

German Plans for Central Europe

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ABSTRACT

German plans for Central Europe had already appeared in the 19th century. At the heart of the Mitteleuropa idea was the creation of an economic area under German leadership. In the literature, List is considered the father of the Mitteleuropa idea, the first systematic developer of the integration of Central and Eastern Europe under German leadership. His work 'Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie' [The National System of Political Economy], in which he scientifically summarised and systematised his previous writings, was published in May 1841. In this work, List expressed his views in defense of political unity and national economy and against the teaching of Adam Smith's school. List first advocated the realisation of a continental alliance against the English hegemony, and then, when the USA advanced, he believed that the English should also join the alliance. He wanted to promote the development of the economic region, by developing the railway and waterway network. Another famous German developer of the Mitteleuropa concepts is Friedrich Naumann. Within his work, the books and articles dealing with Mitteleuropa form a closed whole. These writings of his are closely related. Their time of origin also shows unity. Naumann elaborated his plan for Central Europe in his main work 'Mitteleuropa' published in November 1915. Central Europe was not to be a new state, but an alliance of existing states, the core of which would be the alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary. It was to be a confederation and not a federal state.

KEYWORDS

Mitteleuropa, Adam Smith, political economy, confederation, Oberstaat, Friedrich List, Friedrich Naumann

Introduction

*'The concept of Mitteleuropa is closely related to German nation-building and identity construction. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, German unification had been a major topic in intellectual and political debates. In those debates, Mitteleuropa was a central as well as a contested concept.'*¹ In the 19th century, this concept arose as a security policy alternative to the realisation of the Great German ideology, and

1 Stråth, 2008, p. 171.

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as a defense against England's hegemony, in order to consolidate European peace and create an economic area.² Economic cooperation comprised the fundamental element of these plans.

The First World War provided new impetus to ideas about Central Europe. The study compiled by the German Imperial Government on 9 September 1914, that is, the September Program, contained a catalog of war aims. Among the goals outlined by the chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, were the weakening of France, pushing back of Russia to the east, and creation of a Central European economic association. While its members would have been ostensibly equal, in reality the alliance would function under German leadership and stabilise Germany's economic and political dominance over Europe.³

The *Mitteleuropa* plans emphasised the ways and advantages of economic cooperation, arguing for the inevitability of integration. However, these plans served the leading role of Germany, promotion of German interests, and advocated action against the preponderance of the other great powers. The two most significant representatives of the *Mitteleuropa* plans, who elaborated their ideas in the most detail, were Friedrich List and Friedrich Naumann, who devoted their whole lives to the realisation of these ideas.

1. Friedrich List (1789–1846)⁴



1.1. His life

Friedrich List was born on 6 August 1789 in Reutlingen, and was the son of a wealthy tanner. He attended a Latin-language school, after which his father wanted to train him as a tanner in his own workshop. However, List preferred to read books rather than master the craft of tanning. He therefore left his parents' home at the age of 17, and began to work as a scribe, while also beginning commercial studies with a lawyer in Blaubeuren.

He passed his first exam in Stuttgart, at the Royal Ministry of Finance, in 1808. He then spent a year in Ulm as a scribe. In 1811 he got a job as an accountant in the main office in Tübingen, and at the university he listened to lectures on chamber sciences, public law and the English constitution.

² Németh, 2020, pp. 15–16.

³ Kosiarski, 2015, p. 305.

⁴ Friedrich List, German-American economist and political theorist, lithographie von Josef Kriehuber, public domain, source of the picture: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_List#/media/File:Friedrich_List_1845_crop.jpg.

In Tübingen, he met the Minister of Culture of Württemberg, Karl August Freiherr von Wangenheim, who later became his principal patron.

In 1813, he gave up official work in order to focus solely on his university studies. However, he did not take the university exam in 1814, answering instead, the public administration exam, following which he was employed in the Ministry of Finance in Stuttgart. Here, he became chief auditor and won the title of Rechnungsrat. Wagenheim, who in the meantime had become Minister of Church Affairs and Education, commissioned List to prepare proposals to reform university clerical training. List proposed the establishment of a faculty of political science at the University of Tübingen. At the faculty established on 17 October 1817, he was appointed (on Wagenheim's proposal) as professor of public administration, despite the fact that he did not have a university degree.

In 1819, during his trip to Frankfurt, he met merchants with whom he founded the Union of German Merchants and Manufacturers. This union was formed to achieve the abolition of internal customs duties and introduce external protective duties. To this end, petitions were submitted to the provincial government. When List lost the trust of Wilhelm I due to his political activity, he resigned from his professorship in Tübingen.

