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Nationalitaetenrecht: The South Slav Policies of the Habsburg Monarchy

Sean Krummerich

University of South Florida, saladin20@yahoo.com

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Nationalitätenrecht: The South Slav Policies of the
Habsburg Monarchy

by

Sean Krummerich

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of History
College of Arts & Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor, Graydon A. Tunstall, Ph.D.
Kees Botterbloem, Ph.D.
Giovanna Benadusi, Ph.D.

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Dedication

For all that they have done to inspire me to new heights, I dedicate this work to my wife Amanda, and my son, John Michael.

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This study would not have been possible without the guidance and support of a number of people. My thanks go to Graydon Tunstall and Kees Boterbloem, for their assistance in locating sources, and for their helpful feedback which served to strengthen this paper immensely. Additional thanks go to Giovanna Benadusi, for reviewing this work and providing feedback. I would also like to thank Leo Nicoll, S.J., and Bernard Cook of Loyola University New Orleans, who many years ago inspired a keen interest in the history and politics of the Habsburg Monarchy and its successor states, particularly with regard to the Balkans.

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Abstract

The national development of the ethnic groups of the Habsburg Monarchy were influenced by the policies undertaken toward them by their rulers, the Austrian Germans and, after 1867, the Magyars of Hungary. Contrasts can be identified between those groups living in the Austrian part of the Monarchy and those living in the Kingdom of Hungary, a trend that can be identified in the Monarchy's South Slav populations (Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes), as this population inhabited territories on both sides of the dualist border. The present study examines the differences in the nationality policies toward the South Slavs on the part of the governments of Cisleithanian Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary during the decades prior to the First World War. The concluding section examines how these nationality policies influenced the post-1914 development of the South Slav groups.

Introduction

When surveying the conflicts in the Balkan peninsula over the course of the twentieth century, up to and including the bloody aftermath of the collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, it is tempting to look for a single cause or point in history responsible for these outcomes. While many of the conflicts among the South Slav peoples (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes) long predated the nineteenth century, at least some of the conflicts had their genesis in policies undertaken toward them by the Habsburg Monarchy, of which the majority of the South Slav territory was a part prior to 1918. Complicating matters is the fact that these territories were divided between the jurisdictions of Austria and Hungary. What were the differences in the nationality policy toward the South Slavs (i.e., the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) in each half of the Dual Monarchy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (in the decades immediately prior to the First World War)? What effect did they have on the South Slav population of the Monarchy? What impact did these policies have on developments in the Balkan Peninsula in the decades since 1918? The present study intends to examine the history of the Habsburg Monarchy in an attempt to trace some of the origins of conflict within the former Yugoslavia since the end of the First World War. Since the conflicts between Croats and Serbs, Slovenes and Serbs, Serbs and Bosnian Muslims, among others, were expressed in ethnic terms, I will explore the relationship between the Southern Slavic ethnicities and

the impact of Austrian and Hungarian policies on the evolving ethnic identity of the various populations inhabiting the South Slav region who were once ruled by the Habsburgs.

Of the three European multinational empires (the Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian; i.e., states that lacked an overwhelming majority population of one nationality), it is the post-1867 Habsburg empire (also commonly referred to as Austria-Hungary and the Dual Monarchy) that presents some unique challenges for historians attempting to decipher political conditions in its subject territories. With the *Ausgleich* of 1867, the state was essentially split in two: the Kingdom of Hungary (the lands of the Crown of St. Stephen) gained autonomy over its internal affairs under the control of a Magyar-dominated Budapest government, while the rest of the Austrian state (also known as Cisleithanian Austria)¹ continued to be ruled from Vienna. This division meant, in many cases, different approaches to the problem of how to deal with the other nationalities of the empire, which were marginalized and denied an equal role in government at both the local and national level.

This distinction between Austrian and Hungarian government becomes apparent when examining the status of the South Slav lands of the monarchy (territories encompassed by the modern day states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and parts of Serbia). The dividing line between the Vienna and Budapest governments ran directly through this area; significant Serbian and Croatian populations existed on both

1 The internal boundary between the Austrian and Hungarian jurisdictions largely followed the Leitha River. For this reason, historians have taken to referring to post-1867 Austria as “Cisleithanian Austria,” over its formal title “the kingdoms and lands represented in the *Reichsrat*.” The complementary name, “Transleithania,” is much less often used to refer to post-1867 Hungary.

sides of the internal border. Faced with similar challenges (especially as the Yugoslav movement gained steam at the end of the nineteenth century) the Austrian and Hungarian governments at times gave different responses to the nationality problem.

Background

Before exploring in detail Austrian and Hungarian nationality policies, it will be helpful to provide a brief overview of the complicated historico-political situation of the South Slavs in the years following the 1867 *Ausgleich*.

Of the three ethnic groups, the Slovenes were the only ones whose population resided primarily in the Austrian half of the monarchy (however, according to some reports the Kingdom of Hungary at the time of the *Ausgleich* in 1867 had a Slovene population of as much as 45,000).² They constituted a majority of the population in the province of Carniola, and made up a significant portion of the population of the territories that were southern Styria and Carinthia prior to 1918 (even today, there is a small Slovene minority remaining in the southernmost part of the modern day Austrian republic). Slovene nationalists in this province were engaged in a constant struggle for equality against the dominant German population.

The largest concentration of Serbian population in the monarchy was the province of Vojvodina in southern Hungary, although significant numbers of Serbs resided in Croatia and Dalmatia as well. Many Serbs in this area worked with the Croats to obtain greater autonomy in the form of a separate South Slav state within the monarchy; others

² Fran Zwitter, "The Slovenes and the Habsburg Monarchy," *Austrian History Yearbook* (Vol. 3, Part 2, 1967), 159-188: 159.

sought union with the neighboring state of Serbia (a trend that intensified dramatically in the years leading up to the First World War).

The situation of the Croats of the Habsburg monarchy represents what is perhaps the best example of the issues at hand, as the Croatian people had two main centers in which they made up a large part of the population. On the one hand, they constituted a majority of the population of the Kingdom of Croatia, the provinces of Croatia and Slavonia, which was part of the Hungarian crownlands. On the other, Croats claimed the province of Dalmatia, which was part of Cisleithanian Austria, and continually demanded its union with the rest of Croatia.

There was, also, a fourth ethnic group residing in this region – the Muslim South Slavs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a legacy of the centuries of Ottoman rule. These were descendants of medieval adherents of the Bogumil sect, regarded as heretical by both Rome and Byzantium; at the time of the Turkish conquest the population promptly converted to Islam.³ This group, however, unlike the others, remains largely in the background for most of this period, and many of its members identified with the Serbs or the Croats. It would not be until the last decade before the war that Bosnian Muslims began to actively assert their own national consciousness, in part for reasons to be examined later in this study.

The issue of language was not be a delineating factor, as by the end of the nineteenth century, Serbs and Croats spoke what was essentially the same language.⁴

3 Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), p. 323.

4 In the early nineteenth century, Croatian authors gravitated toward the *štovakian* dialect, common to both Serbs and Croats, over the more uniquely Croatian *kajkavian* dialect. By the end of the century, the only major linguistic difference between Croat and Serb would be the use of Latin characters over

Only the Slovenes used their own distinct language, although one that was related to Serbo-Croatian. Religion instead to a strong degree came to be associated with ethnic identification in this area, as it still is today. The Slovenes were Roman Catholic, as were the Croats. Serbs generally adhered to Eastern Orthodoxy, although there were Catholic South Slavs who identified themselves as Serbs.⁵

Relations between the Croats and Serbs alternated between conflict and cooperation for the entire period under review. Staunch nationalists on both sides would take turns denying the existence of the other as a separate nationality. Serbian nationalists referred to Croats as “Catholic Serbs”; Croats countered with the charge that Serbs were merely “Orthodox Croats.” Some Croats extended this claim to supremacy even further, designating the Slovenes as “Mountain Croats.”⁶

What was the political status of the lands in which these peoples lived? Some of these provinces were directly incorporated into the administrative structure of their respective states (Austria or Hungary), while others had some form, however limited, of autonomous rule.

An example of the former is the Slovene-inhabited provinces of Carniola, Styria and Carinthia. These lands had been part of the Habsburg inheritance for centuries, and had always been ruled in the same manner as the other territories under Vienna's administration. Along with this had come German dominance of provincial and local

Cyrillic ones. For a review of Croatian language development and its implications, see Bogdan Krizman, “The Croats in the Habsburg Monarchy in the Nineteenth Century,” *Austrian History Yearbook* (Vol. 3, Part 2, 1967) 116-158: 118-120.

5 Ivo Banac, “The Confessional 'Rule' and the Dubrovnik Exception: The Origins of the 'Serb Catholic' Circle in Nineteenth Century Dalmatia,” *Slavic Review* (Vol. 42, No. 3, Autumn 1983) 447-474: 448.

6 Zwitter, p. 178.

government. Much the same could also be said for the province of Istria, which had also long been an Austrian crownland (including the port city of Trieste), with a large Slovene population, and significant numbers of Croats and Italians as well.

Similar conditions existed in the Vojvodina, which was fully incorporated into the Kingdom of Hungary, and ruled directly from Budapest. The province had enjoyed a brief period of autonomy from the Hungarian crown in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions; however, the Vojvodina was returned to Budapest's control as the Habsburgs during the 1860s moved away from attempts to centralize administration from Vienna at the expense of the Magyars. As such, for the post-*Ausgleich* period, the Vojvodina was subject to the full force of the magyarizing policies enacted by the Hungarian government, as will be discussed.

The lands of Croatia and Slavonia, collectively known as the Kingdom of Croatia or the “Triune Kingdom,” (Croatia, Slavonia & Dalmatia – the last being claimed as part of the kingdom despite being under a different jurisdiction) had been joined to the Hungarian crown since the twelfth century. In 1868, the Croatian state had won, at least nominally, significant autonomous rights from the central government in Budapest, enshrined in their own *Ausgleich*, the *Nagodba*. In practice, however, many of these rights were sharply curtailed, as we will soon examine.

The province of Dalmatia had been annexed by the Habsburg Monarchy following the Napoleonic Wars. Prior to this, the area had been ruled by Venice for several centuries, with the exception of the city of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), which had been an independent republic. The years of Venetian rule had left the province with a

significant Italian minority among the South Slav majority; the interplay between these two groups proved to be a factor in the nationality policy adopted toward this region, as we will see.

The provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina have had a tumultuous history since 1878, the year in which the Congress of Berlin assigned them to Austria-Hungary to administer (although they for a time remained nominally under Ottoman suzerainty). The area was administered neither by the Austrian part of the monarchy nor the Hungarian government, but rather was governed separately as the responsibility of the state's joint Ministry of Finance. In the aftermath of the Young Turk revolt of 1908, the Habsburg monarchy determined to formally annex the territory, setting off what to many observers would be the chain reaction leading to the assassination in Sarajevo in 1914, and thus the World War.

In his comprehensive study of the nationality problem in the Habsburg monarchy, *The Multinational Empire*, Robert A. Kann divided his treatment of the nationality groups into those with an “independent national history” and those without; many other scholars have followed his example. It is noteworthy that Professor Kann assigned the Croats to the former group, while the Slovenes and Serbs were placed in the latter.⁷ However, this designation can be somewhat misleading. It is true that Croatia had been an independent state prior to its union with Hungary, and at times Croatian nationalists pressed for its continued independence and the interpretation that its tie to Budapest was merely a personal union of crowns. Likewise, it is true that there had never been an independent

⁷ Robert Kann, *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848-1918*, 2 vols. (New York: Octagon Books 1964), v. 1, p. 44.

Slovene state in the modern sense of the term (although the Slovenes did live within defined historico-political entities, including a territory in which they constituted a majority of the population – the Duchy of Carniola). However, the designation of the Serbs as being without an independent history is definitely misleading, as there was the history of a medieval Serbian state, as well as the developing contemporary Serbian one; the only difference was that the Serbs did not have a history of independent development on territory within the Monarchy.⁸

A final word regarding classification. In speaking of national movements, there is often the temptation to generalize, as if all members of a group were seeking the same goal: e.g., “the Croats pressed for independence.” In reality, during this period, the seeking of nationality rights, particularly among the South Slavs, was limited virtually entirely to the *intelligentsia*, the educated class (to be sure, it was these individuals who ultimately set the agenda, and whose narrative is remembered by history). The vast majority of the population was unconcerned with these issues, and did not particularly care who ruled them. Indeed, even to the end of the empire, many remained at least passively loyal to the dynasty (*Kaisertreue*).⁹ Therefore, I will attempt as far as possible to make the distinction between South Slav nationalists and the South Slav population at large.

8 Ibid, p. 46. For Kann's purposes, the brief period of Habsburg control of the Pashalik of Belgrade during the early 18th century does not count.

9 Philip Longworth, *The Making of Eastern Europe* (London: Macmillan Press 1992), p. 121.

Political Conditions in Austria and Hungary

Now I will examine in detail the opportunities and obstacles faced by the South Slavs in both parts of the Dual Monarchy. It has been said by one observer that in the years following the *Ausgleich*, relations between the nationalities in the Austrian half became considerably more balanced, in that the Cisleithanian nationalities had a greater degree of autonomous rights, relative to those experienced in Hungary.¹⁰ This supposition has been widely believed, not only by modern scholars but also by contemporary observers. For example, a 1915 memorandum from the German secretary of state to the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister lamented that Austrian Germans had lost predominance of their half of the Monarchy, and the other nationalities had gained greater power; the German government then demanded as a condition of continuing the alliance that Austria halt its “progressive slavization” in a manner similar to what its Magyar partners had done.¹¹ Cisleithanian Austria has gained a reputation for having a more liberal nationality policy than Hungary; however, upon closer examination, there is more to this story.

10 László Katus, *Hungary in the Dual Monarchy, 1867-1914*, Trans. by Paul Bódy and Andrew T. Gane (New York: Columbia University Press 2008), p. 434.

11 Stephan Verosta, “The German Concept of *Mitteleuropa*, 1916-1918 and its Contemporary Critics,” in *The Habsburg Empire in World War I: Essays on the Intellectual, Military, Political and Economic Aspects of the Habsburg War Effort*, ed. by Robert A. Kann, et. al., (New York: Columbia University Press 1977), pp. 203-220, p. 210.

In Cisleithanian Austria, there was no blanket attempt made to address the legal status of all the non-German nationalities; this was generally done on a province-by-province basis. In Hungary, such a comprehensive attempt was made: the Nationalities Law of 1868 demarcated rights for all of the non-Magyar nationalities of the kingdom, including the right to use their native languages in community, county and church assemblies. However, Magyar was still to be the administrative language of county and city government, and the law did not recognize any collective national existence for any group other than the Magyars. Although the law had considerable flaws, it has been judged by some historians to be progressive legislation for the time.¹²

One of the clear indicators of attitudes in Vienna and Budapest toward the nationalities was the policies enacted regarding the use of language in their respective lands. Language policies also had the most practical impact on the lives of their citizens, as they impacted even those individuals who may have considered themselves outside of the political process (i.e., a considerable majority of the population of the Monarchy). In addition, language was the primary criterion used in the Monarchy's censuses to classify nationality. In Cisleithanian Austria, the specific category used for the census was the *Umgangssprache*, the language in daily use; in Hungary it was the *Muttersprache*, the mother tongue.¹³

12 Katus, p. 102. Katus' work provides an excellent brief survey of the 1868 law. To be sure, most of the historians giving positive appraisals of the Nationalities Law are Magyar, although the concurring opinion of American historian Arthur J. May is cited alongside their own, as Katus does.

13 Z.A.B. Zeman, *Pursued by a Bear: The Making of Eastern Europe* (London: Chatto & Windus 1989), p. 24. This is to say nothing of bilingualism, which, as Zeman discusses, was quite common in the Monarchy (e.g., Slovenes perfectly conversant in German, and vice versa). The issue of bilingualism in the Habsburg Empire itself provides fertile ground for future study.

In Cisleithanian Austria, the language policy could vary, sometimes considerably, depending upon the province. In addition to the conflict between German centralism and the desire for national rights on the part of the population, such factors as the presence of other national minorities in the province could impact the adoption of a language policy.

In the Slovene areas, legislation tended to bring the use of Slovene closer to parity with German. In 1883, a decree of the Ministry of Justice established that those bureaucrats who were assigned to Slovene-inhabited areas were expected to have familiarity with the Slovene language, or to acquire it within a short time.¹⁴ However, considerable allowances were made as a result of pressure on behalf of the German population of this region. An 1896 decree established that, even in Slovene schools, German was to be taught alongside Slovene in instruction.¹⁵

The Dalmatian coastline represents a special case, as the language policies involved not only the German administrators and the Serb and Croat population, but also the Italian minority living in the region as well. There is a long-standing perception that the Austrian government had favored the Italian population of the province at the expense of the South Slavs, perhaps owing in part to the long period of Venetian rule in Dalmatia. However, a review of the evolution of language policies in Dalmatia tells a different story. Here, legislation gradually improved the status of the Serbo-Croatian language in the pre-war decades. An 1885 regulation mandated that laws published in Italian in Dalmatia be translated into Serbo-Croatian, although this was largely for the benefit of

14 *Das Österreichische Sprachenrecht* ed by Alfred Fischel (Brünn: Fried. Irrgang 1910), p. 224.

15 *Ibid*, p. 335.

personnel in neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁶ By 1909, regulations had been established for Dalmatia that mandated the use of “the Croatian or Serbian language” for most aspects of official business, with the use of Italian being the exception rather than the rule.¹⁷

Within the Kingdom of Hungary, an attempt was made to provide for a consistent language policy. The non-Magyar nationalities had to contend with laws mandating the use of the Magyar language in public life, particularly in schools. The South Slavs had little if any political ability to slow the push toward magyarization, but they did make their opinions known. During the debate in the Hungarian parliament over an 1879 law mandating use of Magyar in schools, Mihailo Polit, a Serbian representative, declared that the fact that such a law even came before them demonstrated that Hungary was an “eastern” country, and compared Hungary's treatment of nationality questions unfavorably with western European states, such as Belgium.¹⁸ Likewise, another Serbian representative, Anton Hadzsics, expressed the view that he considered the proposed bill as tantamount to an assault on his nationality.¹⁹

Due to its legal status as a technically semiautonomous land under the Hungarian crown, Croatia was spared the full impact of Budapest's magyarizing policies. However, the Hungarian-appointed government still enacted Magyar-favorable policies. The administration of *Ban* (governor) Karoly Khuen-Héderváry proved to be particularly

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 227. This concern, however, was largely unnecessary, as a review of Bosnian language policy will demonstrate; see below, p. 13.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 322-325.

¹⁸ *Magyarisation in Ungarn: Nach dem Debatten des Ungarischen Reichstages über dem obligaten Unterricht der magyarischen Sprache in sämtlichen Volksschulen* (Munich: Theodor Ackerman 1879), pp. 40-46.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 314.

hostile to Croatian language policies (as well as other national interests, as will be discussed). Legislation was passed forbidding the use of the Croatian language in the railway service.²⁰ In addition, Magyar instruction was introduced on a voluntary basis in Croatian *Gymnasia*, and inscriptions in Magyar were to be engraved on government buildings in Zagreb.²¹ Another policy mandating the use of Magyar in Croatian railways, in 1907, was described by a contemporary observer as a “stab in the heart” for Croatia.²²

The language policies of Bosnia-Herzegovina display what is perhaps the most overt attempt to maintain control over the debate in the region. One of the earliest pieces of legislation on the subject, in 1880, established that German was to be the language of administration in the provinces.²³ This predominance of German remained until 1895, when a new decree allowed for the use of the local language; however, the use of German was still preferred.²⁴

Perhaps the greatest difference with regard to the nationality policy in the two areas of the Habsburg realm can be seen with regard to issues of franchise and representation. Cisleithanian Austria progressively increased the franchise in the post-*Ausgleich* years, culminating in the electoral reform of 1907, which, in theory, provided for universal male suffrage. In Hungary, however, despite several promising attempts, the Magyar ruling class allowed only minimal increases to the franchise, and resisted any substantive reform to the very end. A comparison of how the South Slavs fared under the

20 Rudolf Kiszling, *Die Kroaten: Der Schicksalweg eines Südslawenvolkes* (Graz: H. Böhlau Nachf 1956), p. 68.

21 Charles Jelavich, “The Croatian Problem in the Habsburg Empire in the Nineteenth Century,” *Austrian History Yearbook* (Vol. 3, Part 2, 1967), 83-115: 106.

22 Kiszling, *Kroaten*, p. 77.

23 Fischel, p. 336.

24 *Ibid*, p. 338.

electoral systems in Austria and Hungary will shed a great deal of light on the question of their role in their respective states.

