

# Chapter 2

## Post-Brexit and Post-Corona: The UK, the EU and Central East Europe: ‘Illiberal Democracy’ and the Influence of China



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**Abstract** In this chapter, the author investigates and analyzes the effect of Brexit in the UK after Covid-19, the expansion of China’s influence in the Central–East–Southern half of the European Union, and the emerging narrative of “Illiberal Democracy” from Hungary’s leader Victor Orbán that is shaking western values in Central East Europe\*.

In the UK, the birthplace of parliamentary democracy, the parliament rejected the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated between the EU and Prime Minister May on three occasions. After the May government resigned, the government of Boris Johnson in the wake of a general election victory (December 2019) was able to secure a prompt exit from the EU at the end of January 2020.

However, the new economic relationship between the EU and the UK is yet to be reconstructed.

Negotiations remain on-going at a time when Covid-19 continues to cause a large loss of life and major economic disruption. It is a phenomenon not to be overlooked, that Asian Countries controlled Covid-19 very well, including Australia and New Zealand, but especially Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam.

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\*The author defines this region, Central East Europe, according to the definition of Oscar Halecki. Central East Europe lies in the Eastern part of Central Europe between Germany and Russia, and the area’s nations are currently members of the EU. Historically, this area was under the control of the Habsburg Empire, the German Empire, or the Russian Empire. Politically this region was influenced by democracy, liberalism, socialism and independence, and continued to seek freedom and liberation against the Soviet system. It is also a region where the people refer to themselves as “Central Europe” and insist on the unfairness of referring to them as “Eastern Europe” during the end of the Cold War and the period of negotiations for accession to the EU. Historically, most of citizens of this region tried to embody European values rather than European skepticism, but most of their life have been under the control of neighboring big powers. Although they have been leading the European Revolution in 1989, after joining the EU, they began insisting nationalism, populism, unique democracy and economic development. Halecki (1980). Kumiko Haba, *Nationality Question in Integrating Europe*, Kodansha Gendaishinsho, 1994–2004. Kumiko Haba, *Enlarging Europe, Searching Central Europe*, Iwanami Publisher, 1998–2003.

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How will the post-Covid-19 world change? The trend of international ‘power politics’ in the early twenty-first century appears to be strengthening, Chinese influence is widening through the 16 + 1 and 17 + 1 policy and is making itself felt across half of the European Union. As a result of Brexit, the future of Britain’s political and economic clout remains uncertain.

Are we now truly witnessing a shift in the global order when the economic and medical reliance and wider influence of Asian countries become a reality post-Brexit and once Covid-19 abates?

## **Introduction: Post-Brexit: The UK, the EU, Central East Europe and China**

This article analyzes and investigates the following three points on a historical basis and geopolitical background from the viewpoint of international politics before and after Brexit.

(1) The transformation of Power in Europe, (2) The withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) and its effect, and (3) The decline of traditional European values, in the face of the promotion of ‘Illiberal Democracy’ and the influence of China. In so doing, it focuses on the following three parts.

(a) The changing process of the relations among three parts of Europe: the UK, Europe and Central East Europe, (b) The transformation process of power relations of European integration, and (c) The expansion of China’s influence to Europe (especially to the eastern and southern part of Europe).

EU research can sometimes come across as being too Brussels centric or focusing too much on the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. However, as is well known, the EU consisted of 28 countries (27 since the departure of the United Kingdom). Following the end of the Cold War, the bloc expanded eastwards on three occasions: 2004, 2007, and 2013 that brought 11 countries of former Eastern Europe (as well as Cyprus and Malta) into the organization. As a result, the EU not only expanded geographically, it also expanded the reach of its value system. This point must not be neglected.

Enlargement also ensured that the EU became the world’s largest economic organization, not least surpassing the United States’ in terms of GDP, prior to the 2010–12 Euro Crisis.

However, since the early twenty-first century, the flip-side of its economic strength has been an increase in economic inequality and the reduction of social security and healthcare as a result of neo-liberal “small government” policy.

Simultaneously, there was the economic growth of China and India. In particular, China’s growth and “Belt and Road strategy” has resulted in the 16 (countries in Central and Eastern Europe) + 1(China) beginning to forge closer ties. This has

witnessed China beginning to enter the border region of Central East Europe within the EU as a result of infrastructure development, investment, trade, and railway construction, and via its offer of medical and social security care during the Covid-19 pandemic.

After the UK withdrawal from the EU, 11 of 27 countries are Central East Europe, and with the participation of Serbia and Balkan countries in the future, geopolitically the EU will move further east and south, not only geographically but also in terms of values and behavior.

If the influence of China and Russia increases, will the traditional characteristics of the EU (which had been forged by Western Europe) be changed greatly by developments in the east and south?

Therefore, it will be necessary to reconsider that nearly half of the EU is constituted by the countries of Central East and Southern Europe, not only considering that they are “poor and backward” region, but we need to investigate and analyze the new structural position of the EU greatly transforming from west to east and south, after the result of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. As we will see in the latter half, China has expanded its influence on 16–17 countries of the EU, including Greece.<sup>1</sup>

It might be possible that half of the EU member states will receive greater influence from China and other Asian countries than from the EU headquarters in Brussels, in economics, trade, investment, and infrastructure development. Could that also result in a competing set of values within the geographical space of the EU? Such a possibility cannot be overlooked or neglected.

It is not a nightmare that the main powers of the EU may be replaced by China and Central Europe or Central East Europe without realizing it.

#### (1) After Brexit and the Corona Crisis in Europe

In spring (February to June) 2020, the dramatic impact of Covid-19 especially against five major European countries (Spain, Italy, UK, France and Germany) and the USA. This resulted in the economic harm of developed countries in the EU and the USA, and opens the door for the expansion of the influence of China on the EU, especially to the eastern half of the EU, in Eastern and Southern Europe in the long run. Coronavirus is not the reason for the process but it has strengthened and promoted such a tendency.

Another part of the reason is the impact of Brexit. In one part, it brought with it the ‘decline of authority’ traditionally associated with the UK not least as a result of the impasse within the House of Commons. The time and energy taken up by Brexit also impaired the UKs validity and political leadership to solve the problems in the EU, and in the world as well. Such impairment can also be witnessed with the USA as a result of the decisions of the Trump administration.