In 1819, he was elected as a member of the State Diet of Württemberg by the people of Reutling. After criticising the king and monarchical state organisation in his resolution proposal called the 'Reutlinger Petition', and strongly demanding the strengthening of civil rights, he was sentenced to ten months' imprisonment on 6 April 1822 for insulting majesty. He first fled from arrest to France, then returned to Stuttgart in 1824 to request a remission of his sentence. However, this did not succeed, in August 1824 he was arrested and taken to the Hohenasperg fortress. After serving part of his sentence, he promised to travel to America and renounce his Württemberg citizenship. Therefore, in exchange, he received permission to travel. On 26 April 26 he moved to New York.

In Pennsylvania, List acquired a newly discovered coal deposit. In order to transport coal to the coast, he financed the construction of a railway, with which he acquired a fortune of millions. In the American elections, List supported the campaign of Andrew Jackson, after whose victory he could have been appointed as a minister or vice president. In view of his homeland, however, Jackson, sent him to Germany as the American consul general. The immunity thus obtained protected him from the full execution of his former sentence.

In Germany, List advocated for the creation of a German customs union, and fought to create a modern economic infrastructure. He proposed the development of a railway and waterway network, and also called for the unification of laws and the tax system, as well as the creation of a national economy. His railway construction plans formed the basis of the railway sections being built. Since he did not receive any financial benefit from this, and his request for rehabilitation was rejected, he moved to Paris in 1836. There, he wrote for the *Allgemeine Zeitung*

about French domestic politics and published studies on the national economy. He returned to Germany in 1840, where he settled in Augsburg.

When List's American bank failed, he lost his fortune. On the advice of a friend from Stuttgart, the book publisher Cotta, he began writing a multi-volume basic work on commerce, handicrafts and the national economy. However, of the six planned volumes, only the volume titled 'Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie' [National System of Political Economy] was completed in 1841, which was a great success. In 1842, with the help of Cotta, List founded the newspaper *Das Zollvereinsblatt*, in which he wrote approximately 650 articles over the course of his life.

After his health failed, List left for Italy. On the way there, he arrived in Kufstein on 26 November 1846. His financial problems, depression, boredom, and constant headaches drove him to commit suicide. His body was found on a hill in Kufstein on 3 December, with a pistol in his hand. He was buried in the city cemetery.⁵

1.2. List's work related to the Central European unity

In the literature, List is considered the father of the *Mitteleuropa* idea, the first systematic developer of the integration of Central and Eastern Europe under the leadership of the Germans.⁶ He mainly expressed his views from an economic perspective. A tendentious direction can be observed in his works. First, he aimed to create the German national economy.

'A strong nation required a strong economy and vice versa. The nation-state's task was to protect the economy, and through the economy the national interest.'⁷ After this, other states, such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland, would have joined the German unity. This unit would continue to grow towards the lower course of the Danube. Although List first saw the need to establish European unity vis-à-vis Great Britain, he eventually planned to create an alliance with Great Britain as well. He saw the development of transport, railway and water routes as necessary for the creation of state and economic unity. In his works, he called for the creation of an economic unit in which agriculture, industry and trade form a part.

The establishment of German unity in 1815 did not entail the unification of economic conditions. Internal tariffs levied by individual provinces made internal trade difficult and expensive and hindered industrialisation.⁸ For the abolition of internal customs, steps were taken outside the federal bodies and at the level of the provinces. Within the framework of the Union of German Merchants and Manufacturers, List fought for the abolition of internal tariffs and the introduction of protective tariffs, as he feared that the German national economy would end up as the 'water barrel and woodcutter' of the British. List considered the construction

5 For List's life, see Häusser, 1850. Braeuer, 1985 [Online]. Available at: <https://de-academic.com/dic.nsf/dewiki/474695> (Accessed: 23 May 2023).

6 Romsics, 1997, p. 19.

7 Strâth, 2008, p. 173.

8 Rahn, 2011.

of the railway network and the creation of the customs union as ‘Siamese twins’ in the modernisation of Germany.

The German customs union was established in 1834, and after moving to Augsburg, List once again advocated the development of the German railway network. At this time, the debate between the supporters of free trade and protective tariffs intensified. The forum for the debate was the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. While previously, national economic interests were discussed only in a restrained manner, this topic was now the subject of a lively debate in the world of politics. List was the first to arouse interest in the development of railways. With his articles on industry and trade policy, he promoted the entire German nation to learn about the theories that were, until then, only known within narrow circles. He believed that the development of the economy would require at least four railway lines, which would connect the East with the West, and the North with the South. In the columns of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, a lively debate unfolded regarding the Commercial and Shipping Convention, which was established between the German customs union and England on 2 March 1841. This polemic raised the preference of national economic interests, which was also pushed by List, to a political level.

