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The Transformation of the Visegrad Countries and Its Consequences: Reflections in the Light of Selected Globalist Theories of International Relations

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The post-communist transformation of Central Europe, in particular the Visegrad countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia – later the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and Hungary), as well as its consequences have been largely analysed through the liberal IR theory: democratization, liberalization of trade, and the accession to the EU and NATO have been considered as conforming to the interests of post-communist countries. However, some authors have proposed alternative interpretations that are rooted in the globalist theory of international relations, i.e. empire studies, dependency theory, 'world-system' perspectives, and post-colonialism. According to these interpretations, the transformation of the Visegrad states essentially constituted a change of the dominant power in the region: the declining Soviet Union/Russia was replaced by the Western powers – the United States and the European Union. The neoliberal economic reforms followed the principles of the "Washington consensus" and corresponded neither to economic rationality nor to the will of the people of the Visegrad countries. The enlargement of the EU forced post-communist countries to adapt their political, economic, and legal systems to the Western norms. This process brought some benefits, but was realized at the expense of democratic standards. In consequence, the Visegrad countries remain a semi-periphery of the West – convenient export markets and a source of cheap labour – which situates them far behind the highly developed Western Europe.

Keywords: Visegrad countries, transformation, globalist theory of international relations.

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Introduction

The fall of communism in Central Europe,[1] the peaceful transformation[2] of the post-communist states – in particular the Visegrad countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia – since 1993 the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and Hungary) – towards democracy and free markets (1989–1991), and their subsequent accession to the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union (1999–2004) have been largely presented as a success.[3] Such an approach is largely rooted in the liberal theory of IR: democratization, liberalization of trade, and the accession to EU and NATO have been considered as conforming to the interests of post-communist countries.

However, some authors have proposed alternative interpretations that are rooted in the globalist theories of international relations. The globalist approach to IR should not be confounded with globalization, understood as the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked by free trade and free flow of capital, especially that according to its critics globalization is deeply rooted in the neoliberal thought.[4] Globalists study the existing mechanism of dependence within the global political economy, aiming at explaining in particular why the developing countries remain undeveloped. The globalist theories of IR largely refer to the works of Karl Marx. He claimed that society must be analyzed as a whole and the globalists apply this reasoning to contemporary international relations, focusing on the "world-system" and not on minor actors defined by geography, law, or culture. The globalist approach is internally diversified. Its main currents include in particular empire

[1] The notion of Central Europe is far from unanimous. The World Bank uses the term "Central Europe and the Baltics", including in that group Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia (Central Europe and the Baltics, https://data.worldbank.org/region/central-europe-and-the-baltics, accessed 28.01.2020), while the OECD defines the same group of states as "Central and Eastern European Countries" (OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms, OECD, Paris 2008, p. 69). The academic definitions are more diversified. Lonnie R. Johnson, the author of the monumental monograph titled *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, considered the region as one "encompass[ing] contemporary Germany, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia" (L. R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011, p. ix). Other authors, especially those writing in the 1990s, limited the concept of Central Europe to the Visegrad countries (T. G. Ash, *The Puzzle of Central Europe*, 18.03.1999, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1999/03/18/the-puzzle-of-central-europe/, accessed 28.01.2020).

[2] There is no unanimity on when the transformation of the region ended, probably because there is no one single and widely accepted definition of "transformation". Lord Dahrendorf suggested in that context that a political regime change requires only six months, while economic transition – six years, and social and cultural transformation – six decades (R. Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: In a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Warsaw*, Times Books, New York 1990, pp. 99–100).

[3] J. Rupnik, "On Two Models of Exit from Communism: Central Europe and the Balkans", in: S. Antohi, V. Tismaneanu (eds.), *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath*, Central European University Press, Budapest 2000, p. 14; S. L. Wolchik, J.L. Curry, "Twenty-Five Years After 1989: A Balance Sheet", in: S. L. Wolchik, J.L. Curry, (eds.), *Central and East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy*, Rowman & Littlefield, London 2015, p. 515.

[4] See e.g. Dic Lo, *Alternatives to Neoliberal Globalization*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke/New York 2012.

studies, dependency theory, and the "world-system" perspective;[5] it is also close to post-colonialism, even if the latter is not a traditional theory of IR. There is no unanimity on the place of the globalism within the theories of IR. Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi include it in their analysis of international relations theory, alongside realism and pluralism.[6] Andrew Linklater uses the term 'Marxism' and Marxist/neo-Marxist theories instead.[7] Robert H. Jackson and Georg Sørensen do not include any of these concepts when analyzing major theories and approaches to international relations.[8] For the sake of convenience, this article will refer to the globalist theories of IR, taking into account the above-mentioned internal heterogeneity of the globalist approach.

The goal of this paper is to analyze the transformation of the Visegrad countries and its consequences in 1989–2020 through the lenses of different globalist theories of IR, i.e. to show how the concepts and the instruments of globalism can be applied to the contemporary history of the region, and what conclusions they lead to. The analysis of scientific publications related to this topic will be complemented by statistical data in order to verify the accuracy of their theses. This paper aims in particular at mapping the similarities and differences between various currents of globalism in their approach to the topic in order to outline the key features of the globalist interpretation of the post-communist transformation of the Central European countries.

The Transformation of the Visegrad Countries in Light of the Liberal Theory of International Relations

Liberalism has its roots in the thought of John Locke. Locke believed that in the state of Nature no one was to "harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions";[9] however, in order to protect their property more effectively, people decided to unite and form a society.[10] The main aim of the latter and of its laws was therefore "not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom."[11] In other terms, people were able and eager to cooperate, because such cooperation would bring them profits. Locke applied this reasoning to individuals, but his successors did this also in relation to states. Jeremy Bentham forged the term "international law", arguing that the states

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[5] P. R. Viotti, M. V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond*, Allyn & Bacon, Boston 1999, pp. 341–358.

[6] Ibidem.

[7] A. Linklater, Marxism, in: S. Burchill et al. (eds.), *Theories of International Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke/New York 2005, p. 123.

[8] R. H. Jackson, G. Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007.

[9] J. Locke, "Two Treaties on Government", in J. Locke, *Works in Ten Volumes*, vol. 5, Thomas Tegg, London 1823, p. 341.

[10] Ibidem, p. 412.