In addition, during the Covid-19 crisis in the USA and Europe, the spread of the infection and the number of fatalities in the UK has been extremely high; even Prime Minister Boris Johnson was infected. The government’s failure to adequately deal with the outbreak compared to other countries has undoubtedly damaged the UK’s standing in the world.

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<sup>1</sup>Sato (2019).

The policy failure not to be part of the EU's joint medical assistance (initially appearing to insist on a herd-immunity strategy), and the decision not to be part of the EU respirator acquisition program further damaged the UK's reputation. As a result, of the decisions made in the USA and Europe, Anglo-Saxon leadership has shown itself to be much less effective than one might have expected.

On the other hand, Covid-19 infection rate after the dramatic expansion of China's rapid measures and in South Korea, ASEAN countries, Taiwan, Hong Kong and New Zealand of infection suppression has shown a superior set of leadership examples. Thus, what we are witnessing is the flow "from the USA and Europe to Asia", was not only economic and information, but also medical care, social order, and infection control.

The measures against Coronavirus have also adopted a different strategy between Asia and the USA and Europe. The US and European systems chose "lock-down." On the other hand, the Asian medical social system emphasized "self-restraint," suppression, cleanliness, Confucian community and solidarity, etc. Corona infection ability and death rate were the same, 2–3%, but the Asian approach appears to have had a decisive advantage in preventing the spread of corona infection and mortality rates.

Another thing that has not been paid much attention to in the corona crisis is the low mortality rate in the old Socialist countries. Russia recently took place strong infection, but it shows less dead than 1% mortality. (Of course, the possibility of statistical deficiencies cannot be ruled out). In former communist countries other than Russia, infected persons also increased, but mortality rates have been smaller than the European great powers, except for Germany. Spain and Italy across the board experienced 13% mortality; Central East European countries are less than half. (only in Hungary, the number of infected people is low: about 3535, but the death rate is almost 13%, 462, but the death rate in Romania and Poland is less than 4–6% of infected persons.)

In this article, the author investigates the important key, the relationship among the UK, the EU and Central East Europe under post-Brexit and Corona crisis, helping predict the European and global political economy but has not been much discussed until now, and the EU has consciously been neglected. Moreover, the author examines the expansion of the influence of China, not only in economy but also on medical care, and clarifies the transformation of the EU structure after Brexit and Corona.

## **1 The United Kingdom, Europe, Central East Europe—Historical and Geopolitical Background**

Central East Europe, that is to say, former Eastern Europe or East Central Europe area has the following geopolitical characteristics.

(1) Historically and geographically, it is surrounded by strong neighbors, Germany and Russia (Soviet Union). It is a multiethnic region. However, precisely because of this, in order to not be swallowed up by the influence of two large powers, (2) The UK and the USA, as counterparts and as the expectations on the role of liberal democracy and military forces were introduced and were present in force.

This area is historically under the so-called “Resale serf system (Die Zweite Leibeigenschaft)” (Engels).<sup>2</sup> In the development and modernization process of Western industrialization, it was incorporated into the structure; western modernization was supported by “resale serfdom.” It is also a hinterland of agriculture, and as a result, it became an area where the liberation of nations and the liberation of serfs were delayed.

### (1) Premature Political Awareness and Immature Economic System

Due to the historical experience mentioned above, Central and Eastern Europe were often labeled as having a “premature political consciousness and immature economic system” (Esterhazy).<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the movements of liberation of farmers and people existed from an early stage. It is also a region where Western liberalism, nationalism, democracy of the people and the idea of labor movement have already existed since the nineteenth century.

Such a “premature political consciousness and immature economic system” combined with the characteristics of the hinterland supporting modernization of the West forms the unique character of Central East Europe.

### (2) Trust in Liberalism and Democracy

Under these circumstances, as a feature of Central East Europe, in order to counter against Germany in the West, and to counter against Russia in the East, the USA and the UK as the symbol of liberalism, democracy, modernization, and national liberation of the principle was relied upon strongly. With the fusion of feudalistic characters and modern philosophy, the region evolved it will grow as a unique ethnic area that had a hybrid character.

For example, in particular Poland, already a premodern system, under feudalism existed as “noble republic system (Polish: Rzeczpospolita)—to elect a king in feudal parliament”.<sup>4</sup> That was its historical experience.

It is well known that nations in Central East Europe drew upon the political model of the UK and USA (nationalism, liberalism, and democracy) in their struggle against the Habsburg Empire, the German Empire, and the Russian Empire during the World War I.

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<sup>2</sup>Nakamura (1977).

<sup>3</sup>Esterhazy Peter, translated by Mika Waseda, “Eyes of the Countess of Hahn-Hahn—Down the Danube” (Imagination of Eastern Europe 3), 2008.

<sup>4</sup>Naruhito Toriyama, “Aristocratic Republic of Poland”, *Hokkaido History*, 1960–07.

Liberalism and democracy (as well as the ideas of the socialist movement) would be used against Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in the World War II, as tools to try and counter domination. This was inspired by UK liberalism, the nation-state philosophy and the German social democracy movement. During WWI, they collaborated with the USA and the UK, and developed antiGerman and antiSoviet Union movements.

It is well known that during the Cold War, Central and Eastern countries repeatedly sought to break away from Soviet domination: restoring independence, sovereignty, and “Socialism with a human face.” They also hoped that the USA and Britain might liberalize democracy and restore unity in Europe. That is, because it was historically geographically surrounded by military powers like Germany and Soviet Russia, the liberal idea was a powerful symbol for them. The values that they held onto in the hope of liberating themselves were the liberalism of Britain, democracy in France, social democracy, and “socialism with a human face.”

Especially Poland, which found itself occupied by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. It formed a government-in-exile that was based in London that continued for the duration of the War and the Cold War.<sup>5</sup>

### (3) Relation Between the UK and Central East Europe After the End of the Cold War

What then about the relationship between Britain, the EU, and Central East Europe after the end of the Cold War and after the EU enlargement?

- (1) Central East Europe was basically and economically in the framework of the German economy.
- (2) That is why they expected the support and the leadership of the UK, after the end of the Cold War. Large amounts of young students, professionals, women, skilled, and unskilled workers utilizing their rights as EU citizens took employment in the UK, France, Germany, as well as Brussels with the EU headquarters.
- (3) This resulted in the local people of the UK feeling a sense of discomfort toward the immigration from Central East Europe and exacerbated the relationship between the UK and Central East Europe and triggered the UK resistance toward the EU regarding immigrants and the EU bureaucracy.