In the spring of 1841, List published several articles on the national trade systems of England, Holland, and Germany. In these writings, he provided historical evidence that the prosperity and decline of the economy is related to its protection and lack of protection.⁹ Following the publication of these articles, his work ‘*Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie*’ [The National System of Political Economy] was published in May, in which he scientifically summarised and systematised his previous writings.¹⁰

In this work, List expressed his views in defense of political unity and national economy and against the teaching of Adam Smith’s school. According to him, free trade only works between nations of equal development. His book emphasises the promotion of Germany’s national interests. List derives his basic tenets from historical lessons. According to him, a unified national economy is necessary because agriculture can only develop properly if industry and trade also develop, and they mutually help each other.

According to List’s view, the translation of individual strengths into common goals promotes individual prosperity. The more people join together, the greater the prosperity. During List’s time, the state and the nation were the largest associations of individuals regulated by law. The greatest imaginable unity, the unification of all humanity, is not made possible by wars and national self-interests. Therefore, the perfection of the nation should be set as a goal.

However, the unity of nations is only beneficial if these nations are equal. Submission does not allow the setting of common goals. In addition to farming, nations

9 Häusser, 1850, pp. 245–254.

10 List, 1841. In English see List, 1856.

striving for independence must also pursue industry, commerce, and shipping. Ascension is more easily achieved through trade with developed nations.

The cosmopolitan economy proposed by Adam Smith lacks world peace. According to List, productive power is more important than wealth. The state of nations depends mainly on the totality of their productive forces, and productivity can be improved by increasing education. The prosperity of a nation does not depend on its accumulation of wealth (exchange value), but on how developed its productive forces are. Protective tariffs increase productive forces and industrial independence.

According to List, Adam Smith's teaching suffers from three main faults: 1) cosmopolitanism – it does not take into account the nature and needs of the nation; 2) materialism – focuses on the exchange value of goods, 3) particularism and individualism – does not recognise the nature of social work and the benefits of combining forces.

According to List, the nation stands between the individual and humanity. The task of the state is to provide national economic education and prepare the nation to enter the universal society of the future. The nation's territorial deficits can be eliminated by purchase or conquest, and different states' interests can be united by free agreements. Only fully developed nation-states can introduce protective tariffs. Political power not only affects foreign trade, but also promotes the nation's internal well-being. England gained political power through its Shipping Act. Against English supremacy, List urged a unified continental policy.

According to List, the main goal of rational politics is the unification of nations under the rule of law and order. However, this can only be achieved slowly. States must form various alliances with each other. Therefore, a continental alliance is needed against England's preponderance.

The chief obstacle in our day to a close union of the powers of the European continent, is in the fact that the central portion does not perform the part that belongs to it. Instead of serving as a medium between the East and the West in all questions of territory, constitution, national independence and power; a mission with which it is invested by its geographical position; by its federal system excluding all fear of conquest on the part of neighboring nations; by its religious tolerance and its cosmopolitical spirit; lastly, by its elements of civilization; this centre is at present but an apple of discord between the different sides of Europe, each of which entertains hopes of drawing to its side a weak power, because not united and ever uncertain and vacillating in its policy. If Germany, with her sea-coast, with Holland, Belgium and Switzerland, would form a strong commercial and political union, if this powerful national body would reconcile as much as possible existing interests, monarchical, dynastical and aristocratical, with

the representative institutions, Germany might guarantee a long peace to Europe, and at the same time form the centre of a durable continental alliance.¹¹

England has a huge colonial empire. According to List, the rebirth of Asia can only be achieved with the help of Europe. It is an important interest of all continental powers that the routes from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf should not come into the exclusive possession of the British. Delegating the supervision of these important points to Austria would obviously provide all European states with the best security. The unification of the continental powers is a matter of life, because the experience of the past years show that the wars between them have increased the economy, power, colonies, wealth and shipping of the island nation.

According to List, Napoleon's mistake was that he wanted to replace English sea power with French land power. Napoleon did not care about the interests of other countries and cut off the traffic between the industrial countries of the continent and colonies. The alliance of mainland states can only be realised if France avoided Napoleon's mistakes. An effective continental political and economic system can only be created through the free association of continental powers.

List clearly pointed out that the English will soon be forced to create a European alliance against the emerging North America, just as the Germans and the French need an alliance against English supremacy.

