

# The nation state in contemporary Europe: the centenary of WWI.

## New chances for historical reconciliation

### Conference proceedings

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- Nation states need to secure societal attachment, reflected in processes of identity construction.
- In Central and Eastern Europe, the year of 2018 marks 100 years of nation state, a relatively short period of time for the purpose of identity creation.
- The peace treaties signed after World War I created categories of “winners” and “losers” that produce their effects even today: all newly created nation states had sizeable minorities to integrate, a process that is both unfinished and not always successful.
- Exclusive definitions of political communities and revival of nationalism today could, in part, be a consequence of complicated nation state building in the last 100 years.
- European integration may be the solution to accommodating diversity, while preserving identity; socially constructing ethnic and religious variety as natural is key to ongoing processes of reconciliation.

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## Introduction

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The year of 2018 marks the centenary of the end of the First World War, when the principle of self-determination entered center stage and led to the creation of several European sovereign entities. This international conference centers upon the comparative evolution of the nation state – both as concept and lived-in reality – in contemporary Europe. It aims to offer a transnational perspective on anniversary events and discourses related to the end of World War I and a nuanced account of new state formation in its aftermath, and also to contour new research trajectories. By focusing on reconciliation, scholars and practitioners discussed the trajectory of the nation state, since the Trianon Treaty and throughout 100 years of transformations, including but not limited to the effects of EU integration on re-shaping political communities.

This interdisciplinary conference was organized by the Center for Neighborhood Studies (CENS), at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, with the kind support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and in partnership with the Institute of Political History (Hungary).

The conference was structured along one keynote lecture delivered by Géza Jeszenszky (historian, former Foreign Minister of Hungary) and 3 panels:

Panel I: Empires and nation states – a historical perspective

Panel II: The nation state in Eastern Europe after 100 years

Panel III: New ideas, new research, new historiography?

Some of the contributions to this conference are gathered in this publication. Each and all are reflections upon 100 years of history, and aim to explain document and explain (in)/evolutions of conceptualizations of nation and nation state in Central Europe, given both pre and post WWI (and Cold War) transformations and challenges. Moreover, each author also discusses the effects of 100 years of national identity construction and promotion on current debates vis-à-vis the preferred shape of political community in Central and Eastern Europe.

Although 100 years have passed since the end of World War I, we have a duty – especially in post-communist countries – to permanently try to understand its consequences in terms of conceptualizations of political community, status and role of minorities, neighborhood relations, or our countries' position within the European Union. A contextualized, nuanced, and time-sensitive approach to understanding the effects of the peace treaties (including the Trianon Treaty) in Central and Eastern Europe is not only a necessity for improving relations between majorities and minorities, but it may also be important in creating mass support for the European project.

# Conflict and Reconciliation in Europe. Overcoming Memories of a Difficult Past

**Géza Jeszenszky**

(historian, former Foreign Minister of Hungary)

We all know that the two World Wars were caused – to a large extent – by territorial, colonial, naval and economic disputes between the nations of Western Europe. Learning from those conflicts and aiming to avoid repeating them, solid institutions were established after 1945: the Council of Europe, NATO and the Common Market growing into the European Union. By the end of the 1940s the spirit of reconciliation was characteristic of practically all the peoples inhabiting the western part of Europe. In the eastern half of our continent conditions were ripe for a similar process, as shown by the agreement of a confederation between the Polish and the Czech governments-in-exile, or the various plans by Hungarians, the Slovak Hodza and others for federations, but Stalin's baneful influence forestalled all that after 1943. The imposition of communism in all the Soviet-occupied countries put an end to all plans for a federation or even a customs union. Lip-service was paid to the "brotherhood" of the so-called socialist countries, but it was insincere: it hid but did not eliminate nationalist antagonisms. Even after the collapse of communism general and genuine reconciliation did not occur, especially not in the depth of society. Here I would like to summarize my take on the reasons for that absence of reconciliation and I have even the temerity to put forward how, in my opinion, this problem could be remedied.

The national idea ("nationalism") became the dominant ideology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A century later, it led to the break-up of the multinational Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. The end of the Great War introduced a new historical era in all over Europe, but in Central and Eastern Europe (including Germany) the end of the old order was far more visible and radical. Many crowns fell, new, independent countries came into being, displaying

new but hotly debated borders. Universal suffrage became widespread, and some kind of social legislation was also introduced in most countries.

At the end of the First World War the aim of all modern European nations appeared to have been achieved, thanks to the victorious West, who promised independence to the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, and – after the collapse of the empire of the Czars – even to their subjects. There were high hopes all over Europe that, for the first time in history, peace would be fair and lasting. President Wilson's 14 Points and the equally important pledges delivered on February 11, 1918 in his address to Congress inspired most Europeans:

*peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game, even the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of power; [...] every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned, and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims amongst rival states; [...] all well-defined national aspirations shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded them without introducing new or perpetuating old elements of discord and antagonism that would be likely in time to break the peace of Europe and consequently of the world.*

What a beautiful vision and remarkable foresight!

The year 1918 is the birthday of new, re-emerged, or grossly enlarged independent states. For most of them it was then, as well as today, rea-

son for happiness, for celebration. For the Baltic people, independence in Finland and Poland had to be consolidated by fighting a civil war and/or war against the Bolsheviks. In the end, nationalism defeated Bolshevism, except in Russia and Ukraine, where the “Reds” promised land for the peasants, a perspective that trumped all others. Social justice was a universal demand throughout Europe, and it was even stronger in the defeated countries, which had been lagging behind it that respect. Eventually, the ideological Right, represented by various types of authoritarian regimes came to prevail, with the help of nationalism. It started in Hungary, as a reaction to the Hungarian Soviet Republic, was followed by Mussolini in Italy, then Bulgaria, Austria, Yugoslavia and Germany, also Romania. In all those cases, the 1918 peace treaty, regarded by most citizens as unfair and even humiliating, had an important role. In the countries defeated in the war apart from the territorial losses there was also the moral and financial burden of “war guilt”: the peace treaties stated that sole responsibility for the world war rested with the losers, therefore they were to pay large amounts as war reparations.

But the new countries emerging out of the ruins of the Empires were a far cry from being genuine nation states. They were all born with a *birth defect*: a large number of national minorities. The ethnic mixture of Central and South-Eastern Europe precluded the drawing of ethnic borders. Strategic and economic considerations awarding some nations and punishing others populated “the new Europe” with millions of unhappy and hostile national minorities. Those minorities made up almost a third of the population of the territory between Germany and Russia. According to the first census one finds the following composition:

- Czechoslovakia: 14.7 million, 50.5 % Czech, 15.7 % Slovak, 22.5 % German, 5.5 % Hungarian (Hungarian speaking Jews excluded), 3.5 % Rusyn.
- Romania (which increased threefold): 16 million, 72 % Romanian, 9.1 % Hungarian, 4.5 % German, 4.2 % Ukrainian and Rusyn.

