Political Traditions in Central Europe and in the Balkans

(in the light of the experience of the first Yugoslavia)

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In the historical and political scientific literature, the notion of political culture has diverse and even contradictory meanings and therefore has to be redefined again and again. In the political scientific literature, it was introduced for the first time in the book Civic Culture by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963[1]. The book was based on the empirical data collected via public opinion polls. Thus, the authors substantiated their work on the opinions of individual respondents on politics, political institutions and basic political values. In their view, these opinions and values, which were supposed to be shared by the majority of population, formed the political culture of a state or a nation. The book by Almond and Verba stirred up a lot of publicity, also a critical one. As pointed out by Alina Mungiu Pippidi, public opinion on some crucial political issues tends to change rapidly and constantly and besides, there are plenty of political issues about which the public has no clear or prevalent opinion[2]. The method of researching political culture in a state or a national community on the basis of public opinion polls thus proved problematic in this regard. Moreover, it is particular difficult to be applied for historical research, as public opinion polls cannot be conducted a posteriori.

A historian therefore finds more appropriate the definition of political culture presented by Ernst Hanisch in his book on 20th century Austria. In his opinion, the notion of political culture comprises »a mixture of orientations, attitudes and relations to political processes and structures«. Thus, also »the behavioral patterns« based on traditions and sustained by political symbols represent a political culture. The political culture is a »politically relevant picture which the population, large social groups and functional elites« have about the world. The »political culture« as an analytical category is »neutral« and open, as described by the author of the book Long Shadow of the State (Der lange Schatten des Staates)[3].

Hanisch states that any in-depth historical analysis which aims at defining the »traditions« of the Austrian (and Central European) political culture, has to go at least two or three centuries back, i.e. to the era of baroque and josephism. In the early modern era, Austria founded its state by the »crusade« against the external enemy – the Ottoman Empire, and the internal enemy – Protestantism. This process resulted in a close relationship between the absolute monarchy, the army, the bureaucracy and the church. The Counter-Reformation

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1   Gabriel A. Almond and Sydney Verba, The Civic Culture, Political Attitudes and Democracy in five Nations, Princenton, New Jersey, Princenton University Press 1963.

2   Alina Mungiu Pippidi, Romanian Political Culture, Romanian Journal of Political Science, Spring 2003.

3   Ernst Hanisch, Der lange Schatten des Staates, Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert, Österreichische Geschichte 1890-1990 (Hg. von Herwig Wolfram), Ueberreuter, Wien 1994, p. 23.

process pursued by the state and the church involved – as vividly described by Hanisch – brutal brainwashing and disciplining of the population, which in the long run resulted in a huge gap between the public and private spheres. If in their private lives people still behaved in a non-conformist manner, they were increasingly conformist in public, with the fear of God provoking aggressiveness against any possible enemy, be it all sorts of marginal groups, heretics, the Turks and the Jews. In this sense, the catholic reform was complementary to the Counter-Reformation, as it disciplined the human belief in God and at the same time awarded it with »a diverse repertoire of ceremonies and celebrations«.

The »historical traditions« of the Austrian political culture (and of the nations living within the Habsburg Monarchy up to 1918), however, do not go back only to the baroque era, but also to the age of enlightenment and the josephism. Apart for the baroque Austria, there was also another, »enlightened, sober and realistic Austria«, says Hanisch. Austria (the Habsburg Monarchy) went through significant progress in the age of reform absolutism, with the goal of the reforms being »a common union of subjects« rather than a community of »free citizens«. In this manner, »the top-down modernization« strengthened the position of bureaucracy, and its measures influenced not only the public but also the private sphere of its subjects [4]. From time to time, it sparked resistance (especially among peasants), which eventually had no significant influence on the reform policy. Reforms did contribute to a »rise in life opportunities«, but they were fought out not by the subjects but merely by the state elites and bureaucracy. The Habsburg reform policy was a typical example of »state-run modernization«. The most important means which the state leaders used for promoting the reforms were the rule of law and the idea of the Rechtsstaat, as described by an American historian James Shedel. Although already emperor Joseph himself abandoned some of his reforms, and the rest of them were revoked by his successors, the legacy of the josephism with a »Habsburg dynastic state as Rechtsstaat« remained present. The josephist spirit of a state founded on the law and responsible for keeping social order continued also with the post-Joseph bureaucracy. Besides, the image of a ruler who is at the same time superior and inferior to the law remained a self-perception of the Habsburgs – including of Franz Joseph – through the entire 19th century [5].

The monarchy, still drawing on the legacy of josephism, decisively affected the process of economic, social and cultural changes in the 19th century. As Shedel says, from the end of the 18th century to 1914, the monarchy promoted economic development directly or indirectly, it contributed to a rise of middle classes, cultural changes and »ironically – even to a rise in national awareness«. Using »the rule of law« as a source of positive social changes and a frame within which these changes could take place, it laid down the »intellectual foundations of the Austrian liberalism«. The readiness of the Habsburg state and dynastic

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4 E. Hanisch, ibidem, pp. 24-29.