[11] Ibidem, p. 370.

would adhere to it, because it is in their interest to do so;[12] Immanuel Kant believed that states could establish perpetual peace in the world if three conditions were met: existence of democratic, republican institutions; a pacific union between states; and an ethos of universal hospitality.[13]

The contemporary liberal tradition of international relations is based on three basic assumptions: the positive view of human nature; the conviction that international relations can be cooperative rather than conflictual; the belief in progress.[14] The liberals reject the realist assumption that it is the configuration of capabilities that shapes the world politics, and argue that the latter is largely determined by societal ideas, interests, and institutions, all of which influence state behavior by shaping state preferences.[15] They also put an accent on growing interdependence in contemporary international relations, which strengthens the position of non-state actors versus the states and makes the use of military force less effective (and, therefore, less probable).[16] They also believe in the growing role of international institutions, which are perceived as an important tool which allows the states to further their interests through cooperation.[17] International institutions contribute to the stabilization of the international order, therefore reducing anarchical relations between states.[18] This concerns in particular democratic countries, which are more peaceful and more law-abiding; it is considered that democracies do not engage in military conflicts with other democratic states.[19] One of the major case studies analyzed by the liberal school is European integration. After the Second World War, the Western European countries – in particular France and Germany, which had traditionally resolved their differences in a military way – decided to engage in a regional cooperation in order to increase their mutual benefits through free trade.[20]

The collapse of the Communist Bloc and the end of Cold War (1989–1991) was perceived as a triumph of liberalism, understood here rather as an ideology, and contributed to the development of liberalism as a scientific theory. According to

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[12] M.W. Janis, "Jeremy Bentham and the Fashioning of 'International Law'", *American Journal of International Law*, 1984, no 78, pp. 405–418.

[13] I. Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, Cosmo Classics, New York 2010.

[14] R. H. Jackson, G. Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, Oxford 2007, pp. 97–99.

[15] A. Moravscik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics", *International Organization*, Autumn 1997, vol. 51, No 4, p. 513.

[16] R. O. Keohane, J. S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, Longman, New York 2001.

[17] R. Keohane, "Neoliberal Institutionalism: A Perspective on World Politics", in Robert O. Keohane. (ed), *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*. Westview, Boulder 1989, pp. 1–20.

[18] R. O. Keohane, J. S. Nye, "Introduction: The End of the Cold War in Europe", in: R. O. Keohane, J. S. Nye, S. Hoffmann, *After the Cold War: International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe, 1989–1991*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1993, p. 5.

[19] R. H. Jackson, G. Sørensen, op.cit., p. 111-115.

[20] S. Burchill, "Liberalism", in: S. Burchill, A. Linklater (eds.), *Theories of International Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, New York 2013, p. 66.

Francis Fukuyama, with the victory of liberal democracy, humanity reached the "end of history", understood as the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution." No political system could be better than the one existing in the Western countries.[21] The transformation of Central Europe, in particular the Visegrad countries, largely seemed to corroborate liberal concepts.

At the end of the 1980s, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were satellites of the Soviet Union and members of both the Warsaw Pact and the Council of the Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Centrally planned economies, coupled with the isolationist policy and heavy expenses for the military and industrial complex, led to major deep crises, especially in Poland. Such situations, alongside growing discontent due to the Soviet domination, led to the political bankruptcy of the existing regimes. In that context, the communists decided to launch broad reforms (Hungary, 1988), engaged in talks with the opposition (Poland, 1989), or, simply, were swept away by popular protests (Czechoslovakia, 1989). Inspired by the liberal thought of Milton Friedman and Jeffrey Sachs, new, democratically elected authorities initiated ambitious economic reforms, which enabled a quick transformation from the centrally planned economy to the free market economy.[22] These reforms made it possible for private companies to grow rapidly and helped the region find its way out of its economic crisis. Internal reforms were coupled with the reorientation of foreign policies. In 1991, the Warsaw Pact and the COMECON were disbanded on the insistence of the Visegrad countries. Within a year, the latter proclaimed their intent to join the EU and, later, NATO.

Such an evolution was favored by elements such as the weakness of the Soviet Union – as well as, since 1991, its successor, i.e. the Russian Federation – the support from the West, the existence of the organized anti-communist opposition, and a strong national identity (in case of Poland and Hungary). In Czechoslovakia, the end of the communist regime led to a peaceful dissolution of the country into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The latter witnessed internal political difficulties under the rule of the prime minister Vladimír Mečiar (1990–1998), which temporarily impeded the integration with Western structures.

The political and economic transformation brought measurable effects. In 1999–2004, the Visegrad countries became members of both NATO and the EU. As members

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[21] F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York 2006, p. xi.

[22] In Poland, the "shock therapy" – engineered by Leszek Balcerowicz – was based on eleven fundamental acts of law that introduced, especially: the possibility of state enterprises declaring bankruptcy; a prohibition on the state financing a budget deficit through the central bank, in particular by printing money; restrictions on pay rises in state enterprises in order to limit hyperinflation; the introduction of a uniform system of taxation for all businesses; the abolition of the special taxes that private businesses had previously been burdened with; permission for foreign enterprises and natural persons to invest in Poland and transfer profit abroad; and the abolition of the state monopoly on foreign trade (J. Sachs, *Poland's Jump to the Market Economy*, MIT Press, Cambridge, London 1993; B. Slay, *The Polish Economy: Crisis, Reform, and Transformation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1994).

of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, they are covered by the guarantee contained in Article 5 of the Treaty, which states the following: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all."[23] As members of the European Union, the Visegrad countries are part of the single market as well as major recipients of the EU financial aid, which has considerably contributed to the development and modernization of the region (see Table 1 and Table 2.)[24]

According to liberal scholars, the transformation of Central European countries confirmed the superiority of liberal democracy as a political form and has shown the fundamental importance of constitutional democracy, with its emphasis on rights and the rule of law as an antidote to totalitarianism. The radical anti-state solutions (in particular the privatization of ineffective state-owned enterprises) was the key to the economic success of the region, as even an "imperfect market" was a better solution than "an imperfect state."[25] The politico-economic success was completed by the double enlargement of EU and NATO, which largely contributed to the establishment of Immanuel Kant's democratic peace in Europe.[26]

In consequence, the transformation in Central Europe was often perceived as a banality.[27] It was popularly believed that the post-communist countries had merely wanted to repeat the liberal Western experience (the concept of the "catch-up revolution"[28]). The role of the non-liberal elements in the transformation of the region as well as the contribution of post-communist countries to the success and development of liberal thought were all underestimated.[29] The complexity and uniqueness of the experience of the countries of the region and the innovative character

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[23] North Atlantic Treaty, 04.04.1949, https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm (accessed 28.01.2020).

[24] For more on transformation of the Visegrad countries, see e.g. J. J. Linz, A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore/London 1996; P. Hare (ed.), *Systemic Change in Post-Communist Economies: Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies*, Warsaw, 1995, Macmillan Press/St. Martin's Press, Houndmills/New York 1999; S. Antohi, V. Tismaneanu (eds.), op.cit.; N. Hayoz, L. Jesień, D. Koleva (eds.), *Twenty Years After the Collapse of Communism: Expectations, Achievements and Disillusions of 1989*, Peter Lang, Bern 2011; S. L. Wolchik, J. L. Curry, (eds.), op.cit.