- Yugoslavia: 12 million, 47.7 % Serb, 23.3 % Croat, 8.5 % Slovenian, 5.5 % Albanian, 3.9 % Hungarian, 3.4 % Macedonian.
- Poland: 27 million, 64 % Polish, 16 % Ukrainian, 11 % Jews, 5 % Belorussian and Russian, 4 % German.
- Hungary: 8 million, 89.5 % Hungarian, 6.9 % German.
- Austria: 6 million, all German.
- Bulgaria: 4,5 million, 81 % Bulgarian, 10 % Turk.

Thus for 30 million people, self-determination was a false slogan, since they were victims of what they considered unfairly drawn borders. Indeed, the peacemaking Great Powers could have done a far better job by honestly applying Wilson’s principles. At minimum, they could have recommended plebiscites for all the areas claimed by two or more countries. In those places where they were held, in Lower Silesia and Carinthia, the result favored the defeated nations – that is why they were not held everywhere, for example, in the territories detached from Hungary. (In that case, the exception, the area around Sopron in West Hungary was given this chance not in the peace treaty but was achieved by an armed uprising.) At least the powers who dictated the peace tried to mitigate the consequences of the rash, one-sided decisions by ordering all the new Central European states to sign a special treaty for the protection of national minorities. Let me quote from the treaty signed by Czechoslovakia”

*All Czecho-Slovak nationals shall be equal before the law and shall enjoy the same civil and political rights without distinction as to race, language or religion. Adequate facilities shall be given to Czecho-Slovak nationals of non-Czech speech for the use of their language, either orally or in writing, before the courts. In the public educational system ... adequate facilities for ensuring that the instruction shall be given to the children of such Czecho-Slovak nationals through the medium of their own language. Minorities shall be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal or other budget, for educational, religious or charitable purposes.*

The newly created League of Nations was assigned the task to guarantee all the provisions of the new European order.

Instead of trying to placate, to win over their minorities by a fair application of constitutions and the Minority Protection Treaties, practically all the states in the eastern half of Europe mistreated them to various extents: minority rights were not respected, land reforms disadvantaged them, repressive measures (expulsions, denying citizenship, no permission for minority institutions and press, etc.) were introduced, and there were efforts at assimilating them through the education system. To quote the sons of one of the makers of the New Europe, R.W. Seton-Watson in their very fair and balanced book: "In each of the new states there prevailed a narrow official nationalism," and the repressive policies used against national, religious and political minorities led to perpetual internal and external divisions and conflicts. "This state of generalized and mutual hostility provided opportunities for any great power intent on disturbing the peace."<sup>1</sup> Instead of finding their common interests the "small, unstable caricatures of modern states" (the description used by the Cambridge political scientist F.H. Hinsley) were looking for great-power patrons either for the maintenance or for the overthrowing of the new order.

There is no need here to recall what happened to the brave new post-first-world-war world between 1938 and 1945. But throughout the horrors of World War II, there was hope that the long coveted peaceful and just world order would emerge from the ashes. The Atlantic Charter adopted by the United States and Great Britain and endorsed also by the Soviet Union held out such a promise. All decent people drew inspiration from its tenets:

*no territorial aggrandizement; no territorial changes made against the wishes of the people (i.e. self-determination); restoration of self-government to those deprived of it; reduction of trade restrictions; global cooperation to secure better economic and social conditions for*

*all; freedom from fear and want; freedom of the seas; abandonment of the use of force, the disarmament of aggressor nations.*

Today there is a common but mistaken belief that the three Great Powers betrayed those lofty aims at the Yalta Conference. That notion should be categorically refuted: the adoption of "The Declaration on Liberated Europe" proclaimed "the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live." Of course we know that the Soviet Union did not for a moment took that pledge seriously and in the following months and years imposed Communism on all the countries its armed forces liberated and occupied, including Poland, who resisted Nazi Germany most heroically throughout the war. But the Soviet Union is not solely responsible for the new peace treaties which were sadly also a far cry from establishing fair borders. What made the new world order worse than that of the 1920s was that, by 1947, the combined effects of Hitler and Stalin managed to reduce the proportion of national minorities of Central and Eastern Europe considerably, either by murder or by mass expulsions (called transfers) to about 10 per cent of the overall population, and any legal obligation for their protection was dropped. The emphasis on human rights (never kept in the Soviet Bloc) could not compensate for the lack of any international convention protecting the minorities in their fight for survival. In the communist countries, national minorities became the subjects of double oppression: in addition to the general denial of basic political rights they also lost their properties, and were not allowed to form political parties, to have organizations and papers representing their interests. Moreover, industrialization and urbanization radically changed the ethnic composition of the regions inhabited by minorities. Religion, often the last refuge of the minorities, was also cause for oppression and persecution. The Baltic States were again incorporated into the Soviet Empire; they became victims of ethnic cleansing and Soviet colonization. Winston Churchill was fully justified in the first volume of his seminal work "The Second World War," *The Gathering Storm*, to say that: „There is not one of the peoples or provinces that constituted the Empire of the Habsburgs [one should add the Empire of the Romanovs, too] to whom gaining their

<sup>1</sup> Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R.W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary*. London, 1981. 435.

independence has not brought the tortures which ancient poets and theologians had reserved for the damned.”

With “*annus mirabilis 1989*”, the end of the Cold War and the fall of the communist dominoes in Europe, there was a chance to overcome older or newer antagonisms between the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. In a moment of bliss and solidarity a *Christmas Manifesto* was issued by one of the Hungarian parties which played a leading role in the change of regime.

*Now, in our hands we have a great opportunity to put an end to the conflicts that traditionally turned the peoples of this region against each other. Today, in Eastern Europe all swear by freedom of conscience, civil liberties, democracy, a free economy, the observance of human rights and self-determination. ... In past centuries, the peoples of East-Central Europe could never stand together on the same side. Today, history offers us a unique opportunity for such a unity.*<sup>2</sup>

Almost thirty years later it is too early to say if those hopes have been fulfilled or not.