In 1905, two events occurred that escalated calls for government reforms in the Habsburg Monarchy. The first was the 1905 Russian Revolution and the subsequent (however limited) introduction of representative government in that country. The second was what has come to be called the “Crisis of Dualism,” which occurred when a party favoring greatly reducing ties to Austria (up to and including independence) won enough seats in that year's elections to take control of the parliament of Hungary. For much of the next year, the court refused to allow this party to form a government, and attempted to govern through a coalition of the opposition parties friendly to them, setting the stage for constitutional clashes. Ironically, that same year, an event occurred that, almost unnoticed at the time, proved to be significant – through the Declaration of Fiume, representatives of Serb and Croat delegations determined to work together to establish their own state, preferably through the establishment of a third autonomous South Slav state within the monarchy (the heralded “trialist” solution), but outside the Monarchy if necessary.

In the aftermath of these events, the government of Cisleithanian Austria determined to reform the electoral system and extend the franchise further. After much debate, the resulting 1907 Reform Bill granted *de jure* universal male suffrage to all citizens of Austria. It also resulted in some realigning of the nationality representation in the *Reichsrat*, yet the reform left Germans largely in control of the chamber. Historians have lamented that the reform ultimately did little to alleviate the nationality problem in

Cisleithanian Austria. William Jenks, in his survey of the reform opines that universal suffrage temporarily worked because newly enfranchised voters focused on economic policies promised by progressive nationalist candidates, but the reform was ultimately unable to overcome the fatal flaw in that it did not go far enough in creating federalized national states in Austria.²⁵ Robert Kann concurs that the failure to carry through with additional reforms following the franchise extension contributed to the empire's collapse.²⁶ It is also true, however, that the reform had precious little time to have an effect, before the *Reichsrat* was dissolved in March 1914 and the war intervened. It is entirely possible that, had Austria been given a few more years of peace, and the *Reichsrat* been called back into session later in 1914, a more apparent beneficial effect of universal suffrage on the state's national question may have been felt. In the brief time the reform was in effect, however, we can see what impact it did have on the South Slavs.

Inhabitants of the Slovene areas saw greater representation in their local and regional governments. For the population of mixed German and Slovene districts, the electoral precincts were still gerrymandered to give Germans a disproportionately higher representation than their population warranted, however the overall delegation of Slovenes still increased after 1907. For the Duchy of Carniola during the year 1907, the officeholders, while mixed German and Slovene, the majority of them had Slavic names.²⁷ For Croats and Serbs, the representative apportionment was even more heavily weighted toward them. In Dalmatia, the membership roster of the provincial assembly

25 William Jenks, *The Austrian Electoral Reform of 1907* (New York: Columbia University Press 1950) p. 212.

26 Kann, *Multinational Empire*, v. 2, p. 227.

27 *Hof und Staats-Handbuch der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie für das Jahr 1907* (Vienna: K.K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1907), pp. 587-9.

(*Landtag*) for 1907 was almost totally Croat or Serb, with just a handful of Italian names.²⁸

With regard to representation in the *Reichsrat*, it increased slightly for each of the South Slav groups, except for the Serbs. In the 1907 elections, the Slovenes won 23 seats, the Croats 12, and the Serbs had 2 (the numbers the same for the final prewar election, of 1911).²⁹ Compare these numbers to the results of the 1901 election, which gave the Slovenes 16 seats, the Croats 11, and the Serbs 2.³⁰ However, as the total number of *Reichsrat* representatives increased from 425 to 516 between 1901 and 1907, the relative size of the total South Slav delegation increased by an even smaller margin than these numbers suggest – 6.82% in 1901 and rose to just 7.17% in 1907.

In Hungary, likewise, the Crisis inspired an attempt at electoral reform. The 1905 Reform bill promised to increase the size of the franchise considerably, including significant representation by the non-Magyar nationalities. The press in Croatia hailed this development and regarded it as a hopeful sign for the future.³¹ However, conservative Magyar politicians ensured that the 1905 reform was never to be enacted. A new reform attempt followed in 1913; in part due to the outbreak of the war, this bill likewise never went into effect. Final wartime attempts to extend the franchise by framing the issue as granting suffrage to soldiers and veterans were defeated as a result of the opposition of a faction led by Prime Minister Istvan Tisza.³²

28 Ibid, p. 885.

29 Helmut Rumpel, "Parlament und Regierung Cisleithaniens 1867 bis 1914," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, bd 7, eds Adam Wandruszka & Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Öster. Akad der Wissenschaften 1975), pp. 667-894, pp. 884-5.

30 Ibid.

31 *Agramer Zeitung*, 30 December 1905.

32 Gábor Vermes, "Leap into the Dark: The Issue of Suffrage in Hungary during World War I," in *The*

Despite this limited franchise, the South Slavs did play a role in Hungarian government. Their delegates served in the Hungarian parliament during the post-*Ausgleich* years, as did other representatives of non-Magyar nationalities, however, as electoral districts favored Magyars, their numbers often proved too small to have much impact on legislation. They were, however, numerous enough to have their voices heard, as they did during the debate on the 1879 language law. It is not without justification that the Serbs have been referred to as having been politically the “second-most significant nationality” in prewar Hungary.³³

Also, one must consider the national assembly of Croatia, the *Sabor*. This body, composed mostly of Croatian and Serbian representatives, often reduced to a consultative or “rubber-stamp” role during this period, nevertheless at times were active participants in crafting legislation. For example, the *Sabor* in 1873 was able to negotiate minor revisions to the *Nagodba* compromise agreement slightly more in Croatia's favor.³⁴ In addition, the *Sabor* served as an outlet for protest against Magyar-supported legislation, as when it disapproved of the 1907 act requiring Magyar on Croatian railways.³⁵ Such appeals rarely yielded concrete action, yet they represented an official channel for the Croatian people to make their voice heard. The existence of a separate Croatian parliament, however, could be a double-edged sword. In his work on the nationality issue, Josef Eötvös quotes a speech from a representative in the Hungarian parliament

Habsburg Empire in World War I: Essays on the Intellectual, Military, Political and Economic Aspects of the Habsburg War Effort, ed. by Robert A. Kann, et. al., (New York: Columbia University Press 1977), pp. 29-44, p. 32.

33 Adalbert Toth, “Die Soziale Schichtung im Ungarischen Reichstag 1848 bis 1918,” in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, bd 7, eds Adam Wandruszka & Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Öster. Akad der Wissenschaften 1975), pp. 1061-1105, p. 1096.

34 Krizman, p. 133.

35 Kizling, *Kroatien*, p. 77.

stating the view that as long as Croatia maintained its separate existence and assembly, it should not be represented in the national Hungarian parliament.³⁶ However, the Croats ultimately would be guaranteed representation in the Budapest parliament through the terms of the *Nagodba*.

Much of this unequal partnership between the Hungarian government and Croatia stretched back for centuries, but it was largely solidified in the document known as the *Nagodba*, sometimes referred to as a “subdualism” formalized between the two in 1868. Through it, the Hungarian government recognized the Triune Kingdom of Croatia as an autonomous entity within the lands of the Crown of St. Stephen, and the right to utilize the Croatian language in its own administration. In addition, it promised to aid in efforts to unify Dalmatia to the rest of Croatia when the situation was favorable to do so. However, the agreement placed the *Ban* (royal governor) as well as Croatia's finances under the control of the Hungarian government, and transferred control of the port city of Fiume away from Croatia. The agreement was lambasted by Croatian nationalists as a disaster for their cause; however, some have argued that its terms were not as unfavorable for the Croatian people as have been presented and were, in any event, as good as they were likely to get.³⁷

Nonetheless, it was also the case that representatives of the Croatian political parties could and were given a place at the table on equal terms by members of the Habsburg court, Austrian officials, and (at times) members of the Hungarian government as well. One such case occurred immediately prior to the annexation of Bosnia-

36 Quoted in Josef Eötvös, *Die Nationalitäten-Frage*, tr. by Max Falk (Pest: Verlag Moritz Ráth 1865), pp. 56-7.

37 Jelavich, p. 100.

Herzegovina. In April 1908, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff, made a promise to Josip Frank, the leader of the Croatian Party of Pure Rights, that, following the annexation, the provinces would be attached to Croatia.³⁸ In this way Croatian support for the annexation was obtained. Nor was this a singular incident; in his memoirs, Conrad provides a December 1907 letter from Dr. Frank in which the latter declares his loyalty to the Monarchy and in a veiled manner asks for help against the Magyars, a kind of quid quo pro.³⁹

Yet another organ of South Slav representation could be found in the provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Following the occupation of the provinces after the Congress of Berlin in 1878, the area was placed under the direct administration of the joint Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Finance. For much of this period the local population had little input into their government. In the aftermath of the formal annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, the decision was made to establish a regional representative assembly for the area. When this body was convened in 1910, however, according to some historians it was largely denied any executive powers, and served primarily as a consultative assembly.⁴⁰ In contrast, others have maintained that this assembly had more relative authority than the *Sabor* in Zagreb had.⁴¹ In view of these diverging opinions, one must consider, in Alois Czedik's chronicle of Austrian ministerial history, his account

38 Mirjana Gross, "Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand und die kroatische Frage: Ein Beitrag zur groß-österreichischen Politik in Kroatien," *Österreichische Osthefte* (No. 4, 1966) 277-299: 284-5. My research did not find any information on the Croatian reaction when this promise was not kept; doubtless it only added to disillusionment with their future in the Monarchy.

39 Graf Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, *Aus Meiner Dienstzeit, 1906-1918*, 5 vols (Vienna: Rikola Verlag 1921-4), v. 1, pp. 525-6.

40 Wayne Vucinich, "The Serbs in Austria-Hungary," *Austrian History Yearbook* (Vol. 3, Part 2, 1967) 3-47: 31.

41 Kiszling, *Kroaten*, p. 84.

of an ambitious work plan for the Bosnian assembly for 1911, an agenda that included the establishment of a 1912 budget, and appointment of education, agricultural and railway advisors.⁴²

42 Alois Freiherr von Czedik, *Zur Geschichte der k.k. österreichischen Ministerien, 1861-1916*, 4 vols (Teschen: Prochaska 1920), v. 4, p. 382.

Economic Issues

A difference can also be discerned in the attention the respective governments of Austria and Hungary gave to their South Slav provinces concerning economic issues. Generally, in the Austrian part of the monarchy, there appears to have been some attempt to identify and address economic problems in specific provinces, even if these attempts did not always bear fruit. The Hungarian government, on the other hand, largely attempted to deal with the economy of the kingdom as a whole, with less attention being given its composite territories.