[25] L. P. King, A. Sznajder, "The State-Led Transition to Liberal Capitalism: Neoliberal, Organizational, World-Systems, and Social Structural Explanations of Poland's Economic Success", *American Journal of Sociology*, November 2006, vol. 112, No 3, pp. 754–756.

[26] S. Lucarelli, "Peace and Democracy: The Rediscovered Link. The EU, NATO and the European System of Liberal-Democratic Security Communities", Research project funded by the NATO Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Individual Research Fellowships – 2000–2002 Programme. Final Report, https://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/00-02/Lucarelli's.pdf (accessed: 30.04.2020).

[27] W. Outhwaite, L. Ray, *Social Theory and Postcommunism*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden 2005, p. 5.

[28] J. Habermas, *Kleine politische Schriften: Die nachholende Revolution, Suhrkamp*, Frankfurt a.M. 1990, p. 101.

[29] P. Blokker, "Democracy Through the Lens of 1989: Liberal Triumph or Radical Turn?", *International Journal of Politics Culture and Society*, 2009, vol. 22, pp. 274–276.

of the changes of the year 1989 (from communism to democracy and free market) were largely ignored.[30]

Table 1. GDP per capita, PPP in the Visegrad Countries, 1992–2018 (constant 2011 international USD)

	1992	2018
Poland	n/a	28,785
the Czech Republic	17,632	33,435
Slovakia	11,679	31,226
Hungary	14,686	28,464

Source: GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2011 international $), https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.KD&country= (accessed 28.01.2020).

Table 2. EU Net Expenditure in the Visegrad Countries, 2007–2018 (in billion EUR)

	2007–2013	2014–2018
Poland	60.6	51.8
the Czech Republic	14.0	17.1
Slovakia	7.5	8.9
Hungary	21.2	22.4

Source: EU expenditure & revenue 2007–2013 data, http://ec.europa.eu/budget/revexp/revenue_and_expenditure_files/data/revenue_and_expenditure_en.xls (accessed 28.01.2020); EU expenditure and revenue 2014–2020, https://ec.europa.eu/budget/graphs/revenue_expediture.html (accessed 28.01.2020).

Empire Studies

An empire is a "major political unit in which the metropolis, or single sovereign authority, exercises control over territory of great extent or a number of territories or peoples through formal annexations or various forms of informal domination."[31] It is internally diversified into different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups, with one group (most often an ethnic one) ruling over the others.[32] Imperialism, understood as "the projection of power by a political entity for the purpose of territorial expansion and political and economic influence beyond its formal borders,"[33] has been studied since

[30] P. Blokker, "Democracy Through the Lens of 1989: Liberal Triumph or Radical Turn?", *International Journal of Politics Culture and Society*, 2009, vol. 22, pp. 274–276. For more on liberalism and the Central European experience, see e.g. Z. Suda, J. Musil (ed.), *The Meaning of Liberalism: East and West*, Central European University Press, Budapest 2000; S. P. Ramet, *The Liberal Project and the Transformation of Democracy: The Case of East Central Europe*, Texas A&M University Press, College Station 2007.

[31] Empire. Political Science, https://www.britannica.com/topic/empire-political-science (accessed: 29.01.2020).

[32] S. Howe, *Empire. A Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford/New York 2002, pp. 14–16.

[33] R. H. Jackson, G. Sørensen, op.cit., p. 301.

the 19th century by authors such as John Hobson, Vladimir Lenin, or Joseph Schumpeter. The first two authors have argued that the politico-military expansion was necessary for capitalist states to guarantee higher economic profits from the subjugated countries. Schumpeter, on the other hand, considered imperialism to be atavistic in character.[34]

Contemporary empire studies form a large and heterogenous set of concepts. In early 1970s, Johann Galtung introduced the concept of structural imperialism, which included economic, political, military, communicational, and cultural dimensions, claiming in particular that the durability of imperial relations is based on the solidarity between the elites of the center (the metropolis) and the elites of the peripheries.[35] Other authors focused on cultural imperialism. Robert W. Cox applied the concepts of Antonio Gramsci to international relations, arguing that hegemony relied not only on economic and social institutions, but also on culture and technology.[36] Several authors, in particular in France, worked on the decay and fall of empires.[37] More recently, Michael Hardt and Tony Negri have proclaimed the establishment of a new Empire which was to replace the traditional ones; the key position within this new order was given to the United States, although they were seconded by supranational institutions and multinational corporations.[38]

The concepts of empire and imperialism have been applied to the contemporary history of Central Europe, in particular in the context of its relations with the Soviet Union/Russia, but also with the European Union.

On the basis of the experience of the USSR, as well as some other historical and modern imperial projects, Alexander J. Motyl analyzed the causes of decay, collapse, and revival of empires. He has argued that empires "work" when resources flow from the periphery to the core and back to the periphery. The disruption of this process leads to their attrition. This is the case in particular with the development of local centers of powers, which seek more autonomy.[39] The evolution of the Soviet Union followed this scenario. After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, all the peripheries acquired a life of their own; they witnessed the emergence of local Communist Party machines that ruthlessly pursued their own interests, very often to the detriment of the interests of the center.[40]

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[34] See P. J. Cain, M. Harrison (eds.), *Imperialism: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*, vol. 1, Routledge, London/New York 2001.

[35] J. Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism", *Journal of Peace Research*, 1971, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 81–117.

[36] R. W. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 1983, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 162–175.

[37] J. B. Duroselle, *Tout empire périra. Une vision théorique des relations internationales*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris 1982; E. Todd, *The Final Fall: An Essay on the Decomposition of the Soviet Sphere*, Karz Publishers, New York 1979.

[38] A. Negri, M. Hardt, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2001.

[39] A. J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires*, Columbia University Press, New York 2001, pp. 48–55.

[40] Ibidem, pp. 68–69.

The relations of the Visegrad countries with the European Union through the prism of empire studies have been analyzed in particular by Jan Zielonka. This Polish-British scholar has argued that the EU is not a Westphalian superstate. Rather, it is a kind of neo-medieval empire with a polycentric system of government, multiple and overlapping jurisdictions, striking cultural and economic heterogeneity, fuzzy borders, and divided sovereignty.[41] Zielonka believed that the transformation of Central Europe was, in fact, moving from one empire to another. He did not intend to suggest any equation between the Soviet Union and the EU. However, he put emphasis on the severe constraints imposed by the EU as an empire on its formally sovereign member states, as well as on the implications of this fact for Central European states.[42] Of course, one could argue that these constraints are being imposed by the EU on all member states. However, the Western European states – especially Germany, France, and the UK – have largely shaped the European Union according to their interests; this was not the case with the newcomers from Central Europe.