We, the leaders and the peoples who participated in the historic changes, believed in the “New World Order” proclaimed by President George H. Bush after the Gulf War in 1991. In addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1990, I expressed my conviction that thanks to the new attitude of the Soviet Union under the presidency of M. Gorbachev the high principles of the U.N. would now prevail. Many people hoped that “the leopard was changing its spots”, that Russia would also become a democracy. In Hungary, we expected a radical change in the treatment of almost three million Hungarian ethnics living in neighboring countries, as a result of the 1920 Peace Treaty. We counted on the positive western examples like the status of South Tyrol, the Aland Islands, or Schleswig to be emulated. The Copenhagen Recommendations of the CSCE adopted in 1990 and the subsequent creation of the post “High Commissioner

on (unfortunately but tellingly not for) National Minorities”, and even more the attitude and the conventions adopted by the Council of Europe offered much hope. Membership in the European Community and in NATO – the common aim of all the so-called new democracies – was made conditional on guaranteeing the rule of law and democracy and the observation of the rights of the national minorities. Regionalism, decentralization, subsidiarity were words full of promise. While loudly welcoming the great changes, there were fears in the West that freedom might revive old national tensions. Fortunately most governments were sensible and learned from history not to repeat the follies of their predecessors. Instead of forming a new “Little Entente” the Visegrád Cooperation set the tone. Membership in NATO and the European Union made allies and economic partners of all of the countries in Central Europe. Serbia and Macedonia are on the way to EU membership. The extension of the Schengen border control system will consolidate the close relationship of one-time adversaries.

But is the new Europe composed of “nation states”? In the early 1990s the Yugoslav, Soviet and Czechoslovak federations broke up – the first amid a horrible war, the two others – thanks God – peacefully. But disintegration did not lead to more homogeneous states, commanding the loyalty and dedication of all the citizens. On the contrary, in the Balkans and in the post-Soviet space, millions of new national minorities were created. 25 million Russians found themselves outside the borders of the Russian Federation (which continued to include millions of non-Russians), while hundreds of thousands of Albanians, Serbs, Croats, Hungarians and Romanians are minorities in the successor states of Yugoslavia. The new political map did not ease the situation (and mistreatment) of 2.5 million Hungarians cut off from their native land by the 1920 Treaty, or that of the Poles in Lithuania and Belarus. German, Lithuanian, Slovak, Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish and other national minorities add to the complexity of the issue. (Some of the minorities passed from one citizenship to another, several times in one lifetime. – like the Hungarians in Subcarpathia (or Transcarpathia as Kiev prefers). The media and the political leaders pay very little attention to the disadvantageous

2 Christmas Manifesto issued by the Hungarian Democratic Forum. In my possession.

position of the historical minorities, who did not cross borders to become a minority but who were crossed over by the new borders. Internal and international legislation provides modest rights for most of these minorities and could eliminate tensions resulting from the all too frequent acts of intolerance of the majority. It is high time to realize that most countries in Central and Eastern Europe are multinational, and that, usually, ethnicity, religion and language are the source of primary loyalty, not citizenship. The present western ideal, an integrated multiethnic society, where the majority national group does not aim at undermining the position and reducing the size of the national minorities, has little appeal here, at least not among the majority national groups. In the eastern half of Europe the State has not traditionally been neutral in matters concerning language and culture; it rather served as a tool for the harassment of national minorities, in the futile hope that the ethnically heterogeneous population can be "homogenised", assimilated, and thus the nominal nation states could become real nation states. These countries are not melting pots; attempts to turn this region into a melting pot can transform it into a powder keg, as both older and recent history amply testifies.

In my opinion, the idea of the exclusive nation-state is not in line with modern democracy. The only way to create homogeneous nation-states would be through exchanges of population or territory on a vast scale, involving tens of millions of people, at enormous financial cost and causing untold human suffering. (The planned deal between Kosovo and Serbia is promising.) A variant of this is the practice of 'ethnic cleansing' whose hideousness could be observed in the 1990s in the occupied parts of Croatia, in Bosnia, and, today, in Myanmar. Consequently, it follows that the only real solution for the thirty or forty million people who form national minorities in the states of Central and Eastern Europe today (including the close to ten million Russians in Ukraine) is to introduce regionalism, genuine self-government. Where minorities are more dispersed, they could still enjoy the institutions of cultural autonomy, following the example of religious autonomy: the Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran and Jewish churches enjoy autonomy in every European country.

The Pact on European Stability signed in 1995 envisaged the settling of all bilateral problems between European states and guaranteeing the rights of the national minorities in bilateral treaties. Those could be two pillars of stability in the eastern half of Europe. By reconfirming the borders and pledging good-neighbourly relations one of the pillars became strong. The other pillar has remained unfinished. The Charter on Minority and Regional Languages of the Council of Europe as well as its Framework Convention on National Minorities were promising but quite a few countries disregard the conventions which they had signed and ratified. The new school law in Ukraine is clearly a breach of commitments. Unfortunately the process of guaranteeing minority rights has slowed down; practically it has stopped. I hope, I am convinced that it can, it will gather new momentum if European integration continues and deepens.

For peace and general reconciliation in Europe, the European Union is essential. No one should fear that nations, national culture, let alone languages would disappear in the process of integration. In the European Parliament everybody is entitled to use her or his language. The free movement of people, many finding employment in a foreign country does not mean that ties to the home country, to family and friends are being severed. Cheap travel and electronic communication helps people preserve their original identity, or to acquire dual, sometimes even triple identity. More and more children are born from mixed marriages and are brought up as bilingual. One should not forget that during the Cold War we were separated not by one but by many Iron Curtains. It was 1989 which pulled down the Berlin Wall and many other constrains, including the visa requirement imposed to the Europeans after the First World War.

In October 1918, Leo Amery, then an adviser to the British Prime Minister, with remarkable foresight, spoke out against the division of Central Europe in a memorandum. "*The various nationalities of Central Europe are so interlocked, and their racial frontiers are so unsuitable as the frontiers of really independent sovereign states, that the only satisfactory and permanent working policy for them lies in their incorporation in a non-national superstate.*" Can we call the European Union a superstate or is it

a voluntary association of largely sovereign states? It is not and it should not be a loose free-trade zone of so-called nation states. The existence of national and newer minorities refute the idea according to which Europe consists of nation states. Europe should remain the home of many nations, languages and cultures, united by common values and not separated by impenetrable borders, as in the past. The older European generation learned that it is their common duty to show to the young generations that Europe should not go back in history. Because the past means conflict and war.

The developments of 75 years in Western Europe, the reconciliation of the nations and countries after the Second World War offer a model to be followed sincerely in the eastern half of the continent, too. Economic integration followed by political, the „four liberties“ of the European Union, the „Schengen“ system of free movement of peoples are solutions to the border and minority problems, eliminating “the apple of Eris”, discord, which the First World War and the peace treaties tossed into the midst of Europe a hundred years ago.

