was a means of continual replenishment of slaves. When Karl Marx examined examples of class-based ancient societies, he concentrated mainly on Rome due to this dimension. As expansion and continual arrival of a fresh slave supply led to more defined social stratification.

“Population expansion, and the militaristic adventures which this promotes, serve to produce an extension of slavery and an increasing concentration of landed property. The wars of conquest and colonisation lead to the emergence of more sharply drawn lines of social differentiation, causing a swelling of the ranks of slaves.”⁵⁹

Expansions also gave enormous boosts to the Roman economy, and as economist Sir James Steuart argued, the empire overtime - as it grew - became expansion-dependent.⁶⁰ Another use of the Greco-Roman notion of themselves being the center of civilization, was that they can justify their expansion as bringing civilization to the barbarians.⁶¹ Although this form of spreading their domain, may have not been entirely akin to the Greek or later European colonial portrayals of the civilization vs. barbarism view, as for the Romans expansion also meant integration. Thus, apart from a constant fresh supply of slaves, exploitation of indigenous communities could be looked at what sociologist T.D. Hall calls *incorporation* instead.

“According to Hall’s model, incorporation is a process by which non-state societies that interact with imperial states become linked economically with the imperial states. As a result, both societies undergo certain changes in social and

58 Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, 21.

59 Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, 27.

60 Steuart, *Principles of Political Economy*, 428.

61 Morley, *The Roman Empire*, 103.

political configurations. The non-state societies play active roles in such changes.”⁶²

Looking at Roman expansion from this perspective shows an interesting dynamic: they brought to the barbarians many things, such as public institutions and infrastructure. This dynamic wasn't entirely equal, as Roman society was a city-centered civilization, and thus favor of the center and city was favored over the periphery.⁶³

2.3 Barbarian Origins of Europe

Within the first millennium of the common era, migrations of many different barbarian peoples would continually inhabit the borders of the empire. Migrations were not rare for Europe, as the continent's (then current) demographics were the result of countless migration processes.

“The first farmers of the late Stone Age arrived from the east to displace the hunter-gatherers, the copper users did the same for the stone users, the bronze smiths for the copper users, until eventually we reached the Iron Age and the first millennium AD”.⁶⁴

Although there was a migration which was considered the last major migration, it resulted in a massive population increase of the western and central regions of Europe. It is known as the *Great Migration*. This migration was long agreed upon in the scholarly community as being the origin of what we know as Europe today. But this perspective has seemingly fallen out of favor in contemporary scholarly discourse, as it is what is known as a *Grand Narrative*.⁶⁵ European scholars of the past used this narrative in various identity and nationalism movements beginning in the late seventeenth century. They connected these migrations with national identity, arguing that their identities have ancient origins.

62 Wells, *Production Within and Beyond Imperial Boundaries*, 144.

63 Arnason, *The Roman Phenomenon*, 25.

64 Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, 26.

65 Coined by Jean-François Lyotard, is a term for discourse that can be used for social actions or practices. Grand narratives are commonly used as a tool for legitimating a programmes of social change.

“(…) it was presumed that there was a direct and tangible continuity between immigrant groups of the first millennium and similarly named nations of modern Europe. Thus the Poles were the direct descendants of the Slavic Polani, the English of Anglo-Saxons, and so forth. National identities were ancient, unchanging ‘facts’, and their antiquity gave them a legitimacy which overrode the claims of any other form of political organization.”⁶⁶

It was also used by the Nazi party as a basis for their idea of *Lebensraum*.⁶⁷ Apart from the storied past of scholarship surrounding this phenomenon, the academic community does largely agree that there was some sort of major migration process around this time. Traditionally, it was argued that the *Great Migration*, resulted due to an invasion, an ethnic cleansing event by nomadic peoples of the steppe.⁶⁸ This hypothesis is no longer favorable amongst historians, instead, the *Elite transfer* hypothesis has gained large support. The *Elite transfer* hypothesis entails that there is a transfer of elites or ruling class, but apart from this the overall cultural, political, and social structure remains the same. An example of this can be understood through the Norman conquest of England, as scholar H.L. Root says the Norman barons simply replaced the English nobility.⁶⁹ Although evidence of ethnic cleansing is not concrete, ruling out violence entirely is not possible, the catalyst of the migration was most probably due to the advancement of the Hunnic empire. As historian Hyun Jin Kim writes in his book: *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*, there are conflicting theories of the Hunnic impact.

A few of the different theories have been proposed in this debate. Peter Heather, a scholar who has been referenced previously on the Romans, posits the idea of the primitive Huns. This understanding had been the persistent perspective among twentieth century academia.⁷⁰ The Huns, for Heather and other scholars, political organization was primitive, they were a collective of independent war-bands, and later learned organization for the Germanic barbarians.⁷¹ For him, they were the main driving force for the

⁶⁶Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, 27.

⁶⁷ *Lebensraum*, translates to Living Space, it is German idea understood as the necessary space for life and growth. Co-opted by the Nazis, and used as an explanation for their expansion.

⁶⁸ Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, 35.

⁶⁹ Angelucci Meraglia and Voigtlander, *How Merchant Towns Shaped Parliaments*, 1.

⁷⁰ Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*, 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 45.

beginning of the end of the Western Roman empire, as due to them being a preoccupation for the Roman armies, hence allowing the Germanic barbarians to make a foothold in Western Roman territory without harassment from the Roman armies.⁷² Cases like this that Heather puts forward, where two opposing forces fight, in turn allowing a smaller group to survive and grow, is not uncommon in history. For example, the successor to the Western Huns, the Avars; military campaigns against the Eastern Romans led in similar order to the *Slavicization* of the Balkan region.⁷³

The French historian Guy Halsall, disagrees with Heather on the Hunnic involvement, and takes them out of the picture entirely, he instead cites internal political problems that resulted in the barbarian migration into Roman territory.⁷⁴ Halsall says that the barbarians that fought alongside the Romans were given land within Roman territory, and with the internal strife of the empire they were able to manifest their power.⁷⁵ Kim's interpretation of the Huns is different from Heather and Halsall, and considers the Huns to have much political organization, originating from Central Asia, which allowed them to defeat the Roman armies on the battlefield. Each of these hypotheses, although disagreeing as to the causes, do show that the migration processes resulted in the populating of Western Europe, and eventually leading to the disintegration of the Western Roman empire in 476 CE.

2.4 Civilizing Europe

The period after Rome, was once referred to as the Dark Ages, due to scholars viewing the fall of Western Rome as a step back on progress.⁷⁶ Those barbarian peoples, whom the Greco-Romans looked down upon, had now taken up habitat in former Roman territory. Rome still existed in the East, under the Byzantine Empire, but its power over its former territories faded after the sixth century.⁷⁷ That is not to say that Roman

⁷² Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 344.

⁷³ Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, 343-4.

⁷⁴ Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*, 46.

⁷⁵ Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 316.

⁷⁶ Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*, 143.

⁷⁷ Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*, 62.

influence had disappeared, but just like the Greeks influenced the Romans, Roman culture influenced the barbarians. Much of the Roman tradition was transferred to the barbarian peoples through the way of religious conversion to Christianity, Delanty writes.

“What survived was the empire’s main creation, a civilizational heritage, to a large degree now based on Christianity and which was to provide a framework for the homogenization of Europe in the Medieval era.”⁷⁸

Christianity before Roman collapse, became the empire’s official religion.⁷⁹ Thus, taking in many influences of Greco-Roman tradition such as the many binaries we previously discussed. The idea of progress, although already inherent in Christian tradition, was a concept which was carried over from its Judaeo background. As the Jewish religious tradition views history as guided by divine will which will culminate in a future golden era.⁸⁰

Out of the ashes of the Western Roman empire, new political centers began to form in Western Europe. The Visigothic kingdom in Iberia, the Frankish kingdom in modern day France, and the Ostrogoths in the Italian peninsula.⁸¹ The notion of identity surrounding the city also carried over, as Halsall says, “One form of ‘Roman’ identity that was brought to the fore in the fifth century was based around the *civitas*- city-district or diocese.”⁸² Thus it can be understood that the binary of civilization/barbarian was eventually taken up by the barbarian kingdoms. Halsall explains this further by citing the example of Theoderic the Ostrogoths perspective on other barbarians.