As was the case for the population of much of the Dual Monarchy, traditionally, the great majority of Slovenes were engaged in agriculture. But within the first decade of the twentieth century, the percentage of the Slovene population engaged in agriculture fell by a larger margin than among any of the other Austrian language groups.⁴³ It was not necessarily the case, however, that industrial development of the provinces kept pace with this population shift, or that the Slovene laborers were able to take advantage of the existing industrial infrastructure to ensure ample employment or the opportunity to invest in capital themselves. In Carinthia and Carniola, industry was almost entirely in German hands.⁴⁴ Toward the end of the nineteenth century, laborers were often compelled to

43 Janko Pleterški, "Die Slowenen," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, bd. 3, eds Adam Wandruszka & Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Öster. Akad der Wissenschaften 1975), pp. 801-838, p. 814.

44 Oskar Lobmeyr-Hohenleiten, "Steiermark, Kärnten, Krain," in *Das Nationalitätenrecht des alien Österreich*, ed. Karl Hugelmann (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller 1934), pp. 459-544, pp. 513, 542.

travel to different parts of the Monarchy and beyond to seek work; some Slovenes even worked in the mines in Westphalia.⁴⁵ On the other hand, significant capital was invested in building the infrastructure in Slovene towns, particularly in the area of Ljubljana.⁴⁶ While I have not found any figures as to how many (if any) Slovene laborers were employed in these efforts, the local population did benefit from these improvements. In addition, Slovenes benefited from the Semmering Railway, running from Vienna through Ljubljana and terminating at Trieste. Completed with state funding in 1853, the railway boosted industry and commerce between the Slovene areas and the northern parts of the Monarchy.⁴⁷

The province of Dalmatia at the dawn of the twentieth century has often been perceived as having been economically backward, and underdeveloped compared to the rest of the Monarchy. Historians have long pointed to the economic problems of Dalmatia as evidence of Austria's inattention to South Slav nationality issues, beginning with Oscar Jászi's characterization of the province as the “Cinderella of the monarchy.”⁴⁸ There is, however, evidence that the Vienna government placed a great deal of effort and capital into the local economy. Around 1905 considerable discussion was given to the idea of constructing a railway connecting Dalmatia with the rest of the Monarchy. The stated reasons for the project were the need to encourage the province's economic and cultural development; however, the military applications of the project (as it would

45 Carole Rogel, *The Slovenes and Yugoslavism 1890-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press 1977), p. 51.

46 Ibid, p. 41.

47 Longworth, p. 99.

48 Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1929), p. 408.

facilitate troop movements) were not forgotten.⁴⁹ Although the railway connection ultimately was not built, the evidence indicates that the Austrian government recognized the need for the project. Robert Kann in particular placed the blame for the failure of this enterprise on Magyar opposition, as such a railway would have crossed Hungarian territory.⁵⁰ In addition, in 1904 the Joint Ministerial council debated at length the renewal of a trade treaty with Italy, in part over the clause limiting imports of Italian wines.⁵¹ This was clearly a protectionist move, as the importation of Italian wines since the previous trade treaty of 1891 had been damaging to the native Dalmatian winemakers.⁵²

For many of the same strategic reasons, effort was invested in improving economic conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In many respects, the provinces were economically linked to Dalmatia, as Dalmatia provided its access to the Adriatic. At the time that Austria-Hungary occupied the provinces in 1878, the local economy still operated largely according to the traditional Turkish land tenure system that had been in place for centuries, including remnants of serfdom.⁵³ In the years immediately following, administrators mostly left the Ottoman social economic structure intact in the hopes of gaining favor with the local Muslim aristocracy, and only gradually began to dismantle

49 Somogyi, Éva, ed., *Die Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Osterreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie 1896-1907* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó 1991), p. 491.

50 Kann, *Multinational Empire*, v. 1, pp. 237, 419

51 Somogyi, p. 408.

52 Mirjana Gross, "Über die Nationale Frage in Kroatien während der Krise des Dualismus," in *Die Nationale Frage in der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie 1900-1918*, eds. Péter Hanák & Zoltán Szász (Budapest: Verlag Ung. Akad. Der Wissenschaften 1966), pp. 217-231, p. 219.

53 The Ottoman form of serfdom, the *çiftlik*, differed significantly from its European counterpart in that peasants were not the property of the landlord, nor were they legally tied to the land. Nonetheless, the lord had ownership of the peasants' homes, land and tools, and peasants were often compelled to remain on the land as they were indebted to their lord. See Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 1977), pp. 219-221.

the institution of serfdom, a process still incomplete at the outbreak of war in 1914.⁵⁴ But in other ways Bosnia was brought into line with the rest of the monarchy, efforts that accelerated following annexation in 1908. We have already seen the attention given to the economy by the Bosnian assembly; prior to the annexation, at a 1896 Joint Ministerial council meeting, the principle was laid out that the governments of both halves of the Monarchy would take part in providing the budget for the Bosnian administration.⁵⁵

The 1868 Compromise document between Hungary and Croatia, the *Nagodba*, goes into its greatest level of detail not in regards to issues of administration and representation, but rather in terms of finance and economy. The document spells out in minute detail the amount of money Croatia is to be allocated for its annual internal administration, how much it is to be allowed in taxation, and how its debts are to be managed.⁵⁶ While it does place some responsibility on the senior partner, the Hungarian government, much of the onus for ensuring financial success is placed on the Croatian *Sabor*. For this reason, it has been said that with the ratification of the *Nagodba*, Croatia lost its financial independence.⁵⁷ In an 1884 interview with a representative of Crown Prince Rudolf, a representative of the Croatian Party of Right complained bitterly of

54 Milorad Ekmečić, “Impact of the Balkan Wars on Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, eds. Béla Király and Dimitrije Djordjevic (New York: Columbia University Press 1987), pp. 260-285, p. 261.

55 Somogyi, p. 23. In this same meeting, detailed discussion was given to plans for the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and a proposed incorporation into the Monarchy – more than a decade before annexation occurred.

56 A translation of the *Nagodba* is printed in R.W. Seton-Watson, *The Southern Slav Question and the Hapsburg Monarchy* (London: Constable & Co. 1911), pp. 361-379.

57 Krizman, p. 132.

economic oppression by the Magyars, including the diversion of Croatian tax revenue to projects primarily benefiting Magyars, and the suppression of the Croatian wine trade.⁵⁸

In the Serbian area of the Vojvodina, the province's economic development in the post-*Ausgleich* years proceeded at a slow but steady pace; however, observers such as Wayne Vucinich have charged that following the restoration of the province to Hungarian rule after 1860, the central government virtually ignored its development except to discourage Serbian national movements.⁵⁹ On the other hand, it was also the case that the province had been connected by rail to Budapest since the 1860s; the Vojvodina has been called the “center of Serbian economic, political, and cultural life;” its middle class was larger and more prosperous relative to their conationals in the neighboring state of Serbia.⁶⁰

A final point to make regarding economic issues: in many ways, the entirety of the Habsburg Monarchy functioned well as an economic unit, with more industrialized areas (e.g., Bohemia) complementing more agrarian ones (such as eastern Hungary). As Philip Longworth argues in his survey of eastern Europe, the consequences of the breaking of this unit into separate states proved to be disastrous, and contributed to the economic turmoil of the interwar period.⁶¹ We will return to this point later.

58 Oskar Mitis, “Crown Prince Rudolf and the Croats,” *The Slavonic Review* (Vol. 5, No. 15, Mar. 1927) 580-593: 589.

59 Vucinich, p. 7.

60 Dimitrije Djordjević, “Die Serben,” in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, bd 3, eds Adam Wandruszka & Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Öster. Akad der Wissenschaften 1975), pp. 734-774, p. 741.

61 Longworth, pp. 69-71.

Attitudes of the Rulers

A major component of the South Slav nationality policy for both Austria and Hungary was the viewpoint and actions of the rulers and administrators in office in both parts of the Monarchy during this period. The rulers of the state were by no means unaware of the severity of the nationality problem; writing in 1907, Otto Bauer, head of the Social Democratic party, referred to it as the most important problem facing the state's domestic politics.⁶²

The monarch himself, Franz Joseph, was not known for having any particular sensitivity regarding the nationality issues of his realm (although in a study of the issue, William Jenks does suggest that his support of the 1907 electoral reform may have been motivated by a desire to exchange national conflict for class conflict – if true signaling at least a desire on the monarch's part to alleviate the national tensions of the empire).⁶³ His son, Crown Prince Rudolf, however, has been remembered by history largely for his desire to push through liberal reforms, particularly regarding the nationality problem. Several years before his untimely death the Crown Prince famously commissioned the multi-volume series *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild* (The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Word and Image), an encyclopedic compendium of information about each of the provinces of the Monarchy with detailed information about

62 Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna: Volksbuchhandlung Ignaz Brand 1907), p. v.

63 Jenks, *Austrian Electoral Reform*, p. 211.

the customs of the local population. Rudolf revealed something of his mindset toward the nationality issue in his introduction to the work:

The study of the peoples living within the borders of the Monarchy is not a topic limited to specialized scholarly research, but rather has practical worth for the elevation of a general love for the Fatherland. Through the increasing familiarity with the advantages and peculiarities of the individual ethnic groups and their mutual and material dependence on one another, the feeling of solidarity that should connect all of the peoples of our Fatherland will be substantially strengthened.⁶⁴

In addition, Rudolf demonstrated a particular concern for the struggle of the Croats against Magyar pressure. In the aftermath of riots and constitutional struggles in Zagreb in 1883, Rudolf, highly skeptical of the official reports coming from Budapest, sent a representative to investigate the situation and provide a detailed report on the Croat question.⁶⁵ But Rudolf's labors should not necessarily be considered as representative of the nationality policy of the court in general. Differences with his father resulted in the Crown Prince being for the most part politically marginalized, and he himself did not live to ascend to the throne. In addition, Rudolf's views were more tempered by his dynastic mindset than is commonly known. He regarded the Slovene nationality as having been largely invented by the Taaffe ministry.⁶⁶ Although cognizant of Magyar treatment of the nationalities, he still wished to maintain the territorial integrity of the Hungarian kingdom.⁶⁷

64 *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild* (Vienna: K.K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei 1887), v. 1, pp. 5-6.

65 Mitis, p. 584. In an appendix, Mitis includes translations of the original interviews with the participants, including Croatian *ban* Count Khuen-Héderváry and members of the Croatian Party of Right.

66 Kann, *Multinational Empire*, v. 2, p. 185.

67 *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 186.