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<sup>5</sup>Galinsky (1985).

## 2 The EU Enlargement and the EU's Ruthless Treatment of Central East Europe

From 1996, the so-called "EU Eastward Enlargement" started, and the accession negotiations (Copenhagen criteria), began. There also existed the feeling in the west side of the EU, that Central East Europe, which was the former communist bloc, that the countries were heterogeneous, and requested them to become integrated with the EU in political, economic, and social contact to through EU law (compliance with the *acquis*). It changed the life, economy, and social style of Central East Europe, which had been completely different for decades.<sup>6</sup>

While staying in Hungary in 1995 and in London in 1996 for a total of 2 years, the author witnessed the disparities and structural changes in the EU due to the expansion of the EU.<sup>7</sup>

From 1995 to 2004, as a result of removing the vestiges of the socialist system, and being forced to comply with Brussels' Western standards, liberalization, democratization, and marketization, people from across Central East European recoiled against the EU. At the turn of the century from the twentieth to twenty-first, and from 2004 to 2007, upon getting the membership of the EU, the dream and reality's discrepancies began.

Because of the gap between the West and East, Western Europe set the policy in terms of a "Europe of the two-speeds and two dimensions." The fact that domestic governments across Central and Eastern Europe adopted policies, in order to comply with the demands of the EU, cost them politically as their citizens became disgruntled.<sup>8</sup>

In particular, consider the Polish dairy products and wine, agricultural products like Foie gras in Hungary, traditional and historical special products of Central East Europe. The EU wanted to protect the vested interests of the EU members in Western Europe by limiting market access of the products of new member states, and using EU subsidies to, for example, shrink vineyards in the region, which caused widespread dissatisfaction in East European nations. The EU consciously lowered wages in Central East Europe to keep the EU competitive with Asia.<sup>9</sup>

All these situations in the EU disparities spread discontent and nationalism in Central East Europe against the EU.

Below, this article analyzes the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU in June 2020, and the transformation of the power inside the EU, and the influence of the Brexit impact,

- (1) The relative decline of the power of the EU,
- (2) China and India, especially China's Belt and Road Initiative and Central East Europe,

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<sup>6</sup>Haba (2004).

<sup>7</sup>Haba (1998).

<sup>8</sup>Haba et al. (2006), Haba (2004b).

<sup>9</sup>Csaba (2006).

(3) And “Illiberal democracy,” conservatism and nationalism, and Euro-skepticism in Central East Europe.

In particular, in the latter half pages, I investigate China beginning to enter and collaborate with 16 + 1, which happened in 2019.(including Greece 17 + 1).<sup>10</sup> On the topic of construction, we consider such the facts of Central East Europe in the area of constructing roads, railway infrastructure, development, and investment.

It is also revealed that Brexit, not only led to the rapid decline of Britain’s power on the European continent (not just with EU member states) its prestige is also waning in the neighboring small countries and the former colonies of the British Empire.

This effect is seen even in the UK–Japan relationship, which has been a historically friendly collaboration for 150 years, except during WWII, and the UK was the model of Japanese modernization. However, after Brexit, Honda and Hitachi have announced plans to withdraw from the UK.

Eastern and Southern European countries have also been observing and learning from the reality of the international situation and the UK’s Brexit experiences and have cautiously determined that a different path is in order. They do not withdraw from the EU; they are taking the opposite actions that the UK is taking. That is, in other words, even though they are dissatisfied with the EU, they remain inside the EU, and aim to oppose and reform from the inside.

The UK, leaving the EU is no more the leader of the half billion people in the EU’s political, military and economic system. Even though the UK has only 55 million inhabitants, it has the world’s fifth largest GDP after Germany. After the decision of Brexit, Boris Johnson approached China and wished to ask for additional investment in nuclear power generation and collaboration with Hua Wei’s 5G system.

This was postponed by the expansion of the coronavirus. China started a “masks diplomacy” after the recovery of Wuhan’s situation from the end of March, but there is another problem, which is that it was revealed that many masks and antibody test kits were defective in Europe and were not certified by the Chinese government.<sup>11</sup>

The evaluation of the UK changed drastically during the 3 years since June 2016. In the rest of this chapter, we will investigate the transformation of the British international status and how the power relations in the European continent have changed politically and economically, and how China or Russia is seeking to build linkages in Europe.

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<sup>10</sup>Tonami (2019). Astrid (2018).

<sup>11</sup>BBC News Japan (2020).



### 3 Transformation of British International Status and Change of Power Relations in Europe

From the so-called imperialism era of the nineteenth century until World War I, the British Empire was the model of modern capitalism. Its role was symbolized by the sterling pound and Union Jack national flag.

After World War II, even though the top position of economics and military was assumed by the USA and the Soviet Union, the collaboration between the USA and the UK remained an important symbol of the European Community is a bulwark against the Soviet influence during the Cold War. During that era, although the global role of the UK was in decline, it still continued a leadership role in military, politics, and economy in the EC/EU.

Major changes would take place after the end of the Cold War. In 1989, the former Eastern European countries abandoned socialism, seeking instead a “Return to Europe.” The role of Germany was expanding to the East, at the turn of the century from the twentieth to twenty-first. On the other hand, China and other Asian ASEAN countries rapidly were rising and collaborating with the EU and as part of the ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting—established in 1996) which had adopted a three-pillar structure encompassing political, economic, and social culture matters. More specially, the politics strand dealt with terrorism, maritime security, energy security, disaster prevention, immigration problem, the economic strand saw the formation of the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF), while the sociocultural strand dealt with culture, arts, education, youth, and the exchange of students. The ASEM decided to put an emphasis on “open regionalism.”<sup>12</sup>

#### (1) The Center of Gravity moves to East in Europe

Under these circumstances, the center of gravity of Europe moved eastward both inside and outside the EU.

The EU Enlargement toward Central East Europe meant the historic and local expansion of German influence<sup>13</sup> to the Central and Eastern parts of Europe.

The introduction of the Euro, the expansion of the continental economic zone, and the shift of Central East Europe to the EU (due to the EU’s geographic shift to the east) resulted in a diminishing role of Britain. Nonetheless, for Central East Europe it continued to remain an important player as a counter for Germany and Russia. The geopolitical position and role of the UK and the USA were extremely attractive for Central East Europe.