At the dawn of the 1990s, as Zielonka argued, the EU was the biggest power in the region. It could not, therefore, ignore the political vacuum in its direct neighborhood.[43] Nonetheless, the neo-medieval foreign policy of the European Union differed considerably from the 19th- and 20th-century imperialism. The EU imperial policy was "quite benign and incentive driven." Its final objective was not the conquest of the region, but the establishment of peace, democracy, and prosperity. The European Union used not military, but peaceful methods, aiming at exporting its institutions and norms to the post-communist countries, hoping this would maintain economic growth and secure their borders. During the first years of the post-Cold-War period, the Union was even unwilling to accept the idea of the Eastern enlargement and, later, to establish some concrete dates for this process. Such a situation was largely due to the fact that the EU always tends to act along the lines of institutional and not strategic logic. The Union did not have a clear plan what to do, although it was very precise as to how to do it.[44] The nature of the EU's agenda was revealed by the scope and intrusiveness of its conditionality policy towards the applicant countries. The adoption of the *acquis communautaire* (20,000 laws, decisions, and regulations spanning nearly 80,000 pages) was one of the clearly stated conditions of accession. Not only did the EU tell the applicants what to do, but it also closely monitored this process. In

[41] J. Zielonka, *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007. It should be noted that the above-mentioned book had been published before the Lisbon Treaty came into in force and before several major crises (international financial crisis, migration crisis, Brexit, etc.) struck the EU. These events have considerably influenced the shape of European integration, making some of Zielonka's consideration less valid.

[42] J. Zielonka, "The Return to Europe", in J. Kłoczowski, H. Łaszkiewicz (eds.), *East-Central Europe in European History. Themes & Debates*, Institute of East Central Europe, Lublin 2009, p. 473.

[43] J. Zielonka, *Europe as Empire*, op.cit., p. 54.

[44] Ibidem, pp. 48–52.

fact, its policies did not differ from "previous imperial exercises: the export of laws, economic transactions, administrative systems and social habits."[45]

Because of the discrepancies between the old EU members (EU-15) and the Central European candidates (Table 3), the latter were hardly in a position to negotiate with the Union.[46] Besides, they, in fact, accepted such a policy as it was compatible with their democratization and modernization strategy. They saw themselves as naturally belonging to Europe and as such wanted to join the club of rich, democratic, and relatively well-governed Western European countries.[47] Despite some initial fears, as Zielonka noted, the painful adjustment process did not provoke any serious social protests, the Central European states successfully avoided border or ethnic conflicts (such as were the case in the Balkans), and the democratic turn in the region proved to be permanent, i.e. no populist or nationalistic dictatorship was established on the ashes of communism.[48]

Table 3. Potential of the Visegrad Countries and the EU-15 at the Eve of Negotiations (1998)

	Population (in million)	GDP per capita (in EUR)
EU-15	375.5	21,780
Poland	38.5	4,040
the Czech Republic	10.3	5,780
Slovakia	5.4	3,770
Hungary	10.3	4,320

Source: Main GDP aggregates per capita, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=nama_10_pc&lang=en (accessed: 30.01.2020); Population on 1st January by age and sex, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_li04&lang=en (accessed: 30.01.2020)

The Concept of Dependency

The concept of dependency explains the socio-economic situation in developing countries in terms of the existing international order and not as a result of internal factors.[49] Its advocates focus their research mainly on Latin America.[50] The concept

[45] J. Zielonka, *The Return to Europe*, op.cit., pp. 481–482.

[46] Ibidem, p. 482.

[47] J. Zielonka, *Europe as Empire*, pp. 49–50.

[48] J. Zielonka, *The Return to Europe*, op.cit., pp. 476–480.

[49] This latter approach is typical for the proponents of the modernization theory, relatively close to liberalism, which assumes that in order to solve their economic problems the developing countries should implement the European model of development and integrate with world economy (see W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1960).

[50] "General Introduction", in: Ch. Abel, C. M. Lewis (eds.), *Latin America, Economic Imperialism and the State: The Political Economy of the External Connection from Independence to Present*, The Athlone Press, London, Dover 1985, p. 2.

of dependency largely relies on the works of the Argentinian economist Raúl Prebisch. He argued that, historically, the spread of technical progress has been uneven. In consequence, the developing countries produce and export mainly primary commodities. They are quite unable to change that situation, because low productivity and unfavorable terms of trade impede the accumulation of capital and, therefore, the modernization of their economies.[51]

The dependency school was highly diversified internally. Its moderate representatives studied both external and internal factors of Latin America's underdevelopment. Celso Furtado analyzed in that context the role of the international division of labor,[52] the specificity of Latin American "wild capitalism", and the importance of the agrarian sector in the region.[53] Anibal Pinto introduced the notion of "structural heterogeneity", arguing that Latin America was divided into more advanced and backward sectors and areas, and the gains from the former were hardly invested in the latter, which impeded the development of the entire region.[54]

More radical, Marxist-oriented authors put emphasis on the role of external factors. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto blamed in that context the colonial powers (Spain and Portugal) as well as, subsequently, Great Britain and the United States for the underdevelopment of Latin America, arguing that their policies led to the strong dependency of the national economies on the export. Besides, the key sectors of the economies were directly controlled by the foreign powers – which had to rely on local, mostly authoritarian regimes – in order for their assets to be protected.[55] Samir Amin has claimed that as capital is more mobile than the labor force, investors will invest in the developing countries and sell their products in the developed ones in order to maximize their gains. International trade is, therefore, an instrument of the transfer of capital from the developing countries.[56]

The dependency concept was applied by some authors to analyze the situation in Central Europe during the Cold War. Those scholars aimed at proving that the relations between the Soviet Union and its satellites were similar to those between the United States and the Latin American countries.[57] More recently, the concept has been used by

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[51] R. Prebisch, "Commercial Policy in the Underdeveloped Countries", *The American Economic Review*, 1959, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 251–273.

[52] C. Furtado, *Economic Development of Latin America: Historical Background and Contemporary Problems*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York/Melbourne 1976, p. 179.

[53] C. Furtado, *Teoría y Política Del Desarrollo Económico*, Companhia Editora Nacional, São Paulo 1974, pp. 169–228.

[54] Pinto Santa Cruz, Aníbal, "Nature and Implications of the 'Structural Heterogeneity' Of Latin America", in: *ECLAC Thinking, Selected Texts (1948-1998)*, ECLAC, Santiago 2016, pp. 303–314.

[55] F. H. Cardoso, E. Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1979.

[56] S. Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, Harvester Press, Hassocks 1976, pp. 139–144.