Perhaps the most celebrated figure in this respect is the person of the ultimate heir apparent, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Much has been made of his presumed support for a solution to the nationality problem, and many South Slav nationalists pinned their hopes on him. For example, his name has long come to be associated with support for the so-called “trialist” reform – the proposed replacement of the dualist system with the inclusion of a third entity, supposedly a South Slav autonomous state.⁶⁸ It was known that some in his circle gave support to reforms addressing the nationality issue, such as the Romanian politician Aurel Popovici, who in his work *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich*, argued for the federalization of the Monarchy.⁶⁹ In addition, Franz Ferdinand himself was not above using his partisans to give the impression that he backed the trialist plan, both in order to gain support among the South Slavs and to intimidate the Magyars; his auxiliaries were active in Croatian political circles during the first years of the twentieth century.⁷⁰ From these facts has grown the belief that, at the least, the Archduke was planning a drastic reorganization of the Monarchy, aided in part by the postwar release by one of his circle of a purported manifesto by which the Archduke planned to implement a federal reconstitution of the empire. Although short on specifics, the manifesto itself reads with a sense of optimism of resolving the nationality problem:

The peoples of the Danube Monarchy are in a thousand ways bound together by historical development, common education and culture, and economic

68 See, for example, Janko Pleterski, “The Southern Slav Question,” in *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary: A Multinational Experiment in Early Twentieth Century Europe* ed. by Mark Cornwall (Exeter: University of Exeter Press 2002), pp. 119-148, p. 132.

69 Aurel C. Popovici, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich: Politische Studien zur Lösung der nationalen Fragen und staatsrechtlichen Krisen in Österreich-Ungarn* (Leipzig: B. Elischer Nachfolger 1906), pp. 304-316.

70 Gross, “Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand,” p. 277.

interests. They should unite in brotherly love, strong together with separations eliminated, and only in the areas of cultural and economic progress differentiated from each other. In a spirit of mutual confidence We call all who have in heart the prosperity of our God-blessed Fatherland to unite their work with Ours! Only with the dedicated cooperation of all of Our peoples will the well-being of each individual part be assured and promoted.⁷¹

There are, however, several important things to consider about Franz Ferdinand that give us pause in this respect. First, he was above all a dynast with a remarkably conservative mindset, and would not have done anything to lessen the prestige of the Habsburg inheritance.⁷² In addition, in large part he was motivated by the desire to elevate the status of the crown and to reduce the role of the Magyars; if that meant removing some of their subject nationalities from Magyar jurisdiction, so be it.⁷³ Therefore, if a “trialist” South Slav state was to emerge from Franz Ferdinand's reign, it would almost certainly have been composed of the lands taken exclusively from the Hungarian half of the Monarchy; Austria's South Slavs would remain under Vienna's administration. Likewise, in an overview of the Slovene position in the Monarchy, Franz Zwitter expresses the view that Franz Ferdinand would never have permitted the incorporation of the Slovene areas into an additional autonomous entity of his realm.⁷⁴

Outside the ruling family, the next most powerful person in Cisleithanian Austria was the prime minister (or, to use the proper title, minister-president). During the post-*Ausgleich* years, this position was filled by a succession of individuals, most of whom served a relatively short time in office. Of these, the most notable are Eduard von Taaffe (1879-1893) who pushed for electoral reform with mixed success, Ernst von Koerber

71 *Reichspost*, 28 March 1926.

72 Robert Kann, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand Studien* (Munich: Oldenbourg 1976), p. 27.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

74 Zwitter, p. 179.

(1900-1904) who sought to improve economic conditions for the whole of Cisleithanian Austria (but gave less attention to nationality issues), and Max Wladimir von Beck (1906-1908), who presided over the 1907 Austrian electoral reform.

The Taaffe ministry deserves particular mention, due both to its relatively long term in office, as well as the perception that it did a great deal to expand Slavic participation in Austrian government, to the extent that Taaffe has been referred to as a “Slavophile.”⁷⁵ Among Taaffe's achievements was an 1882 electoral reform that reduced the size of the tax base required in order to vote. Taaffe's ministry has come to be known as the “iron ring” based on the belief that its goal was to encircle and ultimately smother German dominance in Austria; in reality, his policy was one of “muddling through” - getting along day-to-day, making small, piecemeal concessions to placate the nationalities when necessary, making no major changes.⁷⁶ Indeed, it was a second, much more comprehensive, attempt at franchise reform in 1893 that has been regarded as the catalyst for the Taaffe ministry's fall from power, as German centralists viewed the bill as a preamble to federalization of the Monarchy.⁷⁷

In a very real sense, Taaffe's “muddling through” approach is also characteristic of the South Slav nationality policy of Cisleithanian Austria throughout the post-*Ausgleich* period. With the exception of the 1907 electoral reform, no major changes occurred in the balance of power in the years leading up to the war. Instead, the government contented itself with gradual half-measures, incrementally expanding the franchise, and

⁷⁵ Kann, *Multinational Empire*, v. 2, p. 183.

⁷⁶ Ibid, v. 1, p. 96.

⁷⁷ Jenks, *Electoral Reform*, p. 106.

gradual liberalization of the language laws. For the South Slavs, there was to be no bold experiments in self-government similar to those attempted in Moravia and Galicia.

Ernst von Koerber, on the other hand, believed that the economic concerns of Cisleithania transcended the national issue, and was confident that improvements in the economic situation would naturally foster improvements in the political and national scene.⁷⁸ While the state as a whole benefited from these reforms, Koerber largely overestimated the influence of economics on the nationality issue.

Max Wladimir von Beck was, in the words of Robert Kann, “one of the ablest Austrian statesmen and one of the very few who was supported by a parliamentary, as well as a truly popular, majority.”⁷⁹ Yet his active role was limited to presiding over the franchise reform, and he was forced to resign in 1908. When this happened, the South Slavs lost a potential ally. When a discussion in the *Reichsrat* occurred over the possibility of uniting Dalmatia with Croatia (an outcome desired by Croats but usually opposed by the government as it involved transferring Austrian territory to the Hungarian crown), Beck reserved his support, but argued that the authority to make this change did rest with the *Reichsrat*.⁸⁰ In addition, he opposed the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the grounds that the provinces were not worth the risk of war or of driving the South Slavs further into the Russian orbit.⁸¹ Such a stance was likely appealing to many of the Serbs of the Monarchy.

78 Albert Ableitinger, *Ernst von Koerber und das Verfassungsproblem im Jahre 1900* (Graz: Verlag Hermann Böhlau Nachf 1973), p. 221.

79 Kann, *Multinational Empire*, v. 2, p. 226.

80 Czedik, v. 3, p. 101.

81 *Ibid*, v. 3, p. 145.

On the other side of the dualist border, the office of prime minister for the Hungarian lands was slightly more stable. For a number of years following the *Ausgleich*, the role was filled by Kalman Tisza (1875-1890). In the early years of the twentieth century, Count Istvan Tisza (son of Kalman) served several times as prime minister (1903-1905, 1913-1917), and was serving in this capacity for the majority of the wartime period.

Kalman Tisza attempted to give at least the illusion of equality among the nationalities (in accordance with the law of 1868) yet did nothing to risk the Magyar character of the kingdom and Magyar political dominance. When in 1875 Mihailo Polit stated his view that Hungary was “not a national state but a state of nationalities,” Tisza threatened him with political repercussions if he continued to advocate this “illegal view.”⁸² Tisza's administration continued to pursue magyarization measures, such as the law of 1879 and a similar one applying to middle schools in 1883. During this period, no consideration was given to any amendment to the 1874 electoral law, which allowed only minimal suffrage to non-Magyar nationalities.

His son Istvan Tisza pursued a similar course. We have already seen how the younger Tisza defeated wartime efforts to extend the franchise; he was also instrumental in the failure to implement the 1905 and 1913 electoral reform laws.

Here we can see a difference between how the nationality policy played out on both sides of the dualist border. Taaffe and Beck supported electoral reform as they realized it could ultimately work to the benefit of the Habsburg dynasty. Both Tiszas,

82 Friedrich Gottas, *Ungarn in Zeitalter des Hochliberalismus: Studien zur Tisza-Ära (1875-1890)* (Vienna: Öster. Akad der Wissenschaften 1976), p. 186.

father and son, led the fight against extending the franchise particularly to keep it out of the hands of additional non-Magyars. Regarding other nationality rights, the Austrian prime ministers followed a general pattern of allowing small, limited concessions on an as needed basis in an attempt to conciliate the national groups; by contrast, the prime ministers of Hungary generally treated the idea of Magyar dominance of the state as paramount, and actively attempted to discourage assertions of non-Magyar national rights.

The position of *Ban* (Governor) of Croatia was an important one, and the one who held it had access to near absolute rule of the territory. While officially appointed by the Emperor-King, in practice the office was filled by the Hungarian government, and was expected to further Magyar interests. A survey of the individuals who held the office during this period demonstrates that for the most part, they concerned themselves with advancing Magyar interests than protecting those of Croatia. The Magyar attitude toward Croatia is apparent in a 1911 statement by Istvan Tisza: “The Croatian *Sabor* is no parliament; the *Ban* owes nothing to it, but is responsible solely to the Hungarian Minister-President.”⁸³

As *Ban*, Ivan Mazuranic (1873-1880) introduced landmark reforms to Croatia, including laws granting freedom of the press and freedom of political assembly, and improvements to the educational system.⁸⁴ Unfortunately for the Croatian people, this kind of stewardship turned out to be an anomaly, and different from the course his

83 Quoted in Wilhelm Schüssler, *Das Verfassungsproblem im Habsburgerreich* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1918), p. 147.