# Nation-states-in-the-building and their Imperial legacies

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For most of the last century nation states were perceived as not only essentially different from the preceding empires but as their antithesis: democratic, free, liberal (unless some extreme political ideology would capture them), the quintessential and natural form of democracy. From a political perspective there was nothing wrong with this assumption. Although these states were successors of four dynastic empires formed out of medieval roots throughout the early modern period, their emergence was conditioned on the disappearance of Imperial statehood. Therefore, their main legitimacy was also not being empires, and national historiographies duly reinforced this idea with their canonical national narratives. In this narrative the realm of the Habsburgs was an ailing, backward construct, full of feudal remnants, based on the rule of a military-bureaucratic complex, not responsible for the parliaments and the new nation states that embodied modernity, democracy, freedom. The collapse and dissolution was inevitable, a result of the logic of historical development.

Recent trends in the research on modern empires broadly, and on the Habsburg Empire in a more narrow sense, began to question these assumptions. The push for reconsideration comes not just from one direction, but from many, simultaneously. Habsburg historians pointed out that while the empire was not a democratic regime, it was gradually and permanently democratizing, giving ever larger influence for civil society on political decisions, broadening representation and participation. It was – at least in its Cisleithanian parts – less of a „cage of the nations“ and more an incubator of national movements, for whom Austria-Hungary provided much better conditions to develop than any of its neighbors, not to speak of many (though not all) Western democracies or parliamentary regimes. Furthermore, the Habsburg Monarchy was

not as stagnant as depicted earlier; it had colonial endeavours in the Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania), it made efforts to modernize its military, its political and administrative system (see the introduction of universal, equal male suffrage in 1907 for the election of the Reichstag) and, in comparison with so-called modern empires, it was hardly just a pre-modern remnant of the past. Recent studies drew attention to the imperial characteristics of dualist Hungary, an administrative and political unit usually seen as an emerging nation (or nationalizing) state.

Neither was the flattering portrayal of the successor nation-states left intact. Their treatment of the new minorities was often even worse than what nationalities had to suffer in Austria-Hungary: none of the issues on the political agenda before 1918 (language use, schooling, cultural institutions etc.) was resolved, centralization was overemphasized in Romania, the South Slavic state and sometimes even in Czechoslovakia often subdued any regional or local political will. In many cases, democracy turned out to be a failure very soon and was replaced by authoritarian systems. Therefore, it became common to refer to the successor states as quasi- or mini-empires, or short-distance empires.

While it is not necessarily sound to bundle together the pre-1918 imperial and the post-1918 national states and take them as one common form of statehood, paying attention to continuities and imperial legacies is important for understanding how politics and society evolved in the long term, and how much they were influenced by the modernization they experienced within the imperial framework. Furthermore, accounting for the post-imperial aspects of nation-state building enables us to reveal deep seated roots of divergence within the new states, countertendencies to their homogeniz-

ing efforts and not just the ones coming from the national or ethnic minorities.

In this paper I will not give an exhausting list of such continuities, not least because it is the subject of an ongoing research project supported by an ERC Consolidator Grant. My intention is to point out some of the most important ones and draw attention to their influence on state formation in the first decade after WWI, illustrating how they could change our perception of the phenomenon of the nation-state.

But first, it is worth spending some time defining the two basic concepts: empire and nation-state. An empire is a territorial conglomerate of diverse regions and peripheries, often without definitive borders which is subject to rule from a metropolitan center. This rule is differentiated, and often based on the cooperation of locals. Imperial rule also facilitates the emergence of imperial figures, whose special knowledge enables them to represent the empire in different regional context and to connect spaces. In contrast, a nation-state is a contained territorial entity with a well-defined territory over which the state is supposed to exert uniform authority. It is the state of a specific nation, and, therefore, its main goal is to further its national existence. Membership – citizenship – is based on equality, just as representation. Finally, a nation state is a nationalizing state, one which aims at promoting only one of the nationalities living on its territory.

In light of these definitions, and looking at the imperial legacies, one should differentiate between practical continuities and continuities of statehood. While the former definitely could contribute to the existence of the latter, it was not always conducive to such phenomena.

As regards to practical aspects one should start with the continuities of the administration. The institutions of the executive branch of the state were the main representatives of both forms of statehood, but they were also the ones whom people encountered and with whom they associated the state. While it was earlier generally known that most of the personnel of the imperial administration of the Bohemian lands and Galicia were retained by

Czechoslovakia and Poland, the fate of the personnel of dualist Hungary was different and it meant almost complete dismissal. Recent research, however, has shown that continuity was much more present even in regions like Transylvania. One can assume that there was a certain rule to this continuity, the higher ranking personnel undergoing more sweeping changes, while the officials at lower levels remained undisturbed. In Czechoslovakia this was also true for the police, and not just the metropolitan, but the state branch.

The result was, however, not just the chance to find a familiar face within the new state whom to address with specific matters. Often, the presence of these people preserved elements of a specific administrative culture, not necessarily compatible with the homogeneity and the supposed uniformity of the new nation-state. As legislation on the functioning of administration rarely admitted regionalization, it was often confined to informality and to verbal aspects, but it prevailed for a surprisingly long time, making the new states more diverse than they pretended to be.

Another field of significant continuity was associational life. It was one of the most important dimensions of the democratization of the empire before 1918, and during the WWI, at least in Cisleithania, where associations organized along national lines became the most important institutions of welfare services, reinforcing national boundaries. It has not changed much, in these regions, after WWI, but as most new states united territories from both halves of the former empire, they had to face the challenge of reconciling this model with the fuzzier Hungarian one. In the kingdom of Hungary, cultural associations were generally organized along linguistic boundaries, but this was less the case with welfare associations. Some of them were strictly national, others, however, united people from similar social backgrounds, irrespective of their national affiliation. Furthermore, there were associations like the voluntary firefighters in Transylvania, which were simply not present in those parts of the new nation states that had not belonged to Austria-Hungary. The result was not just some confusion, or adaptation of the state to the local customs. Often the very existence of these associations created tensions between center and regions,

like it happened with the voluntary firefighters in Romania when the General Staff mistook them for being ethnic Hungarian organizations.

Turning our attention to the continuities of statehood, the most important continuity was differentiated rule. The previous examples also illustrate how and why the new states had to content themselves with a broad range of informal arrangements regarding the local and regional implementation of their nationalizing ideas. It was, however, not just a necessity given the meager resources of the new states. It was the result of conscious attempts of many local and regional elites to implement an aspect of the former imperial rule that served them very well before 1918.