In 1842 List investigated the prospects of German emigration into south-eastern Middle Europe. He estimated that German colonists could be sent there at one-fifth the cost of travelling to America. The Hapsburg state possessed three-fourths of the Danube; with its cooperation German settlers might continue to populate its lands, as they had begun to do in the days of Maria Theresa, and move beyond as well. A network of railroads and canals integrated with the Danubian waterway would be the framework for a German-Hungarian economic area extending southeastward from the Nord and Baltic seas. 'We have our backwoods as well as the Americans', wrote List: 'the lands of the Lower Danube and the Black Sea, all of Turkey, the entire Southeast beyond Hungary is our hinterland.'¹²

In List's 1843 article '*Österreich und der Zollverein*' [Austria and the Customs Union], published in the columns of *Das Zollvereinsblatt*, he provided a detailed explanation of the benefits for Germany and Austria if the latter joined the German

11 List, 1856, pp. 479–480.

12 Meyer, 1955, p. 13. Already in 1834, List formulated that Germany and the other European states should expand to the southeast, Austria should occupy the territories in the lower reaches of the Danube and the weakened Turkey's place in the Balkans to the Black Sea. See List, 1834, pp. 720–721.

customs union. The connecting link would be the Danube, the region of which is mostly owned by Austria, and through which Germany could reach the mouth of the Danube in the Black Sea. Emigration could be directed to these regions and transport should be developed there the most. *'How differently trade would develop in Austria if its neighbors to the north and south-east were Germans,'* declared List.¹³

Continuing to envision the engine of unification in the development of transport networks, in 1846, List wrote the following:

The Danube, once it has been regulated, is the best road for land transport, both between Hungary and the other provinces, and between the Austrian Monarchy and the western and eastern parts of Europe. The plan of the transport system in Hungary must be taken into account on the one hand for the connection between Galicia and the Danubian Principalities, and on the other hand for the connection to the western part of Germany. Both directions are more important from a political and military point of view than from a commercial and national economic point of view.¹⁴

To carry out the reform of the transport system, he also formulated a plan to establish a joint stock company.

The plan for Germany's alliance with England was further developed by List in his work *'Über den Werth und die Bedingungen einer Allianz zwischen Großbritannien und Deutschland'* [On the Value and Conditions of an Alliance between Germany and Great Britain]. In this article, he details that England can only compete with North America's vast territories and economic power by increasing its own territories in Africa and Asia. However, for this, England needs an alliance with Germany. The prerequisite for this alliance is the renewal of Germany. List saw that this renewal could be achieved by reducing the bureaucracy.¹⁵

*'List proposed the formation of an Anglo-German alliance which would have a dual purpose. Britain would help protect Germany from Russian or French aggression, while Germany would protect the flank of Britain's routes to India when the Empire had been extended to Egypt and the Near East.'*¹⁶ In the fall of 1846, List travelled to London to negotiate a political and economic alliance between Germany and England. However, without any political authority, this plan was doomed from the start; List returned from England disappointed and without any results, and these events contributed greatly to his suicide.

He wrote not soon before his death – 'would have to be succeeded by a German-Hungarian Eastern Empire, whose frontiers would have been

13 List, 1843, pp. 225–248.

14 List, 1850a, p. 308.

15 List, 1850b, p. 455.

16 Stráth, 2008, p. 176.

washing by the Black Sea and the Adriatic Sea, and which would be dominated by German and Magyar spirit.’ Apart from the theoretical framework of Mittel-Europa, more practical ideas, such as the Berlin-Baghdad railway, could also be linked to List,

Romsics summarises correctly.¹⁷

List advocated his plans not only in the press. He developed contacts at the highest political level to secure support for his suggestions for the agrarian and industrial expansion of Hungary and for the future Austro-German domination of the Balkans. He explained his ideas to Metternich, for example.¹⁸

As we have seen, shortly before his death he also travelled to London in order to implement the Anglo-German alliance. In addition to being a visionary and thinker, his plans were interwoven with logical thought processes, rationality and practicality.

2. Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919)¹⁹



2.1. His life²⁰

Naumann grew up in a conservative family in Störmthahl, near Leipzig, as the child of an evangelical pastor. He graduated in Meißen in 1879, and then studied theology in Leipzig and Erlangen. After his first theological exam in 1882, he worked in a house (the ‘*Rauhe Haus*’) in Hamburg where orphaned or neglected children lived. In 1885, he passed his second exam in Dresden. In 1886, he received a priest’s position in Langenberg. Here, he gained an insight into the delicate life of the workers. In his first writings published at that time, Naumann acted as the ‘shepherd of the poor’. From 1890, he worked

as a pastor of the *Inner Mission* in Frankfurt am Main, where he was engaged in social work. Among other things, he dealt with founding Christian associations,

¹⁷ Romsics, 2019, p. 7.