5 James Shedel, Fin de siècle or Jahrhundertwende, The Question of an Austrian Sonderweg, Rethinking Vienna 1900 (ed. by Steven Beller), Berghan Books, New York – Oxford 2001, pp. 90-92.

leaders to pursue reforms was of course strictly limited from the very beginning. The Court as well as the ruling elites only agreed to the changes to the extent which did not threaten their own existence and the traditional legitimacy of the dynasty. The rationalist and legalist spirit of the enlightenment was a new and important source of legality for the dynasty, which contributed to its stronger legitimacy founded on the church and traditional law. On the other hand, the rule of law was an »indispensable frame« for managing the monarchy. It was the combination of modern and traditional that crucially defined the Austrian »Rechtsstaat« according to Shedel[6].

In the times of Joseph's successors, emperors Franz and Ferdinand, who adhered to the principle »Liegen lassen ist die beste Erledigung«, the enthusiasm of the dynastic and the state leaders for the modernization processes significantly waned, while the lack of the »josephist initiative« is believed to be one of the causes for the 1848 revolution. Only after 1848 – in the period of neo-absolutism – the government and the Court returned to Joseph's principles and again opted for the policy of state-run modernization (in the economy and education). A decade later, financial troubles, military defeats and opposition of the liberal middle classes even forced them to make constitutional concessions[7]. But also the constitutional reform of 1867, which strengthened the parliamentary system of the western part of the monarchy and guaranteed the protection of individuals' rights, was only a compromise, as it preserved a great deal of the monarch's powers. The liberals who in 1867 co-created constitutional laws did not want to weaken the state but only to reinforce its legal foundations, says Helmut Rumpler. The German middle classes, which supported the December Constitution, on the one hand dismissed the bureaucracy of the neo-absolutist era but on the other hand preserved its political ideals. In this sense, the December Constitution in the *Cisleithanien* failed to establish a »constitutional state«, but further strengthened the Rechtsstaat, or better, the »legally regulated execution of state's power«[8].

The compromise nature of the December Constitution was only one of the reasons for political troubles in the western part of the monarchy in the last decades of the 19th and in early 20th century. The other two problems, no less important, were the nationally unbalanced "election geometry" extremely in favor of the German-speaking population, and the parliamentary system based on the majority principle and the possibility of being outvoted. This could simply not work in the multi-national composition of the parliament with the deputies who were in the first place representatives of their nations and only then members of political parties and groups[9]. But also in the period of political crises after 1897, when the

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6 J. Shedel, ibidem, p. 92.

7 Ibidem, pp. 94-95.

8 Helmut Rumpler, Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa, Bürgerliche Emanzipation und Staatsverfal in der Habsburgermonarhie, Österreichische Geschichte 1804-1914 (Hg. von Herwig Wolfram), Ueberreiter, Wien 1997, p. 417.

9 Ibidem.

parliament failed to assemble because of the obstruction of German nationalists and Young Czechs, the deputies and parties permitted to function the *Rechtsstaat*. They not only supported the bureaucratic ministries, but even allowed the government and the emperor to apply Article 14 of the constitutional law allowing them to issue »provisional decrees« when the parliament did not assemble. Later on the Reichsrath easily confirmed most of these »decrees«, which according to James Shedel, clearly reveals a high degree of unanimity on the legitimacy of the emperor's power [10].

Shedel is also convincing in his findings that *Ausgleich* with Hungary in 1867 was a kind of supplement to the *Rechtsstaat*. By forming a quasi-federal dualist union, it actually meant modernization of the authority of the state, but at the same time it preserved and even enhanced the role of the emperor and the dynasty. It also applied the constitutional *Rechtsstaat* to Hungary. While this quietened down the Magyars for some time, it increased the discontent and the national-political ambitions of the non-Magyar and non-German nations. The unilateral German-Hungarian agreement set off mass movements in Bohemia in support of the demands of the Czech leaders for the Czech historical law to be respected and for the formation of a new provincial diet, which would be elected by universal suffrage and would draft the constitution of the kingdom of Bohemia, assuring the Czechs »independence and freedom« as enjoyed by Magyars [11]. With the national mobilization of the rural population for the provincial elections in January 1867, Slovenes for the first time ever won a majority in the provincial diet in the province of Carniola. The policy pursued by the Slovene conservatives who in the Reichsrath voted for the dualism, was severely criticized by liberal »Young-Slovenes«, who organized mass public rallies in the late 1860s following the Czech example. They demanded not only national and language equality, but also the federal transformation of the Habsburg Monarchy and uniting of all Slovene »ethnic territories« in an autonomous United Slovenia (*Zedinjena Slovenija*). Croatia had a special position in Hungary, as the supporters of the Croatian union with Hungary concluded the Croatian-Hungarian Agreement in 1868, which led to a kind of restricted political and cultural autonomy of Croatia. In the 1870s the Austro-Slavic and federalist Croatian National Party also came to terms with the Croatian-Hungarian Agreement. Thus, the Party of the Right assumed the leading position in the Croatian national movement. It first advocated full Croatian national independence, but gradually it eased its rhetoric and demanded increased independence of Croatia within the dualist monarchy [12].

These three examples clearly reveal how the position of individual nations differed in the monarchy and how diverse the aspirations of their national movements were. Apart from historical traditions and general cultural and social conditions, their demands were largely

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10 J. Shedel, Fin de siècle, p. 97.