Nevertheless, it was also the result of another legacy of the empire, namely colonial rule. Almost all of the new states engaged in some civilizing effort within their new boundaries, be it the civilizing of

backward areas (Karpatho-Ukraine in Czechoslovakia, Prekmurje in the South Slavic state), or the effort to redeem allegedly lost co-nationals (the Magyars in Czechoslovakia, the Romanians living in the border areas with Hungary), and its means and supporting rhetoric was coming from the imperial toolkit. Often the executors were imperial bureaucrats.

Differentiated rule was, finally, one of the reasons for the prevalence of regionalist policies in all of the successor states. Tensions between the new centers and the elites, even the co-national elites of the annexed territories, were almost always based on different pre 1918 experiences. The regional elites were keen to exploit such differences and use previous social and political practices in order to highlight social differences within the new national society. As such, it resonated with the masses and served as the basis of mass mobilization against the new nation states.

# Imperial past: How Historiography has Shaped the Memory of the Habsburg Monarchy

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In the “age of memory”, it is more obvious than ever, that it is not the past that changes, but the questions with which we approach the past. This holds true especially for the writing of history. The existence and demise of the Habsburg monarchy, then, are not just historical facts, they are also a historiographical lieu de mémoire in the field of cultural memory as defined by Aleida and Jan Assmann: the glance at the past is shaped by the horizon of experiences and demands of the respective present.

Since its demise, the character and significance of the Habsburg Empire have been the object of ongoing lively debate. A recent example can illustrate the ambivalence inherent in the unceasing fascination with the Habsburg Empire’s relationship to modernity. In his widely acclaimed recent account of contemporary history, *The Age of Anger* (2017), the Indian writer Pankaj Mishra enlists Vienna 1900 as an historical example to help illustrate the genealogy of modern feelings of hatred: “Fin de siècle Vienna, which elected an anti-Semitic mayor in 1895 and where both Hitler and Herzl spent their formative years, was a hothouse of venomous prejudice.” Freud, Mishra argues, “developed his theory of psychological projection” with “the city’s paranoid inhabitants” in mind. For Mishra, then, Vienna 1900 is an ambivalent lieu de mémoire: the capital of modernism, on the one hand, and what Jacques Le Rider called, in 1990, the “battleground of national chauvinisms, ethnic and social divisions and ultimately of all kinds of racism and antisemitism”, on the other.

The discussion of contemporaneous problems in the light of seemingly analogous constellations in the Habsburg Empire runs like a red thread through its historiography – and also its memory – and it transpires somewhere in the contested space be-

tween black and golden myths, between pathologization and de-pathologization.

What follows is a short overview of the principal research perspectives that have shaped (and continue to shape) the historiography of Habsburg Central Europe since its demise.

## 1. The Focus on the Austrian Problem of State and Empire

In 1920, in his seminal book, *Das österreichische Staats- und Reichsproblem* (“The Austrian Problem of State and Empire”), the great Austrian constitutional historian and political theorist Josef Redlich did point to nationalist activism as the main reason for the collapse of the Habsburg Empire. Even so, he did not place the nationalities’ problem centre-stage. Instead, he sought to emphasize the bonds that held the Empire together, be it the dynastic notion of empire or the peculiar juridical structure of the monarchy, which he classified as an “empire” rather than a “state.”

## 2. The Focus on the Multinational Empire

After World War II, Habsburg historians again emphasized the Empire’s function as a role model for a peaceful Europe. In 1950, Robert A. Kann, a Vienna-born historian who had been forced to flee after the “Anschluss” in 1938, published his two-volume study, *The Multinational Empire*. In 1964, Kann’s book came out in German as *Das Nationalitätenproblem der Habsburgermonarchie*. In Kann’s opus magnum, the nationalities’ question definitely took centre stage. He was particularly interested both in the development of “nationalism among the peoples of the empire”, and in “the reform proposals developed concurrently” in order

to “address or, indeed, solve the nationality question”. For him, the history of the Habsburg Empire was that of an “attempt ... to create a supranational order.” Against the backdrop of the early Cold War and the European integration process, Kann wanted the multi-national Empire to be conceptualized as an historical role model for “the creation of supra- or multi-national political and economic entities”.

In 1975, Kann revised this position and raised the provocative question of whether supranational state orders were actually compatible with democracy. For Kann, the Soviet Union provided the best example for an anti-democratic supranational state order.

### 3. The Focus on Art and Culture in Vienna 1900

William M. Johnston’s book, *The Austrian Mind. An Intellectual and Social History, 1848–1938*, published in 1972, was an important milestone for the renewed interest in Habsburg intellectual history. Johnston introduced not only Vienna, but also Prague and Budapest for the first time as the cities from which “many, perhaps even most, of the seminal thinkers of the twentieth century emerged”. At a time, when two of these cities were located behind the Iron Curtain, Johnston advocated an approach that took into account historical entanglements transcending the divisions created by the Iron Curtain.

Carl E. Schorske’s path-breaking book, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna—Politics and Culture*, first published in 1980, irrevocably established Vienna 1900 as a scholarly and cultural (as well as touristic) trademark. The American historian’s main thesis sprang from his observation that US intellectuals had withdrawn from politics during the McCarthy era. To Schorske’s mind, Vienna’s late-nineteenth-century intellectual bourgeoisie had also withdrawn from politics into the ivory tower of *l’art pour l’art*.

### 4. The Focus on Postmodernity and Postcolonial Studies

Jean-François Lyotard was the first, in his acclaimed account of *La condition postmoderne* (1979), to

draw a connection between the current “postmodern world” and the pessimism on which “turn-of-the-century Vienna was weaned”. Jacques Le Rider introduced a new emphasis in 1990 with his book, *Modernité viennoise et crises de l’identité*. He saw the nexus between Viennese modernism and postmodernity in a number of “crises of identity”, foremost among them the “questioning of conventional gender roles” and a “crisis of Jewish identity”.

The research project, *Modernity. Vienna and Central Europe around 1900*, undertaken at the University of Graz and initiated by Moritz Csáky, repositioned Vienna in its Central European context. To quote Moritz Csáky: “In the age of modernity, Central Europe and its urban milieu in particular, given their socio-cultural variegation”, became “laboratories” for processes that are currently of global significance.

With the appropriation of postcolonial approaches, the study of Habsburg Central Europe was integrated into a novel, globally discussed theoretical model. The challenge consisted, first, in the examination of the extent to which analytical tools developed for the study of colonial empires could usefully be applied to the uneven economic, social and cultural development of a multi-national state; and second, in the identification of new perspectives, which might emerge from this approach. The study of Habsburg Central Europe on the basis of postcolonial approaches has certainly shed light on colonial-like power structures in the Empire.