¹⁸ Stráth, 2008, p. 178.

¹⁹ Friedrich Naumann, German politician, unknown author, in: Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, Archiv des Liberalismus, Audiovisuelle Medien, F3-240, source of the picture: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Naumann#/media/File:Portrait_Friedrich_Naumann_\(ca._1911\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Naumann#/media/File:Portrait_Friedrich_Naumann_(ca._1911).jpg).

²⁰ On his life, see Peschel, 2014; Meyer, 1904; Heuss, 1937; Heuss, 1997.

providing housing for the needy, caring for the poor, ensuring foundations' support for the elderly, and maintaining institutions providing care to children and young people. The *Inner Mission* was fundamentally close to socialism, as the goal of both was to help the needy. Here, he developed his theses on the relationship between socialism and the state, which in his opinion should be guided by the Gospel. This set Naumann on the political path, through the Christian-social trend. From 1890, Naumann participated in the Evangelical Social Congress, where he made acquaintances with theologians, economists and practical experts. At the end of 1894, he founded the Christian-socialist weekly *Hilfe*, where he worked as an editor. In 1896, he founded the *Nationalsozialen Verein* [National-Social Association] in Erfurt, of which he was the first president. In 1897, he left his priestly career to devote himself entirely to politics and the *Nationalsozialen Verein*. This association essentially functioned as a party that contested elections. In 1903, after an unsuccessful election run, the association was dissolved. Along with the majority of the association's members, Naumann then joined the *Freisinnigen Verein* [Freeminded Union]. In 1907, he won a seat in the Reichstag from the Heilbronn constituency, and in 1913 he was re-elected in Waldeck. In January 1919, after the First World War, Naumann was elected a member of the Weimar National Assembly, and in June as the president of the German Democratic Party, founded on 20 November 1918. He died in Travernünde in August 1919 as a result of a stroke. As can be seen from his biography, Naumann was a versatile politician. He belonged to the circle that supported the union of social democrats and liberals, although he cannot be described only a social liberal.²¹ His political career can be distinguished by three stages: Christian-socialism until 1895; national-socialism between 1896–1903; and a social liberal from 1903.²²

2.2. Naumann on Central Europe

Within Naumann's work, the books and articles dealing with Mitteleuropa form a closed whole. His writings are closely related, and their time of origin also shows unity.²³

In 1898, Naumann took part in a trip to Asia as a 'political shepherd', as he described himself in his travel report.²⁴ In this book, he also explained his geopolitical views. He rejected an alliance with Great Britain, as this would have led to a decrease in Germany's importance; any German weakness would have strengthened England. '*No friendship with England! National Policy!*', he wrote. Naumann considered it possible that the world war against England would break out before the collapse of the Turkish Empire.²⁵

21 Kellmann, 2021.

22 Fesser, 2002, p. 400.

23 Schieder, 1964, p. 376.

24 Naumann, 1913, p. 2.

25 Ibid. pp. 144–145, 153.

Between 1898 and 1907, he travelled to Austria-Hungary, North Africa and several times to France in addition to the Middle East. He considered Austria-Hungary a natural ally. His work *'Deutschland und Österreich'*,²⁶ published in 1900, is regarded by the literature as the beginning of his Middle European writings, even though it does not directly belong to this region. In this work, Naumann dealt with the Monarchy for the first time, which later played a significant role in his Central European plans.²⁷ In this book, he had already explained that Germany and Austria-Hungary should establish a customs union and a military alliance. He also saw this as necessary for the survival of Germanness in Austria-Hungary.

In 1914–1915, Naumann prepared his unified work on Central Europe in several articles.²⁸ After the outbreak of the First World War, he committed himself even more to the unification of the Central European states. In February 1915, he gave a lecture in Budapest, wherein he advocated the unification of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, referring to historical events. At that time, he still believed that the alliance would also result in the victory of the Central Powers: *'In this war, which has made East and West Germany's enemies, the Central Powers will triumph in all directions.'*²⁹

Naumann elaborated his plan for Central Europe in his main work *'Mitteleuropa'* published in November 1915.³⁰ The states that did not belong to either the Anglo-French alliance or the Russian Empire were the subjects of Naumann's investigation. The first step would be the unification of Germany and Austria-Hungary, as all further Eastern European plans would depend on this. According to Naumann, Central Europe is the area that extends from the North and East Seas to the Alps, Adriatic Sea and southern part of the Danube plain. This area could function as a defense alliance and economic unit, from which all particularism must be eliminated. The formation of *Mitteleuropa* requires not only territorial unity, but also the creation of the Central European spirit. Since the small states themselves are no longer good for anything, they must remain in an alliance even after the war, which also gives meaning to the struggles of the war.