84 Hodimir Sirotković, “Die Verwaltung im Königreich Kroatien und Slavonien 1848-1918,” in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, bd 2, eds Adam Wandruszka & Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Öster. Akad der Wissenschaften 1975), pp. 469-498, pp. 495-6.

successors followed. *Ban* Count Karoly Khuen-Héderváry (1883-1903) was a cousin of Kalman Tisza, and would rule Croatia, in the words of Rudolf Kiszling, “entirely according to Budapest's wishes.”⁸⁵ His rule is remembered as having been particularly hostile to Croatian and South Slav national aspirations. In the course of an interview with Crown Prince Rudolf's representative shortly after assuming office, Khuen-Héderváry revealed a deep distrust of Croatian politicians, particularly those of the Party of Right, as well as skepticism that he would be able to work cooperatively with the *Sabor*.⁸⁶ In his testament, Stjepan Radić, the founder of the Croatian Peasant Party, relates several incidents in which he was imprisoned for having made statements protesting Khuen-Héderváry's government; however, he does recall at least one occasion on which the *Ban* personally intervened on his behalf.⁸⁷

The administration of Khuen-Héderváry was also noted for its active attempts to incite animosity between Croats and Serbs, a policy that continued in Croatia until the end of the empire. During the two decades of his administration, the Serbs of Croatia were given preferential treatment over the Croats; although some of this has been attributed as a response to the conciliatory stance of the Kingdom of Serbia toward the Monarchy, this “divide and rule” strategy was used to great advantage by Khuen-Héderváry as a cover to implement magyarization policies with diluted resistance.⁸⁸ Once given a push by the *Ban*, this ethnic conflict proved difficult to contain (as it has been ever since). Stjepan Radić relates how, as a university student, he found it necessary

85 Kiszling, *Kroaten*, p. 68.

86 Mitis, pp. 590-591.

87 Stjepan Raditch, “The Story of My Political Life,” *Current History* (October 1928) 84-106: 86.

88 Jelavich, p. 106.

to organize a movement to counter demonstrations against a Serbophile professor.⁸⁹ Croatian Serbs returned these challenges: the appearance of an anti-Croat article in 1902 contributed to the outbreak of violent, bloody anti-Serb riots in Zagreb.⁹⁰

Khuen-Héderváry's successors were largely in the same vein, and approached the position from a similar perspective. Pavao Rauch (1908-1910) ruled in an authoritarian fashion, and his administration is notable for having been the setting for the Friedjung treason trials, which will be discussed in detail shortly. This state of affairs continued under the next two officeholders, Nikola Tomasic (1910-1912) and Slavko Cuvaj (1912-1913). In the interim, Croatian resistance to Magyar rule intensified, and Cuvaj was the target of assassination attempts by radical Croatian nationalists.

The years leading up to the outbreak of the war saw increasingly authoritarian rule in Croatia. The *Sabor* was dissolved in 1909, and did not meet again until 1913. In the interim, the Magyar-appointed administrators were given even wider authority to implement policies favorable to Budapest.

The Friedjung trial / The "Agramer Hochverratsprozess"

In the aftermath of the Bosnian annexation crisis, ostensibly prompted by a fear of Serbian revanchism (as will be discussed shortly), the government of the Croatian *Ban* determined to identify possible conspirators and traitors against the crown. Several Serbian and Croatian politicians were charged with treason and put on trial. The incident is sometimes referred to as the Friedjung trial, because of the involvement of historian

89 Raditch, p. 88.

90 Jelavich, p. 107.

Heinrich Friedjung in providing documentary evidence of treasonous activity by the accused (these documents were later determined to be forgeries).⁹¹ But the true objective of what has also become known as the *Agramer Hochverratsprozess* (Zagreb High Treason Process) was to drive a wedge between the Croat and Serb political parties in Croatia by exploiting, among others, their differences regarding the policy toward Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁹² Ultimately, all of the accused parties were acquitted. Rather than drive Croats and Serbs further apart, the incident had the effect of bringing the two sides closer together, accelerating the trend toward cooperation against both Budapest and Vienna. Writing shortly after these events took place, Thomas Masaryk could already see this increased solidarity happening.⁹³

Another office figuring prominently during this period is that of the joint Minister of Finance, responsible for the administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This post was filled by Benjamin von Kállay from 1882 until his death in 1903. Like some of his colleagues elsewhere in the Monarchy, Kállay adopted a “divide and rule” strategy toward the provinces. He is credited with having to a large degree encouraged the development of the Bosnian Muslims (or Bošnjak) as a distinct nationality, in large part to create dissension between them and the Serb and Croat inhabitants, but also with the hope that the “new” nationality would be more loyal to the Monarchy.⁹⁴ This policy did not result in a strong bulwark against Serbian irredentism, but it did log some minor success; Josef Redlich, a representative in the *Reichsrat* (and later Austrian Minister of

91 Kann, *Multinational Empire*, v. 1, p. 431.

92 Jelavich, p. 111.

93 Thomas G. Masaryk, *Der Agramer Hochverratsprozess und die Annexion von Bosnien und Herzegowina* (Vienna: Verlagsbuchhandlung Carl Konegen 1909), p. 113.

94 Vucinich, p. 28.

Finance), reported having met with the leader of a party of “government-friendly Muslims” in 1912.⁹⁵ While his national policy was not entirely successful, Kállay did set the stage for a temporary pacification of the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina, perhaps at the cost of what proved to be decades of ethnic conflict.

The question may be asked, for the purposes of this study, would Bosnia-Herzegovina be more closely aligned with Austria or with Hungary with regard to its nationality policy? Taking all of these factors into account, it is my contention that the Bosnian territory, while it was economically linked to Dalmatia and thus to Cisleithanian Austria, implemented a nationality policy much more similar to that found in Hungary. This can be partially ascribed to the fact that the government of the region during the bulk of the prewar years was placed in the hands of Magyar administrators (Kállay and Burián). Parallels can be seen with between the treatment of the South Slav population of Bosnia-Herzegovina and that of Croatia, particularly in relation to the “divide and rule” policy. The evolution of language rights also followed the Hungarian model more closely than the Austrian, although in this case the dominant language was German rather than Magyar.

We can see that, even in the character of the rulers and administrators that there is a difference in the manner that government dealt with the South Slav nationality issue. In Cisleithanian Austria, government alternated between, on the one hand, attempts at reforms that improved the condition of the population, and, on the other, a policy that at best could be considered “salutary neglect.” In Hungary, meanwhile the dominating

⁹⁵ Josef Redlich, *Schicksalsjahre Österreichs, 1908-1919: Das Politische Tagebuch Josef Redlichs* (Graz: Verlag Hermann Böhlau Nachf 1954), v. 1, p. 157.

principle was to maintain Magyar supremacy and the kingdom's territorial unity. Also characteristic of the nationality policy in the Hungarian territories was the imposition of authoritarian rule, and the practice of playing the nationalities against each other, characteristics shared by the administration in Bosnia-Herzegovina; while both of these did occur on the other side of the dualist border, they are much less commonly associated with Cisleithanian Austria.

In terms of the rule of the South Slavs, 1903 was a pivotal year. Three crucial events occurred during the course of this year. First, Count Khuen-Héderváry, who had reigned as absolute *Ban* of Croatia for twenty years, finally left that position (to briefly serve as minister-president of Hungary). For a few years following, Croats saw some relaxation of the laws he instituted. Second, Benjamin von Kállay, who had governed Bosnia-Herzegovina, died. His successor Istvan Burián retreated from some of his hard-line policies, but has been accused of following “an ingenious zig-zag course” of his own.⁹⁶ Third, and perhaps most significant for the long term, King Alexander Obrenović of Serbia, who had been considered subservient to the Habsburgs, was assassinated along with most of his immediate family. His replacement on the throne, Peter Karadjordjević, was known to be an advocate of the “Greater Serbian” or “Yugoslav” solution to the South Slav issue. As a result, Serbian foreign policy in the years following became considerably more hostile to the Monarchy and closer to Russia.

⁹⁶ Kiszling, *Kroaten*, p. 73.

Foreign Policy Considerations

An awareness on the part of the Austrian and Hungarian governments of the need to preserve the state's internal security and standing with regard to its neighbors also figured into the South Slav nationality policy. As a power with a significant presence in the Balkans, the Monarchy was drawn into repeated crises on its southern border, including the one that ultimately led to the Great War and its own collapse.

First, Italian irredentism proved to play a significant role in Austro-Hungarian policy considerations regarding the South Slavs during this period. The Austro-Hungarian government was well aware of the Italian state's desire to annex the South Slav-inhabited coastland areas of Istria and Dalmatia. So it was not surprising that, upon hearing a report of a massing of Italian ships off the coast of Dalmatia in 1905, the joint Austro-Hungarian ministerial council determined that it was necessary to increase the strength of their own forces in the area to defend against any possible threat.⁹⁷ Likewise, when the war began in 1914, discussions almost immediately started regarding the possibility of offering Italy territory to entice it to remain neutral. In August 1914 the Joint Ministerial council discussed offering Italy Trentino and parts of Istria (including Trieste) to forestall the possibility of Italy joining the war in search of more extensive territorial gains.⁹⁸ Fear of this eventuality weighed heavily on some in the Austro-

⁹⁷ Somogyi, p. 490

⁹⁸ Miklós Komjáthy, ed., *Die Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Osterreichisch-Ungarischen*

Hungarian government; in his April 6, 1915 diary entry, Josef Redlich opined that with the entry of Italy into the war, Austria-Hungary would be lost.⁹⁹

Italian ambitions, however, were a minor irritant in comparison to the threat posed by the presence of an independent kingdom of Serbia on the southern frontier of the Monarchy, one advancing irredentist claims on Habsburg territory. As discussed, within a few years of the Serbian regime change in 1903, the Monarchy's neighbor progressed from being a virtual protectorate to being an active rival for leadership of the South Slav peoples. In a memorandum of February 1907, Foreign Minister Count Alois von Aehrenthal, noting that “great Serbian propaganda” was gaining steam in the South Slav areas, exhorted his colleagues to resolve the issue (preferably by creating a South Slav state within the Monarchy) before Serbia took care of it for them.¹⁰⁰ In his words,

Now we that we have come up against these national aspirations, so we should therefore create along a new outline a South Slav grouping that, in close federation with the Kingdom of Hungary, would secure the influence of the Monarchy for the distant future.¹⁰¹

The first attempt by the part of Austria-Hungary to deal with rising Serbia, the customs war of 1906-1909 (the notorious “Pig War”) proved ultimately to be an embarrassment for the Habsburgs, as the Serbs found other markets for the embargoed goods. In addition, Serbia's relations with France and Russia grew closer as a result of the affair.

Monarchie 1914-1918 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó 1966), p. 160.

⁹⁹ Redlich, v.2, p. 28.

¹⁰⁰ Aehrenthal's memoranda are included as an appendix in Solomon Wank, “Aehrenthal's Programme for the Constitutional Transformation of the Habsburg Monarchy: The Secret 'Mémoires',” *The Slavonic and East European Review* (Vol. 41, No. 97, Jun. 1963), pp. 513-536.

¹⁰¹ Memorandum I, in Wank, p. 525.

The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 had considerable ripple effects on the status of the South Slav question in the Monarchy. Although it had been *de facto* part of the Monarchy's framework (albeit in a separate unit) for some time, its formal acquisition gave the Serbs for the first time officially a position of virtual numerical parity in population with the Croats (see tables 1 and 2).¹⁰² From that moment forward, many of the South Slav nationalists of the Monarchy began to believe increasingly that their future was to be aligned with Belgrade, not with Vienna or Budapest.