### 5. Fresh approaches to Habsburg history

Today, there is evidence of a turn towards a new reflexive approach to Habsburg history. Taking into account recent developments in both the history of knowledge and cultural studies, current approaches are challenging the premise of difference, and its spin-off – a binary dichotomous understanding of the world. Instead, historians argue for an agency-based approach that takes the scope of action available to individuals into account, emphasizing interaction, cross-cultural encounters and exchange, all of which are studied within a transnational perspective challenging the idea of

a naturally given ethnic/national identity (Cohen 1980, Judson 2006).

Hence, we are currently observing a shift in Habsburg history – from the traditional focus on narratives of the multi-national state to imperial history, highlighting distinctive institutions, entangled cultures and practices of governance, all of which ultimately made Habsburg history unique, similar developments in other European states notwithstanding. Not least, this shift marks an attempt to move the focus away from what Pieter Judson (2016) has called the “pathologization of the Habsburg Empire”.

In this regard, Habsburg Central Europe is currently being reassessed in a way that leaves the dominant nation-state paradigm behind. This reassessment highlights how heterogeneous societies can be studied without artificially defining groups in linguistic, cultural, ethnic or national terms. Moritz Csáky’s nationally contingent notion of culture allows for a new understanding of the linguistic heterogeneity of Central Europe “as a plurality of different, antagonistic, and overlapping spaces of communication” (Csáky 2014).

A similar direction is taken by Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich in their book, *Similarity. A Paradigm for Culture Theory* (2018). They argue that “social practices make us aware of and underline similarities”, which refer to cultural configurations shaped neither by generic sameness nor by rigid difference. They assume that social practices are necessarily determined by an “indifference towards difference”. Since the reinforcement of distinctions runs the risk of inappropriately simplifying the complexity of social practices, applying the concept of similarity to the late Habsburg world might help render previously overlooked acts of encounter, interaction and exchange visible again.

In conclusion, throughout time, historiographical perspectives of Central Europe have ranged from the exploration of the nationalities’ question in the 1950s and the renewed interest in the art and culture of the Central European metropolises as beacons of modernity in the 1970s to the culturalist-postmodern analysis of the construction of ethnic

identities in the 1990s, to postcolonial approaches. Most recent approaches share a common goal: to de-pathologize the historiography of Central Europe.

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# The Tragedy of the Small Central European Nations Today

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On the 28th of October 2018, Czechs and Slovaks commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the first Czechoslovak Republic. Many were nostalgic for the Masarykian ideals of humanity, liberty and freedom in a shared home, and the idea of being united by these principles rather than on the basis of ethnicity or language. Daniel Kroupa, philosopher and former MP and senator used the anniversary to lament the failure of the ideals of the Czechoslovak nation to take hold. The fate of Czechoslovakia would surely have been different, and the fate of democracy as well...

But it could not have been. The political understanding of nations, stemming from historical experience, and a series of coincidences did not play in favour of a nation, beyond a small group of thinkers and political leaders. This constitutive institutional and ideational design still grips political imagination in Central Europe today. The result is exclusive citizenship, closed to the "Other", and a disconnected and divided generation struggling to find their own identity in the present. Not much is left of the Masaryk's most known motto, "to not fear and not steal!" today, which rings hollow in halls decked with corruption and the politics of fear.

## Not so liberal

Not everyone was celebrating the birth of the new Republic, one hundred years ago (especially on the Slovak territories), and not everyone has reason to remember its birth as fondly as many Czechs and Slovaks today. Although Czechoslovakia is often presented as the island of liberal democracy in the sea of totalitarian and puppet states (and on many counts, that is certainly true), it presented obstacles in the lives of Hungarians, Germans, Ruthenians, and others, who had more difficulty in accepting the idea of a Czechoslovak nation-state. A Czecho-

slovak nation was an active attempt to minimize the influence of Germans and Hungarians in the new republic, and the only way how to claim a state-formational position in a country, where Germans were more numerous than Slovaks. It was not a cosy homeland for the non-Czechoslovaks. It is therefore not surprising that Slovak Hungarians relate to Czechoslovakia differently and perceive that while the foundation of that Republic is celebrated as a state holiday, their historical experience – the trauma of Trianon – cannot really be publicly commemorated without risking a public outcry. László Szigeti argues that "this state never tried to accommodate the Hungarian consciousness. Neither Masarykian, nor the Bolshevik, nor the Havelian Czechoslovakia offered a political, economic, social program of reconciliation to their autochthonous minorities. And Benešian Czechoslovakia, accounting with fascism, built the requirement of ethnic cleanness and ousting everything foreign into its 'democratic' foundations" (Szigeti, 2018). (Slovak) Hungarians, Slovaks, and Czechs have therefore rather different evaluations of this shared past. Slovaks are more lax than Czechs towards the events that led to the disastrous dissolution of the Republic in 1939, Hungarians perceived the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire significantly more negatively, but still evaluated the first republic positively in terms of democracy (Bútorová, 2018).

## Not so viable

Even without the intervention of *Big History* through the Second World War, there were just a few chances that this project would survive and take hold of people's imagination.

In the Slovak political space before the First World War, the Czechoslovak state was not among the options considered by the Slovak intelligentsia. Slovak political leaders circulated a vision of autonomy

within the Habsburg Empire, some pinned their hopes on federalization plans announced by Franz Ferdinand before his death, and yet others turned their gaze to Russia. But very few at that time had a vision of a common Czechoslovak nation, never mind a state.

The Czech national aspirations were saturated with the creation of Czechoslovakia, but it was more complicated for the Slovaks, who were pursuing the goal of autonomy, and even more so for the large national minorities, whose identities were pulled between mother nations and the new state.

The project of Czechoslovak nation itself, Petr Pithart maintains, was, despite declared as an all-embracing declaration of a political nation, a Czech national project. He called it the “well-fed” nationalism (compared to a “hungry” Slovak one, for example), because it re-instated historical Czech statehood embodied in the new Republic, and, because, it homogenized the population through ethnically cleansing the territory of the Czech lands by massive deportations of German citizens (Pithart, 1998). More recently, Pithart maintained that it was not a national state, but a nationalities’ state, which failed to elevate the second level of a political nation. National minorities, including Slovaks, were never fully integrated into this project (Pásztor, 2018). Thus, the myth of a political Czechoslovak nation was but a veil for underlying national aspirations. And while many Slovaks accepted the idea of political unity, it did not translate, as per Beneš’ wishes, into a fusion of two nations into one, in language and feeling.