“The immediately post-imperial kings readily appropriated Roman victory ideology, Theoderic the Ostrogoth even incorporated Roman ideology about barbarians. When his troops occupied Provence he announced that it had been retaken from the barbarians - even when those barbarians were Goth ruled by a dynasty claimed by his propaganda to be inferior in status among the Goths only to his own Amal family.”⁸³

78 Ibid.

79 Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 119.

80 Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, 25.

81 Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 415.

82 Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 480.

83 Ibid, 490.

This attempt at distancing themselves from their barbarians origins might have been due to these kingdoms trying to show legitimacy to their rule. Although the imperial empire had fallen, the core of the West was still centered on Rome.⁸⁴ Continually vying for legitimacy many of the barbarian kingdoms did not survive. The heir of Rome would not come until the Frankish Kingdom under Charlemagne (800CE) who proclaimed himself the ‘father of Europe’.⁸⁵ Although it is important to note that the name Europeans still was not in wide use at the time and when referred commonly the word Franks was used instead.⁸⁶ Charlemagne’s empire also known as the Carolingian empire became the dominating force in Western Europe.

“Charlemagne was incontestably the greatest ruler of early medieval Europe. He was a great ruler in the traditional, old-fashioned manner long expected of Germanic kings. He expanded his kingdom by means of war and diplomacy in every direction, amassing untold quantities of land and plunder and tribute for judicious distribution to grateful and loyal followers.”⁸⁷

Western Europe in the middle ages saw consolidation of the Western landmass and the emergence of *Christendom*. Scholars of the past used to equate Christendom to the origin of Europe, although the notion of *Christendom* and Europe being synonymous is a bit flawed as historian Paul Rich notes, the idea of a united European continent under *Christendom* is not as rigid as some early scholars envisioned it, as *Christendom* wasn’t entirely connected to the European continent, but instead represented everywhere Christianity was present. “Christendom’s geographical boundaries did not strictly coincide with those of ‘Europe’ since Christian communities existed in areas such as Anatolia.”⁸⁸ Christendom, although loose in its organization, as a whole still played a role in the consolidation of the European landmass. Europe underwent an internal colonization also known as ‘Europeanization of Europe.’ There were many key figures at

84 Delanty, Formations of European Modernity, 68.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid, 62.

87 Fletcher, The Barbarian Conversion, 317.

88 Rich, European Identity and Myth, 438.

play during this time, as the kingdoms of the West branched out on its Northern, Eastern, and Southern borders.

“Medieval Christendom was an expanding world in which the edge of Europe was pushed in many directions through settlements and migratory movements: the Norman conquest of England, the English Conquest of the Celtic world in the western and northern regions of the British Isles, the Catalan conquest of the south of Italy, the Castilian ‘reconquest’ of the Iberian peninsula.”⁸⁹

The reasons for these continually conquests along the landmass cannot all be stated, although one of the explanations can be of the spreading Christianity. As Delanty suggests the spread of Christianity could have been used as a way of civilizing and bringing under control the barbarians.

“Christianity was a relatively modernizing religion in that it promoted a world view that proclaimed the de-magnification of the world; it sought to eradicate paganism and replace it with doctrinal authority controlled by an ordained priesthood. It has often been observed that the term ‘modern’ was first used by Pope Gelasius in the fifth century to distinguish the Christian era from the pagan age.”⁹⁰

Christendom was thus perceived as the civilizing force of the middle ages, those who were not among the faith were deemed as backward, savage, and violent. As Western Christendom spread, it demonized others, eventually leading to their colonization.⁹¹ This brings about the previously discussed theme of *geographical otherness*. The notion of a civilizing force was at first directed mainly towards the non-Christian pagans on the landmass. Notable among these non-Christian pagans were the Vikings to the North and the Slavs, Avars, Maygars to the East.

The Slavs who now comprise the largest ethnic group in Europe, were spread across a large distance of the central and eastern European landmass.⁹² Their earliest settlements on the borders of Eastern Rome were from the fifth century CE. Their

⁸⁹ Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*, 72.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 74.

⁹¹ Arnason, *Understanding Intercivilizational Encounters*, 46.

⁹² Panek and Tuma, *A History of the Czech Lands*, 61.

continual migrations westward brought them into contact with the Gepids, Lombards, and Avars; the latter who became military allies and eventually their subjects.⁹³

The Avars, like the Huns before them, originated from the pontic steppe and moved to central Europe. The primary opponent that clashed with the Avars was the Byzantine Empire, these clashes as expressed earlier led to the Slavization of the Balkans. The Byzantine Emperor Maurice divided barbarians into four categories, this is outlined by historian Walter Pohl.

“A manual on warfare written about 600, called the Strategicon of Maurice, divides the barbarians into four groups according to their ways of life and war: the Persians; the ‘blond peoples,’ among whom the Franks and Lombards; the ‘Scythians,’ that is the Avars and Turks and the other Hunnic peoples; and the Slavs and Antes.⁹⁴

Due to the Avars being regarded as Scythians by the Byzantines, who were nomadic peoples the furthest away from peoples of civilization. “To a cultivated Byzantine nomadic life must have appeared coarse, brutal, and uncivilized.”⁹⁵ Clashes with the Eastern Romans aside, Charlemagne's kingdom also had dealings with them. The Frankish scholar Einhard who part of the court of Charlemagne wrote this about the Frankish war with the Avars: “Charlemagne’s greatest war” apart from that against the Saxons, was the Avar war; it was conducted with more fervor and greater force of arms than all the others.”⁹⁶ This war lasted for eight years resulting in a complete victory by the Franks. During the aftermath Charlemagne was quoted saying “(...) with plaited hair, the Hun turns to Christ, and he who once was savage is now humble before the faith.”⁹⁷ The war was strategic but also symbolic for the Franks as Pohl says that the Avars being descended from the Huns as well as being Nomadic embodied the barbarian migration.

“Charlemagne acted in the name of the Christian West that had long suffered from barbarian depredations. The Franks’ own past as one of these gentes could in this new confrontation finally be forgotten. The victory over the Avars symbolized a

93 Ibid.

94 Pohl, *The Avars*, 5.

95 Ibid, 6.

96 Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, 23.

97 Theodulf of Orleans, *Carmen*, 484.

line drawn under the dark centuries during which the West had suffered from barbarian incursions.⁹⁸

As the Avars dominion waned, in the early seventh century, the Frankish merchant Samo became King of the Western Slavs, creating a tribal union against the Avars.⁹⁹ Eventually this union joined the Franks in the Frankish conquests of the Avars. Though allies in this war and Samo Frankish, the tribal union being pagans (and thus barbarians) were still viewed poorly by the Franks, as can be seen for the seventh century *Chronicle of Fredegar*.

“(…) put this thought in the mouth of Samo, king of the Wends, when he is vilified as a ‘heathen dog’ by a Frankish ambassador: ‘Then if you are God’s servants, and we his hounds, and since you persist in offending Him, we are within our rights to tear you to pieces.’”¹⁰⁰

As Samo’s union disbanded, western Slavs reaped immense spoils from the Avar wars. The Moravians, western Slavs residing on the Morava river, used these spoils to establish a state. Recognizing Frankish power they subsequently converted to Christianity.¹⁰¹

It has been commonly noted that the geographical others of Christendom were that of the Islamic civilizations. Although there is a lot of evidence backing up this claim, there is also a lot of evidence contrary to the idea. Instead, we can view this dimension as a form of fear and awe, from the Western perspective. Otherness requires a hierarchical difference between two groups.¹⁰² At this time the Western Christendom was as much as civilizationally advanced to those Islamic civilizations to the East, and in actuality they borrowed many technological advancements from the East.¹⁰³ Of course there were moments of fear amongst Western Christendom, especially due to the rapid advance of Islam after the death of Mohammed in 632.