Table 1 – Population of the South Slav Territories, c.1910

Croats.....	2,731,000
Serbs.....	1,967,000
Slovenes.....	1,214,000
Bosnian Muslims....	612,000

Table 2 – Population of the South Slav Territories (excluding Bosnia-Herzegovina)

Croats.....	2,297,000
Serbs.....	1,142,000
Slovenes.....	1,214,000

Source: Paul Robert Magosci, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*

On the international front, the move was problematic for the Habsburgs. The annexation had been timed to coincide with the Bulgarian declaration of independence in the hopes that the latter event would take the focus away from Bosnia; the maneuver failed and the annexation was loudly condemned.¹⁰³ The Austro-Hungarian army was prepared to mobilize in response to Serbian calls for war over the issue. Serbia was only restrained from declaring war by Russia, who, still recovering from its losses in the Russo-Japanese War, had already given its approval for the annexation. But Serbia was to continue to seek a means of avenging itself for the annexation; in advance of June 28, 1914, Austro-Hungarian intelligence suspected the Serbian government of ties to subversive organizations within the Monarchy such as *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia),

¹⁰² Kann, *Multinational Empire*, v. 2, p. 305.

¹⁰³ Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy, 1814-1914* (New York: McGraw-Hill 1992), p. 412.

members of which ultimately carried out the assassination (to the extent that Austro-Hungarian officials have been accused of intentionally failing to warn the Archduke).¹⁰⁴

A further consequence of the annexation had the ultimate effect of indirectly strengthening Serbia. In an unsuccessful attempt to blunt the impact of the annexation, the Monarchy agreed to evacuate its troops from the neighboring Turkish province of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, which it had occupied at the same time as Bosnia-Herzegovina. The return to Turkish control was short-lived; during the Balkan Wars, Serbia was able to annex this territory, adding to its power and prestige among the South Slavs.

Impact of the Balkan Wars

The leadership of both parts of the Monarchy witnessed with trepidation the unfolding of events that led to the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913. The alliance concluded between Serbia and Bulgaria in March 1912 (several months later to include Greece) in a secret clause provided for the division of the Ottoman European possessions among them. The *Balkanbund* was arranged in collusion with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov, who intended for the Balkan region's incorporation into the Russian sphere of influence in the event of the disruption of the area's status quo.¹⁰⁵ The Italian invasion of Tripoli, which had begun in September 1911, provided the opportunity to put this plan into action, with Turkish forces being occupied in North Africa. In addition, the Tripoli invasion was the occasion for a trial mobilization of Russian forces, and a resulting mobilization of Austro-Hungarian troops, as it soon became clear that the *Balkanbund*,

104 Ibid, p. 438.

105 B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co 1921), p. 154.

while its primary objective was to annex and partition Ottoman territory, secondarily targeted Austria-Hungary.

Thus with the outbreak of the First Balkan War in October 1912 and the rapid collapse of the remnant of Turkish control on the European continent (despite a hastily concluded peace with Italy), the Habsburg Monarchy was compelled to intervene to ensure that Serbia was not able to grow too powerful occupying the void left behind. This necessity was reinforced by subsequent events; while the London Conference ended the First Balkan War, the Second Balkan War erupted before the treaty was signed. The “concert of Europe” (as represented in the London Conference) had failed to keep the peace; as a result, Austria-Hungary had lost its diplomatic position in the Balkans. Therefore, Austria-Hungary became the *de facto* guarantor of the independence of the newly established state of Albania, and threatened to intervene militarily to prevent Serbia and Montenegro from annexing Albanian territory; Serbia especially desired this gain as it would have given them an outlet to the Adriatic Sea - ironically, this purely strategic objective may have worked against Serbia's national aspirations, as the territory was not populated by South Slavs nor was it part of the traditional Serbian heartland (as in Kosovo).¹⁰⁶

On three occasions during the Balkan Wars, the Monarchy was compelled to threaten the use of force in response to Serbian and Montenegrin provocation. The first occurred when Serbian troops moved toward the Austro-Hungarian border in December 1912; the fear of involvement from other Great Powers and doubts about German support prevented war on this occasion. The second occurred when the Monarchy threatened war

¹⁰⁶ Rich, p. 428.

to compel Montenegro to return the city of Scutari to Albania; the king of Montenegro ultimately relented. The third occasion was in October 1913, when Serbia refused to withdraw from Albanian territory it had occupied; once again the threat of war convinced Serbia to yield.¹⁰⁷ However, overshadowing these crises was the question of possible Russian involvement. Russia threatened military involvement in the case of a war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia.¹⁰⁸ But Russia at this point was not in a position to intervene during the Balkan Wars, and Sazonov persuaded the Serbs to back down and abandon the Albanian territory, promising Russian support in the future.¹⁰⁹ This factor was key, as the Austro-Hungarian government followed the same pattern of threatening military force during the July Crisis, (anticipating that the strategy which seemed to be successful during the Balkan Wars would work again during the July Crisis) but on the later occasion, Russia no longer had the ability to remain out of the conflict; it had failed to support its Serbian allies too often, and Russian influence in the Balkans would have been irreparably damaged had Russia backed down then.

Although it was denied its prize of access to the Adriatic, the Kingdom of Serbia emerged from the Balkan Wars with its territory doubled in size (including the formerly Habsburg-occupied territory of Novi Pazar), and with its prestige among the South Slav peoples enhanced even further. Therefore the possibility loomed even larger of the Serbian state playing the “Piedmont” role, and implementing a Yugoslav solution outside the framework of the Monarchy. The voices of those who had been sounding the alarm

107 Ibid, pp. 428, 429, 431.

108 Siebert, p. 804.

109 Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914*, trans. by Isabella M. Massey, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1952), v. 1, p. 486.

about this possibility, such as Conrad, grew even louder. In a 1913 memorandum, Conrad advanced the view that Austria-Hungary's future security could only be guaranteed by the incorporation of Serbia and Montenegro into the Monarchy.¹¹⁰ Such an outcome could only be achieved through war, as in Conrad's words, "the time when friendly cooperation with Serbia was possible is over... the same holds for Montenegro, whose king has no choice but to act in a Great Serbian spirit."¹¹¹ Count Leopold Berchtold, Aehrenthal's successor as Foreign Minister, preferred a diplomatic solution but was eventually convinced of the necessity of military action, particularly following Serbian aggression in the Second Balkan War.¹¹² Berchtold's foreign policy had been effectively destroyed by the events of the Balkan Wars. More and more the Austro-Hungarian foreign ministry concluded that something had to be done about Serbia in order for the Monarchy to retain its great power status. But as Austria-Hungary would not have been able to fight Russia alone, assistance from Germany was required (this assistance ultimately materialized in the form of the notorious "blank check" during the July Crisis). The promise of German assistance was also needed to overcome the opposition of Istvan Tisza to the Monarchy's Balkan policy; Tisza believed that Romanian territorial ambitions in Transylvania posed a greater threat to Hungary than Serbia.¹¹³ In the early part of 1914 a memorandum outlining an aggressive Balkan policy was commissioned, to include as a guiding principle the attempt to build an anti-Serbian

110 Conrad, v. 3, p. 755.

111 Ibid, v. 3, p. 758.

112 Samuel R. Williamson & Russel Van Wyk, *July 1914: Soldiers, Statesmen and the Coming of the Great War* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's 2003), p. 55.

113 Albertini, v. 1, pp. 506-7.

coalition among the Balkan states and to isolate Serbia as far as possible.¹¹⁴ This document, known as the Matscheko Memorandum, was completed just days before the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife.

In the aftermath of the assassinations in Sarajevo, the pressure to subdue Serbia once and for all grew too great to ignore. The Monarchy had been embarrassed twice before in dealing with Serbia (during the Pig War and in the Balkan Wars) it could not afford to be caught off guard again. There was a palpable sense that the Monarchy had lost control of the situation; Berchtold's more restrained inclinations had failed, and Conrad's more belligerent policy ruled the day. Ironically, Franz Ferdinand had been one of the major voices advocating against war, and had he survived, it is likely war would have been prevented again.¹¹⁵ The death of Franz Ferdinand resulting in Berchtold gravitating even more closely to Conrad's more aggressive stance. Viewed in this context, the Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum to Serbia represented a final attempt to retain the Monarchy's great power status and some influence in the Balkans. The Serbian government was presented with a ten-point list of demands, to be accepted unconditionally within 48 hours. Included in them was the demand for involvement by Austro-Hungarian authorities in the suppression of anti-Habsburg subversive organizations in Serbia, a demand that was not expected to be accepted.¹¹⁶ By presenting Serbia with a demand designed to be rejected, the Monarchy effectively provoked the war that some, such as Conrad (and to a much lesser extent, Berchtold) believed was necessary to end the threat posed by Serbian irredentism. Ironically, they were following

114 Ibid, v. 1, p. 535.

115 Ibid, v. 1, p. 434.

116 Rich, p. 445.

the same pattern of provocation during the July Crisis as they had during the Bosnian annexation and the Balkan Wars, when the hope had been to engage Serbia without involving Russia; the Monarchy wished to keep the war localized as far as possible. Unfortunately, when the declaration of war finally came, it was no longer possible to keep Russia out of the conflict. As a result, the Dual Monarchy, to borrow a phrase from Robert Kann, “committed suicide out of fear of dying.”¹¹⁷

The Great War and the End of the Monarchy

The question of the viability of the Habsburg Monarchy absent the war falls outside the scope of the present study; suffice it to say that virtually all observers agree that the war was the immediate cause of the empire's collapse. However, for most of the war, the Allies had no intention of allowing the Monarchy to be partitioned; as late as January 1918, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George expressed his support for keeping the state intact.¹¹⁸ It was only in April 1918, when Kaiser Karl I submitted his forces to Wilhelm II's leadership at the Spa Conference (in response to the revelation of the Sixtus Affair in which Austria-Hungary attempted to make a separate peace with the Allies) that the Allies concluded that the Monarchy was lost to German domination, and no longer desired to preserve it.¹¹⁹

During the course of the war, it became increasingly apparent that if the Monarchy was to have any hope of surviving in postwar Europe, a satisfactory solution to

117 Quoted in Longworth, p. 121.

118 Kann, *Multinational Empire*, v.2, p. 271.

119 David Stevenson, “War Aims and Peace Negotiations,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, ed. by Hew Strachan (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998), pp. 204-215, pp. 213, 215.

at least the South Slav nationality problem would have to be found. However, it was not until October 2, 1918, at what turned out to be the penultimate meeting of the Joint Ministerial council, that the desirability of establishing a separate political unit (in a form approximating a trialist framework) for the South Slavs was considered.¹²⁰ The final attempt to address Habsburg Monarchy's nationality issue was Karl I's October 16, 1918, decree ordering the federalization of the lands of Cisleithanian Austria; even at this late date the Hungarian government refused to allow any such changes to its constitutional framework.¹²¹ Had these measures been implemented under different circumstances (e.g., earlier in the war), they may well have saved the Monarchy. As it was, the gestures were far too little and far too late to have any effect on the loyalty of the South Slavs. The Allies ignored these belated half-measures, and instead gave their support to the Yugoslav National Committee, representatives of which were at that time preparing to detach the South Slav territories to be united with Serbia into the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

120 Komjáthy, p. 693.

121 Ibid, p. 696.

Conclusions

What general trends can be discerned about the nature of the policy adopted by the Vienna and Budapest governments toward the peoples of the South Slav area? We can see certain slight differences between the respective nationality policies of Austria and Hungary. To a large degree, the motivation behind them may have been influenced by the process by which the two realms came to be organized.