[57] J. L. Hughes, "The Politics of Dependence in Poland and Mexico", in: J.F. Triska (ed.), *Dominant Powers and Subordinate States: The United States in Latin America and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe*,

some authors to study the transformation of Central European countries since the year 1989. Those scholars argued that the Visegrad countries had developed a particular type of capitalism, strongly relying on foreign capital for the socioeconomic setup (see Table 4), which they called the dependent market economy. Such an economic model had some comparative advantages which guaranteed those countries an economic success, namely skilled but cheap acquisition of technological innovations from transnational companies and the provision of capital via foreign direct investment.[58]

Table 4. Foreign Direct Investments as part of the GDP in the Visegrad Countries (1995, in %)

	FDI stock (inward)	FDI stock (outward)
Poland	5.6	0.4
the Czech Republic	12.3	0.6
Slovakia	6.5	0.7
Hungary	24.4	0.6

Source: Country Fact Sheets 2019, https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DIAE/World%20Investment%20Report/Country-Fact-Sheets.aspx (accessed: 31.01.2020).

The concept of the dependency of Central Europe was particularly elaborated by Grzegorz Kołodko, a former Polish Minister of Finance. Kołodko criticized the neoliberal "development model" based on the naïve belief in the "miraculous power of an invisible hand of the market,"[59] as well as the Polish-style shock therapy, which "involved too many unnecessary shocks and too little therapy,"[60] but his argumentation goes beyond that. The main argument in favor of free market transition, as he noted, was that it was to improve competitiveness and efficiency, and lead to quick growth. However, in Central Europe this was not the case. Transitional depression lasted ten years and was deeper than expected.[61] Such a situation was partially due to the neoliberal policies adopted at the beginning of the transformation ("the best policy is no policy"). It was suggested that the reduction of government would stimulate economic growth; however, the reality proved to be different (Table 5). Some segments of the society benefited from the transformation, but most people suffered;[62] unemployment rose

Duke University Press, Durham 1986, pp. 342–368; V. A. Mahler, *Dependency Approaches to International Political Economy: A Cross-National Study*, Columbia University Press, New York/Guildford 1980, pp. 10–11.

[58] A. Nölke, A. Vliegenthart, "Enlarging the Varieties of Capitalism: The Emergence of Dependent Market Economies in East Central Europe", *World Politics*, October 2009, vol. 61, No 4, pp. 670–702.

[59] G. W. Kołodko, *The World Economy and Great Post-Communist Change*, Nova Science Publishers, New York 2006, p. 165.

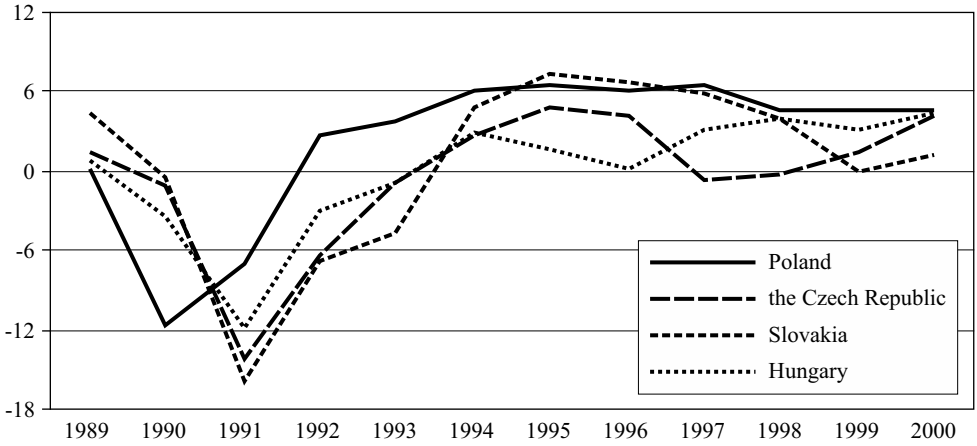
[60] G. W. Kołodko, "Globalization, Transition and Development Prospects", in: G. W. Kołodko (ed.), *Globalization and Social Stress*, Nova Science Publishers, New York 2005, p. 12.

[61] G. W. Kołodko, *Globalization and Catching-up in Transition Economies*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester 2002, p. 1.

[62] Ibidem, pp. 35–36, 40.

sharply in most of the countries (Table 6).[63] The neoliberal policies incorporated in the region in the 1990s were largely derived from the so-called Washington consensus[64] (fiscal policy discipline, trade liberalization, privatization).[65] They were promoted by Western advisors such as Jeffrey Sachs.[66] Central Europe was to be the place where the neoliberal concepts were to be tested.[67]

Table 5. GDP Change in the Visegrad Countries in 1989–2000 (in %)



Source: GDP growth (annual %), https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG&country=# (accessed: 30.01.2020); S. Fischer, R. Sahay, C. A. Végh, *From Transition to Market: Evidence and Growth Prospects*, "IMF Working Paper", 1998, No WP/98/52, p. 6, https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/wp9852.pdf (accessed: 05.02.2020). Data for the Czech Republic and Slovakia for 1989–1995 is approximative.

The neoliberal solutions were profitable mainly to the former bureaucrats who moved to business – to the shadow economy – as well as to the transnational corporations and foreign investors, who could easily invest in Central Europe. The asymmetry between the capital invested by the latter ones in the region and the scarce capital exported by the Central European countries created the risk of "dependent capitalism,"[68] i.e. an economy largely depending on foreign investors – particularly in the financial service sector – which was not always beneficial for the long-time growth.[69] Indeed,

[63] G. W. Kołodko, *From Shock to Therapy: The Political Economy of Postsocialist Transformation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 45.

[64] For a critical analysis of the latter, see e.g. J.E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York 2003.

[65] G. W. Kołodko, *Globalization and Catching-up in Transition Economies*, op.cit., p. 80.

[66] Ibidem, p. 49.

[67] Ibidem, pp. 21, 43.

[68] Ibidem, p. 6.

[69] G. W. Kołodko, *The World Economy and Great Post-Communist Change*, Nova Science Publishers, New York 2006, p. 6.

the inflow of foreign capital strengthened the local currencies, therefore making exports less profitable and imports much cheaper. In consequence, the Central European countries were flooded not only with foreign capital, but also with foreign goods.[70]

Kołodko did not deny that the Central European – in particular the Polish – transformation was a success, but he claimed that this success had been achieved not because, but in spite of the "shock therapy". The success was not due to the implementation of the neoliberal model, but due to the coherent policy of Polish governments (in particular those that Kołodko was a member of).[71]

Table 6. Unemployment in the Visegrad Countries (1991–1995)

	1991	**1993**	**1995**	**1997**
Poland	11.8	14.0	13.3	11.0
the Czech Republic	4.1	3.5	2.9	5.2
Slovakia	n.d.	12.2	13.1	11.9
Hungary	7.4	12.1	10.4	10.5

Source: Unemployment total (% of labor force) (national estimates), https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.UEM.TOTL.NE.ZS&country= (accessed: 05.02.2020); A. Nešporová, *Employment and Labour Market Policies in Transition Economies, International Labour Organization*, Geneva 1999, p. 17. Data for Poland is approximative.