More recently, though, decisive change was caused by the expansion of China’s influence. This has come about via a rapid-fire pace of change centered around two initiatives. First, the AIIB (Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank) brought the opening.

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<sup>12</sup>MOFA (2020).

<sup>13</sup>Haba (1998).

The second is the Belt and Road Initiative policy that includes a European dimension and is marketed as a win—win economic policy. It now straddles half of the earth, through land, sea, and the Arctic “triple necklaces’ routes. It is the 100-year Silk Road Economic Zone concept.<sup>14</sup>

China and Russia have signed treaties to embark upon collaborative activities between the BRI and the Eurasian Economic Alliance, including Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Collaboration of Russian military and Chinese economy might become a menace to the EU where division and internal divergence was already apparent.

Cooperation between China and Central East European countries was established in 2012 and is currently 16 + 1 (17 + 1 including Greece) since 2020.<sup>15</sup>

China’s influence has expanded in the eastern half of the EU in a wide range of areas such as infrastructure, investment, economy, trade, politics, information, at the same time as the main axis of the EU has shifted from the west to the east.<sup>16</sup>

It is the expansion of Chinese influence to the UK and the EU, which is taking place in parallel to the confusion of Brexit; it is also the expansion of relations between China and Central East Europe. As an effect, it also brings forth a division of the EU by China and Russia.

## (2) Brexit and Russian Influence on Populism

The Brexit referendum brought a great shock to many EU countries. During the European refugee crisis of 2015, populism and nationalism were widespread throughout Europe. The sense of crisis and fear spread across the bloc. This came at a time when talk about leaving the EU featured in the political debates of several other member states such as Italy, Greece, or Hungary.

On the other hand, when the Maidan Revolution happened in Ukraine in 2014, Russian president Vladimir Putin decided to have a referendum and occupied the Crimean Peninsula with the Russian Army after the national referendum was incorporated into Russia. Because of that occupation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russian Army, Russia was expelled from the G8, and British government and other European government simultaneously summoned their ambassadors from Russia due to the assassination.

Under these circumstances, Russia started to support and funded aggressively the European Populists, such as Nigel Farage of UKIP, Le Pen of FN, Alexis Tsipras, Greek Prime Minister. The European Commission criticized Russia in an article that Russia is dividing the European Union by funding populists.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Haba (2016c). Yukawa (2018).

<sup>15</sup>*Shizuoka Shimbun* (2019). *Saga Shimbun* (2020).

<sup>16</sup>Kaczmarzski and Jakóbowski (2015).

<sup>17</sup>Haba (2017b). Haba (2017a).

## 4 Brexit and the Decline of the UK and the US Prestige: The rise of “Illiberal Democracy”

In the UK, the draft Withdrawal Agreement negotiated with the EU by UK Prime Minister Theresa May was rejected by the parliament on three occasions—contributing to her eventual resignation in June 2019. Boris Johnson, who came into power after that, said that he was not afraid to leave without an agreement. He eventually reached a compromise deal with the EU that included the matter the Irish border and tariff issues for Northern Ireland (a deal not so dissimilar to what the EU had offered PM May but which she had rejected). In the general election in December 2019, the Conservative Party gained an overwhelming victory that gave Johnson a large majority to get his deal passed by the parliament. On 31 January 2020, the UK officially left the political institutions of the EU.

On the other hand, even in Southern Europe and Central Eastern Europe where populist political parties are strong, the disillusion to the UK began to spread with the EU leadership.

The difficulty of the UK’s departure from the EU greatly impaired the UK’s position at home and abroad. As a result of that, ironically, the Brexit process had helped calm the populist political assault on the EU. At the May 2019 European elections, for example, only about 20% of the populist parties across the block managed to get seats. Many Central and Eastern European countries were also disillusioned having witnessed first-hand Britain’s difficult experiences.

Brexit was the result of direct democracy, a referendum, but similar to the presidential election of President Trump in the USA, it showed a loss of trust in the international order that had been dominated by the USA and the UK for the past 100–200 years, which was in fact constructed by the UK and the USA.

It indicated and produced a difficult and basic question, “What is democracy?” in the face of the rise of populism. This caused an explosion of books such as “Self-Death of Western Europe,” “The way to die of democracy”.<sup>18</sup> Such books were published and widely read one after another, and through these books, values of modernization, democracy, liberalism, marketization themselves are also reconsidered and discussed.

### Expansion of Coronavirus in the USA and Europe

Ironically, the coronavirus had drastically spread from February in 2020 all over the world especially in Europe and the USA. These countries were locked down, but it continued to spread until almost 5 million people were infected and 320 thousand died. It spread to emerging countries as well including the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India). It damaged the infrastructure of developed countries: affecting economy, politics, military, and medical and social security system. These are the pillars upon which trust and the social structure of citizens rest, but these modernized systems

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<sup>18</sup>Murray (2018). Steven Levitsky (2018).

are being severely challenged by Covid-19. I would like to investigate how the USA and Europe were influenced by coronavirus (see below).

Many European countries are reconsidering “solitude and solidarity” and help and support each other, but Trump in the USA criticized the “China virus” and Tedros, WHO’s secretary general, and the UK criticized the EU.

(1) “Illiberal Democracy”: A solution different from Brexit

Against this backdrop, among Central East European countries, it has been left to the government of Hungary (as well as Poland) to challenge the EU’s norms and values. At the forefront of this challenge is Hungarian Prime minister and leader of Fidesz—(Fidesz Magyar Polgári Szövetség—in English—Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance) Victor Orbán who has advanced an alternative vision—what he calls an “illiberal democracy”.

It rallied against immigrants and promoted refugee exclusion, recovery of sovereignty, etc., leading EU officials to severely criticize the Hungarian Government’s actions and commence sanctions procedures.

Poland also decided to publish a new law on the Supreme Court, which violates the independence of the judiciary, and the EU decided to take them to the EU Court of Justice.