### Legacy of the Tragedy of the Small Central European Nations

Part of the impossibility of the social engineering of a Czechoslovak nation in the Central European region is the historical context within which it was attempted, and the earlier historical path leading to the breakdown of empires, all of which contributed to specific, ethno-centric, exclusivist national projects with attached political goals.

After the Second World War, István Bibó described the national and political sentiments in the region as the “misery of the small Eastern European

states”, arising from the unresolved cultural traumas and resulting in political hysteria and “phony realism”—leadership style based on politics of fear (Bibó, 2015/1946). This take on the situation was echoed by Milan Kundera four decades later (Kundera, 2000/1983), highlighting the shared sentiment of victimhood in the frame of Big History, where the small) Central European nations (vulnerable against the great powers) are always at the wrong end of history, sacrificed whenever it is convenient for the West. The trauma of numerous partitions in the region cemented the inward-looking, mistrustful disposition of Central European nations, defining themselves against the West and against each other.

### Exclusive Citizenship

The legacy of the “misery” and “tragedy” of the small nations in this region is represented by its reach into the realm of collective memory. Mistrust, ontological anxiety, and mutually exclusive self-definition are propped up by narratives of the past that justify such status quos. All master narratives simplify, select, emphasize. But Central European interpretations of the twentieth century past are a remarkable exercise in guilt export. The interwar regimes are presented as inevitable outcomes of the Nazi Germany’s expansion, while guilt for the crimes committed during the war are largely attributed away to Germany, omitting the actions and decisions of domestic governments and individuals. Just in the past few years, Hungary unveiled a monument to the victims of the war, depicting Hungary as a helpless victim attacked by the German imperial eagle, Poland criminalized any intent to implicate Polish citizens in crimes related to the Holocaust, waged a campaign against the expression “Polish concentration camps”, and opened the question of reparations for war damages to be paid by Germany. Communism was proclaimed a criminal regime in laws (Rupnik, 2002), resulting in de facto impunity for the political leaders of communist regimes (only the “small fish”, the ranking Party members felt repercussions of their affiliation with the former secret police through lustration policies, with varying levels of implementation).

One logical outcome of this is a perceived link of the present-day corruption with the failed criminal

justice against the former communist leaders (this link is shown strongly in our recent survey *Heritage of the Past and the Quality of Democracy* conducted in Slovakia, not yet published). Another is the translation of the inward-looking, exclusivist stance into political culture of mistrust and lack of tolerance toward the “Other”, and the ethno-centric state-forming vision, translated into democratic practice. This has resulted in identities that put “Slovaks first”, or “Hungarians first”, and relegate the position of others, even if they are full-fledged citizens, but are located lower on the hierarchy of “who belongs” into the society.

Advanced democracies are measured and evaluated by the state of minority rights (one of the telling indicators is representation of women in public affairs) and tolerance towards otherness (particularly towards gay and lesbian communities, migrants, and foreigners), in line with Inglehart’s post-modernization thesis (Inglehart, 1997). These are the distinguishing features that allow the evaluation of the depth of democracy today. And, on these measures, Central Europe fails most spectacularly. In 2015 the Special Eurobarometer Report on Discrimination, Central European countries came last in relation to tolerance towards Muslims, Roma, and LGBT communities. Most markedly, it was translated into the strong resistance against the migrant policies proposed by the EU during the crisis that started in 2015. FIDESZ and SMER alike gained significant number of votes using the anti-migrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric, practicing “phony realism” and fearmongering.

The complex of inferiority, the perceived “tragedy” or “misery” of Central European nations continues to play out in the EU sphere today. The feeling of second-rate identity was previously attached to the label of “Eastern Europe”. After 1989, and the rush to (re-)enter Europe, there was more joy and pride in being labelled “Central Europeans”, representing the hope of catching up with the West. Recently, with rising disagreements about common policies in the EU, the idea of “core Europe” was introduced, and the complex of inferiority, a sense of being relegated into periphery was, again, re-awakened.

In 2017, Viktor Orbán, called the two-speed Eu-

rope “one of the most abhorrent ideas.” Mateusz Morawiecki concurred: ‘We do not agree to Europe being divided into better ones and worse ones, where stronger nations are favoured. That’s not right.’ (Miszerak & Rohá , 2018). Although the ostracism from the core is to a large degree self-imposed due to rejection of EU migrant policies (and a series of violations of fundamental values at the core of the EU), it is perceived again as the treachery of the West.

## Conclusion

Among the significant consequences of Central European nation states’ manipulation of collective memory – stemming from conceptualizations of exclusivist citizenship – is the disconnect of the current upcoming generation of adolescents and young adults from public issues. Their experience, which, for each generation is formed by significant events and issues happening at different moments in time (as understood in the sociology of generations (Mannheim, 1972 (1928))), is shaping within somewhat of an ethical vacuum. The abysmal state of education and general silence on the experiences from the Normalization era in the families, along with the manipulated narratives that export guilt contribute to this disconnect. This has implications for the future of democratic citizenship practice. It is visible in the fracture within the young generation itself—on the one hand, there is a rising number of “critical citizens”, ready to take to the streets to hold their governments accountable, but on the other, there is also a large portion of this generation inclining towards the easy answers of populism and extreme right.

The Central European nations today are small not only in the sense of their vulnerability against geopolitical giants. That vulnerability could be moderated through stronger integration in European and international institutions that they already belong to. They are small especially in the sense of their democratic vision. Gaze fixed inwards and to the past, little room is left for recrafting the social fabric of society so that it is in line with the demands of the quickly changing global environment.

Nation-states are not to be lamented and decried. In this geographical space, they are a reality and

they are here to stay for the foreseeable future. They could adapt to changing realities via their own institutions, by upholding the rule of law and implementing human rights without discrimination. To establish such atmosphere, to “not fear and not steal”, their approach to the past would require a great deal more of honesty and responsibility. Only in such a way can imagination be opened to empathy and inclusion rather than blaming, mistrust, and exclusion.

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## Commemorating 1918 in 2018 in Romania

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This contribution discusses some historiographical priorities and challenges of the 1918 centennial in Romania, while also addressing some larger political challenges as well.

How to examine the memory of the long nineteenth century in Romania? And how to write its history? How to write the history of 1918? These are highly relevant issues in this centennial year. In 1918, by the incorporation of Romanian-speaking provinces, on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, Romania doubled in size and population, compared to 1914. Since 1918, the official memory and narrative have not put forward the break represented by the war, but rather the continuity: the union of 1918 is considered as the completion of the national project, pursued at least since 1848, namely a unification based on ethnic criteria, bringing all Romanians in a single state.

