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Article

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EMPIRICAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WESTERN EUROPE MANUFACTURING OUTPUTS WITH EASTERN EUROPE MANUFACTURING OUTPUTS, 2018-2024

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Abstract

The study is engaged in an empirical comparative analysis of Western Europe and Eastern Europe manufacturing outputs between 2018 and 2024. Both Western Europe and Eastern Europe regions have been actively participating in the manufacturing sector of the global economy; but at different pace. Western Europe is the second leading region after the Asia region of the world in this regard. Whereas, its eastern neighbour Eastern Europe, has been putting up fair performance by placing 6th on the world regional manufacturing outputs ladder. The Eastern European region has seriously underperformed compared with that of the Western European region. The study adopted descriptive research design with methods of data used for analysis were sourced from World Bank Open Data on Manufacturing, UNCTAD annual reports, academic journals, bulletins, textbooks, scholarly papers, and internet materials. The generated narrative data was analyzed through critical discourse method, while, empirical data generated from verifiable sources, was computed by the researcher and presented in tabular and graphical forms and analyzed through descriptive and explanatory methods, drawing inference where appropriate. The study has established that the Eastern European region with 4% of the world manufacturing outputs has seriously underperformed. By way of recommendation, Eastern European region should rely heavily on strategic local thinking and techniques to come up with unique products for exports.

Keywords: Comparative Analysis, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Manufacturing outputs.

JEL Classification: N10, N20, N60, O1, O19, O47, O57, P0, P16, P33.

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Introduction

Industrialization has brought about general economic development of the northern hemisphere. Industrial manufacturing for most part of the 19th and 20th Centuries generated enormous wealth for them. during the industrial revolution up to the point when the 'China-shock' set in. Though Eastern European countries which include Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Maldoval and the Czech Republic have been into the manufacturing business since their political independence, yet they could hardly meet their domestic consumption needs, talk less of massive exports. The poor performance of the Eastern Europe region in this regard, has been wrongly attributed to the bitter rivalry that once existed between the West and the East during the cold war era. It was wrongly held that the Western Europe region (France, Germany, UK, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Monaco) in strong collaboration with its traditional ally, the North American region (more specifically the US) adopted deliberate policies and measures to stifle and stagnate the industrial and manufacturing growth of Eastern Europe during the ugly cold war period. It resulted into a stunted manufacturing growth for Eastern Europe up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. With the global disparaging economic campaigns against Eastern Europe by the West during the cold war era, it resulted into dwindling and very limited global market spaces manufactured products from for Eastern European; such that even long time after the end of the cold war; Eastern European products, goods and services have little breeding spaces in markets around the world. The ascendancy of Western manufactured products in the global market up to the point of the 'China-Shock' (with low prices of Chinese products that are affordable to Eastern European citizens). During the cold period, Western Europe and North America dominated the world manufacturing sector with their expensive products fostered on the global community. It made the United States (US) to also dominate global political and economic affairs up to the end of the 20th Century. However, what will Eastern Europe say about the current global manufacturing leadership of China, which was once colonized by Japan? It is all about purposeful political leadership that have their countries and citizens at heart; and desirous of real national growth and development (Harb & Basil, 2023; Krusse, et-al, 2023; Wolde, 2022; Katina, 2024).

The problem of Eastern Europe so far is not that of resource wherewithal, but that of lack of political-will from their leaders to succeed in the nascent global manufacturing vogue. Where there is the political-will, the economic-will, certainly will be there to harness and direct all resources to the manufacturing production process that will generate enormous production activities with the accompanying employment generation and wealth creation for the Eastern European populace. As long as the Eastern Europe region fails to adopt the manufacturing vogue, it will continue to be among the wobbling manufacturing outputs performers of the world. Eastern Europe must learn to do it either the 'China way' or the 'Asian way' (Felipe, 2018; Xu & Pal, 2022; Diodato, et-al, 2022; Chaponniere & Lautier, 2020; Shameem, & Jayaprasad, 2020; Rocha, 2018; Liu et-al, 2020; Iqbal, 2022; Joshi, 2021).