According to Naumann, after the war, border walls would be built, and Europe would be marked by trench politics. There would be two long ramparts from north to south. One would stretch from the Rhine to the Alps, the other from the Courland peninsula to the right or left border of Romania. Therefore, it was necessary to decide which friendships were worth forming. It is questionable whether a rampart should be built between Germany and Austria-Hungary.

However, there are many differences between Austria-Hungary and Germany. On the one hand, Austria-Hungary is an old unit, which transformed from states to a state confederation, Catholic, characterised by slower transformation, and with

26 Naumann, 1964a.

27 Schieder, 1964, p. 378.

28 See Werke, Band 4, pp. 442–484.

29 Lecture of Frigyes Naumann, 1915, p. 8.

30 Naumann, 1915; in English see Naumann, 1916.

more fields and pastures. On the other hand Germany is a new unit, where the state confederation becomes a federal state, Protestant, faster on the path of capitalist transformation, and characterised by a more business spirit, with more cities. In addition to the differences, there were also many opponents of unification. The alliance between the two states was necessary, the cooperation so far was not enough. It was of a defensive nature, and the peoples were not united.

Naumann outlined the history of Central Europe. Unity requires a new historical consciousness, and cannot be based only on economic relations alone. Spiritual development and the formation of a Central European feeling presupposes the forgetting of old grievances. A supreme power reigned north and south of the Alps, with brief interruptions from Charles the Great to Charles V. This is how a certain medieval Central European community of life and culture was formed. The Germans occupied the center of Central Europe, and the smaller peoples were attracted to them. However, the old German imperial history ended with the Confederation of the Rhine. The second era of Central Europe begins with the age of Napoleon. The age of Napoleon had a significant impact on the inner spirit of Central Europe, because it developed the peoples in a political and democratic direction.

The result of the Congress of Vienna was the restoration of Central Europe under Russian protection. Thus, the indirect ruler of the region was first Alexander I, and then Michael I. In 1848, however, a new democratic wave began from the west of France all the way to the Tsar's empire. The spirit of the West rose against the rule of the East, and parliamentary life began. Discussions of Central European affairs began in Frankfurt's St. Paul's Church in May 1848. However, a split then occurred in the Great-German and Little-German direction. Regarding Bismarck's role in 1866, Naumann emphasises that the Prussian Prime Minister at that time wanted to establish the foundation of a permanent alliance between the two Central European powers. Bismarck was more a friend of the Austrians than of the Russians.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871 entailed the final liberation of Central Europe from the influence of France. Central Europe was thus demarcated on the western side, and its area still had to be demarcated from Russia. Bismarck did not side with Russia in attacking Austria, which led to the Congress of Berlin in 1878, and in the dual alliance in 1879. This ended the traditional alliance between Russia and Prussia. The dual alliance between Austria-Hungary and the German Empire created a Central Europe between the West and the East.

Naumann also addresses the question of religion and nationality. The term Central Europe has no religious or national connotations, and does not evoke emotional resistance. The Central European type of man has not yet crystallised quite like the French or English type. The development of a historical understanding in Central Europe, in which Catholics and Protestants see themselves as part of a common past without giving up their spiritual values and self-awareness, is essential. The union of the north and the south may affect the parties sensitively

in the religious field. Therefore, religious and school matters can never be Central European allied matters.

The nationality issue is more of an Austria-Hungary problem. In Germany, the Poles mainly caused trouble for the Prussians. The non-German nationalities living in Austria-Hungary would be given autonomy in the 'Oberstaat'. Central European unity, however, would also solve nationality issues, and a Central European culture would emerge.

Most of Naumann's book deals with economic issues. The specific German spirit, that is the ability to organise, boosted the Germans in the economic field as well. Organisation is also an advantage in the performance of state duties. This organisational ability and the German economic system must also become decisive in Central Europe. Austria-Hungary lacks not the technology but the spiritual strength for economic recovery. Its population comprised of many beggars and emigrants. However, Central Europe can only be built on the strength of an educated, well-nourished population.