However, according to reports from a Berlin reporter, there are also problems with the EU’s response, because sanctions for the suspension of voting rights require unanimous decisions by the member states except the target countries, but the Czech Republic and Bulgaria are opposed. Therefore, sanctions have remained unenforced against Central East European countries even though they are in conflict with the EU’s agreed position on immigrants and refugee acceptance.<sup>19</sup> Against this backdrop, the influence of China and Russia has penetrated into Central and Eastern Europe, further deepening the division within the EU.<sup>20</sup>

Fidesz have won three straight victories in the general election in 2010, 2014, and 2018. Its success originated from a skepticism concerning the EU’s neoliberal competition policy in the twenty-first century, and a keen criticism of the corruption of the Socialist Party who carried the EU’s policy domestically.

In Hungary, the Socialist Party, the former Communist Party, led much of the process of reform at the end of the Cold War post-1989. However, when they lead the reform from 2002, the Minister of Finance at that time, Lajos Bokros offered the Bokros Package (Bokros Csomag), which was a neoliberal competition policy, and

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<sup>19</sup>According to the AFP on September 13, 2018, the European Parliament adopted a resolution for political sanctions against the Hungarian Orbán administration. Orbán argued against the report leading to this resolution as an insult to the Hungarian people. Sanctions are based on Article 7 of the EU Basic Convention, used for the first time in the European Parliament. Sanctions under Article 7 of the EU Basic Convention were also resolved by Poland in 2017 by the European Commission. AFP 2018.9.13. <https://www.afpbb.com/articles/-/3189426>. However, in reality, EU sanctions against Poland and Hungary are not being implemented due to the opposition of Eastern European countries, and it is said that only fragmentation will be prolonged.

<sup>20</sup>Miyashita (2019).

carried out the fiscal reform, to reduce social security and public policy spending. From that time, people's discontent increased. As a result, the Socialist Party could not recover from overseeing the expanded economic disparity after the end of the Cold War, and could not even realize a sustained economic recovery. In addition, plagued by corruption allegations they lost the trust of the people. After the former eight Central East European countries joined the EU in 2004, the dissatisfaction raised against the Socialist Party's government, and the corruption of the government in the process of dismantling state-owned enterprises increased public dissatisfaction. As a result, the conservative government of the Fidesz—Hungarian Civic Alliance was readministered, subsequently, long-term singly administrated government by prime minister Victor Orbán has continued for a period of over 10 years and has maintained two-thirds majority of the parliament.

However, the 20 years after the end of the Cold War in 1989 was the time when major painful economic reforms were carried out to abolish the socialist system and to join the EU. This necessitated the introduction of liberal economic policies and the wiping out of the old 'command' system. It could be said that this was an unavoidable issue for any Central East European government trying to join the EU.

That is why in both Poland and the Czech Republic, conservative parties were forced to balance their economic policies with their cultural defensive policies when they introduced the EU's rapid prescription for the introduction of a Western European system.

## (2) Orbán's Majority Strategy—"Illiberal Democracy" and Creating Workfare Community

The notorious Fidesz leader, Victor Orbán was a lawyer and was the youngest Prime minister at the age of 35 in 1998. Leading Fidesz, (which in English means Youth Democrat Union) started from the liberal democrat party originally, his speech was rational and logical against the Socialist Party, which was organized by the Horn and Gyurcsany administration from 1994 to 1998, 2000 to 2010, which was stable but mismanaged discontentment of the people. Much of Orbán's support base comes from the countryside and villages. They were attracted to his insistence of independence from the EU, restoration of sovereignty, nationalist policies and links with 1.5 million Hungarian minorities outside the border.

In 2010, Fidesz won the election with two-thirds of the votes against the socialist government's unregulated failure. He has continued to overwhelm the opposition with an atmosphere of anti-immigration, exclusion of immigrants, and support for Hungarian minorities outside the border in Romania, Slovakia, Austria, and Serbian Vojvodina. Above all, he defends the conservative national interests of the region against liberal trends that tends to be associated with capital cities. This has enabled him to maintain an overwhelming parliamentary majority and concentrate his power.

The wider goal is to form a conservative political community group in the region and create a "workfare" system that supports the administration as the aggregate of workfare. It draws upon the UK's departure the EU, the local dissatisfied people who underpin the Trump administration, the elderly who fear welfare loss, and the

nationalists who are dissatisfied with the EU's liberal competition policy. Orbán spontaneously formed a conservative “workfare” community around the liberal capital, consolidating those dissatisfied groups to protect Hungarian interests. It has proved to be a successful method of populism.

Against the background of such a region of aggregate welfare system, against the liberalism of the EU, he insisted on the merits of an “illiberal Democracy”, based on the “popular support” dictatorship. He has succeeded in promoting a shift of the concentration of power to the government and has maintained and further strengthened a stable long-term dictatorship despite criticism both inside and outside of the European Union.<sup>21</sup>

### (3) “Illiberal Democracy” will Lead the World to Success”

“Illiberal Democracy” was a policy vision asserted by Orbán after the landslide victory in the general election, in a speech in a local city in 2014.

He said: “Successful nations are not necessarily liberal. There is also non-liberal democracy (in the world). Now the Stars of international politics and economics are Singapore, China, India, Turkey, and Russia.

It is time we are set free from the western dogma. We are thinking about how to organize the best societies that can compete and win in magnificent world races. We will not reject liberalism, but we will not make it the central idea of the state”. “There are nation states, liberal states, and welfare states (in the world). What comes next? Workfare states.”<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, so-called “Illiberal democracy”, democracy without liberalism, means to promote a concentration of power based on an organized and widespread “popular support” dissatisfied with modern global capitalism. Following the model of successful nations in the world, it is important to create social communities in each region, for example by forming Hungarian civic groups, workfare communities in each region, and thereby support the government”.<sup>23</sup>

As Orbán said, they need to move away from the dogma of neo-liberal globalization in Western Europe, which widens the gap and widens corruption, and looks down on Central East Europe and Southern Europe—an approach that had been followed by the rather liberal leadership of the Socialist Party. For Orbán learning from China, Russia and India necessitates a powerful state based on a “workfare” community, “democracy without liberalism” and the support of local people.

This is a way of thinking by theoretically taking populism one step further, that explored and examined the way of successful centralized countries in economics such as China, India and Singapore, after the decline of Western European powers.

It is a persuasive but dangerous thinking for pragmatism.

<sup>21</sup>Kallius et al. (2016), Buzogány (2017), Haba (2011).