98 Pohl, *The Avars*, 377.

99 *Ibid*, 26.

100 Fredegar, *The Fourth Book of Chronicles of Fredegar*, 154.

101 Panek and Tuma, *A History of the Czech Lands*, 69.

102 Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 188.

103 Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*, 71.

“Yet where Islam was concerned, European fear, if not always respect, was in order. After Mohammed’s death in 632, the military and later cultural and religious hegemony of Islam grew enormously. First Persia, Syria, and Egypt, then Turkey, then North Africa fell to the Muslim armies; in the eighth and ninth centuries Spain, Sicily, and parts of France were conquered. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Islam ruled as far east as India, Indonesia, and China.”¹⁰⁴

At times the fear was so strong that Mohammed can be found in Dante’s *Inferno*, as the character Maometto, who could be found in the eighth out of nine circles of hell, possibly used as a form of propaganda to deter Christians from abandoning the faith. Another reason why the notion of otherness is lost on the Islamic civilizations is due to the fact that during this time the identity of Europe was ever-changing. There was the notion of Christendom, but as previously mentioned, Christendom was a relatively loose unity spread over a large territory. Europe of the middle ages still needed a lot of time to consolidate its holdings. “Due to the highly-differentiated and internal divisions within Europe there was no central unifying cultural or political identity that could provide an identity for Europe for long.”¹⁰⁵ During this time there were acts of unity amongst Western Christendom. Such as the Romano-Gallic alliance led by Charles Martell at the *Battle of Tours* (732).¹⁰⁶ Of course one cannot rule out the Crusades as an example of Christendom unity, although the motives for the Crusades were very mixed.

104 Said, *Orientalism*, 59.

105 Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*, 98.

106 Rich, *European Identity and the Myth of Islam*, 438.

3 Early Modern Changes

Europe's affect on the world began to change around the Renaissance era known also as the early modern. The early modern era brought about profound change in the perspective of Europe, the view of civilized/savage manifested then too, as Delanty uses the term *periodization* to explain European history viewed by the Renaissance mind. This historical perspective was divided into three eras: ancient, medieval, and modern.¹⁰⁷ Unlike the previous eras' perspectives on history Renaissance thinkers history in a relatively cyclical fashion, as many historians cite the Renaissance as a 'rebirth' due to their extensive stress on the ancient past.¹⁰⁸ Although the era before the Renaissance was viewed with contempt, for them the Greco-Romans created civilization whereas the barbarians destroyed it. For the people of the Renaissance, the prior era was perceived as a period of de-civilizing.¹⁰⁹ Their perspective of history although cyclical was still viewed as continuous and cumulative, quoting Nisbet:

"Renaissance thinkers, from the fifteenth-century humanists in Italy to Francis Bacon, tended overwhelmingly to see history not as something unilinear in its flow, as continuous and cumulative, but as a multiplicity of recurrences, of cyclical ups and downs, all of them the consequence of the fixed elements in human nature: evil and good."¹¹⁰

Ideas that came out of the Renaissance included stress on cultivating the self and a new emphasis on a human being's individual being.¹¹¹ Being influenced by ideas from Saint Augustine as well as classical philosophers like Aristotle and Plato. Augustine who preached looking inward to find God, eventually led to the notion of a separation between the self and the world. Delanty discusses how this newfound perspective may have been the leading force of Europeans' interest in the outside world.

107 Rich, *European Identity and the Myth of Islam*, 437.

108 Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 103.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Delanty, *Formation of European Modernity*, 118.

“This capacity led to a certain displacement and eventually to the great movement of Europe beyond the continent to the New World. Without this notion of the inner self as the path to the city of God, Europeans would not have had the cognitive capacity to conquer other parts of the world or, compelled by curiosity, to seek out other parts of the world and to rule over them, acquire knowledge of them, and to convert them.”¹¹²

With the Spanish Reconquista complete, the landmass its Western border had been consolidated and brought back under Christendom by the Spanish dominion.¹¹³ The middle ages which were defined by internal colonization were coming to an end. The Crusades and the wars of Christendom against the non-Christian pagans began to lose steam as well. 1492 would mark a turning point for the peoples of the European landmass, as Christopher Columbus returned from his first voyage with news of discovering a new land.¹¹⁴ Thus, the new age of discovery changed the European political landscape. This newfound economic change also came to change the cultural landscape of the continent as well. Discovery meant progress, thus the preference for maritime warfare took center stage; as the progress and liberal way to do battle.¹¹⁵

The Western border protected, and the Mediterranean protecting Europe to the south, the only place of concern left was the east. The Ottomans to the southeast, and as discussed earlier the relationship between the Islamic empires such as the Ottomans was a mixture of awe and fear. Also due to the Ottoman’s sizeable European territory as well as it being the successor of the Byzantine Empire,¹¹⁶ the Ottomans were wholly not outside of Europe. This can be further understood by the Ottoman engagement with various European kingdoms throughout their reign, contributing to social change within Europe. One such example, Akgunduz puts forth is the role the Ottoman Empire played in the *Protestant Reformation*, by being a major threat to the Holy Roman Emperor,

112 Ibid, 119.

113 Ibid, 134.

114 Elliott, Empires of the Atlantic World, 18.

115 Black, Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony, 25.

116 Karlsson, Turkey in Europe, 9.

leading up to the *Siege of Vienna* (1529), thus allowing the German protestants pryncedom an exploitable dynamic.

“There were numerous German princes, and many free cities, that desired political and economic freedom from the imperial powers. Thus, the Ottoman threat was in short a convenient leverage for the German estates in their negotiations with Charles V. This allowed them to continue their protest against the Imperial power and aid the consolidation of Protestantism in Germany.”¹¹⁷

The event similarly resembles the Avar earlier mentioned Avar wars against Byzantium, allowing for the Slavs to gain a foothold within the Balkans. Of course, we cannot say that Ottoman involvement was the only key to the survival of Reformation within Europe, although its influence did not stop there within Europe. This can be considered as an example of what Arnason considers an *inter-civilizational encounter*.¹¹⁸

Although a stress on naval warfare, and the increasing overseas European holdings led to the eventual supremacy over the Ottoman navies in 1571 at the Battle of Lepanto.¹¹⁹ Shortly after Ottoman attention away from Europe towards Persia, left European powers unchecked. There were other conflicts with the Europeans by the hands of the Ottomans, although after Lepanto there began to be a shift in the balance of power. European advances against other great powers such as the Dutch against the Ming Dynasty in China, and the British and Portuguese against Muhgals in India, also increased during their time.

With Europe’s new identity forming as a global identity, having put them as the new center of the world, they thus perceived themselves as the world civilization. Those they encountered in the newly discovered territories, due to not knowing Western European civilization as well as their resemblance to Europe’s barbarian past, were viewed as groups that can only be saved by the introduction of civilization.¹²⁰ The connection of these peoples with Europe’s barbarian history is a reference to the notion of progress inherent within the European tradition. Colonized peoples followed along the

117 Akgunduz, *The Ottoman Sociopolitical Impact on the West*, 635.

118 Arnason, *Contested Divergence*, 78.

119 Delanty, *Formation of European Modernity*, 44.

120 *Ibid*, 133.

same civilizational trajectory as the Europeans, although they were still in the past stage compared to the Europeans. A strong example of this line of thinking is from the French ethnologist Joseph-Francois Lafitau, in his book titled *Customs of Primitive Americans Compared with the Customs of Early Times*, which drew parallels between each other.

“The Christian theory of human progress made it easy for Lafitau to find parallels between American Indian beliefs and customs and those of an earlier Western European age. He could deduce from this the fact that Western civilization was more advanced and had once known such beliefs and customs but had gone beyond them over a long period of historical time.”¹²¹

3.1 The Civilized Man

Due to Western European powers continually rising to supremacy, the term *civilisation* began to gain a lot of traction in scholarly circles. It was connected to the notion of a ‘civilized man.’¹²² During this time there was an increasing stress on civilized behavior in Western Europe elite circles.¹²³ In Norbet Elias’ *The Civilizing Process*, he analyzes this phenomenon. He writes that when the middle ages were coming to a close, and the unifying power of the catholic church was weakening. A new conception began to take center stage, this is the concept of *civilité*.¹²⁴ It was focused around the new societies that gained prominence during the time, Italian and French.