Today, a certain historiographical tradition still looks at the nineteenth century exclusively under the sign of this national determinism, 1918 being seen as the culmination of the claim of historical rights to a territorial state. In a country where history is still largely defined as a remembrance of the past and as a means for teaching “national” values, it is difficult to separate the history of historians, the centennial celebrations and national activism. In 2018, history as a discipline and the role of historians are still about a memory to fight or to defend and to make sacred. The view of the nineteenth century and 1918 is therefore part of this romantic national historiography, which is a specific form of historical representation that accompanies the formation of the nation-state and seeks to influence the existing definitions of national consciousness<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *Monika Barr*, *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

From this perspective, the opportunity offered by the centenary to revisit the national narrative and historiography is partly missed. The multitude of publications and encomiastic events is not surprising. In general, it is about the return of traditional political and diplomatic history, in fact the narrative on the Romanian people in search of its autonomy and a history of national wars and between nations. It is an approach that both idealizes and glorifies the national history to which it confers a unifying and reassuring function. This is the perspective chosen by the Romanian Academy.

However, historiographical renewal does take place. There are:

a) Studies that reject the hagiographic approach and examine the role of so far neglected historical actors (such as women, peasants, ethnic groups or the middle clergy).

b) Recent studies focusing on universities and intellectuals and their relationship to politics; on everyday life; on the construction of political memory; on the professionalization of political elites and their networks of sociability; on socialism, and the social and the agrarian question, and their relation to the Romanian national community.

c) The publication of diaries or memoirs focusing on the experience of the Great War represents a novelty. There is also interest in restoring the anonymous voices of history (such as soldiers), and in digitizing the iconography of the period. The Europeanization, even the globalization of questions about WWI may have been triggers in these respects.

d) One can deplore the absence of large social investigations which might throw another perspective on the patriotic engagement in the national

cause of the popular classes, especially the peasants at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Another important question deserves more attention: Was the sharing of patriotic ideals really unanimous and spontaneous, as the militant national history would have us believe, in an effort to impose a shared and consensual memory of 1918?

e) Against the nationalist canon, recent research shows that nothing was decided in advance in 1918-19 and that there was no pre-established order of political decision in favor of "Greater Romania", but spaces of negotiation and opportunity in the new framework created by Wilsonian principles of self-determination. The detailed examination of the events taking place during the pivotal period of 1918-19 is not the least of the contributions of research liberated from historical activism, but, so far, they are still in rather small number.

Another important recent scholarly contribution is to look at 1918 as the beginning, and not as the completion of a process. In 2018, seeing 1918 as an achievement comforts the hegemonic character of national history, understood as the history of the formation and cohesion of an ethno-national group within a given territory. On the other hand, looking at 1918 as an inaugural moment makes it possible to understand better the complexities, and failures of integrating multi-ethnic territories and populations in "Greater Romania".

A major historiographical challenge is to better understand the nature and actors of pre-1918 nationalism, characterized by the anxiety of ethno-territorial incompleteness and the difficulty of handling the agrarian question. Recent research shows how nineteenth-century liberal nationalism viewed other ethnic groups as an existential threat to the Romanian nation. Post-1918 nationalism, characterized by fear of internal disintegration, separatism and secession, and also inter-war Romanian fascism have already benefited from numerous studies.

f) Notes on World War I and *sorties de guerre*. One potentially rich perspective would be to focus not that much on the state-legal-territorial changes, military and diplomatic history (already much bet-

ter studied), but on the total war as a human experience: the 1918-20 treaties vs 1918-20 as *sortie de guerre*, as a dynamic process.

In the (West) European recent historiography, a more static approach to the aftermath of WWI was followed by a more dynamic approach, which seeks to understand the demobilization processes of societies, armies, states and economies. It is the counterpart of Jean-Jacques Becker's "Entry into War" which analyzes the processes of the transition from peace to war<sup>4</sup>. The notion of war exits/*sorties de guerre* benefited from a recent renewal of the historiography of war, largely derived from the studies carried out on WWI<sup>5</sup>. The more anthropological approach to the history of war has made it possible to examine the experience of civilian and military populations, a diversity of actors, their perception of war and the difficulties of peacetime readaptation<sup>6</sup>.

Applied to Romania and Eastern Europe, this approach would shift the focus from the nation-state as a unit of analysis (as both agent and subject of historical change), and would turn towards transnational and global history, connected or entangled history. It would entail denationalizing history *via* studies on regionalism, margins and borderlands (notably of empires). This approach makes it possible to rethink the position of the protagonists, going beyond the traditional victorious / vanquished binary classifications, focusing on different types of actors, on different scales and their interactions.

g) Notes on Trianon and Versailles treaties as a burden. These treaties were not a Hungarian-Romanian affair or rivalry, they were a burden on both countries, and they were not a zero-sum game. Hungary lost its territories, hence the major trauma, revived every day. Romania – a burden as well

4 Jean-Jacques Becker, "Entrées en guerre", Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre 1914-1918 sous la dir. de Jean-Jacques Becker & Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Bayard, 2004, p. 193-220.

5 « Les sorties de guerre. Une introduction », par Cosima Flateau, Les Cahiers Sirice, 2016/3 (N° 17).

6 Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau & Christophe Prochasson, Sortir de la Grande Guerre. Le monde et l'après 1918, Paris, Tallandier, 2008; John Horne (ed.), State Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997

– promised to integrate its many minorities, to be a home for all its nationalities, ethnic and religious, and it failed. Nobody was satisfied internally.

Second burden: the principle of self-determination prolonged the obsession with the frontiers which remained an open-ended problem, instead of solving it. Romania and Hungary both remained convinced that modifications should still intervene.

Third burden: both societies failed to manage politically the complications produced by the treaties ending WWI. Both were fragile societies in terms of their democratic experience and liberal-democratic culture. WWI treaties failed to inaugurate the 20th century for either Romania or Hungary; they both

remained trapped in the unsolved “national question” of the long 19th century.

The Trianon moment should not be regarded in a simple way, in which Romania gained and Hungary lost. There was no unmitigated success for Romania (it was unable to manage its minorities), there was no unmitigated disaster for Hungary (it was an opportunity for it to leave behind its exclusively ethnic reading of the nation). But many political leaders and even members of the intelligentsia today in both Romania and Hungary are convinced that only hard power can be the solution. The discursive assumption is that small countries like Romania and Hungary can win only as one against the other.