11 Oto Urban, Die tschechische Gesellschaft 1848 bis 1918, Band I, Böhlau Verlag, Wien 1994, p. 329 ff.

12 Nikša Stančić, Hrvatska nacija i nacionalizam u 19. i 20. stoljeću (Croatian Nation and Nationalism in 19th and 20th century), Barbat, Zagreb 2003, pp. 116-117.

affected by the social composition and the actual power of their political elites. Despite the differences however, at the end of the 18th century and throughout the 19th century they all formed similar (or comparable) value systems, with the language and cultural creation being the central factors of national self-assertion. Ever since the beginning of the constitutional era, all national movements spread their social basis and radicalized political goals (although these processes proceeded at different speeds, with different compromises and adjustments), with national affiliation and distinction becoming an inseparable part of political life. Despite the increasing political reputation of social democrats and Christian socialists at the end of the 19th century, a large majority of population of *Cisleithanien* supported their national parties. The expectations of the Austrian state leadership that the extension of the right to vote and introduction of general curia in the elections to the Reichsrath would ease the national tensions and the work of the parliament, proved unfounded in 1897, with the election results clearly revealing massive support for national movements. At the elections a decade later, after the introduction of the general (male) suffrage for the Reichsrath, liberal and national groups lost, and social democrats – the only all-national party, but divided into national organizations – won. However, the national relations in the parliament and in individual provinces still failed to improve, which was again reflected well in the parliamentary elections in 1911, which weakened the pro-government bloc and further deepened the national divisions in the assembly [13].

As Jiri Koralka maintained, by the early 20th century the Austrian state became increasingly distanced from all the »peoples and nations living in its territory«. Its population was divided into separate socially and culturally formed ethnic groups, each with its own language, newspapers, clubs, parties, economic and cultural organizations (some of them, e.g. the Czechs even had their own representatives in international associations), but – except the Magyars – all without an autonomous national-legal status [14]. Despite the general discontent with this situation, before the First World War there were only a few small radical national-political groups that strived for full independence and overthrow of the monarchy. Most national political elites and parties counted on the further existence of the Habsburg Monarchy and its potential transformation. The contradiction between the advancement of national societies on the one hand and their lack of legal national status on the other thus created an impression of an insurmountable division between the national and the state. The patriotic feelings for the monarchy, expressed by the representatives of the Habsburg nations in the period before the First World War and also after its break out, were not based on their

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[13] Helmut Rumpler, Parlament und Regierung Cisleithaniens 1867 bis 1914, Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918 (Herausgegeben von Adam Wandruszka und Peter Urbanitsch), Band VII, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 2000, pp. 872-894.

[14] Jiri Koralka and R. J. Crampton, Die Tschechen, Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918 (Herausgegeben von Adam Wandruszka und Peter Urbanitsch), Band III, Die Völker des Reiches, 1. Teilband, Verlag des österreichischen Akademie der Wissneschaften, Wien 1980, pp. 516-517.

attachment to the state but rather on their loyalty to the dynasty and the monarch. The emperor was, as stated by George V. Strong, the connecting »political icon« and even in times when the Austro-Hungarian Empire seemed to face permanent internal chaos, the emperor's Court and personality were the only political institutions which ensured continuity and stability [15].

This course of development, relations and conditions inevitably affected the political affiliation, practice and values of the population and social political elites. In the opinion of Ernst Hanisch, the political culture in Austria (and in the Habsburg Monarchy) – contrary to the Anglo-Saxon political culture based on civil initiative and representation – was decisively marked by the traditionally strong role of the state, which hindered the development of political individualism. Respect for traditions and authorities was also imposed by the Austrian Catholicism, which infiltrated into »the very roots of the people's culture«. Despite the tendencies for greater social openness and adjustment to the changed social and economic conditions at the end of the 19th century, Austrian Catholicism reestablished itself on new extremely anti-modern ideological foundations. It declared its greatest enemies to be the anti-clericals, liberals, social democrats and Jews as »the enemies of the enemies«. Anti-Semitism had been deeply rooted in the Austrian (and Central European) »people's culture«, and was therefore not difficult to politicize [16].

From the beginning of the constitutional era, political mobilization of the population was strongly under the influence of the national movements, national elites and national ideologies. Although the processes of mass politicization and national integration varied among the nations, they all concentrated more on the demands for strengthening and social-political establishment of national collectives, while putting aside the issues of social modernization and political democratization. The national movements thus had a central role and deserve indisputable credit for political and cultural emancipation of national communities. However, with their aspirations for national unification they also fuelled intolerance and national exclusion, where there was no room for cultural plurality and any diverse feelings of loyalty and affiliation. In *Cisleithanien*, the unfulfilled expectations about the general suffrage, which was thought to contribute to better inter-national communication and easier overcoming of national conflicts in the Reichsrath, undermined the confidence in the parliament. A statement by Ivan Hribar, mayor of Ljubljana known for his all-Slav and liberal orientations, in the Reichsrath in 1909 could be an illustration of the weakness of the Slovene liberalism. He said that he had lost all the confidence in the parliament and in general suffrage, as in his opinion the national conflicts were worse after its introduction than they were before in the curial system. But his opinion that »the nations would never manage to come to an agreement only by themselves«, as Germans (and Magyars) would never declare

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15 George V. Strong, Seedtime for Fascism, The Disintegration of Austrian Political Culture 1867-1918, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York 1998, p. 64.

16 Hanisch, Der lange Schatten, pp. 30-31.

the equality of Slavic nations was most likely shared by many non-Slovene deputies, politicians and voters. This is why the best »solution« would be a dictate of a »fair government« or of a true statesman with an »iron will«[17].