“They manifested the unity of Europe, and at the same time the new social formation which formed its backbone, court society. The situation, the self-image, and the characteristics of this society found expression in the concept of *civilité*.”¹²⁵

Civilité can be viewed as a form of *psychogenesis*, a term paired with *sociogenesis* that Elias uses to describe the civilizing process. Our section on the emphasis of the progress on civilization could be understood as the process of sociogenesis. Which is: “(...) the long-term evolution of states and social structures of inequality, power, and order.”¹²⁶ On

121 Nisbet, History of the Idea of Progress, 146.

122 Wolff and Cipolloni, The Anthropology of the Enlightenment.

123 Subrt, The Perspective of Historical Sociology, 155.

124 Elias, The Civilizing Process, 47.

125 Ibid.

126 Subrt, The Perspective of Historical Sociology, 162.

the other hand psychogenesis focuses more on an individual's actions, manners, behaviors, and personality. Elias shows that the European of the middle ages was one who was spontaneous in their mannerisms, "They ate wildy, devouring their food. Gnawed bones were thrown straight to the ground. Diners blew their noses in their hands, or on their clothes, or on the tablecloth."¹²⁷

As the period of the Enlightenment began these distinctions became more pronounced. Jervis shows us the concept of modernity is in connection with modern civilization, henceforth implying a concept of a civilizing process.¹²⁸ This concept came about through a long process, there is not one singular cause for this change in perspective. It is connected to the change in the notion of the self, through a stress on the mind/body dichotomy of rationality.

"What we encounter, then. Is the modern experience of selfhood, self as identity, self as project: the bounded, rational self, 'inside' the body - mysteriously - and somehow both governing it, and threatened by it."¹²⁹

Thus, the action of self-limiting and control of one's own body through the mind. The animalistic and barbarous tendencies of our past can be eliminated through the right amount of discipline and exercise. As the understanding was that if one was in control of their animalistic qualities, then they could consider themselves free. Hence there was a change in the values of certain qualities that were considered positive and valuable that one could embody. For instance, the association with bigger body sizes amongst men turned negative. Before, a bigger body size was a status of wealth, but shifting into the early modern day, robust men were connected to irrationality and unintelligence.¹³⁰ It shows that this shift was slow, as it took many more years to associate thinness and femininity as positive. Alsoit shows the connection between intelligence and masculinity and femininity with being part of nature.

127 Ibid, 163.

128 Jervis, *Transgressing the Modern*, 5.

129 Jervis, *Transgressing the Modern*, 5.

130 *Strings, Fearing the Black Body*, 53.

Hence, civilizing during the Enlightenment starts with the individual but manifests throughout the society. Elias writes that through control of certain institutions and starting from infancy through practice self-restraint can become ‘second nature.’¹³¹ Thus, the civilizing mode becomes a project of the Enlightenment, linking together the notion of imperialism and rationalism, Jervis points out the perspective: “(...) if I am enlightened, it is my duty to enlighten you; Enlightenment becomes a mission, necessarily intolerant of otherness.”¹³²

3.2 Inventing Eastern Europe

Briefly, we have discussed Eastern Europe by discussing the various migrations of barbarians traveling from East to West across the European landmass. As well as discussing the Scythians, a notable geographical other for the Greco-Romans. Apart from that we have mainly discussed early Europe in terms of Western Europe. This is intentional as Eastern Europe plays a role not in itself but as a place of defining Western Europe. Thus, what we are claiming is that the concept of what we know as Eastern Europe has its origins by the means of Western Europe. As Wolff writes, “It was Western Europe that invented Eastern Europe as its complementary another half in the eighteenth century, the age of the Enlightenment.”¹³³

What we mean by this invention is the idea of Eastern Europe, and what it stands for, not so much the various entities within the region. This idea of Eastern is similar to the created notions of Easternness within the Western European tradition. Though Eastern Europe shows a lot of similarities with the greater notion of Eastern for Western Europe, we believe they are not the same. The similarities arise, due the originator of both concepts is the same. As well, the notions we have discussed in the previous sections play a role here. What is important to take note of is the East versus West narrative. This narrative we believe is too black and white to be applied to the case of Eastern Europe.

131 Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 369.

132 Jervis, *Transgressing the Modern*, 6.

133 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.

Like will be shown, Eastern Europe's definition contains many common themes: it as the theme of “the orient”, although it, like all other regions of the world, is unique in its own right. Not all of Western Europe was instrumental in creating the Eastern notion, nor was all of the ‘East’ involved either.¹³⁴ Eastern Europe’s role within the dynamic of Europe is a bit different from that of the Ottomans, or the early Islamic empires, due to the hierarchical differences between the notion of the western part of Europe and its eastern portion, or as Walter Prescott Webb called it the ‘*Great Frontier*’.¹³⁵

At the same time, European advancement spread to even the former territories of the non-Western powers such as the acquired territory of the *Near East*, from French and British conquests against the Ottomans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This dynamic is outlined extensively in Edward Said’s seminal work, *Orientalism*. “A line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant.”¹³⁶ These two examples of European perspective and engagement fit as good examples of two notions that were beginning in the sixteenth century and reached high popularity with Europe’s rise to power. Both of these perspectives were tied in with the notion of progress.

“For sixteenth-century Europeans, as for the ancient Greeks and Romans, there were at least two explanations available: one, that all these peoples represented corruptions or degenerations of once civilized races; the other that these peoples were different, generally more primitive, savage, or barbaric because they had not yet developed to the level of Europe.”¹³⁷

The first explanation fits with the dynamic of Europeans in the near east. This concept later influenced conceptions such as *Atavism*, which is the belief that certain peoples were on lower stages of the evolutionary trajectory than others. Heavily influenced by the theory of evolution, *Atavism* is a form of *Social Darwinism*, which views that some peoples can devolve, becoming more savage and primitive.¹³⁸ The European perspective

134 Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*, 126.

135 Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*, 135.

136 Said, *Orientalism*, 57.

137 Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 146.

138 Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 21.

left little room for admiration amongst the non-Europeans. Although there were fringe groups that saw the way of life outside of civilization as captivating, as a glimpse into Europe's forgotten past. J.H. Elliot in his work, *The Old World and the New: 1492-1650* writes that this interest could have been viewed as a tool for reflection and a way of creating new ideas to work around their own barbarian traits inherent in their culture.

“In changing and refining Europe's conception of barbarism and civility, therefore, as in many other areas of thought, the discovery of America was important, less because it gave birth to totally new ideas, than because it forced Europeans to come face to face with ideas and problems which were already to be found within their own cultural traditions.”¹³⁹

The Western Asian lands that were formerly controlled by the Ottomans, was known to the Western Europeans as the 'Orient,' The Orient, like all other domains of Western European control, were brought civilization, but more importantly it had a different function by the ways of sources of knowledge and artifacts that could be extracted from it. Since the Orient was perceived by the Western Europeans as in disrepair, those who inhabited the area could not be trusted with the preservation of it. Thus, Western Europeans put it upon themselves to save the Orient's languages, traditions, artifacts, and philosophies.¹⁴⁰ Due to the Orient's proximity to Western Europe, as well as its long standing relationship with it, interest in the Orient went much farther than just on an academic and colonial level. The European fascination with the Orient continued in the ways of a literary and artistic level as well. It was a place of legend, mystery, and wonder. Thus, creatives of all kinds took inspiration from this new opened up space. Demata writes:

“It was an Orient whose mixture of beauty and horror could be described and presented to the Western reader through references to the works written by those who had a thorough knowledge of it by having visited and studied it.”¹⁴¹

139 Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 146.