Literature Review and Theories

The manufacturing theory and comparative advantage theory have been adopted and utilized as frameworks for the study as outlined and treated below:

- i. **Manufacturing Theory:** Manufacturing Theory is the study of how businesses make use of resources to process and eventually produce goods or services for sale. It is a branch of economics that explains how businesses decide what to do with resources of raw

materials and labour at its disposal to efficiently produce goods or services with comparative competitive advantage over other businesses or trading partners. In international economic relations, manufacturing and international trade theory refers to the economic concepts that explains why countries specialize in producing certain goods based on their available resources and comparative advantage over other entities, that attracts greater benefits to them. The theory identifies three factors that are very essential to the transformation of raw materials into finished goods and services; which include - resources, capital and labour. Though this study concurs with this position; but would like to add that the fourth important factor in manufacturing - is a very disciplined (clean) politico-economic condition. With a very disciplined government presiding over a very disciplined citizenry, there will be no wastages; where all efforts and resources will be judiciously directed at the qualitative and quantitative production of goods and services in which the country or region has comparative competitive advantage in the international market (Alting, 1978; Gandolfo, 1986; Daniel & Brown, 2004; Zhao, et-al, 2006; Zhang & Sharifi, 2007; Watson, 2017; Murdock, 2020; Katina, 2024).

Comparative Advantage Theory

The Comparative Advantage Theory (CAT), is the second theory adopted as framework for the study. Comparative advantage relates to how much productive and cost-efficient a country is over another country in the harnessing of vital resources in the production of finished goods and services. Furthermore, the theory of comparative advantage which is generally known as Heckster-Ohlin theory, is a classical country-based theory which states that countries will gain comparative advantage if they produce and export goods that requires resources or factors that they have in great supply; and cheaper production factors. The differences in factor abundance and the factor intensity of goods must be in favour of the country that possessed them. The CAT states that countries can benefit from international trade by specializing in producing goods where they have a lower opportunity cost compared to other countries. In another word, it is the ability of a country to produce a particular good or some goods or services at lower opportunity cost than its trading partners. Furthermore, comparative advantage also describes the economic reality of the gains from trade for individuals, firms, or nations; which arise from differences in their endowments or technological progress. The theory emphasizes that countries with advantage in factor abundance and the factor intensity of goods, often attains absolute advantage where they become more productive, and cost-efficient than other countries (Alting, 1978; Rodrik, 2013; Szirmai & Verspagen, 2015; Rocha, 2018; Liu et-al, 2020; Wolde, 2022; Xu & Pal, 2022; Krusse, et-al, 2023; Busse, et-al, 2024).

Methodology

The study adopted secondary data analysis method. The document scrutinized include: UNCTAD Statistical Data, World Bank Group Open Data and BRICS-JSP. Other documents scrutinized include published materials such as textbooks, academic journals, scholarly papers, and internet materials. The generated narrative data was analyzed through critical discourse method. While, empirical data generated from verifiable secondary sources were computed by the researcher and presented in tabular and graphical forms; and analyzed through descriptive and explanatory methods drawing inference where appropriate.

Results and Discussion

Results from data generated mainly from secondary sources through document studies on manufacturing outputs of the two regions, viz: Eastern and Western Europe are hereby presented in tabular forms and in figures; and analyzed through critical discourse method, descriptive and explanatory methods.

Manufacturing Outputs of the Western Europe Region, 2018-2025

In the face of dwindling manufacturing production, Western Europe, is placed second on the world regional manufacturing outputs table, where it recorded \$16,880,381,849,062tr, which represents 16% of the World total cumulative manufacturing outputs, which stands at \$106,856,626,720,000tr for the period of the study. Germany leads the region with \$5,363,785,805,039tr, representing 5% of the World total cumulative manufacturing outputs; but represents 32% of the region’s total cumulative of \$16,880,381,849,062tr for the period of the study. France is placed second with \$2,115,014,705,196tr which represents 13% of the region’s total cumulative; but representing 2% of the World total cumulative. Italy is placed 3rd with \$1,879,487,236,743tr representing 11% of the region’s total cumulative; but represents 2% of the World total cumulative. Whereas, UK is fourth with \$1,782,527,057,204tr which represents 11% of the region’s total cumulative; but represents 2% of the World total cumulative. Ireland is in the fifth position with \$1,182,420,374,452tr representing 7% of the region’s total cumulative; but represents 1% of the World total. Spain is placed sixth with \$1,098,964,945,135tr representing 7% of the region’s total cumulative; but represents 1% of the World total cumulative. The rest of the Western European countries scored below 1% of the World total cumulative manufacturing production for the period of the study; indicating a very disturbing serious decline of the region in this regard (Jehle & Renny, 2011; Chaponniere & Lautier, 2020; Liu, et-al, 2020; Joshi, 2021; Harb & Basil, 2023; Katina, 2024). This is as presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Manufacturing Outputs of the Western European Region, 2018 - 2024 (\$tr)

