



Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program

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Jointly Administering the Balkans: Habsburg Local Government and Ethnic Politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia, 1878-1914

Topic of Research

Following the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 by the Habsburg (Austro-Hungarian) Monarchy, the new regime introduced a method of joint administration into the province that was unique to the Monarchy. The rest of the empire remained under either Austrian or Hungarian rule. Unable to compromise on which entity would govern Bosnia-Herzegovina, the leaders in Vienna decided upon a joint Austro-Hungarian rule, to be run by the joint Ministry of Finance. Consequently, and using vestiges of the previous Ottoman regime, the Austro-Hungarian leadership governed here unlike anywhere else in the empire. Meanwhile, across the border in Dalmatia, the Habsburg Monarchy governed much like the rest of the empire, either ruled by Austria or Hungary, and with more direct intervention from the center. Dalmatia, with similar linguistic and economic traits as Bosnia-Herzegovina, fell under Austrian rule since the Napoleonic Wars.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, local politics in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia began to develop along ethnic lines into unified Serb, Croat, and in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina Bosnian Muslim parties. This project seeks to identify how the two systems of local administration affected this development of stratified local politics. Surprisingly, by the beginning of the twentieth century, several of the ethnic groups began to form coalitions in order

to exert more influence over local affairs. While fueled and funded by national movements, at times from outside the Monarchy, these partnerships were in direct reaction to the local imperial administrations, albeit for rather contradictory circumstances.

Relevance and Contribution to the Field

As mentioned earlier, the latest wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia and their aftermaths have generated the most interest among scholars in recent years. However, the longer history of the region cannot be neglected. The relevance of this project lies in its understanding of the internal workings of a multinational, multiethnic, and multi-religious state, especially in regards to how the government, in this case imperial government, functions at all levels and to form a cohesive and stable system, as well as their ability to deal with the various forces, both internal and external, undermining state stability.

While at its heart a local study, this project also will incorporate the experiences of other land-based empires throughout East-Central Europe and Central Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and place them in a comparative context. This methodology is meant to break away from trends over the past two decades that focus solely on nations, nationalities, and identities and instead bring focus to the broader context of coterminous relations, effective and stable rule, and unifying, rather than disjointing forces.

In terms of U.S. policy, the wars of the 1990s should serve as a grim reminder of how a deeper understanding of this region, among all disciplines, needs to be maintained and even increased in order consistently have informed experts and policy-makers at all times in case of new strains on American foreign policy. Borders are not pure, and almost every state in the world holds some sort of religious, ethnic, national, or linguistic minority among its inhabitants. By understanding how an empire with over twelve languages and all three major Abrahamic religions successfully functioned for centuries, as well as tracing the roots of historic conflict, can inform the policy community indefinitely.

Summary of Approach and Research Methodology

The foundation of this study is its comparative context. The Habsburg Monarchy, while remaining a centralized, bureaucratic and modern state, also approached many areas with a certain degree of decentralization. A comparative approach allows a portal into understanding the importance of these differences, especially in regards to local administration. The comparison of Bosnia and Dalmatia is relevant for a number of reasons. First, the two provinces share similar linguistic, cultural and geographic characteristics. Second, the economies and networks of transportation and communication of both provinces remained relatively underdeveloped by the end of the nineteenth century. Additionally, the incorporation of the two provinces into the Habsburg Monarchy occurred relatively late when compared with the other Habsburg South Slav lands: Croatia-Slavonia, the Military Border, and Vojvodina. On the macro level, comparisons with other Eurasian land empires will also prove enlightening, as the Habsburg Monarchy did not exist in a vacuum, but rather in the organic development of the region, with each empire facing their own concerns in regards to state security, minorities, administration, foreign policy and expansion. The framework for the imperial comparison closely follows the work of Alfred Rieber and Alexei Miller, along with new work by Kenneth Pomeranz. Their comparative work has allowed scholarship to shift away from trends of the last 20-30 years placing emphasis on national development and identity and their disintegrating effects on empires, to viewing imperial rule as a useful category for historical analysis, not the dated, crumbling old-world relics content on keeping national movements in check.