In his comprehensive history of the 20th century in Austria, Ernst Hanisch found out that the historical conditions and experiences in the Habsburg Empire led to a »type« of hedonistic, apolitical and opportunist Austrian who – despite all the opposite political camps and the process of social democratization – by far outlived the Habsburg Monarchy. However, in addition to a »wide spectrum« of population who was not concerned with politics, there was another part which was extremely politicized. This part followed political activists and leaders who used sharp rhetoric to dictate political polarization. The party elites sitting in the provincial diets and the Reichsrath nevertheless also started to learn about democratization. One of the consequences of sharp social and political divisions in the Habsburg and post-Habsburg Austria was also »deep fragmentation« of political culture and formation of political sub-cultures. Moreover, the political culture of the post-Habsburg Austria also comprised non-democratic moves on all political sides, which were supposed to originate from the old-Austrian historical traditions. These were: strict social hierarchy, obsession with titles of honor, ceremonies as an external expression of preserving a distance and of division by social status as well as theatrical behavior and clientelism[18].

Some of these characteristics, as Hanisch says, could no doubt be found in any Central European nation. However, despite similar historical traditions and experiences, there are still some obvious differences in political legacy and practices in individual ethnic groups. Especially in Bohemia where the influence of Husitism and Lutheranism was stronger than in Moravia, the Anti-Reformation Catholicism never managed to penetrate so deeply in the Czech population as it did in German-speaking Austria. The Czech clergy did have an important role in the Czech linguistic and cultural movement but in the 19th century the Czech Catholicism, under the strong influence of josephism, was nevertheless shallow and rationally indifferent (except in South Bohemia and in the major part of Moravia)[19]. The nationally-based Czech society, formed in the second half of the 19th century, was much less hierarchic and formalist than the contemporary German-speaking Austrian society, as the nobility had no significant role in the Czech national and political movements. According to Emanel Pecka, Czech political culture was more attracted to fatalism than to ceremonials and theatrical behavior[20]. Along with rapid industrialization and social restructuring, both leading to decreasing agrarian and rising urban populations, the liberal tendencies prevailed in Czech

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17 Vasilij Melik, Slovenci in avstrijska država 1848-1918 (Slovenes and the Austrian State 1848-1918), Grafenauerjev zbornik, Znanstveno raziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti, Ljubljana 1996, pp. 523-528.

18 Hanisch, Der lange Schatten, pp. 27, 32-33.

19 J. Koralka – R. J. Crampton, pp. 497-498.

20 Emanel Pecka, Political Culture in Czech Republic, Political Culture in East Central Europe, Edited by Fritz Plasser and Andrei Pribersky, Avebury, Aldershot 1996, p. 206.

politics, despite its extreme political divisions before the First World War. The two Catholic political parties established in the 1890s, were more influential in Moravia than in Bohemia. Cultural creation and cultural activism based on a wide network of organizations and societies were traditionally an important factor of national mobilization of population. Because of the policy of »short steps« in the time of the Taaffe government and the positive inclination of »Young Czechs« to the governments in Vienna at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, the Czech deputies and leaders were subject to severe and ironic criticism of domestic society, since their endeavors in Vienna produced no visible results. The historians, on the other hand, believe that their politics was realistic and had clear goals. Czech political culture was in this sense – according to political scientists – typically realistic and pragmatic [21].

Although the Czechs were a national and political model for the Slovenes, the cultural, social and political conditions in the provinces with the Slovene population differed largely from those in Bohemia and Moravia. Also in the years before the break out of the First World War, the share of agrarian population was much higher in Slovene regions than in Austria on average, industrialization was slow and towns were small. The Slovene middle classes gained their position largely by schooling and education, but the number of successful businessmen and traders who joined the Slovene national movement remained modest. Anti-Reformation Catholicism put down much deeper roots among the Slovenes than among Czechs, despite the cultural importance of the Protestant literature written in Slovene language. Thus, the conservative, Catholic and since the late 1860s also clerical tendencies prevailed in Slovene politics, with only a weak role of liberals despite the liberal orientation of the majority of intellectuals and cultural workers. Slovenes could also not refer to any »historical tradition of a state«, like the Czechs. Their national political goal was an autonomous United Slovenia within a federalized Habsburg Monarchy. But in everyday politics, both middle-class political groups (conservative-Catholics and liberals) were satisfied with obtaining some language or cultural rights. In this sense, cultural activism was a traditional characteristic of the Slovene struggle for national emancipation as well. At the end of the 19th century, only the Catholic (People's) Party managed to establish a modern structure based on a network of efficient cooperative and economic organizations.

Because of the strained national relations in the monarchy and the progressing Germanization at the turn of the century, both Slovene middle class parties and also the emerging Slovene social democrats started to seek alliances with the Croats and Serbs. Before the First World War, Slovene politicians increasingly believed that Slovenes could only fulfill their aspirations in close association with South Slav nations (Croats and Serbs). All the three Slovene political groups (social democrats included) strove for »Yugoslavia« within the federalized Habsburg Monarchy. During the monarchy period, the Slovene political culture

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21 Ibidem.

was thus strongly catholic, even clerical, liberalism was weak and there was strong political exclusivity and sharp catholic-liberal polarization. Slovene political elites demanded national, in particular language equality, cultural-language autonomy and supported an idea of Yugoslavia. In their every-day political activities, Slovene deputies and leaders pursued a pragmatic policy of »short steps« and sought agreement among nations in the Reichsrath and provincial diets. Like the Czechs, Slovenes also had no influential political groups that would fight for full national independence and long for a disintegration of the monarchy before the First World War. In the opinion of some researchers, the Slovene population was even more loyal to the dynasty and the emperor than the Czechs. Nevertheless, a mass movement for uniting of all Habsburg South Slavs into a »Habsburg Yugoslavia« spread also among the Slovenes in the last two war years 1917/1918. Among the intellectuals, this movement in 1918 even gradually transformed into a movement for Yugoslavia outside the Habsburg Monarchy.