SN	Country	Cumulative	ICAA	WECAA	WEACCA
1	Germany	5,363,785,805,039	383,127,557,502.8	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
2	France	2,115,014,705,196	151,072,478,942.6	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
3	Italy	1,879,487,236,743	134,249,088,338.8	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
4	UK	1,782,527,057,204	127,323,361,228.9	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
5	Ireland	1,182,420,374,452	84,458,598,175.1	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
6	Spain	1,098,964,945,135	78,497,496,081.1	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
7	Netherlands	749,580,628,456	53,541,473,461.1	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
8	Sweden	523,506,062,000	37,393,290,142.9	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
9	Austria	522,257,384,976	37,304,098,926.9	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
10	Belgium	486,036,724,340	34,716,908,881.4	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
11	Denmark	323,964,397,548	23,140,314,110.6	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
12	Finland	291,619,031,302	20,829,930,807.3	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
13	Hungary	206,255,347,419	14,732,524,815.6	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
14	Portugal	185,253,603,277	13,232,400,234.1	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
15	Greece	126,540,769,993	9,038,626,428.1	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
16	Luxembourg	24,615,711,475	1,758,265,105.4	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
17	Cyprus	10,255,627,356	732,544,811.1	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
18	Malta	8,296,437,151	592,602,653.6	1,205,741,560,647.4	937,798,991,614.6
	Total	16,880,381,849,062	1,205,741,560,647.4	8,440,190,924,531.8	16,880,381,849,062

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adopted from UNCTAD, 2023; World Bank Group, 2025

Manufacturing Outputs of the Eastern European Region, 2018 and 2025 (\$tr)

Right from the period of the cold war up to date (2026), the performance of the Eastern European region in terms of manufacturing outputs is on the declining mode. For the period covered by the study, Eastern Europe with a total cumulative of \$3,851,301,464,270tr, which represents 4% of the world total for the period of the study. This is in spite of the presence of Russia in that region with total cumulative of \$1,444,018,570,988tr representing 37% of the regional total; but just 1% of the world total which stands at \$106,856,626,720,000tr. The Eastern Europe total cumulative manufacturing annual average stands at \$550,185,923,467.1tr; with a country cumulative average of \$160,470,894,344.6tr. If this downward trend in Eastern European manufacturing outputs is not reversed urgently, the region will fall into the club of large consumers of Asian manufactured products, goods and services. The implication of this is so dire for the region in terms of job-losses (employment). Income per capita fall for citizens and the general retardation of economic growth and general development for their individual countries. In addition, with the fast -shrinking population of this region, the absence of manufacturing will be strategically injurious to their national securities (Kotresh, & Patil, 2015; Joshi, 2021). Their performances are as presented in Table 2 & 3, and Figure 1:

Table 2: Manufacturing Outputs of the Eastern European Region, 2018-2024 (\$tr)

SN	Countries	Cumulative	EECA	EECA	WCAA
1.	Russia	1,444,018,570,988	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
2.	Poland	780,863,396,348	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
3.	Czech Repub.	409,105,407,173	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
4.	Romania	193,049,080,279	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
5.	Kazakhstan	182,559,327,191	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
6.	Slovakia	157,106,648,985	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
7.	Ukraine	110,080,821,166	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
8.	Belarus	108,344,852,355	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
9.	Uzbekistan	88,784,007,194	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
10.	Slovenia	82,117,435,069	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
11.	Lithuania	73,007,453,323	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
12.	Serbia	56,121,868,901	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
13.	Latvia	34,537,800,860	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
14.	Estonia	31,615,307,896	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
15.	Azerbaijan	22,080,929,167	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
16.	Georgia	13,983,151,320	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
17.	Armenia	12,962,995,115	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
18.	N/Macedonia	10,430,837,482	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
19.	Moldova	8,762,899,661	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
20.	Kyrgyz Repub.	8,750,806,009	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
21.	Kosovo	8,065,965,788	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
22.	Albania	7,626,734,680	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
23.	Tajikistan	5,953,794,087	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
24.	Montenegro	1,371,373,233	550,185,923,467.1	160,470,894,344.6	15,265,232,399,571.4
	Eastern Europe	3,851,301,464,270			106,856,626,720,000
	World Total	106,856,626,720,000	4,645,946,292,173.9	7,632,616,194,285.7	106,856,626,720,000