However, again, this study will focus primarily on local experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia. While drawing heavily from secondary sources, especially in German and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, archival research remains the hallmark of this study. For nine months, archival research was conducted throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia at the research sites listed below. First, lists, titles, and responsibilities of the local administrators were compiled to achieve an overall impression of the Habsburg framework in Bosnia, and eventually Dalmatia. The differences between Bosnia-Herzegovina and the rest of the Monarchy became immediately apparent, as the Habsburg authorities chose to keep many of the former Ottoman regional and district boundaries and internal structures, while of course adding their own flavor to the mix. The majority of records remaining from the Habsburg period were internal correspondences up and down the chain of command, both in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia. Thus, I devoted a majority of my research time to these internal correspondences, both from the regional offices to the provincial capital, and from the capital to the imperial center in Vienna (or Budapest in certain instances).

Research Sites:

Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine (Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina
Arhiv Republike Srpske (Archive of the Serb Republic), Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina
Arhiv Unsko-Sanskog Kantona (Archive of the Una-San Canton), Bihać, Bosnia-Herzegovina
Državni Arhiv u Zadru (State Archive in Zadar), Zadar, Croatia
Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku (State Archive in Dubrovnik), Dubrovnik, Croatia

Summary of Research Findings and Conclusions

This dissertation will examine the Austro-Hungarian administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Austrian administration of Dalmatia from 1878 (when the Habsburg Monarchy occupied the former Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina) to the start of the First World War in 1914 to compare the nature of Habsburg local government in the two provinces and the effect of this administration on local politics. My first step was to break down the administrative structure in Bosnia-Herzegovina and identify all players, both major and minor. The administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina ran through the Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministry of Finance, and not through direct administration in Austria or Hungary. Thus, the de facto ruler of Bosnia-Herzegovina fell to the Joint Minister of Finance. From 1882-1903 this man's name was Benjamin Kállay, followed by Istvan Burian from 1903-1912. The Joint Finance Ministry set up an office for Bosnia-Herzegovina in Vienna, and then a central provincial government in Sarajevo (*Landesregierung*). Furthermore, the joint Austrian and Hungarian delegations stipulated that Bosnia would receive no financial disbursements from either the Austrian or Hungarian treasuries. Simply stated, any spending on Bosnia had to be drawn from Bosnian income. Additionally, the legal status of Bosnians, regardless of confession or income, remained unclear throughout the Habsburg period. Even after the 1908 annexation, Bosnian residents had no legal rights in the Habsburg structure because, according to both the Austrian and Hungarian constitutions, one had to be a citizen of Austria or Hungary to retain any rights under the law. Bosnians never achieved this status. On the contrary, Dalmatians were Austrian citizens under the dualist structure, subject to Austrian law, the Austrian Parliament, and administrators chosen by the Austrian bureaucracy. Conversely, the joint, or dualist Habsburg system chose the administrators for Bosnia.

The *Landesregierung* then set up six regional offices (*Kreis*) throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina in the towns of Mostar, Sarajevo, Travnik, Banja Luka, Bihać, and Tuzla. Those regions were further divided into districts (*Bezirk*) and even further into sub-districts (*Expositur*). As expected,

each level had one main administrator accompanied by staffs for general administration, political development, propaganda, agriculture, finance, surveillance, forestry, etc. Conventional wisdom among the historiography places Kállay as the quasi-dictator of Bosnia-Herzegovina, ruling unhindered with little to no interference from the Emperor or the parliaments in Vienna and Budapest. However, my research has uncovered that most major decisions for Bosnia-Herzegovina actually remained in the hands of the *Civil Adlatus*, the civilian second-in-command under the *Landeschef*. While on paper the provincial head in Sarajevo was the *Landeschef*, that position always fell to the supreme military commander for the provinces, and thus his major decision-making duties remained in the sphere of the army and other military matters. The *Civil Adlatus* in charge for most of my period of study was Hugo von Kutschera, followed by Isidor von Boinik Benko. Through extensive archival research, it appears most major decision making for Bosnia-Herzegovina began and ended with the office of the *Civil Adlatus*. Instead of a detached Finance Minister in Vienna who charted grand schemes for the provinces, I contend that the process was more hands on in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and this more direct approach filters down to the lower-level administrators, many of whom spoke a variant of the local language. Consequently, with more access and integration with the community, the *Civil Adlatus* and his subordinates managed to develop a tighter, more aggressive administrative style than in other parts of the Monarchy.