<sup>22</sup>Full text of Viktor Orbán's speech at Băile Tușnad (Tusnádfürdő) of 26 July 2014, July 29, 2014 -by Csaba Tóth, Budapest Beacon, October 13, 2013- April 13,2018. <https://budapestbeacon.com/full-text-of-viktor-orbans-speech-at-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo-of-26-july-2014/>

<sup>23</sup>*op. cit.* And see Zakaria (1997).

It cannot be overlooked that in the background there was the regional disparity that the EU and Western Europe had taken over the 30 years as neo-liberal competitive policy after the Cold War, and the political and economic inhospitality to Central East Europe. Also, the historically respected UK has left the EU, but it does not appear to be successful either.

The situation must not be overlooked that there was a political and economic snub to Central East Europe from Western Europe. In order to maintain competitiveness against Asia (cheap products, cheap wages), Western Europe considered Central East Europe as a hinterland allowing EU of different speeds and dimensions, which is symbolized by the so-called “two-speed, two-dimensional Europe”.

Central East European skepticism originated from the EU regional integration as part of Western European neo-liberal competition policy. But unlike the UK Brexit, they attempt to act to stay in the EU and avoid the collapse of the nation state, while implementing a strategy of self(country)-defense.

Orbán—Fidesz Civil Alliance has supporters in the outside, Jobbik (better people = extreme right. In Hungarian language, “right” and “good” are synonyms), seated in the Parliament since 2010. Both raise immigrant exclusion, anti-Semitism, and Hungarian nationalism. By the double outer-moat with autonomous organization of local conservatives (workfare) and with the extreme right-wing, they exclude other political parties and have maintained strong power successfully from 2010 to 2020, although they are not “liberal,” but “majority democracy” supported by local self-workfare organizations.

#### (4) The Balanced Policy in Poland between Law and Justice (PiS) Government and Tusk

In Poland, Jaroslav Kaczynski and PiS (Law and Justice) took power in 2005–2007 and 2015–2020.

PiS is a traditional Catholic right-wing party, founded in 2001 from political forces that had ties to the original Solidarity movement. Then PiS became the first party in 2005, when the Kaczyński twins became the prime minister, (Jarosław Aleksander Kaczyński, elder brother), and president (Lev Kaczyński, younger brother). However, President Lev Kaczyński and cabinet ministers died in a crash of the presidential airplane near the forest of Smolensk suburb, close to the Russian border, on the way to lead official mourning ceremony in the Katyn forest.<sup>24</sup> The “Katyn Forest Incident” concerned the murder of thousands of Polish cavalry officers by the Soviet KGV in 1940. It has left an unbelievably high level of distrust and a wound that could not heal between the Polish people and Russia.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>On April 10, 2010, the military aircraft (T-154) crashed as an accident in Katyn Forest, carrying the members of Parliament, including the Polish President and his wife, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, attempting to commemorate the genocide in the Katyn Forest. <https://www.afpbb.com/articles/-/2717331>.

<sup>25</sup>Katyn Forest genocide: 22,000 officers, police officers, and clergy were shot dead in the Katyn Forest on the outskirts of Smolensk, in the event of the disappearance of 250,000 officers, prisoners, and civilians taken by the Soviet army in 1940. It was only decades later in 1990 that the Soviet

Unlike Hungary, Poland has a strong sense of mission as a “western fort that protects Catholicism” because it is a West Slavic nation that has historically accepted Catholicism and has a historically anti-Russian/anti-Soviet ethnic identity. There was a strong solidarity in Poland with England. Therefore, in modern history, relations with England were a strong memory for a long time. However, since joining the EU, there is a strong sentiment among the people that EU policies are damaging their own national interests.

PiS has policies which are common to other Central East European countries, such as immigrant expulsion, anti-Semitism, Polish Catholicism, as well as continuing free medical fees which was the strategy of the socialist era.

When it comes to certain cultural values, however, PiS takes a different line from other liberal countries; it had approved a ban on abortion, and prohibition of same sex marriage. However, the bill that banned abortion in the House of Representatives in 2016 was rejected due to the spread of demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of people.<sup>26</sup>

Sanctions were approved against the PiS regime by the European Commission in 2017 under Article 7 of the EU Basic Treaty but those sanctions could not be enforced due to an inability to secure unanimity from the other member states. So, Kaczynski argued that “the EU was just hysterical and could not do anything useful”.

On the other hand, another prominent politician in Poland holding many opposing views to Kaczynski, Donald Tusk, represented a strong liberal/progressive strand in Polish politics. He was the leader of the opposition party, Civic Platform (PO), which is a moderate liberal party. Tusk was prime minister from 2007 to 2014 before assuming the role of the President of European Council for a 5-year mandate. His balanced approach to the Brexit negotiations was highly evaluated.

In that respect, Poland is different from Hungary’s one-party rule of the Fidesz Civil Alliance under Orbán. In Poland, we can witness the presence of parties promoting both a strong pro-EU and anti-EU stance.

Poland is a member of the Weimar Triangle (Germany, France, Poland, the three countries’ leaders and foreign ministers summit), which was founded in Weimar, Germany in 1991, and the largest population and territory in Central East Europe and is second only to Spain in the EU, furthermore, and has a strong army which participates in a voluntary coalition army with the USA. Therefore, Poland has a leadership role in the EU and Visegrád four countries.

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Union acknowledged that the massacre had been carried out by the NKVD. The tragedy of Polish history, which has also become a novel and movie titled “The Katyn Forest Incident”.

<sup>26</sup>[https://www.huffingtonpost.jp/2016/10/05/poland\\_n\\_12367796.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.jp/2016/10/05/poland_n_12367796.html).



## 5 Visegrád Countries Expansion of Power: The Transformation of European Power Relations

After Britain's withdrawal from the EU, European power relations are changing. In Japan, the German-Franco Union by Merkel and Macron has been attracting attention, however, there are many researchers who suggest the expansion of influence of future Visegrád countries.

The Visegrád countries first came together in Visegrád, Hungary in 1991. At the time, it was composed of three Central East European: Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. With the split of the latter into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993, the Visegrád grouping became four. The V4 as it now well known seeks to build regional cooperation relationships between the four and promote its regional voice within the EU.

The Visegrád countries cooperation originated with a historical symbolic meeting of three kings in Visegrád in 1335. The three kings were the king of Hungary, the king of Poland, and the king of Bohemia. They talked together to compete with the Habsburg Empire and build an alliance in the capital Visegrád at the time of the Hungarian Kingdom.<sup>27</sup>

The Visegrád countries meeting continues to be held since then, with the economic stability of the four countries, stable political and economic relations with each other and with Germany, opposition to EU bureaucracy, and in recent years expanding relations especially with China as their main priorities.