The "World-System" Perspective

The "world-system" perspective refers to the works of American economists Gerald M. Meier and Robert E. Baldwin, who in late 1950s were the first authors to attempt a conceptual description of a core–periphery structure on a global scale,[72] as well as the French *Annales* school which aimed at analyzing the "history in slow motion"[73] and find its patterns and trends.[74]

The most important representative of the "world-system" approach was Immanuel Wallerstein. According to Wallerstein, a "world-system" is a unit with a single division of labor and multiple cultural systems. There can be two varieties of such "world-systems": one with a common political system ("world-empire") and one without it ("world-economy"). The "world-system" is by nature "capitalist" (every actor seeks to maximize its gains), even if it includes some "socialist" states – such as the Soviet Union – which also aimed at increasing their profits on the international level. The "world-economy" is internally diversified. There are core countries, which dispose

[70] Ibidem, p. 156.

[71] G. W. Kołodko, *From Shock to Therapy*, op.cit., pp. 111, 342.

[72] P. Knox, J. Agnew, L. McCarthy, *The Geography of the World Economy*, Routledge, Abingdon/New York 2013, p. 20.

[73] F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, University of California Press, vol. I, p. 23.

[74] Ibidem, p. 737.

of strong state-machineries that serve the capitalist landowners and their merchant allies; peripheral countries, where state-machinery is weak and the interests of main economic actors are contradictory; and semi-peripheral countries, whose existence is necessary in order for the capitalist "world-economy" to be run smoothly. The core countries – owing to their military power and ideological supremacy as well as the division between the peripheries and semi-peripheries – are able to shape the "world-economy" through the division of labor so that they can maximize their profits.[75] Peripheries and semi-peripheries can "rise on the ladder", moving towards the core. In order to do so, they must in particular achieve formal independence and exploit existing economic opportunities.[76]

The existing "world-system" was established in Europe in 1460–1640, although now it has a global character.[77] Northwestern Europe emerged as the core area, while Central Europe as well as the regions colonized by the European played the role of peripheries.[78] The core countries focused on more profitable sectors of economy, thus generating a capital surplus, while the peripheries were left behind. The Central European economy, which was dominated by agricultural production for the Western markets, underwent a process of re-feudalization.[79]

The "world-system" perspective directly referred to the history of Central Europe in the context of its relations with Western European countries. Wallerstein's argumentation was shared by the Polish historian Marian Małowist, who studied the dependence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the export of the grain to Western Europe[80] and its similarities to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America.[81] More recently, Marcin Starnawski and Przemysław Wielgosz in their preface to the Polish edition of Wallerstein's *World-System Analysis. Introduction* have written that since the year 1989 Poland has again taken the place it had occupied in the 16th century. This phenomenon has been exacerbated by globalization. Poland and other Central European countries have become peripheries or semi-peripheries, i.e. assembly plants for Western corporations (see Table 7).[82]

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[75] I. Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein*, The New Press, New York, 2000, pp. 75–100.

[76] Idem, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, Duke University Press, Durham/London 2004, pp. 56–57.

[77] Idem, I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Academic Press, New York/San Francisco 1974, pp. 10–11.

[78] Ibidem, pp. 301–302, 313–316.

[79] Idem, I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* II: *Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750*, pp. 134–144.

[80] M. Małowist, "Problems of the Growth of the National Economy of Central-Eastern Europe in the Late Middle Ages", *Journal of European Economic History*, 1974, vol. 3, pp. 319–357.

[81] Idem, *Europa i jej ekspansja XIV–XVII w.*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1993, p. 134.

[82] M. Starnawski, P. Wielgosz, "Kapitalizm nad przepaścią, społeczeństwa wobec wyboru. O krytycznych perspektywach analizy systemów-światów Immanuela Wallersteina" (*przedmowa do wydania polskiego* [foreword to the Polish edition]), in: Wallerstein I., *Analiza systemów-światów. Wprowadzenie*, Dialog, Warszawa 2007, pp. xxx–xxxi.

One of the contemporary Polish authors who actively draw on Wallerstein's concept is the sociologist Tomasz Zarycki. In his opinion, the model of core–periphery dependence still applies to Poland, although Poles generally believe that since the end of communism and the fall of the USSR, the era of unwanted domination and spatial hierarchies has ended.[83] Zarycki claims that the incomplete modernization of the Polish economy and society is related to the peripherality of Poland, which is in line with Wallerstein's concept.[84] According to Zarycki, Polish elites can also be analyzed through the concept of peripheral elites as they have a limited freedom of action in relation to the core.[85] Zarycki also analyzed the emergence of the "ideologies of Eastness" in Central Europe since 1989 (dependency discourse, postcolonial discourse, etc.), explaining this phenomenon with Wallerstein's core–center paradigm and the semi-peripheral position of the region.[86]

Another Polish scholar Jan Grzymski argues that the concept of "Central Europe" itself reflects the semi-peripheral position of that region in Europe.[87] In his opinion, the discourse of the Eastern enlargement of the European Union was based on the division between a "fully European" center and a "not-fully-European" Central Europe. However, Grzymski claims that the center–periphery dichotomy does not fully reflect the character of the Central European countries and the 2004 EU enlargement, as "Europeanness" and "Eastness" have a gradual character: each place in Central Europe is both "European" and "Eastern European".[88]

More recently, the concept of the core–periphery has been used to analyze the evolution of relations between the Visegrad countries and the EU since 2010. Within the last decade, the region witnessed the rise to power of populist "illiberal democrats" such as the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of the 'Law and Justice' ruling party in Poland (Table 8). Their popularity in the region stems from resentment of this former Europe's periphery at the post-1989 imperative to become Westernized. The Visegrad leaders are critical of the European Union – in particular because of its multiculturalism and openness towards immigrants – and they claim to be the defenders of the true Europeanness, while the EU is said to negatively assess the deterioration of democratic standards in the new member states. The West, as Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes have noted, believed it could change "the East" like in Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion; instead, it acted like Mary Shelley's Doctor Frankenstein,

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[83] T. Zarycki, *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcia zależności centro-peryferyjnych*, Scholar, Warszawa 2009, p. 19.

[84] Idem, "Socjologia krytyczna na peryferiach", *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2009, No. 1, p. 105.

[85] Idem, *Peryferie*, op. cit., p. 26.