During the corresponding period, the administration in Dalmatia followed the more traditional Austrian model, with far more direct intervention from Vienna than in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unlike the provincial status of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia held the title of *Staathalterei*, sort of a state within a state, or within in the Austrian half of the Empire. At the top of the *Staathalterei* government sat the *Staathalter*, an appointed governor from Vienna. Through the archival record, I ascertained that the *Staathalter* possessed far more limited powers than his counterpart in Sarajevo. Vienna forced The *Staathalter* to obtain permission and authorization for many of his decisions with great frequency. Moreover, unlike in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia retained its own parliament (*Sabor* or *Landtag*) as well as being represented in the Austrian Parliament.

The next issue was to ascertain what sort of decisions the local administrators made in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia. On the day to day operations of the imperial government in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the administration remained quite effective. The economic condition of the provinces slowly improved with upgraded transportation and communication networks, the influx of trade with the rest of the Monarchy, and access to education. However, as mentioned earlier, Bosnia-Herzegovina had to pay for itself, so this burden also kept the provinces from growing at an even faster pace. The Bosnian administrators surprisingly devoted an enormous amount of time and resources to stopping the infiltration of national ideas and agitation from neighboring Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia. Beginning around 1890, countless documents began to show an almost paranoid fascination with this topic. So-called agitators continued to be surveilled, their movements tracked and publications intercepted. The Bosnian administration also had free reign to censure or shut down publications deemed inappropriate or offensive to the loyal Habsburg idea. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the anti-nationalist movement of the administration consumed far more interest than any other topic (thus draining time and resources from education, defense, and economic stimulation), but with inverse results as the national movements actually gained strength among the political elite.

The administration in Bosnia-Herzegovina also had the unique situation of dealing with an ethnic Muslim population, the first of its kind in the Monarchy. This Muslim population, combined with the legacies of four centuries of Ottoman rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina, led the Habsburg administration to seek an alliance with the Muslim elite. While not making up a

majority the Bosnian population, the Bosnian Muslims constituted the bulk of the landowning elite. Thus, when the Austro-Hungarian authorities entered the provinces, they struck a deal with the Bosnian Muslim landowners: in return for loyalty and support for the new administration, the Austro-Hungarian authorities allowed the landowners to keep their land and maintain the near-serfdom, sharecropping agriculture system passed down from the Ottoman days. As a result, the majority of the remaining ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, continued to exist as agricultural peasants. The animosity forged by this agreement pushed the Croats and Serbs to form political movements based on their own national interests, against the landowning Muslims as well as their Austro-Hungarian rulers.

One exception must be noted, however: the religious identity of the Habsburg system. The Catholic Church remained a linchpin of the dynasty's legitimacy, and as such this highly Catholic nature spread throughout the bureaucracy, especially since most other religious minorities (with a few exceptions) in the Monarchy did not advance into the officer corps, foreign service and domestic administration, mainly due to their lack of education and their location on the peripheries of the empire. Accordingly, the Austro-Hungarian leadership populated the Bosnian administration mostly with Catholics, especially from Croatia proper. This influx not only increased the overall population of Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also improved their position vis-à-vis their Serbian Orthodox counterparts. The administration also attempted to colonize Bosnia-Herzegovina with Catholics (most notably in the Prnjavor region) from all over the Monarchy, but mostly from Galicia, in present-day Poland.

In Dalmatia, the Austrian administration faced similar ethnic challenges, but on a much different mosaic than the Bosnian experience. In Dalmatia, there were three main ethnic groups: Croats, Serbs, and Italians. Even though Italians made up an extremely small percentage of the population (less than one percent), they wielded enormous influence as the selected appointees of the Austrian administration. The Austrian system had also been in place since 1815, thus leading to an ingrained administrative structure with far more influence from Vienna. Much like their deal with the Bosnian Muslims, Austrian authorities chose to invest their administrative faith with the group that previously ruled the province: the descendents of the Venetian Empire, now a powerful but small Italian minority. Whereas representing only around 10 percent of the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croats made up roughly 80 percent of the Dalmatian population. Additionally, local Croatian politics in Dalmatia always fought for different goals in Dalmatia than their counterparts Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dalmatian Croats constantly strove for union with Croatia-Slavonia, then part of the Hungarian half of the Monarchy, as well as relative autonomy for the Catholic South Slavs. Both Austrian and Hungarian authorities adamantly opposed this union, first as a challenge to their own authority, but also fearful of a strong and united South Slavic presence in the southern Monarchy.