140 *Ibid*, 121.

141 Demata, *Discover Eastern Horrors*, 15.

Whole genres have their inspiring origins in the creative possibilities of the Orient. Originating inspiration from the Orient, was for the creation of the Gothic horror genre, as the genre's intention to scare and bewilder its readers capitalizes on themes of otherness. "(...) a narrative space which discloses to the readers the dangerous proximity and closeness of the alien presence of the Oriental other."¹⁴² Gothic horror fits perfectly with this theme as it is based around the premise of combining the known with the unknown.¹⁴³ Europeans took so much interest in the Orient, that many creatives began to take inspiration from the various texts written on the Orient rather than the Orient itself. Those who had never traveled or witnessed the Orient first hand, wrote on it, taking the word of an European of its reality. This perspective was devoid of the actual perspective of those who had originated from the Orient, as Said says through the colonizers perspective there was nothing the Orientals could tell them that they didn't already know.

"If he does not speak directly for the Orientals, it is because they after all speak another language; yet he knows how they feel since he knows their history, their reliance upon such as he, and their expectations. Still, he does speak for them in the sense that what they might have to say, were they to be asked and might they be able to answer, would somewhat uselessly confirm what is already evident: that they are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves."¹⁴⁴

Continual writing in this way created the concept known as *Latent Orientalism*, in which the idea of the Orient becomes isolated from its actuality, existing in a literary space.

"The centuries-old designation of geographical space to the east of Europe as 'Oriental' was partly political, partly doctrinal, and partly imaginative; it implied no necessary connection between actual experience of the Orient and knowledge of what is Oriental, and certainly Dante and d'Herbelot made no claims about their Oriental ideas except that they were corroborated by a long learned (and not existential) tradition."¹⁴⁵

142 Ibid, 23.

143 Stoddart cite

144 Said, Orientalism, 34.

145 Said, Orientalism, 210.

Latent Orientalism stays static through time, even as the geographical space of the Orient changes. By referring to texts of others who had their own bias and motives, a theme arose within the literary space. A theme dependent on the ways in which Western Europeans saw themselves and their history. We have discussed the European tradition's obsession with progress. The associations with civilization and barbarianism were carried over to this subject as well. The Orient became associated with a general understanding of 'East.'

"All the latent and unchanging characteristics of the Orient stood upon, were rooted in, its geography. Thus on the one hand the geographical Orient nourished its inhabitants, guaranteed their characteristics, and defined their specificity; on the other hand, the geographical Orient solicited the West's attention.... East was East and West was West."¹⁴⁶

The fate of Eastern Europe is also not immune to this process, as those that have never set foot in Eastern Europe seemed to have an opinion on it. Many notable academics and creatives alike opinions all followed a similar vein on the subject. Such as Voltaire, wrote extensively on the subject of Russia, even though never traveling further East than Berlin. There was also Rousseau who was particularly interested in the subject of Poland who just like Voltaire never went farther East than the so-called West.¹⁴⁷ Mozart when on tour from Vienna to Prague noted that when entering Bohemian lands, "it was a voyage into Eastern Europe, even though Prague is technically more farther West than Vienna."¹⁴⁸

It was very popular at this time when noting anything about Eastern Europe to speak of it as if it was a wild place. The reason for these constructions was to show that there is a difference between Western and Eastern Europe, as we have discussed previously the notion of civilization was being associated with a civilized man, this concept became a tool or marker of sorts to define a group.

"This relative concept of civilization was used to order intellectually the relation among the different parts of Europe in the eighteenth century, namely in the differentiation between Eastern Europe and Western Europe, but also to establish hierarchically Europe's cultural priority with respect to the rest of the world."¹⁴⁹

146 Ibid, 216.

147 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 7.

148 Ibid, 8.

149 Elias, *History of Manners*, 40.

As Jervis writes, to define something as modern, implies that there was a before period of modernity, and modern civilization thus implies a notion of a civilizing process, and hence those deemed not part of modernity did not go through such a process.¹⁵⁰

During this time the notion of Europe as a continent came to fruition, as a way of defining itself completely differently from Asia. The notion of Europe in our contemporary world comes off as self-evident, although for much of the continent's history, this was not evident. Europe's continental status is a recent invention, in actuality, the notion of continents is also a fairly recent invention. When compared to the other continents of the world Europe's continental status is an anomaly. As it is considered a continent even though it does not completely follow the parameters of a continent. Geographically speaking the definition of a continent is a large mass of land ideally separated from another with water.¹⁵¹ The continents such as North and South America as well as Asia and Africa are connected by land, the connection is so relatively small that it can be overlooked.¹⁵² On the other hand, Europe's connection to Asia is by no means small. The Ural and Caucasus mountain ranges are said to be its Eastern border, but they are not much of a border as there is a 600-mile gap between these ranges. Which allowed throughout history many peoples to enter Europe's geographical territory through the Pontic Steppe. Due to this strangeness as its own continent, there are some scholars who consider it not to be a continent and instead to combine Europe and Asia into one continent known as Eurasia.¹⁵³ There was a time when the notion of Eurasia gained popularity although it was short, Europe on the other hand as a continent is referred to by most as an undeniable and distinct continent. With Europe considered its own continent that begs the question why? Academics Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen explain that Europe's continental status is tied in with the identity of Europe. In their book, *The Myth of Continents* (1997) they write:

150 Jervis, *Transgressing the Modern*, 5.

151 Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents*, 35.

152 Ibid.

153 Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*, 34.

“Viewing Europe and Asia as parts of a single continent would have been far more geographically accurate, but it would have also failed to grant Europe the priority that Europeans and their descendants overseas believed it deserved. By positing a continental divide between Europe and Asia, Western scholars were able to reinforce the notion of a cultural dichotomy between these two areas- a dichotomy that was essential to modern Europe’s identity as a civilization.”¹⁵⁴

4 Rise of Hegemony

The notion of progress and otherness are concepts deeply tied to one another, and their influence to European history is no understatement. Colonialism allowed for European

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 36.

ideas and themes to spread across the globe, but in order to understand how they persisted with time, it is important to understand the concept of *hegemony*. Hegemony was coined by the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, it refers to a form of rule through intellectual and moral leadership.¹⁵⁵ It is a form of control where the ruling ideas of a population are made to seem the same as those being ruled. It is a concept having its roots in Marx and Engels.

“In every epoch the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, that is, the class that is the ruling material power of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual power. The class having the means of material production, has also control over the means of intellectual production, so that it also controls, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of intellectual production.”¹⁵⁶

Where Marx and Engels fell short was underestimating the power of hegemony over the population.¹⁵⁷ Hegemony prevails as a form of ‘common sense’ among the population, making ruling ideas come off as normal and legitimate within society. The strive for legitimacy is important for hegemony, as demands for ‘consent’ among the population must be justified.¹⁵⁸ We used the term *consent* as hegemony finds its way of rule through consent of the population.¹⁵⁹

The notion of consent can be better understood through the ways in which consent is given by the population. The first one is the act of conforming due to fear of the repercussions of non-conformity. This can lead to notions of shame, loss of honor, or self-esteem issues.¹⁶⁰ The second reason why is which consent can manifest is through habitual patterns, that is if one is accustomed to the established form of society and does not reflect on it then that is a form of consent. The third example is most closely rooted to the concept of hegemony, which is agreement with certain core elements of society.¹⁶¹

Gramsci refers to consent as a psychological state that involves acceptance.¹⁶²

155 Boggs, Gramsci’s Marxism, 38.

156 Easton and Guddat, Writings of the Young Marx, 438.

157 Femia, Gramsci’s Political Thought, 32.

158 Ibid, 38.

159 Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts, 134.