The war stimulated economic ingenuity in Central Europe, and stock management emerged. War farming and state intervention hid the deficit. The national economy gained a new meaning, and production was determined by state needs. The post-war financial policy would be based mainly on a state syndicate obliged to provide workers' insurance. The economic separation of Austria and Hungary is unreasonable, and it will be difficult to solve the financial problems by relying on taxes. The Germans could help with economic recovery.

Central Europe must occupy a special place in the world economy. The question is whether, in addition to the big centers – London, New York, Moscow – Central Europe can also become a center? After Great Britain, America and Russia, Central Europe can only be the fourth power. Naumann rejected the plan of the United States of Europe, stating that in his work he deals only with the alliance of Germany and Austria-Hungary. He lists the advantages and vast areas of the three great powers, one by one. Although Central Europe cannot catch up with these, the alliance itself cannot be delayed, because then the surrounding states would join with their possible colonies. Without these, it is not possible to join the ranks of the first-class world economic powers.

Naumann deals at length with the issue of customs, which was the subject of lively debate in his time. According to him,

the technical question at the root of the matter is whether the two, or three, commercial States desire to have and are able to have a joint commercial policy with intermediate frontiers between the countries, or two commercial policies in whose adjustment they co-operate. It is the old question of a federal State or a State confederation transferred to commercial policy.³¹

31 Naumann, 1917, p. 237.

In the area of customs, this necessitates a choice between preferential customs procedure and customs union. In the case of the preferential customs procedure, everything would remain unchanged in the states under public law, and the parties would only have to comply with the contract. Although the implementation of the customs community would entail public law tasks for the parties, according to Naumann, this should be implemented. However, before the establishment of the new Central European customs system, storage treaties based on state granaries and contracts on the Central European iron syndicate must be concluded.

During the discussion of constitutional issues, Naumann states that Central Europe will be the creation of the will of the people, so the idea of its implementation must be spread. It would not be a new state, but an alliance of existing states, the core of which would be the alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary. It would be a confederation and not a federal state. When the confederation is established, it is necessary to determine the matters that would not fall under the jurisdiction of the central state (*Oberstaat*). These matters include: church matters, education, questions of language use, internal public administration, local administration, the constitution in the narrow sense. Already existing international treaties can serve as models for the treaties establishing Central Europe.

Naumann imagined that the states would conclude treaties with each other to manage common affairs.

They may be divided into two principal groups: treaties which are carried out by each State through its own officials in its own way and without joint control, and treaties which owing to their nature require a mixed Joint Commission to carry them out. The latter group thus paves the way for joint administration in limited spheres. It will be much more readily and frequently possible between two States with a permanent alliance and a joint trench system than between two States which still have to reckon with the possibility of mutual war.³²

With regard to the customs community, the stock economy based on joint state grain purchases, and the joint syndicate arrangement, permanent joint enforcement and accounting bodies must be set up. These would be followed by other joint offices.

But when once we picture to ourselves a certain number of such Mid-European Commissions or higher administrative departments, they form together something like a Mid-European Central Administration. For this reason the Commissions ought to be housed, so far as is feasible, in the same place. This place will become for Mid-Europe in a modernised and

| 32 Naumann, 1916, p. 261. |

better fashion what once, though with a mistaken constitution, Frankfurt-on-Main was or should have been in the old German Confederation.³³

In addition to the economic alliance, Neumann also urged for the creation of a military alliance. *'Any one who belongs to the military union is guaranteed by it in so far as this is within the power of the joint army.'*³⁴ This would have an impact on foreign policy. A joint foreign ministry cannot be established, *'but we shall mutually come to work better and better with one another. There will be no change in the Constitution, but here too a tradition will grow up'*.³⁵

According to Naumann, the joint participation of the central powers in the war only makes sense if the parties remain allies of each other even after the war. Thus, the realised *Mitteleuropa* will be the fruit of the war. Neumann believed that *'Mid-Europe will have a German nucleus, will voluntarily use the German language, which is known all over the world and is already the language of intercourse within Central Europe'*.³⁶

In a later writing, Naumann confirms that all war aims only make sense if *Mitteleuropa* is created. The Balkan Peninsula belongs to Central Europe, and therefore Bulgaria must also join the alliance. According to Naumann, if Bulgaria does not win and Turkey's position in Asia is not maintained, Central Europe will be defeated.³⁷ The Hungarians could act as intermediaries between Bulgaria and the central powers.³⁸ He further intended the independent Kingdom of Poland to also be part of *Mitteleuropa*. However, the accession of the Poles must be supported by both Austria and Prussia.³⁹