The same differences in political conditions and traditions or even wider could also be found among the nations of *Cisleithanien* and *Transleithanien*. As pointed out by Robin Okey, the Magyars as the predominant national group had a stronger position in Hungary than the Austrian Germans in Austria, which importantly affected also their attitude to non-Magyar nations [22]. Typical for this attitude was the constitutional law of 1868, saying that »all the citizens of Hungary – regardless of their nationality – form a single and indivisible Hungarian nation in a political sense«. This position was based on a traditional aristocratic conception of the nation influenced by modern French national and state-political ideas. The superior attitude to non-Magyar nations which had no historical state traditions nor noble elites, was at first held only by nobility, but it spread in the 19th century also to the middle classes and intellectuals and thus became one of the origins of the Magyar nationalism. Even after the introduction of dualism, the liberally-oriented acts acknowledged the citizens' individual rights, but not the collective national rights, with the use of national languages being only allowed but not guaranteed. This in an important way contributed to political practices of local and regional authorities, which simply ignored smaller linguistic and ethnic groups [23].

The Hungarian society was known for a strict hierarchy, party and personal patronage and traditional respect for authority, which had not been undermined before the first mass social movements in the decades preceding the First World War. The political power remained in the hands of noble elites and only partially of some middle class upstarts, and the ruling political elites predominantly comprised of nobility and their followers, associated not only by their political convictions but also through personal ties. In the predominantly liberally-oriented Hungarian politics the modernization tendencies were intertwined with more

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[22] Robin Okey, The Habsburg Monarchy 1765-1918, European Studies Series, Macmillan Press Ltd., London 2001, p. 312.

[23] László Kóntler, Millienium in Central Europe, A History of Hungary, Atlantisz Publishing House, Budapest 1999, pp. 280-284.

conservative nobility principles, and the Hungarian liberalism, although having succeeded in separating the church from the state by the laws of the late 19th century, turned a deaf ear to the demands for democratization of political life. This was further confirmed by the unsuccessful attempts at election reform and the extension of the right to vote [24]. All this strained the relations between the traditional parties and the increasing mass workers' and agrarian-farmers' movements and speeded up the fragmentation of the political life with emerging new political subcultures. Although the adversaries of the dualist system of the monarchy existed on both sides of Leitha, most Hungarian political elites supported dualism and the constitutional order. Nevertheless, there were constant tensions between Budapest and Vienna, which culminated in the mass demands for greater Hungarian independence in the early 20th century. According to the Hungarian researchers, the Hungarian political culture was thus comprised of the traditions of legalism, realism and paternalism in combination with national populism [25]. The Hungarian politics before the First World War also had elements of constitutionalism, positive attitude to liberal political values, but also of expansive nationalism with tendencies for assimilation of non-Magyar ethnic groups, weak democratic traditions and a legacy of aristocratic exclusiveness.

The Croats were the only non-Magyar nation in Hungary which had a status of »political nation with a separate territory, independent legislation and a government for internal affairs«. However, only a part of the territory with Croatian population belonged to Hungary, whilst the rest of the Croats lived in Dalmatia, which was directly subordinated to Vienna, in Istria, which belonged to *Cisleithanien*, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was a part of the Ottoman Empire up to 1878 and in the *Military Frontier*, which was also subordinated to Vienna up to 1881. The main demand of the Croatian political elites in the second half of the 19th century was thus unification of the territory with Croatian-speaking population and its progressive integration into a single Croatian nation. As these wishes were opposed not only by Budapest but also by Vienna, most of the Croatian middle classes supported the aspirations for preserving and expanding Croatian autonomy under Hungary. In the second half of the 19th century, full Croatian independence was only advocated by the Croatian Party of the Right, which, however, eventually gave in regarding the Habsburg frame, but continued to pursue radical nationalism. In its aspirations for uniting the territory with a Croatian-speaking population, the more liberally-oriented part of the Croatian middle classes even agreed to closer ties with Serbs within the monarchy and to the Yugoslav idea in the last decade before the war (which was in Croatia, contrary to the Slovene beliefs, mostly understood as bilateral alliance between Serbs and Croats) [26]. In the early 20th century, most of Croatian parties

24 Ibidem.

25 Áttila Ágh, Political Culture and System Change in Hungary, Political Culture in East Central Europe, quot. in note 5, pp. 127-135.

26 Nikša Stančić, Croatian Nation pp. 51-59.

advocated the state-political transformation of the monarchy, be it by federalization or by establishing a separate sub-dualist Croatian entity within Hungary. Like with the Slovenes, also among the Croats the anti-Habsburg position only came to the forefront in the last year of war.