160 Femia, Gramsci’s Political Thought, 38.

161 Ibid.

162 Ibid, 37.

“(…) Gramsci describes hegemony as the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.”¹⁶³

The details of Gramsci’s theory are not wholly specific, but the essence of hegemony comes from what Edward Shil calls the ‘centre.’ The centre includes all the moral standards, institutions of authority, and how they are maintained within the hegemony. Shil writes:

“Consensus must focus on the allocation of scarce goods, the permissible range of disagreement, and the institutions through which decisions about such allocations are made- that is, on the values, norms, perceptions and beliefs that support and define the structures of central authority.”¹⁶⁴

The common sense notion penetrates every facet of daily life hence becoming a silent form of control.¹⁶⁵ Hegemonic structures are commonly studied in post-colonial spaces, as they were used to maintain control over large spaces, colonization was done at first through force, but in order to maintain their territorial control, those colonial powers had to cement in their ideas of rule with the general population.

“The term is useful for describing the success of imperial power over a colonized people who may far outnumber any occupying military force, but whose desire for self-determination had been suppressed by a hegemonic notion of the greater good, often couched in terms of social order stability and advancement, all of which are defined by the colonizing power.”¹⁶⁶

The post-colonial philosopher Frantz Fanon writes that when the European powers colonized Africa, their understanding of themselves changed. Fanon says, “He is something because the white man has come, this has led him to ask the question of whether he is a man because his reality as a man has been questioned.”¹⁶⁷ The ideas,

163 Gramsci, *The Intellectuals*, 145.

164

165 Danilova, *Narratives of “Losers” and “Winners”*, 444.

166 Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 134.

167 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 98.

values, and perceptions of the dominant actor bled into the social fabric of the colonized. The Western obsession with progress, with the dichotomy of civilization and savagery, was shown fairly easily for colonized Africans. “From black to white—that is the way to go. One is white, so one is rich so one is handsome, so one is intelligent.”¹⁶⁸ The remedy for a situation such as this is to try to become equal to the dominant group.

“All colonized people—in other words, people in whom an inferiority complex has taken root, whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave—position themselves in relation to the civilizing language i.e., the metropolitan culture. The more colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush. The more he rejects his blackness and the bush, the whiter he will become.”¹⁶⁹

4.1 Czech Central European History

Now one may be thinking: how does the theory of hegemony and its effects upon Eastern Europe’s identity affect the Czech Republic? The Czech Republic, although it has had a long history belonging to the Central European kingdom of Bohemia, is not immune to this dichotomy. Geographically speaking, Czech Republic lies in Central Europe, the question lies in what is their status between East and West?

The Czech lands historically known as Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia have long considered themselves as the “Heart of Europe”¹⁷⁰ These lands nestled between modern day Germany to the West, Austria and Hungary to the South, and Poland to the North and East. Some have therefore complained about the presumed isolation of the lands from the rest of Europe.

“Protected by mountains at its border, in the notional centre of the continent, with no marine harbours and without access to the large waterways, without extensive fertile lowlands, the Czech lands remained for centuries rather at the margins of the great political, economic and social of Europe.”¹⁷¹

This is not to say there was no activity in these lands prior to as the Slavic Union of Samo’s Empire, the Avars, and the Great Moravian Empire existed prior. Each of

168 Ibid, 34.

169 Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 2.

170 Panek and Tuma, *A History of the Czech Lands*, 25.

171 Panek and Tuma, *A History of the Czech Lands*, 25.

these eventually laid the grounds for the central Bohemian state. The geography which was once a curse was in turn a blessing for the foundations of the Bohemian kingdom, as their natural barrier meant little change of control, whereas the Moravian lands which although achieved quite some territorial expanse; border's continually changed.

“The natural barrier, protecting the inhabitants of the Czech lands and its seats, was created by a mountain zone covered by impassable woods, and with a notional border running through its middle. In the territories unprotected by mountains with dense forests, a natural border was lacking and it mainly the south-eastern border of Bohemia and southern border of Moravia that changed most often, and differ most from the present state.”¹⁷²

The history of Bohemia is tied in with many of the great events that occurred within Central Europe. Such as the extremely successful diplomatic reign of Charles IV the Holy Roman Emperor and king of Bohemia.¹⁷³ The emblematic teachings of Jan Hus, which eventually led to the Hussite Wars. The Protestant Reformation and subsequent thirty years war, and the Battle of the White Mountain. In 1526 the Bohemian crown integrated into the greater Habsburg monarchy to form a Czech-Austrian-Hungarian confederation, they would stay under the rule of Habsburgs until the end of the First World War. Under the rule of the Austrians, the Czechs almost lost most of their language and culture due to a process called Germanization. It wasn't until the late eighteenth century that it was 'revived' during the period aptly known as the Czech national revival.

The Czech state had a brief independence era beginning in 1918, this time known as the First Republic Era, it was a union between Czechs and Slovaks, resulting in the creation of Czechoslovakia. The Union between Czechs and Slovaks was a political move, in order to have stronger numbers of Slavic citizens against that of Germanic citizens. Though the name Czechoslovakia may suggest that the country consisted largely of Czechs and Slovaks, the fact is that The First Republic was a multiethnic country with Germans actually being more numerous than Slovaks. Among other ethnicities were Jews, Roma and Poles. Predominantly speaking, Czechs and Slovaks created a Slavic

¹⁷² Ibid, 27.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 30.

nation, that was in the majority to these minorities. Though equal in the constitution, there was a superiority on the side of the Czechs, with Czechs seeing themselves as superior to Slovaks, who were seen as lesser due to the fact that they had never had their own state.¹⁷⁴

The Czechoslovak First Republic ended in 1938, after the Munich agreement on 30th September 1938, in which the then world powers – Italy, Germany, Great Britain and France - divided the Czechoslovak nation, as was claimed, in order to prevent another world war. This agreement greatly affected the Czechoslovak view of the West who were and still are blamed by the Czechs for their demise. So, the so-called Second Republic was born, 1st October 1938 and lasted until 15th March 1939, when Nazi forces entered Czechoslovakia to take the rest of the land. Czechoslovakia fell under the influence of the Third Reich, and during that time, it institutionally became a so-called Protectorate - a land needing protection - of the Third Reich.¹⁷⁵ Since the Munich agreement had soured the relations of Czechoslovakia with the West, after the end of Nazi occupation, and the re-establishing of the Czechoslovak nation, attention was turned towards the East. Czechoslovaks saw themselves as the bridge between the East and the West, and thus, in the 1948 takeover, the Communist party of Czechoslovakia, which had been a steady player in the Czechoslovakian political landscape since the nineteen-twenties, became the de facto only influential political party in the country.¹⁷⁶

During the beginning of their socialist period Czechoslovakia considered itself the bridge between East and West. Although the aforementioned Prague Spring in 1968, ended such a perception of Czechoslovakia, arguably, damaging its relationship with the East to this day.¹⁷⁷

174 Černý et al, *The Czech Republic*, 111.

175 *Ibid*, 110.

176 *Ibid*, 111.

177 Černý et al, *The Czech Republic*, 111.

4.2 The Iron Curtain's Shadow Persists

The iron curtain is gone, and yet the shadow persists.”¹⁷⁸ These words still stand true now as they did to the scholar Larry Wolff in 1994. The fall of the iron curtain brought undoubtedly immense changes within Europe, most notoriously, Europe would no longer be divided. However, the idea of Eastern Europe remains, and for all those nations that once fell under that banner, its stigma still persists. Non-Eastern European countries such as those of historically Central Europe, are now tainted, as for 50 years Central Europe disappeared. Like the author Milan Kundera described it in 1984, it is a Europe that has been “kidnapped, displaced, and brainwashed.”¹⁷⁹ This stigma is prevalent because the concept of Eastern Europe stands in the opposition of Western ideals. Eastern Europe was never enough in the eyes of its Western counterparts. As Francis Fukuyama proclaimed with the fall of the Eastern bloc, that the world was at the “End of History,” thus, citing that the Western route was the highest ideal and inevitable.¹⁸⁰

This sentiment proved true in a way, as the socialist project ended in disaster, on top of the previously discussed psychological issues felt by the population, economically the situation was not much better. Thus, the citizens of those countries were open to change. The question then comes, why adopt the Western model? Why would they be so open to change so quickly after being indoctrinated by the socialist ideology for so long? Even in Russia, which was the head of the former Soviet Union, the sentiment seems to have been the same.¹⁸¹ Could this phenomenon be fully explained as owing to a collapsed system. Is it possible that there was a simultaneous explanation going on in the background?