Because of the UK withdrawal from the EU, several researchers point out that the EU center of gravity might be moving from Western Europe to Central East Europe.<sup>28</sup>

In the future, due to the UK's withdrawal from the EU, Germany and moderate conservative parties in Central East Europe, and Orbán's "illiberal Democracy" might have influence in the future, especially if they are able to build relationships with powerful nations beyond the EU.

And it was China that noticed that.

## 6 China and Central East Europe—Post Brexit

On April 13, 2019, Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang held a summit meeting with 16 Central and Central East European countries in the Croatian Mediterranean resort of Dubrovnik.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Kumiko Haba "Central Europe four countries (the Visegrád countries) Alliance", *Nationalism Question of Integrating Europe*, Kodansha Gendaishinsho, 1999/2004, pp. 161–162, Chap. 7.

<sup>28</sup>Göllner (2017).

<sup>29</sup>Nihon Keizai Shimbun (2019).

China's policy toward Central East Europe has a great significance as an important base for the "One Belt One Road" Strategy, which is an infrastructure development plan based on the old Silk Road that goes halfway around the globe from Xi'an, China to Europe as 16 countries + 1. The 16 countries are Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. It has provided active economic and political support to small EU countries, such as infrastructure development, road and railway, investment, trade expansion, and strengthening of cooperation, using Chinese money and companies. From 2020, support for medical and epidemic measures will be also added after the corona pandemic.

On April 14, 2020, Li Keqiang of China, added Greece and it became 17 + 1. This grouping therefore includes not only former communist countries but also Southern Mediterranean countries and will expand to include Italy in the near future as well. This means almost two-thirds of the EU 27 Southeast European countries collaborate with China and start to develop an economic relationship.<sup>30</sup>

After the EU enlargement in 2004, and 2007, for 15 years, the EU has continued to accept the disparities in the new member countries and continue to give priorities to the vested interests of advanced EU countries, such as France, the UK, and Germany.

Central East Europe and southern European countries who are dissatisfied in the EU, and approach China for economic support show that pro-Chinese countries are spreading to Central East Europe and Greece—both countries inside and outside of the EU. This will strengthen after the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Russia is also injecting funds and aiding these countries with the aim of increasing its influence and dividing the EU by supporting populist parties and former Socialist countries.

The UK's long and protracted withdrawal from the EU, the division between Western Europe and Eastern Europe within the EU, the income gap and disparity between North and South, West and East Europe, and the disparity emanating from the presence a "two-speed, two-dimensional Europe" are all strengthening disgruntlement toward accepting guidance from Brussels. Under such a situation, Chinese influence will be strengthened across central eastern and southern Europe.

A Professor's words at St. Petersburg State University were symbolic. "China will continue to expand her territory without a war." "In St. Petersburg suburb, there were many dacha(villas) areas inhabited by Russians once, but it is becoming a Chinese area now." "Recently I visited one restaurant where I used to go, but it was already a "Chinese people Only" restaurant, and it is impossible for Russians to go in. Terrible and awful penetration!"<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Jiji.com (2019).

<sup>31</sup>A Professor's words at St. Petersburg State University in September 2019. In the beautiful St. Petersburg city, there are plenty of Chinese tourists and Chinese language, we can hear in streets, more than Russian nations. Many Russian citizens shared the anxieties of the previous Professor's words.

China's influence has panned out across the world, due to its domestic and overseas Chinese economic power, and the number of pro-Chinese cities are increasing within the EU especially in the internet cities network areas. According to NHK's special TV series, even in small cities in Germany where the Mayor thinks that they have fallen behind in high technology, they have begun to launch joint endeavors with Huawei-China. These internet cities network areas are widening to forms of internet lines, across the EU and all over the world.<sup>32</sup>

How and which countries could the EU collaborate with after the UK's withdrawal from the EU? Some local governments of the EU, or Central East and Southern East European countries are first cautiously but gradually more aggressively seeking solutions with Chinese economy, trade, investment, and high technology.

## 7 Conclusion: Post-Brexit and Post-Corona—Where is the World Heading?

Finally, this chapter wants to turn its attention to the transformation of the EU post-Brexit and post-Covid-19.

In December 2020, the coronavirus having emerged in Wuhan developed and rapidly spread to Europe, the USA, and the rest of the world within a few months.

By May 2020, 5 million people, in just five months, have been infected and more than 330 thousand people have died (as of May 20). The USA has 1.57 million people infected and 90,000 people dead. The following top places are occupied by Russia, Spain, Brazil, UK, Italy, France, Germany, and Turkey. In the top five European countries, 1.1 million people have been infected and 130,000 people dead. (As of May 20). The world changed drastically only in several months.

On the other hand, the low number of infections in Central East Europe, especially the low number of dead, deserves special mention. The death rate in the four advanced European countries is around 13%, which is much higher than the general coronavirus mortality rate (2–3%), whereas most of East European former socialist countries have around 4–6%, except Hungary. The mortality rate is less than half that of the developed countries in the EU, which is difficult to explain. The biggest problem is the medical collapse caused by the exponential increase in the number of infected people. Unfortunately, the most basic “joint support” system of the EU was not established in the early stages of the emergency, and each state tried to monopolize masks and medical devices, even Germany, in emergency. Such a lack of a joint support system caused the epidemic medical outbreak in Italy and Spain.

It is the same in the USA. The American epidemic and mass deaths are a total failure of the Trump regime, not China.

First, the USA, and then the UK, became the pinnacle of infection in the world in a noticeably short period of time from mid-March to mid-May. Of the 4.8 million

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<sup>32</sup>NHK Special (2020).

infected persons and 316,000 dead in the world, 55% of the total infected persons are in the USA and Europe's five major powers; 70% of the total dead are occupied by the USA and four countries in Europe (As of May 18). The USA and the UK account for 37% of the world's infected people and nearly 40% of the dead. Despite the economic and military might, or science and technology power of the two nations they find themselves at the apex of the corona crisis in terms of both infections and death rates. This is a completely abnormal situation that would have been unimaginable to contemplate just a short while ago.

Trump's "America First!" and Boris Johnson's "Britain First!" failed to defeat corona virus.