Like the Slovene middle classes, the Croatian middle classes also were mostly of peasant origins and obtained their civic status by schooling and education. But the Croatian political elites were mostly liberal and tried to enforce the basic liberal demands for the division of power, a constitutional state and individual freedom. Except for the Peasants' Party of the Radić brothers and the social-democratic intellectuals, none of them, however, supported political democratization and introduction of general suffrage. At the turn of the century, the Catholic movement also gained new members, but it never obtained enough support for independent political organization either from the middle classes or from peasants. In the provinces with Croatian population there was no strong Catholic political party like in the Slovene provinces and also liberalism had no long tradition. In the opinion of Tihomir Cipek, the Croatian political elites accepted liberalism only as an ideology with a system of values which would open the way to national emancipation. According to Cipek, there was a huge gap between the »elites and non-elites« in Hungarian "continental" Croatia like elsewhere in Hungary, with only 2% of population having a right to vote up to 1907 and 6% after that year. The population only entered political life with mass social rallies against the policy of Magyarization. The political culture of Croatian political elites before the First World War was thus marked by basic values of political liberalism, constitutionalism and parliamentary discussions, but at the same time also by weak democratic traditions and belief in the power of the state, which was to be the main factor of modernization [27]. In the national sense, the aspirations for (language, cultural and political) emancipation and unification of the Croatian nation prevailed in the Croatian policy of the second half of the 19th and early 20th century. Their goals were first, political, cultural and to some extent an economic autonomy based on alleged Croatian state-political tradition, and only then a separate sub-dualist or federalist Croatian state-political entity. The demands for full Croatian independence only briefly enjoyed limited social and political support.

The above brief descriptions of national-historical and political traditions are inevitably generalized and approximate. But they clearly reveal a huge diversity of historical experience and political legacy of individual Central European nations and lead us to the conclusion, that despite the historical and political traditions shared by all nations that once belonged to the Habsburg Monarchy, one can hardly speak of any special »Central European political culture«. This was also confirmed in the period in between the two wars, when the national political elites and parties, originating mostly from the time of the Habsburg Monarchy, attempted to

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[27] Tihomir Cipek, Liberalizam – korporativizam. Dva lica ideologija hrvatskih političkih elita u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, (Liberalsim - corporativism. Two faces of the ideology of the Croatian political elites in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes), Dijalog Povjesničara-Istoričara (Dialog of Croatian and Serbian Historians), Pecs maj 2000, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, Zagreb 2001, pp. 276-281.

fulfill their national and political ambitions within the new states. The methods used for this and their final results depended on very diverse social, political, economic, cultural, national and foreign-policy factors, but to some extent also on the political traditions inherited from the times of the monarchy, mixed with Western European ideals and models.

Czechoslovakia was supposed to be the most democratic state from among those who emerged from the ruins of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918. It was the only state which preserved the democratic constitutional-parliamentary system up to the second half of the 1930s. Czechoslovakia had a two-chamber parliamentary system, general suffrage and a proportional election system which was favorable for small (also national) political parties, but at the same time encouraged fragmentation of political life. It resulted in a large number of small political parties, of which only up to five entered the government coalitions. The famous »five« comprised the parties existing from the times of the Habsburg Monarchy and continuing their political activities in the post-war Czechoslovak Republic. The deputies were bound by strict coalition and party discipline, they treated their mandates as if owned by their party and protected their political »territories« at all costs, which all weakened the role of the parliament. Small and newly founded parties could hardly seriously threaten the government coalitions, which did good »neither to political life nor to parties«[28]. Mistrust toward the central authority was one of the traditions inherited from the old-Austria, which according to Robert Luft and T. Mills Kelly, resulted in the parliamentary policy remaining restricted to a narrow circle of the »men from Prague« and failed to change into democratic mobilization of the population in a wider spatial and social sense[29].

The Czechoslovakian political system between the wars is known for a relatively strong position of the president of the state, attributed by many Czech historians more to the personal political prestige of Masaryk and the French influence than to the traditionally strong role of the ruler within the Habsburg Monarchy. Masaryk with his closest collaborators was the only real opposition to the »five«. There was a constant struggle for political predominance between the government parties and Masaryk's »Hrad« (the Castle), which was further complicated by the fact that the president of the republic participated in the political life by various means (also by publishing anonymous articles in the press, instructions to ministers and criticism of the government via confidants), and his authorities were not clearly defined in the constitution[30]. In the national sense, Czechoslovakia was defined in the constitution as a state of the »Czechoslovak nation«. The Czech historians explain the idea of Czechoslovakism (which has a peculiar analogy in the Serbian comprehension of the Yugoslavism) by the closeness of the Czech and Slovak ethnic and languages and also by

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28 Robert Kvaček, The Rise and the Fall of Democracy, Bohemia in History, edited by Mikuláš Teich, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 250

29 T. Mills Kelly, New Perspectives on Interwar Czechoslovakia, EEES (East European Studies News), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C. 2003, p. 10.