In 1917, the plan of the Austro-Polish solution was created to settle the situation in Poland. According to this, after the unification of the former Congress-Poland and Galicia, the Polish crown would also belong to the Austrian emperor. According to Naumann, this plan would have been feasible only after the unification of Germany and Austria-Hungary.⁴⁰

Naumann's book was translated into several languages in a short time. Its main aspects were aptly summarised by Géza Lengyel in 1916:

Naumann does not say: Gross-Deutschland, Naumann says: *Mitteleuropa*, and everyone argues with him, everyone frowns, everyone picks up a pencil, everyone finds supporting and refuting arguments. The notable

33 Ibid. p. 264.

34 Ibid. p. 281.

35 Ibid. p. 284.

36 Ibid. p. 108.

37 Naumann, 1964b.

38 Naumann, 1964c, pp. 872–882. Naumann saw an opportunity to further settle the Balkan issue in 1918, based on the peace treaty concluded with Romania. See Naumann, 1964d.

39 Naumann, 1964e; Naumann, 1964f.

40 Naumann, 1964g.

feature of Naumann's inventive, enjoyable, shapely, superior, and cunning book is that it prompts the reader to express his or her opinion, and almost makes the reader pretend. [...] And hardly a book has been published in the last two or three years, which has been approved or rejected by so many orally and in writing, and whose title, idea, and thought would have occupied minds to such an extent.⁴¹

Naumann devotedly defended his position on Mitteleuropa. On 29 February 1916, he wrote the following to his doctor, Ernst von Düring: *'My schedule is such that I spend the few weeks when there is no Reichstag in Austria, because it is my personal wartime task to pave the way for unification.'*⁴²

He defended his position against those who attacked his plan in several studies. In this way, he tried to dispel the objections of the merchants of the Hanseatic cities⁴³ and the concerns of those who feared that Mitteleuropa would be an obstacle to the resumption of the German colonial economy.⁴⁴

In 1917, he summarised the general principles of Central European cooperation. In the first principle, he stated that *'the military, political and economic rapprochement of the two Central European empires is the basis for the future security of the continent, a necessity for all those states that do not want or cannot belong to either the Russian or the English confederation.'*⁴⁵

In February 1916, Naumann and Ernst Jäckh founded the Central European Working Committee. And on 1 July 1917, the first issue of the weekly *Mitteleuropa* publishing the committee's announcements was published. In the introductory article, Naumann laments that no steps had yet been taken to realise *Mitteleuropa*. For this, according to him, the declaration of the two emperors about Central Europe should take place immediately. *'This would be the basis, the details can be worked out later.'*⁴⁶

In the summer of 1917, Naumann feared that the creation of the foundations of state law was too late. The situation for the conclusion of state contracts was no longer as favourable as during the first years of the war. Austria and Hungary were busy with their internal affairs.⁴⁷ With the first signs of peace negotiations, Naumann continued to urge the conclusion of the German-Austrian-Hungarian state treaty, because he believed that further peace policy depended on this step. The treaty was supposed to create military and economic unity, so that the central powers could negotiate together. The alliance would have been vital for

41 Lengyel, 1916, p. 484.

42 Fesser, 2002, p. 410.

43 Naumann, 1964h.

44 Naumann, 1964i.

45 Naumann, 1964j.

46 Naumann, 1964k.

47 Naumann, 1964l.

Austria-Hungary as well, since the Monarchy was threatened with dismemberment by the Entente powers.⁴⁸

On Christmas 1918, Naumann's last article about *Mitteleuropa* was published in the weekly newspaper *Mitteleuropa*, with which the newspaper ceased operations.⁴⁹ In it, he admitted that with the great collapse the idea of *Mitteleuropa* would also disappear, that neither Germany nor the peoples and states of the old Austria-Hungary would be able to conclude treaties. According to Naumann, the realisation of the *Mitteleuropa* plan would have created a friendly alliance across country and language borders. Whether or not this idea is lost depends on whether the concept of *Mitteleuropa* was an arbitrary idea or a necessary one.

If it is true that the nationalities living in Central Europe are dependent on each other and cannot exist permanently separated, if it is true that the technical and economic culture of the Czechs, Hungarians, and South Slavs exists in permanent interaction with German life, then these natural relationships will one day resurface by themselves.

According to Naumann, however, one should work instead of despairing. This applies not only to the Imperial Germans, but also to the Austrian Germans: '*We must not let the flames of our lives be extinguished.*' He believed that the supporters of *Mitteleuropa* would find each other in the National Assembly and on other occasions. Signing off with '*Auf Wiedersehen,*' the great thinker said his goodbye.

48 Naumann, 1964m.

49 Naumann, 1964n.

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