[86] Idem, *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*, Routledge, London/New York 2014, pp. 16–17.

[87] J. Grzymski, "Europa wyobrażona. Język i interpretacje", *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, 2018, No. 2, p. 107.

[88] Idem, "O powrocie Polski do Europy. Przyczynek do rekonceptualizacji dychotomii centrum-peryferie", *Kultura i Polityka*, 2010, No. 7, pp. 68–82. See also: idem, *Powrót do Europy – polski dyskurs*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Uczelni Łazarskiego, Warszawa 2016, pp. 131–143.

"assembling replicas of human body parts into a humanoid body," which turned against its creator. This situation is a major challenge for the EU.[89] Such an interpretation is only partially true. In majority, the inhabitants of the Visegrad countries are favorable towards the membership in the EU (the Czech Republic being an exception here,)[90] while their leaders understand the economic benefits of the European integration,[91] even if they are using the anti-EU rhetoric for internal-politics purposes.

Table 7. Employment per sectors of Economy in the Visegrad Countries and in EU-15 (2018, in %)

	Poland	the Czech Republic	Slovakia	Hungary	EU-15
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	9.6	3.0	3.0	4.1	2.7
Industry, manufacturing, construction	31.5	36.5	31.4	28.6	19.6
Services	58.9	60.5	65.6	67.1	77.8

Source: Employment by A*10 industry breakdowns, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=nama_10_a10_e&lang=en (accessed: 31.01.2020).

Table 8. Democracy Index of the Visegrad Countries (2010–2019)

	2010	2019
Poland	7.05	6.62
the Czech Republic	8.19	7.69
Slovakia	7.35	7.17
Hungary	7.21	6.63

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, https://infographics.economist.com/2020/democracy-index-2019/index.html (accessed: 04.02.2020). Below 4 – authoritarian regimes; between 4 and 6 – hybrid regimes; between 6 and 8 – flawed democracies; above 8 – full democracies.

Post-colonialism

The postcolonial approach refers to the works of Franz Fanon and Edward Said. The former one pointed to the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation: the settlers did not only delimit the place of the natives physically, but they also mentally presented them as a sort of quintessence of evil.[92] This situation has not changed fundamentally

[89] I. Krastev, S. Holmes, *The Light That Failed: A Reckoning*, Penguin Books, London 2019, pp. 67–70.

[90] "Closer to the citizens, closer to the ballot", *Eurobarometer*, Spring 2019, p. 16, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2019/closer-to-the-citizens-closer-to-the-ballot/report/en-eurobarometer-2019.pdf (accessed: 29.06.2020).

[91] M. Ehl, The Other Frugal Four, 27.05.2020, https://visegradinsight.eu/the-other-frugal-four-v4-eu-budget/ (accessed: 29.06.2020).

[92] F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York 1991, p. 41.

after independence as the new states remained dependent on the former colonial powers.[93] European supremacy over former colonies was based on economic, but also cultural domination.[94] Said analyzed the stereotyped perception of the Middle East in the European (Western) countries, proving that "the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experience."[95] "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, «different»; thus, the European is rational, virtuous, mature, «normal»."[96]

The postcolonial thought was further developed by Hindu historians from the Subaltern Studies Group, who aimed at analyzing the history of "subaltern groups" (lower castes, classes, women), juxtaposing it with the dominant historiography, which focused on South Asian elites.[97] Ranajit Guha claimed that colonialism in India had been possible owing to the collusion between the colonizers and the local elites which profited from the existing situation.[98] Dipesh Chakrabarty argued in favor of provincializing Europe, i.e. breaking its still existing intellectual hegemony in the world.[99] Homi Bhaba popularized the concept of mimicry: the colonized imitate the colonizers, which makes their mutual relations less conflictual; however, the identity of the colonized becomes hybrid as the imitation is never fully successful, which turns their behavior into a farce.[100]

Last but not least, one should mention the Australian authors Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, who studied the evolution of the English language in the former British colonies, proving that the growing differentiation of the language was an instrument of breaking the ties with the former colonial power.[101]

The postcolonial approach was used by several authors to study the Russian/Soviet policy towards Central Europe as well as its transformation after 1989–1991;[102] others considered the countries of the region rather as "semi-colonies".[103] The postcolonial

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[93] Ibidem, p. 98.

[94] Ibidem, p. 222.

[95] E. Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York 1979, p. 1.

[96] Ibidem, p. 40.

[97] S. Krishna, *Globalisation & Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-First Century*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers., Lanham (Md) 2009, pp. 81–82.

[98] R. Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Ma) 1997, p. 5.

[99] D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, Oxford 2000, pp. 3–4, 255.

[100] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London/New York 2004, pp. 126–131.

[101] B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Routledge, London/New York 2002, pp. 38–39.

[102] D. Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique", *PMLA*, 2001, vol. 116, no. 1, pp. 111–128; J. Korek (ed.), *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality: Poland and Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective*, Södertörns högskola, Stockholm 2007.

[103] H. Carey, R. Raciborski, "Postcolonialism: A Valid Paradigm for the Former Sovietized States and Yugoslavia", *East European Politics and Societies*, 2004, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 210–211.

analysis is largely based on the conviction that the end of the Cold War led only to the change of colonial power in Central Europe: the Soviet Union/Russia, too weak to retain control over the region, was replaced by the United States[104] and/or the Western European countries. During the Cold War, Central Europeans idealized (or even worshiped) the West. After the political breakthrough, they have found themselves in the Western zone of supremacy. This took various forms, i.e. a real political and economic hegemony, but, above all, a discursive hegemony.[105] Such a situation was largely the result of the internal, postcolonial weakness of the Visegrad countries, which after the collapse of the Soviet Empire needed a new "protector". At first, they believed that a role could be played by the United States, which made some of them (Poland) vigorously support the American foreign policy, one that was adventurous and sometimes conflicting with the international law (intervention in Iraq, 2003). Later, they turned towards the Franco-German couple and the EU, perceiving them as a potential new metropolis.[106] The current leadership of Poland and Hungary aims at reshaping these postcolonial ties with the European Union and its main states, often at the price of their countries' image and international position.[107]

Some postcolonial authors focused on the already mentioned discursive hegemony, analyzing the "Orientalizing" approach of Western Europe towards its Eastern neighbors. Despite the multicultural demarginalization discourse, Western Europeans perceive Central Europe in a peculiar way. They draw a dividing line between "the civilized West" and "the primitive East" (see Table 9). The area between Russia and Germany, spanning from the Baltic to the Balkans, is perceived as an uncivilized periphery, a kind of non-Europe, nested in the European bosom.[108] Central Europe is subject to an "ethnographic description". Its inhabitants are perceived as "authentic", "indigenous" people; as "species" about to extinct. The region is also analyzed through the prism of its participation in the Western expansion.[109]

Other authors analyze the postcolonial character of Central Europe through its difficult socio-economic situation, arguing that the post-transformation generation is, in fact, a subaltern group, which results from the heritage of the former imperial domination and the lack of moral authorities. Communism was replaced by capitalism, but nothing else

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[104] Ibidem, p. 229.