30 R. Kvaček, The Rise and the Fall, p. 251.

political motives, because only as a single political nation of Czechs and Slovaks had a decisive majority in the state – along with Germans, Magyars and Ruthens. But such a comprehension of the »national unity« failed to bring the Czech and Slovaks together, as it was contrary to the traditional Czech federalism and cultural-language notion of a nation. In the process of democratization of public and political life after 1918, Czechoslovakia achieved significant progress. In the opinion of a French political scientist Jacuqes Rupnik, it was a culturally and economically westward oriented middle class state with a liberal, socially concerned, rational and pragmatic »political style« and with the administration functioning in the tradition of the Habsburg »Rechtsstaat« [31]. The more recent researchers are more critical and reveal significant »weaknesses« of the Czechoslovak democracy between the wars. In addition to the ones mentioned before, these were: primacy of the national over the civic, a relatively weak role of the »civil society« based on the Habsburg tradition of societies and cooperatives, and a insufficient »rule of law« curtailed by censorship and surveillance of the opponents of the regime [32]. These deficiencies make it easier to understand the growing discontent of the Czech and Slovak inhabitants with the political system, expressed in their declining participation in the political life. As stated by sociologist Radim Bure, the Czech political culture of the 1920s and 1930s no doubt carried certain democratic features (such as belief in the ideals of freedom, democracy and pluralism), but also non-democratic ones, i.e. the lack of tolerance, political fragmentation, unwillingness to make compromises and reach agreements and subordination of the common and general interests to more narrow personal, national or party interests [33].

After the unsuccessful attempts for democratization, the bloody months of the Soviet republic and military interventions of the neighboring countries on the territory of historical Hungary which ended with signing of the peace agreement of Trianon, the social-political traditions which decisively influenced the pre-war Hungarian politics »survived« the war and post-war unrest also in Hungary. Although Admiral Horthy was – as pointed out by László Kóntler – a political newcomer in 1919, the restoration of »order and peace« brought back to the political life also the old conservative-liberal aristocratic and capitalist elites in the early 1920s [34]. The return of these elites, however, did not mean the restoration of the pre-war political regime. In the period between the wars, the Hungarian political system – with the extended right to vote and participation of workers and peasants parties in the parliament – was more democratic than before the First World War. But on the other hand it was also less liberal because of censorship, strict police surveillance and official anti-Semitism. Modern

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31 Jacques Rupnik, L'Autre Europe, Crise et fin du communisme, Points-Éditions, Odile Jacob – Paris 1993, pp. 32-33.

32 T. Mills Kelly, pp. 10-11.

33 Radim Bure, The Czech »National Character« and Obstacles on the Road to Democracy (http://www.crvp.org/book/Series04/IV-A3/chapter_viii.htm)

34 László Kóntler, p. 345.

Hungarian historians define the regime of the »Horthy's« era as »restricted parliamentary democracy with indisputable authoritarian traits« [35]. A multi-party system, a government accountable to the parliament, independent judiciary (by law) and public opinion pluralism were all liberal institutions »inherited« from the era of dualism, but the post-war political system was nevertheless authoritarian and non-democratic. The political power was in the hands of the bloc of government parties, which amalgamated into one single government party bloc in the early 1920s. The political groups within this party bloc communicated directly between themselves and not through the parliament. Thus, the opposition could criticize the government decisions, but had practically no influence over them and no chances of coming to power by an alternative policy. Although the conservative and nationalistic right was closer to the government circles than the left, the nationalist extremists were ousted from the governing party in 1923. The general national depression after Trianon, when this unfortunate peace agreement became a »culprit« for various social, economic and other national problems, incited the national, nationalistic and anti-Semitic feelings, which largely affected the public discourse in the 1920s and 1930s in Hungary [36].

Such conditions hardly contributed to strengthening of democratic and liberal traditions. Instead – in the opinion of social psychologist György Csepeli – they stirred up feelings of incapacity and frustration which were at the local level – given the restricted right to vote – further enhanced by centralism of the government [37]. The Hungarian political culture in the period between the wars was also strongly fragmented, competitive, exclusive and strictly divided into subcultures, which is generally typical of socially and culturally poorly homogenized societies. But on the other hand, it also bore certain traits inherited from the times of the monarchy, such as paternalist legalism of the ruling minority and national populism of the middle class, intertwined with the prevalent conservative-authoritarian tendencies [38].

On the basis of political experience, conceptions and cultural-political traditions gained under the Habsburg Monarchy, Slovene and Croatian political elites also formed their own national and party politics within the post-war Yugoslav state structures. In this new environment, they for the first time came into contact with the political leaders, parties and population who had undergone entirely different political, cultural and national development than themselves under the Habsburg Monarchy. It soon became obvious that at least as far as political elites were concerned, the differences in political practices and behavioral patterns were not a real barrier preventing cooperation and closer connections. But it was various national and political ideas which caused much greater disagreements and divisions from the very start.

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35 Ignác Rómsics, Hungary in the Twentieth Century, Corvina-Osiris, Budapest 1999, p. 190.
36 László Kóntler, p. 350.
37 György Csépely, Transition Blues, The Roots of Pessimism, The Hungarian Quaterly, Volume XLI, No. 158, Summer 2000 (http://www.hungarianquaterly.com/no158/064.html).
38 Á.Ágh, quot. in the note 25.

II

In their famous book the Civic Culture, Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba described the political culture of the Ottoman Empire as »parochial« and used the following definition: »The authority of government, based almost entirely on taxation, the maintenance of an army and an age old tradition of dynastic rule, was felt most immediately in the towns and less directly in the villages… The provinces were ruled by military governors or landed feudatories with only occasional interference from the capital… The principal emissary of authority to the village, the tax gatherer, was less of a government official than a private contractor or subcontractor who recompensed himself as liberally as he could for the advances he had paid to his employers. Often the village was responsible for tax payments collectively – a circumstance which further reduced the control of authority over the individual peasant. Law itself was largely beyond the scope of the ruler, whose decrees in a few points supplanted or modified a universal structure of religious law and local custom«. Typical for the »parochial political culture« were thus low expectations regarding the political system and insecure or negative feelings towards the central authorities, with no innate criteria for balancing the relations with them [39].