The lands of Cisleithanian Austria were composed of a hodgepodge of territories - the Austrian duchies (the so-called "hereditary lands"), Bohemia, Galicia, Dalmatia, etc. - acquired piecemeal by the Habsburg dynasty over the course of the centuries. These territories had different historical situations and established customs, and enjoyed a variety of traditional privileges. As such, the main force unifying them was the House of Habsburg itself. In his landmark study *The Multinational Empire*, Robert Kann discussed the role played by German centralism, the desire on the part of the German administrators of the monarchy to maintain their position of dominance in the state; this was particularly the case as Austrian Germans sought to establish their identity in the wake of Austria's defeat by Prussia and expulsion from the German *Bund* in 1866.¹²²

The Kingdom of Hungary, on the other hand, had achieved its prewar borders at a much earlier date (the traditional boundaries of the Lands of St. Stephen had been achieved by the sixteenth century, and been solidified following the expulsion of the

¹²² Kann, *Multinational Empire*, vol. 1, pp. 76-7.

Turks in the late seventeenth/early eighteenth centuries), and all of its territory had long been held (at least in the eyes of the dominant Magyars) as an indivisible part of the inheritance of the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. On the part of the ruling Magyars, there was also a feeling of paternalism toward their subject nationalities; however, it manifested in a different way. Here, there was a tendency to make no distinction between the Magyar nationality and the boundaries of the kingdom. In effect, the non-Magyar nationalities were regarded as “Magyars of another tongue,” and efforts to encourage them to assimilate were based on this premise.¹²³ This much was apparent in the text of the 1868 Nationalities Law, which declared that Hungary was a “unitary national state.”¹²⁴ To be sure, there were those Magyar politicians who saw the need for national reform; Lajos Mocsáry, a Magyar representing a Romanian constituency, believed that long-term stability for the Hungarian state could only be achieved by assuring the full national development of each of its ethnic groups.¹²⁵ But this view was more the exception than the rule, as Mocsáry's efforts faced opposition from Kalman Tisza and eventually from his own party.¹²⁶

From these two disparate starting points, we can see two different nationality policies that resulted. In Cisleithanian Austria during the prewar decades, save for a vague idea in some quarters that the German element should be dominant, there was no clear nationality policy, and the government generally struggled with issues on a case by

123 Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848-1914* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press 2000), p. 64.

124 Gottas, p. 187.

125 István Csucsujá, “Lajos Mocsáry's Political Theory of National Minorities,” in *Geopolitics in the Danube Region: Hungarian Reconciliation Efforts, 1848-1998*, ed. by Ignác Romsics and Béla K. Király (Budapest: Central European University Press 1999), pp. 161-175, p. 162.

126 Ibid, p. 168.

case basis (essentially a version of Taaffe's "muddling through" policy). Within the Kingdom of Hungary, on the other hand, assimilation was strongly encouraged throughout this period. The nationalities might continue to use their languages in their own communities, but they were encouraged to learn Magyar and use it in official settings, and they were not to expect any kind of special treatment or an autonomous national existence. Even in the rare instance in which a concession was made on this last point (as in Croatia), steps were taken to ensure that the provincial administration was to serve Budapest's interests, not the nationalities, and the population was not to be free of the pressure of magyarization. Taking this into account, one can see the reasoning behind the statement that "the King of Hungary governed differently from the Emperor of Austria."¹²⁷

What does this specifically say about the situation of the South Slavs of the Monarchy? Consider briefly for a moment the position the South Slav peoples found themselves in as their respective national movements gained momentum. They were a group of people who had enough in common that the idea of being joined together in one state found a number of supporters (leading to the formation of the Yugoslav state in the aftermath of the war), yet the cultural differences between the ethnic groups ultimately led to the failure of this attempt. While most of these differences predated Habsburg rule, some proved to be enhanced by the simple factor of where in the Monarchy the group resided. For example, we know of the tragic legacy of government attempts to instigate ethnic strife between Serbs and Croats. While this action occurred in other South Slav provinces, it was considerably more pronounced in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

¹²⁷ Mitis, p. 581.

The legacy of Austrian and Hungarian rule was fated to influence the course of the post-1918 history of the South Slav territories in a myriad of other ways. As we have seen, during the prewar years, Cisleithanian Austria made several, albeit imperfect, strides toward democratic reform that brought the nationalities into the system to a greater degree; Hungary resisted any such change and kept participation by the nationalities marginalized. As a result of this prewar experience, the nationalities of Austria entered into the post-1918 period in general more prepared than those of Hungary to handle the demands of representative government they faced as part of their new states, a connection that has not been lost on historians such as Rudolf Sieghart and Robert Kann.¹²⁸ The Austrian government, in large part unintentionally, laid the groundwork for much of the future success of their South Slav population. The Magyars, by contrast, have been regarded, both by contemporary and later observers, as “the mortal enemy of the South Slavs and their unification efforts.”¹²⁹

Although the Slovenes were largely on the sidelines in the struggle between Serbs and Croats for supremacy in the new Yugoslav state (until 1929, officially, the “Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes”), their prior experience learning to conduct business with the dominant Germans in the *Reichsrat* served them well in their later experience; being skilled in local government and administration they were able to maneuver to gain some concessions in the Serb-dominated state.¹³⁰ The Croats, on the other hand, according to Joseph Rothschild, had emerged from the imperial period with a

128 Kann, *Multinational Empire*, vol. 2, p. 227.

129 Schüssler, p. 134.

130 Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 1977), p. 208.

considerable degree of distrust toward the idea of adhering to a central government.¹³¹ But it might be more clear to state that in interwar Yugoslavia, the Croats occupied an analogous position to the one they had in prewar Hungary; they had merely exchanged one dominant power (the Magyars) for another (the Serbs). It is also significant to note that there was a difference between the Serbs that had lived in the Monarchy prior to the war (*prečani*) and those who had lived in the prewar Kingdom of Serbia (*srbijanci*). The *prečani* Serbs ultimately chose to side with the Croats and Slovenes over their conationals in the ethnic strife during the interwar period.¹³² The *prečani* Serbs had two major centers of population; the Vojvodina and Dalmatia. As we have seen, in both of these areas significant capital was invested in building the local infrastructure, and Serbian economic and cultural life in these provinces, although behind the standards of the rest of the Monarchy, was considered superior to that experienced in the prewar Serbian kingdom. Recall also the economic problems caused by the breakup of the Habsburg Monarchy; a similar dynamic can be discerned in post-1918 Yugoslavia. Here, the more industrialized north (Slovenia and parts of Croatia) were expected to subsidize the less developed southern regions.¹³³ Friction over this imbalance plagued the Yugoslav state through much of its existence, and contributed to its final breakup in 1991-2.

The influence of the Austrian and Hungarian governments on the South Slav territories can be discerned even into the period of the collapse of Yugoslavia and the ensuing wars in the early 1990s. We have already touched on the most obvious example:

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid, p. 209.

133 Ibid, p. 204.

the relations between the Bosnian Muslims and the Serbs and Croats of Bosnia-Herzegovina, ultimately leading to the 1992-1995 war, and the fragile peace that exists today. This influence can also be seen in other, more subtle ways. Slovenia was able to break away from Yugoslavia with very little conflict in 1991, and largely remained detached from the chaos of the wars that have embroiled its former Yugoslav partners.¹³⁴ While Slovenia owes much of its external security to its geographical position (with Croatia acting as a buffer separating it from the rest of the former Yugoslavia), it may not be too much of a stretch to argue that the state's internal stability and prosperity in the following years can be at least in part attributed to its advanced political and economic development from the Habsburg era onward. Croatia, on the other hand, endured a protracted battle for independence against the Serbs of Yugoslavia, with much of its territory occupied up to 1995.¹³⁵ One can see parallels in that the occupied territories (such as the greater part of Slavonia) were mostly those parts of Croatia that had been in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy). An additional legacy from the years of Hungarian rule played out here - many Serbs living in these areas fought with the Serb-led Yugoslav armies against their Croat neighbors, and were subsequently expelled when the territories were recaptured; the percentage of Serbs constituting Croatia's population fell from 12% in 1991 to just 3% in 1995.¹³⁶ It would be a considerable exaggeration to assign primary responsibility for the violence of the 1990s to policies pursued by the Habsburg Monarchy; indeed, the immediate cause of the collapse of Yugoslavia and resulting wars

134 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 2002), p. 176.

135 Ibid, p. 230.

136 Ibid, p. 231.

had much more to do with the ambitions of Slobodan Milošević, Franjo Tuđman, Radovan Karadžić and other individuals concerned with self-aggrandizement and imposing their vision on the state. The argument can be made, however, that the legacy of Habsburg rule, particularly in the Hungarian half, laid the groundwork of ethnic tension that, along with subsequent events, facilitated the destructive fruits of these individuals' labors.

In these days, when the prevailing logic is that each ethnic group should ideally have its own independent state, the construct known as the multinational state appears consigned to the dustbin of history. It must be remembered, however, that the multinational state (whether ruled from Vienna/Budapest, Constantinople, or St. Petersburg) served a vital role in maintaining stability (if not necessarily harmony) in Central and Eastern Europe prior to 1918. In a wartime examination of the South Slav issue, Leo von Südland stated that if the Monarchy wished to win the peace as well as the war it would be necessary to come to terms with the South Slav question, and also expressed hope that in the future, such a resolution would be found.¹³⁷ As we know now, the resolution to the South Slav nationality problem was not to be found within the framework of the Dual Monarchy. Neither the Austrian nor the Hungarian approach was successful over the long term, but these governments still left a lasting stamp on their former territories. For both good and ill, the Habsburg legacy is one the region is still today coming to terms with.

¹³⁷ Leo von Südland, *Die Südslawische Frage und der Weltkrieg* (Vienna: k.u.k. Hof-, Verlags-, & Universitäts Buchhandlung 1918), p. 778.

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