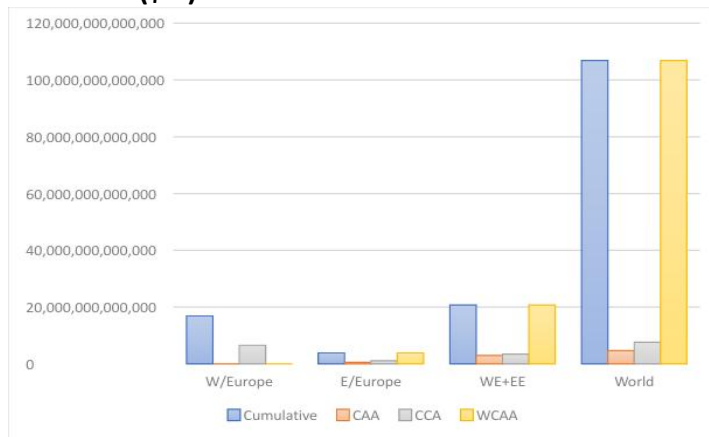
Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Open Data, 2025

Table 3: Summary of Manufacturing Outputs of Western and Eastern European Regions, 2018 and 2025 (\$tr)

	Countries	Cumulative	CAA	CCA	WCAA
	W/Europe	16,880,381,849,062	8,440,190,924,531.8	6,564,592,941,301.92	16,880,381,849,062
	E/Europe	3,851,301,464,270	3,851,301,464,269.7	1,123,296,260,412.1	3,851,301,464,270
	WE+EE	20,731,683,313,332	2,961,669,044,761.7	3,455,280,552,222.0	20,731,683,313,332
	World Total	106,856,626,720,000	4,645,946,292,173.9	7,632,616,194,285.7	106,856,626,720,000

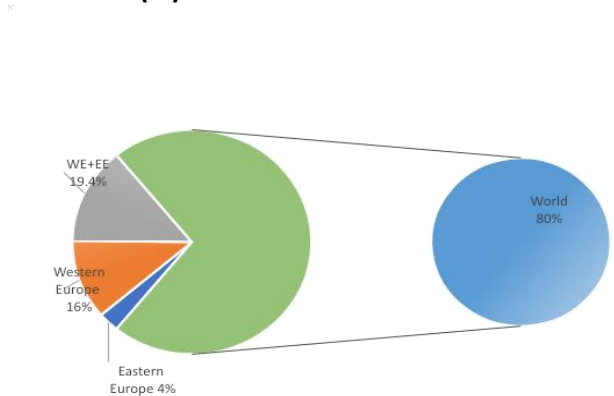
Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Open Data, 2025

Fig 1: Summary of Manufacturing Outputs of Western and Eastern European Regions, 2018 and 2025 (\$tr)



Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Open Data, 2025

Fig 2: Summary of Manufacturing Outputs of Western and Eastern European Regions, 2018 and 2025 (%)



Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from UNCTAD, 2025; World Bank Open Data, 2025

Summary of Major Findings, Conclusion / Recommendations

Summary of major findings, conclusion and recommendations derived mainly from the analysis are hereby presented:

Major Findings

From the analysis so far, the following major findings have been sieved:

- i. The study has established that Western Europe with manufacturing outputs of \$16,880,381,849,062tr, has overwhelmingly outperformed the Eastern Europe region (\$3,851,301,464,270tr) by 438.3%.
- ii. The study has also established that six out of eighteen Western Europe countries of Germany, France, Italy, UK, Ireland, and Spain scored above 1% of the world total; while only Russia scored 1% of the world total out of twenty-four Eastern European countries that featured on the world manufacturing outputs table.
- iii. The study has also established that, Germany which is the Western European region leader (with \$5,363,785,805,039tr), has outperformed Russia the Eastern Europe region leader (with \$1,444,018,570,988tr) by 371.45%.

- iv. The study equally established that Germany (with \$5,363,785,805,039tr) as a single Western European country, has outperformed the entire Eastern European region (with \$3,851,301,464,270tr) by 139.27%.

Conclusion/Recommendations

From the analysis so far, conclusion can be drawn that Western Europe with cumulative total manufacturing outputs of \$16,880,381,849,062tr, which represents 16% of the world total, has comparatively and overwhelmingly outperformed the Eastern Europe region (\$3,851,301,464,270tr, which represents 4% of the world total manufacturing outputs) by 438.3%. By way of recommendation therefore, Eastern European region should in all honesty seek first visionary leaders who have their countries and region at heart; who should adopt local strategic thinking and coming up with independent innovations of producing local unique products, goods and services with comparative competitive advantage in the global market. Furthermore, their political leaders should embark on the harnessing of their individual countries' abundant natural endowments such as human, land, marine, and minerals to launch-out on aggressive manufacturing, which is now a global vogue and a vital economic instrument for attaining economic and political relevance in the world.

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