In South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan, there is a vast Chinese population, but they succeeded in stopping the spread of the infection and curtailing fatalities. It is a situation that needs specific attention and analysis.

The corona crisis has done a great deal of damage to the hegemony and prestige of the USA and Britain. Trump blames his own blunders to the virus on China and to the WHO, which he accuses of having taken China's side. In response he wishes to sanction and raise tariffs on trade with China and is also considering prohibiting certain parts sales to Huawei. But all these actions further undermine American leadership and trust.

The UK also, where Prime Minister Boris Johnson was infected, has found itself in the grip of the deadly virus. It now ranks as the worst case in Europe in terms of infections and deaths. And until June was the most in the world after the USA.

Traditionally, the UK was respected as having one of the highest medical standards and effective welfare states in the world. But now that reputation has been damaged. Furthermore, in developed EU countries, the evidence is pointing to the fact that fatality rates are disproportionately concentrated in "BAME" (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnicity) minorities. In the USA, it was said, that 70% of the dead are concentrated in Blacks and Hispanics. These facts also magnified the damage done to the prestige of the primary carriers of the western liberal model: the USA and the UK.

#### (1) How to Transform the World After Brexit and After Corona?

Seeing the turmoil of Brexit, many small EU countries have learned the disadvantages of leaving the EU's marketplace of 450 million consumers and instead have turned to "opposing the EU from within the EU".

As part of that strategy they have sought to develop their own values/vision that is different from that of the EU's standard liberal democracy.

At the forefront of this endeavor are the four Visegrád countries and from outside the EU China and Russia which see certain opportunities from strengthening relationships with such countries. Seeing the turmoil of Brexit, the EU small countries who go against the EU, tried to make a realistic choice: stay in the EU rather than withdrawal but simultaneously take a different path from the one promoted by the European Commission. That was Orbán's "Illiberal Democracy", Kaczyński and PiS Catholic Nationalism, and the basis for Visegrád collaboration.

The EU traditionally was driven by the narrative of Franco-German reconciliation and subsequent dominance, but this no longer fully reflects the various values of the EU's small countries, especially those from Eastern and Southern Europe.

The international and domestic environment of the EU has changed significantly due to the competition of liberal capitalism, the adverse effects of disparities, and the confusion of Brexit. The USA–UK free competition, widening disparities, elimination of immigrants, majority democracy and Britain first, American first nationalism, above all, undermined the trust and leadership of the USA and the UK.

Thus, European liberal democracy needs to be reconsidered from the small countries' perspective. The EU's value and facts are no longer a useful and effective "joint collaboration" policy including eastern and southern Europe. And through such gaps and disparity, China and Russia are effectively making in-roads with offers of economic and financial assistance to support public policy and medical and social equipment to help with the pandemic.

The danger that the universal values of liberalism are undermined by the UK's withdrawal from the EU and by the blame placed on China and the WHO by the Trump administration is greater than expected. Both actions are extremely nationalistic and reflect an attitude that has no remorse at collapsing multilateral endeavors.

The corona pandemic crisis exposed these egoistic behaviors of the top two Anglo-Saxon states in terms of medical care and infectious disease control.

Further analysis and examination will be needed on the 16 + 1, or 17 + 1 cooperation policy among China and eastern and southern Europe: economic, trade, investment, and infrastructure development, furthermore medical care, and social security policy. Those will be expanding in 2020 and after, in the post-Brexit and post-corona era.

What kind of answer can the EU give, to the issues arising in this era of destabilization not least when it comes to the challenge of "how can small countries, and weak countries and poor countries best survive?" in the post-Brexit, post-corona era?

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) policy, with the slogan, "nobody will be left behind" is one of the most important policies, even it is difficult to bring to fruition. Could "illiberal Democracy" promoting a "workfare" type community spread? Is it possible for small countries to emulate successful models implemented elsewhere?

The deadlock of Brexit in the UK, which was a model of representative democracy until the two world wars in the twentieth century, brought at the European Parliament, it caused the last unbearable terrible speech by Farage, Party leader of Brexit Party, based on the unwillingness of the European Union in January 2020.<sup>33</sup>

Trump and Pompeo in the USA also blamed nationalistically China and WHO; this is another event which led to the demise and of the international organization constructed after two world wars by Wilson and Roosevelt, presidents of the USA. But in the early twenty-first century, Trump's negligence of corona despite causing tragedy in the USA and causing a large number of black and Hispanic minority casualties, has not even tried to save their own people, and blames China and is trying to apply tariffs.

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<sup>33</sup>We will be never coming back to the EU (2020). Nigel Farage's final speech.

Under these situations, “illiberal Democracy” might have ample room to spread. Orbán’s stance of looking beyond what he sees as “Western dogma,” instead “searching for another way for nations to become globally competitive and successful” is extremely pragmatic and rational.

Although the “illiberal democracy” certainly has a plethora of problems producing disparity, competition and unemployment, but the dictatorship does not solve the problems of disparity and inequality.

It is a heavy and important agenda for small countries in Asia and Africa, which has always been put as latecomers to the development of the world’s global economy, therefore, they might get their own sovereignty and people’s voice by using their own democracy, in another style of Western countries.

In fact, Asian and African countries have, for that reason, passed the era when they were colonized for centuries and then fixed their economic colonization. They were trying to achieve independent development. But how?

Until 2016, the USA and the UK was the model of modernization, liberal democracy, and parliamentarism. But ironically, Britain’s withdrawal from the EU and the Trump government and the consequences that followed, made people feel disillusioned by losing their trust in both countries, the UK and the USA.

How though might the small countries in Central East and South Europe, members and non-members of the EU solve the problems that they face? One model is the “illiberal democracy” in transition, the other is sub-regional cooperation as the Visegrád countries, and cooperation with China, Russia, India, and/or Turkey. But it is not the last solution.

It is necessary for us to pay attention to and analyze how the EU, Britain, and the USA could overcome conflicts, disparities, the Coronavirus plague, and how they could reconstruct the economic, political, and social structures, confronting populism and nationalism. We need to analyze Asian situation comparatively, where economic development is steadily progressing and so far, we could manage coronavirus plague better than Europe and the USA.

It is necessary to investigate objectively the future growth of the Regional Framework not only in Europe but also in Asia, ASEAN-type governance or RCEP and TPP regional development. Europe also could learn from Asia.

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