The lack of Austrian support for the union of Dalmatia with Croatia and Slavonia, combined with Italian irredentist claims to Dalmatia, led the Croat majority to seek support from their only viable option, the Serb minority (around 19 percent) in Dalmatia. Consequently, the Serb minority, seeking a voice for their autonomous claims, found no support from the Austrian regime. They eventually joined forces with the Croat majority, forming the Croat-Serb Coalition in 1903. Dalmatian Serbs and Croats also fought for improved economic conditions in the province, since the Austrian, and thus Italian authorities chose to invest little while drawing their own fortunes from the suppressed Croat and Serb, predominately peasant majorities. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, politics also stratified along confessional, hence ethnic lines. However, unlike Dalmatia, no coalitions formed and grievances grew among the three ethnic groups. For the most part, Bosnian Croats remained quite loyal to the Monarchy, mainly because their improved standing in the Habsburg order, but also their low numbers and lack of unifying aspirations with

Croatia proper attributed to this movement. As mentioned earlier, the Bosnian Muslim elite retained their assets and religious institutions in return for loyalty. The Bosnian Serbs, however, chose to follow a far more aggressive political and national movement, directly opposing the Habsburg policy in the provinces, along with the Catholic administrators and Muslim landowners. Bosnian Serbs could also lean heavily on their neighbors to the east, the newly created Serbian state.

The Austro-Hungarian leadership allowed Bosnia-Herzegovina to form its own parliament (*Sabor*) in 1910. Unfortunately, the Bosnian Parliament remained a symbolic gesture, as it held little to no authority or legislative powers. Instead, it became a venue to air grievances against the Habsburg authorities for more autonomy, but mainly against each either, that is, the three respective ethnic groups. No united fronts formed, and consensus remained elusive. Whereas in Dalmatia, local politics focused their energies towards union and against the local administration, Bosnian politics continued to be fragmented and focused on a wide array of topics, but mainly with national/ethnic interests in mind.

Suggestions for Future Research

On a personal level, my year of IREX-supported research will not only allow me to expand upon my dissertation: developing articles for publication in peer-reviewed journals and a manuscript for publication, but also present opportunities to focus on some of the more intriguing individuals introduced in the study as well as applying many of these findings and concepts to other parts of the Monarchy. Furthermore, the framework and approach to this study could be applied to not just the Habsburg Monarchy, but any other forms of multiethnic, multi-religious, multinational societies, regardless of the existence of an imperial form of rule.

Recommendations for the U.S. Policy Community

In the last decade, U.S. policy has shifted considerably from the former Eastern Europe and Soviet Union to the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia, predominantly Muslim states. This study suggests that the developing borderlands of the West with Islam have historical precedents, and they are not always seen as times of tension, bloodshed, and violence. Multi-religious regions can be administered through peaceful and effective means. While I am not suggesting this can be applied to every case, historical evidence suggests the mechanics for successful administration have been used, but we can also learn from the failures of past experiences to continue the development of peaceful coexistence with the Islamic world.

As for Southeastern Europe, I fear the trend of pulling resources out of the region and moving them to the Middle East and Eurasia will continue. As states of the former Eastern Bloc enter international organizations such as NATO and the European Union, support from the Federal Government for scholarship on these states has been reduced or withdrawn entirely. With only 15 years since the fall of communism, scholarship now has the possibility to flourish as more and more archival sources are opened up to Western scholars, unfortunately, it occurs at the same time as resources are drying up. This trend must not continue. We must learn from the lessons of our past to stave off the chances of devoid of experts in this region. The wars Yugoslav succession and the continuing situation in Kosovo should only highlight this point. It is better to be prepared and knowledgeable, than being forced to react to each new situation after the fact. Understandably, the acquisition and continuing support of language training is also essential.