As we have discussed throughout this thesis, there have been certain prevailing concepts throughout the Western European perspective. These are the notion of progress,

¹⁷⁸ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 3.

¹⁷⁹ Kundera, *Tragedy of Central Europe*, 2.

¹⁸⁰ Fukuyama, *End of History*, 1.

¹⁸¹ Danilova, *Neoliberal Hegemony and Narratives of “Losers” and “Winners,”* 452.

which is tied in with the notion of an Other. To be exact we have focused on the concept of a geographical other, manifesting in the way of the dichotomy of civilization/barbarism. This dichotomy, as has been shown, continues to persist whenever the notion of progress was brought throughout the European historical trajectory. This is the shadow that still persists, as it is embedded in the Western project. Due to the West's power throughout the world, before the socialist project came to fruition, those places where socialism became prominent were not immune to the underlying ideas. The allure of the West as the beacon of progress had already seeped in. Thus, we can consider the West's influence on the Socialist nations as what Ewa Thompson considers a surrogate *hegemon*.¹⁸²

Thompson uses the case of Poland, who had been under Russia's control after the partitions of 1795 continuing under their control during socialism. Thus, it is easy to say that the Soviets were the 'real' hegemon of Poland. Although their rule did not garner the same power of that of the Western rule, as she writes.

“The Russian-speaking Soviets demonstrated a remarkable talent for subjugating a variety of countries and territories, but they have not succeeded in generating respect for themselves among the conquered. Thus the Polish elite dependent on the Soviets did not respect their foreign hegemon in a way comparable to that in which the Anglo-Saxon hegemon was respected in Ireland or India.”¹⁸³

Polish elites who were ruled by the Russian Empire, were still under the sway of Western Enlightenment notions, and accused members of their population of backwardness and barbarism if they did not subscribe to the Enlightenment project.¹⁸⁴ The Polish elites still subjected themselves to the outside pressures coming from the West, such as German and French explanations of the inefficiency of their government prior to the Russia invasion as key to their downfall.¹⁸⁵ Thus, internalizing this rhetoric they view themselves as the reason for their downfall, instead of the situation that they were in at the moment, “In other words, it was not the lameness of the rabbit that caused its downfall, but rather that

182 Thompson, *Whose discourse?*, 5.

183 Thompson, *Whose Discourse?*, 6.

184 *Ibid*, 4.

185 *Ibid*.

fact it was surrounded by hunting hounds.”¹⁸⁶ Thus, we can categorize a surrogate hegemon as a hegemon that persists underneath the main hegemon of a society. Homi Bhabha’s book: *The Location of Culture*, although not using the same term of Thompson’s surrogate hegemon, focuses on a similar phenomenon in which the center of one’s culture comes from abroad, instead of from within.¹⁸⁷ Thompson writes that throughout Polish history they have been tied to the West, thus their surrogate has always been to the West.¹⁸⁸

Such a notion is reminiscent of Kundera’s perspective in the Tragedy of the West, where the cultural center of Central Europe is the West. Prior to Kundera, during the First Czechoslovakian Republic era. The Czech writer Karel Čapek wrote that Czechoslovakia is “highly civilized yet very simple,”¹⁸⁹ This quote, which was published in 1936, was featured in the introduction to the first edition of the journal *The Heart of Europe*.¹⁹⁰ Participating in the 1939 New York World’s Fair, the Czechoslovakian art feature embodied this statement. It was a large collage showcasing the various qualities of the nation. “(...) the Bohemian west of the state was urbanized, industrialized, and cultured, while the Slovak and Ruthenian east were more rural, agricultural, and primitive.”¹⁹¹ In Czechoslovakia, the notion of the “Little Czech” served as the embodiment of the positive qualities surrounding Czech identity. What was of the utmost importance was the need to not be perceived as unintelligent. Czechs considered themselves to have ‘golden Czech hands’, which meant that they were skillful, talented, and ingenious.¹⁹² As these positive concepts of what it meant to be Czech arose, negative stereotypes of Slovaks rose as well. Since Czechs were skilled and intelligent, Slovaks were considered dim-witted idiots.¹⁹³ The rhetoric is the same from East to West, primitive to civilized, old to new.

186 Ibid, 5.

187 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 4.

188 Thompson, *Whose Discourse?*, 8.

189 Čapek, *Hle, Československo*, 451.

190 Filipová, ‘Highly Civilized, yet Very Simple,’ 145.

191 Filipová, ‘Highly Civilized, yet Very Simple,’ 146.

192 Holý, *The Little Czech*, 73.

193 Ibid.

Thus, with communism at a close, and the quick adoption of the new hegemony, all around the post-communist similar examples of rhetoric was espoused. Those who did not conform to the new hegemony were demonized and cited as the obstacles of reform. One's national character changed, highlighting the qualities accepted by the West as positive, and conversely those of the old hegemony as wholly negative, and an object to overcome. "One can ask, how did it happen that after decades of a common historical experience with real socialism in Eastern Europe that some people have been able to curtail 'bad habits' within them, and others have not?"¹⁹⁴ Within the society there are those 'clever' people who through tactful decisions and quick wit have been able to make their way in the system. Whereas there are others who cause problems, unfit, uneducated and unable to adapt.¹⁹⁵ In Russia the concept of 'Homo Sovieticus' emerged, which outlined a Soviet personality as the main barrier to reform. The characteristics of homo sovieticus was comprised of mainly negative qualities. They were forced self-isolation, state paternalism, egalitarian hierarchy, and imperial syndrome.¹⁹⁶ Gennady Gudkov, a researcher with All Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM), when discussing homo sovieticus continually stresses its difference with Europeans.

"In contrast to a typical European, this type shares egalitarian viewpoints, but interprets them as anti-elite and low-brow (instead of attempting to rise to, or imitate the upper strata- the 'cream of society'- and to cultivate a certain type of dignity, taking 'aristocracy' or 'meritocracy' as their examples), with a tendency towards falling to the lowest levels, vulgarity and primitivism."¹⁹⁷

Sztompka writes that the perspective in Poland during the transition was also perceived as the same, and the 'pains of transition' were a necessary condition in order to receive the prosperity comparable to the West.¹⁹⁸ There was a push in post-socialist state to be considered 'normal,' which is in these terms to be considered equal to the countries of the West. The perception was in order to be truly equal was to follow their

194 Buchowski, *The Specter of Orientalism in Europe*, 470.

195 Ibid.

196 Levada et al, *Ordinary Soviet Person*, 24.

197 Gudkov, 'Soviet Person,' 24.

198 Sztompka, *The Trauma of Social Change*, 176.

same path of modernization, which meant adopting their various economic policies and institutions. “The region’s economy is developing, but as a dependent backyard of the West.”¹⁹⁹

Czechs in order to be viewed as ‘normal’ also partook in this demonizing of members of their population. Those who were not following the new program were considered lazy, egoistic, cunning, conformists, cowards, hypocritical, and hedonistic.²⁰⁰ In a 1990 and 1992 study of how Czechs see themselves, seventy six percent of the answers given were negative traits applied.²⁰¹ At the time it was common to hear commentators speak on the behalf of how they perceive their own people.