[105] J. Wierzejska, "Central European Palimpsests: Postcolonial Discourse in Works by Andrzej Stasiuk and Yurii Andrukhovych", in: D. Pucherová, R. Gáfrik (eds.), P*ostcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*, Brill Rodopi, Leiden/Boston 2015, p. 378.

[106] M. F. Gawrycki, A. Szeptycki, *Podporządkowanie – niedorozwój – wyobcowanie. Postkolonializm a stosunki międzynarodowe*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2011, pp. 232–233.

[107] See A. Szeptycki, "Polska i Ukraina z perspektywy postkolonialnej", in: M. F. Gawrycki (ed.), *Strategia mimikry. Ameryka Łacińska (i nie tylko) w ujęciu postkolonialnym*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2012, p. 70.

[108] J. Wierzejska, op.cit., p. 392.

[109] D. Skórczewski, "Trapped in Western Gaze: Contemporary European Imagology and Its Implications for East and South-East European Agency – a Case Study", in: D. Pucherová, R. Gáfrik (eds.), op.cit., pp. 369–373.

has really changed. Former communist elites went into business and are getting the most benefits from the new situation. Ordinary people just have to play the game, dressed in second-hand clothes, so to say.[110] Such a situation has resulted in (at least in the case of Poland – see Table 10) mass migrations to Western metropolises – motivated by the desire for the Western modernity – and the subsequent alienation in exile.[111]

Table 9. Perceptions of Relative Living Conditions in Selected EU Countries (2015, in %)

		Perceiving country								
		France	**Germany**	**Greece**	**Italy**	**Poland**	**Spain**	**Sweden**	**Switzerland**	**the UK**
Perceived country	France	42.9	62.2	71.6	70.2	74.9	79.3	62.9	48.9	73.7
	Germany	71.6	70.0	84.7	88.4	87.7	85.2	77.5	70.6	83.8
	Greece	6.7	6.9	9.7	8.4	21.2	5.6	9.4	5.9	14.8
	Italy	24.9	37.5	39.1	19.8	65.7	29.4	38.1	25.6	44.4
	Poland	19.5	25.6	20.2	26.2	24.7	21.2	23.1	16.4	24.6
	Spain	27.2	31.6	35.5	48.8	48.1	33.3	38.9	23.2	43.3
	Sweden	76.1	81.6	86.7	85.7	84.4	84.4	75.4	83.2	84.6
	Switzerland	82.8	84.6	88.7	90.5	85.1	86.9	78.8	75.6	86.9
	the UK	64.9	63.1	81.9	83.5	85.9	80.2	64.5	57.5	70.8

Source: LIVEWHAT. *Living with Hard Times. How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences. Integrated report on individual responses to crises*, p. 11, March 2016, http://www.unige.ch/livewhat/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Integrated-Report.pdf (accessed: 07.02.2020). The project did not cover the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary.

Table 10. Visegrad-countries-born population in EU-15 (2015, in thousand)

Poland	3,430
the Czech Republic	687
Slovakia	184
Hungary	360

Source: Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/data/UN_MigrantStockByOriginAndDestination_2015.xlsx (accessed: 04.02.2020).

[110] H. Gosk, *Opowieści skolonizowanego/kolonizatora W kręgu studiów postzależnościowych nad literaturą polską XX i XXI wieku*, Universitas, Kraków 2010, pp. 199–213.

[111] C. Sandru, "Joined at the Hip? About Post-Communism in a (Revised) Postcolonial Mode", in: D. Pucherová, R. Gáfrik (eds.), op.cit., pp. 65–84.

Concluding Remarks

Each of the main currents of the globalist theory of international relations which have been subject to the analysis was used in relation to the post-communist transformation of the Visegrad countries. The general assessment of this process by the scholars who are close to the globalist theory of IR is not unanimous. Zielonka evaluated the changes in the region positively, even if he perceived the EU enlargement in 2004 as an imperial project – such a situation was caused by the peaceful character of the EU expansion, the relative weakness of the Central European countries, and, last but not least, the success of their internal reforms launched after the fall of the communism. Kołodko, in turn, considered the transformation as a success, but negatively assessed the neoliberal solutions implemented at the beginning of the 1990s (the "shock therapy"), perceiving them as the sources of the socio-economic problems (increase in unemployment) and not the solution; in his opinion, neoliberal policies benefited the former communist bureaucrats and the transnational corporations, but not the local peoples. Zarycki and the post-colonial authors from the Visegrad countries were more critical, pointing to the negative consequences of the transformation process, both at internal and external levels. In their opinion, despite the transformation, Poland and its Central European neighbors have remained a semi-periphery, one despised by the Western Europeans, whom the Visegrad peoples envy.

On the other hand, the above-mentioned authors generally agree on three distinct features of the transformation process in the Visegrad states, which do not fully fit the liberal theory. First, they point to the strongly asymmetric character of relations between these Central European countries and the West, in particular the EU-15, confirmed by its political, economic, and discursive supremacy. Such a statement leaves little room for doubt when speaking about the early 1990s, when the transformation process started. Globalist authors affirm, however, that the situation has not fundamentally changed despite the transformation which has been taking place for the last thirty years. Second, the said authors argue that the transformation process in the region was largely foreign-driven – initially, during the "shock therapy" phase, it was inspired by the Western neoliberal thought, which profited transnational corporations and foreign investors; later, during the EU enlargement phase, it was meticulously planned and monitored by the European Union. In fact, because of the already mentioned asymmetry between the Central European countries and the West, the former had little choice, but to accept the proposals of the Western partners. Third, the globalist scholars focus on the collateral effects of the transformation process: underdevelopment, unemployment, and economic emigration. At the same time, the analyzed authors only to a limited extent study the possible negative effects of the described processes for the "core" states or for the Western states as a whole, e.g. the rise of populism in Western Europe (Brexit) as the consequence of the enlargement of the European Union, or the free movement of labor across the continent. At least some of these affirmations are solidly

corroborated by statistical data with regard to the differences existing between Western Europe and Central Europe, the economic crisis in the Visegrad countries in the 1990s, or the deterioration of democratic standards in the region in the 2010s.

Indeed, the globalist perspective sheds some new light on the transformation of the Visegrad countries since the year 1989. Its position on that issue, however, seems somehow biased (Kołodko being a good example here), as the globalists tend to overestimate the negative aspects of the transformation in the region as much as the liberals tend to defend it.