“The other day I was watching the television discussion group Netopyr on the phenomenon called Czech national character—our national subaltern tutorship, our regional and intellectual inferiority, our magnificently justified mediocrity, our shrewdly circumvented off-the-peg morality and lack of any high vision, and everything that has made us (and, although we do not like to admit it, still makes us) ‘an open air museum of idiots in the heart of Europe.’”²⁰²

The negative traits they embody among themselves are explained as something that must be overcome. Interestingly these negative portrayals are coupled with the positive perceptions of their past before communism. When spoken of the traits one is not supposed to embody they apply it to their current selves, but those positive traits are given to their past.²⁰³

“In general, the Czechs substantiate their image of themselves as an exceptionally cultured and well educated nation by a specific reading of their history in which they construct a close relationship between culture and politics.”²⁰⁴

We believe this is an attempt to legitimate themselves in regards to the West, discarding the negative qualities and showing the West that they are to be accepted as their history is one of having Western values. Pushing their tradition of democratic past, also shows

199 Berend and Bugarcic, *Unfinished Europe*, 770.

200 Holy, *The Little Czech*, 75.

201 *Ibid*, 76.

202 Tvorba, no 42.

203 Holy, *The Little Czech*, 84.

204 *Ibid*, 83.

how they are different from the rest of the post-socialist nations. This legitimation does not wholly apply to the Czechs of the transition however. Holy explains that in order for something to be considered a tradition, it has to have some sort of continuation. Democracy in Czechoslovakia was short-lived, and those who experienced it had passed. Thus, compared to the rest of the countries of Central Europe the Czech nation's current democratic experience was the same. "The amount of personal experience with a democratic form of government is about the same in the present-day Czech Republic as it is in Poland or Hungary, which the Czechs consider to lack democratic traditions."²⁰⁵

This mindset of becoming 'normal' has divided European society into winners and losers. As stated earlier the Czech nation was considered one of the more successful nations of the transition, but now that they are considered on the side of the 'winners; this narrative did not disappear but instead was reinforced. We believe this division continues to affect Czech self-perception even after they have become part of the EU. To the Czechs "(...) if the EU was Europe, then whatever country was not or should not become a member of the Union, was actually excluded from Europe as well."²⁰⁶ The accession into the EU, Czechs can rightfully say that they are on the side of Europe. Their nation represents the image of Europe: economic prosperity, complex culture/civilization, political stability, democracy, and social security.²⁰⁷ Now just like the West regarded them while they were transitioning, they can do the same to other countries still along that process. We believe, for Czechs this is reserved for those who aren't completely up to date with the European/Western project. For example, who have nostalgia of time spent under communism, those who embody Eastern stereotypes, or other countries of the former Eastern bloc, who have not 'succeeded'.

As we have said earlier, those countries like the Czech Republic, who continually push towards Europe, in turn reuse the same rhetoric of the West. "Above all, crusaders of the 'new deal' uncritically accept Orientalizing rhetoric, or politics of marginality."²⁰⁸

205 Holy, *The Little Czech*, 80.

206 Černý et al, *The Czech Republic*, 123.

207 *Ibid.*

208 Herzfeld, 143.

As Paolo Freire would put it, the oppressed have become the oppressors. In moving back to Europe, they have merely adopted the tools, which once and still oppress them.

“The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility.”²⁰⁹

The dichotomy continues within the Czech nation against other Czechs and their neighbors. We believe that this has trapped the Czech people into a continual state of imprisonment where these themes will ever be prevalent, as long as they embody the West-East distinction, as long as they view their history from the narrative of being abandoned by the West. To be eastern is to what Czechs are not, they are European, and always have been. As Kundera would say their fates are intertwined with the European condition. "The people of central Europe are not conquerors. They cannot be separated from European history; they cannot exist outside it; but they represent the wrong side of this history; they are its victims and outsiders."²¹⁰ The Central European and moreover the Czech condition is in a vein to how Czeslaw Milosz described Polish literature: "(...) like a jacket with one sleeve for a dwarf and the other for a giant. The larger sleeve symbolizes our ambitions of being a part of Europe, the smaller one is the expression of the oppressed nation fighting for Polishness. On the one hand, there is the idolization of the West, and on the other hand, contempt and a sense of superiority towards the East."²¹¹

209 Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 29.

210 Kundera, *The Tragedy of Central Europe*, 9.

211 Pyzik, *Poor, but Sexy*, 143.

5 Discussion

The notion of progress in terms of being a guiding force throughout history, does have its merit, although some may ask if it is wise to use this comparison. As the notion of progress implies an end goal, or predetermined path of history, as Fukuyama viewed it with Western Neoliberal society. Progress is regularly viewed as synonymous with change and as definitely inevitable in society. “Ontologically, society is nothing else but change, movement and transformation, action and interaction, construction and reconstruction, and constant *becoming* rather than stable *being*.” Although scholarship starting in the nineteenth and onto the twenty first centuries moved away from the focus on progress as the driving force of history and it being connected with social change, sociologists such as Karl R. Popper criticized it as a form of *historicism*. Other scholars, such as Marx, asked whether due to progress’s subjective nature, can it be considered a positive force for all? Although that is exactly the reason we believe it is imperative that we pose our thesis in this way, as the obsession with progress has been at the core of the modern project. As we continue to use terms such as modernity or post-modernity it implies we still give these terms meaning.

This creates another place of contention, as we are arguing against the notions of modernization processes, the form of modernization we have been focusing on in this thesis is *Westernization*. Commonly throughout modern history we have associated modernization and westernization as one and the same. Although westernization can be characterized as the first modernity and due to the Western world’s global reach, it is no longer perceived as the only or even necessary modernization process. For instance the sociologist Reinhard Bendix who believed in the importance of other societies' pasts and the milestones those civilizations have passed, should contribute to their own modernization process. Shmuel Eisenstadt also viewed modernization in a similar vein, by outlining that due to civilization’s different histories there are different possible paths of modernization.

This thesis was an attempt at outlining one of the various dark sides of modernization, which is the reason why it used the post-colonial critique as part of the crux of the thesis. As was shown, we are not labeling Central European or Czech society as post-colonial, although there are arguments that can be made that the Soviets attempted a colonization of sorts among the other countries of the Eastern bloc. The post-colonial critique was used specifically as it provides a fairly long legacy of scholarly dealings with the various assumptions people have regarding the elements of what constitutes civilization, modernity, progress, and other themes, we otherwise may not question in our tradition. For example, the writer Agata Pyzik, argues that the ‘post’ in post-communism, should be understood the same as the ‘post’ of colonialism as the trauma experienced, and the behavior in those who were colonized, is similar to those of the postcolonial nations.

“Who was the colonizer and who was colonized is not always as obvious as it would seem. By all accounts, many of the post-communist countries, despite the 23 years of ‘democracy’, still display the elements of traumatic and obsessive behavior typical of past colonial countries. But because things were happening so fast between the late 80s and the first few years of the 90s, today it’s hard to say if this trauma comes entirely out of the communist years, or is an effect of the brutal capitalist shock therapy most of the eastern bloc underwent.”²¹²

Even though nowadays there is open dialogue about the dangers of this obsession with progress, it does not change from the fact that its legacy still persists in European Identity.

212 Pyzik, *Poor, but Sexy*, 13.

6 Conclusion

However, it is important to note that while there may not have been extensive research specifically focused on applying these themes to the Czech case, it does not necessarily mean that they are irrelevant or inapplicable. The absence of comprehensive research should not automatically discount the potential presence and impact of these themes in Czech history and society. Furthermore, even though Czechoslovakia had a relatively smoother transition compared to some other post-socialist nations, it does not imply that the country was completely immune to the influences of these themes. While the degree and manifestation of these themes may vary across different countries, it is still worth exploring their potential relevance to the Czech context.

Considering the Visegrad Four countries, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia, it is true that they have experienced more significant challenges and complexities in their transitions. These challenges have often provided fertile ground for the exploration of themes such as otherness, the dichotomy of civilization versus barbarism, orientalization, post-colonialism, progress, and hegemony. Therefore, in the case of these countries, there is a stronger basis for examining and analyzing the impacts of these themes on their histories and societies.

In conclusion, while the extent of research on these themes in the Czech case may be limited, it is not unreasonable to consider their potential relevance and impact. Additionally, comparing the Czech experience to that of other countries in the Visegrad Four can provide valuable insights into the varying effects of these themes in different post-socialist contexts.

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