The situation, however, changed also in the Ottoman Empire. In the 19th century, the central authorities in Istanbul implemented reforms to increase their influence and powers. With the emergence of the independent national states in the Balkan Peninsula, the development there went its own way. All these new states were faced with two very demanding tasks: first, with establishing new state institutions which would allow political and administrative integration and second, with the processes of national formation. That is to say the process of state integration went hand in hand with the process of national consolidation. According to Bulgarian historian Diana Mishkova, political power in the newly emerging states was in the hands of tiny educated elites, who opted for the organizational forms and patterns as seen in Western Europe. They were convinced that this would open for them the door to the developed world. In practice (as well as in laws and constitutions) the ruling elites used various forms of restrictions to preserve control over the state, and they mobilized people and resources in their own way, but their policies – despite restrictiveness and general political corruption – nevertheless took into account wider national needs as well as interests of economic development. The modernization processes relied on liberal measures, gradual introduction of liberal political principles and institutions, and more accessible education. Except in Romania, there was no wealthy feudal nobility in the Balkans. The political elites in these relatively non-differentiated societies of free agricultural landowners mostly increased their influence, position and wealth either by taking part in the struggle against the Ottoman predominance or by acquiring knowledge and education at foreign (Central and Western European) universities and later on also at domestic colleges.

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[39] Gabriel A. Almond-Sydney Verba, pp. 23-24.

They governed the states by a strictly centralized state apparatus and administration which in proportion to the number of population reached or even exceeded the proportion of employed in the public administration in industrialized Western Europe [40].

Although establishing of new western-like political institutions was proceeding differently in these countries, they all tried to do away (down to the local levels) with the remnants of the Ottoman political legacy and break completely with the Ottoman past. Also the political elites had to be formed from scratch, as the Christian population had been only poorly involved in the administrative-political system of the Ottoman Empire, or it was involved only at the lowest level, i.e. as mediators between the autonomous and the Ottoman authorities. An exception were the Phanariots, who were at the same time the Greek cultural elite and Ottoman bureaucrats; their influence on the Greek national movement and after the emergence of the Greek state also on its policy was however, despite the good reputation which they enjoyed, negligible. In Romania, the noble elites partly preserved their traditionally prestigious social position, but also there was no continuity of the political elites connected with the Ottoman system after the national independence of Romania. The Ottoman political legacy was therefore weak in the newly independent Balkan states but their legacy in the economic, social and everyday life was much more present [41]. Nationalism was a new phenomenon for most of the rural population, as affiliation to the religious and church community was in the Ottoman system much stronger than the affiliation to the language or ethnic collectives, despite the strong oral tradition of famous heroic acts of their predecessors. Language as a symbolic inner tie of a national community, however, obtained the central role in the process of nationalization promoted by national and cultural leaders in the 19th century. The new countries strived to establish lay and centralized education systems, which together with the military and state administration became one of the most important means of national integration. In the opinion of Maria Todorova, religion only had a minor role in establishing new national identities. It only became important when language could no longer serve as a clear division line (e.g. a division between the Muslims and Christians of the same language). Moreover, it could only become a representative element of nationality when the church became nationalized. From the very beginning, the national ideologies and policies based on language and religious divisions caused severe tensions among the population. The fact was that as a result of numerous migrations and demographic moves in the past, population had always been very heterogeneous in terms of »language and religion«, and everywhere, be it inside or outside state borders, the national and religious minorities aroused strong nationalist feelings [42].

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[40] Diana Mishkova, Modernization and Political Elites in the Balkans before the fisrt World War, East European Politics and Societies 9.1 (Winter 1995), pp. 63-89.

[41] Maria Todorova, Imaginarij Balkana (Imagining the Balkans), Vita Activa, Inštitut za civilizacijo in kulturo, Ljubljana 2001, pp. 262-280.

[42] Ibidem. As well: Mark Mazower, The Balkans, A Short History, Modern Library Edition, New York 2000, p. 39 ff.

The post-Ottoman development in the individual Balkan states had many similarities but also many dissimilarities. The processes of modernization and changes and their influence on the general political practices, culture and values can in the context of this paper be examined only in the example of Serbia. The national and political mobilization of the Serbian population living within the Ottoman Empire is related to two anti-Ottoman uprisings in early 19th century, which resulted in the establishment of the autonomous vassal Serbian principality. At that time, the Serbian society was very poorly differentiated, it was mostly agrarian and patriarchal, but nevertheless, as Andrej Mitrović says, it had its clear historical "national name" and as well historical consciousness, preserved through oral tradition and epic poetry [43]. After gaining autonomy, all feudal obligations were abolished and peasants became landowners, the Serbian-speaking population started to move to towns, which had been by then inhabited mostly by Muslims and immigrants (craftsmen and tradesmen) from various parts of the Balkan Peninsula. The upper class comprising the prince, his family and his closest associates seized power and formed a new political elite. The process of setting up a state administration was accompanied by tendencies to centralization, which was to assure an efficient collection of taxes and other (vassal) duties to the authorities in Istanbul. Also the setting up of the education system was a part of the modernization processes, and in the 1840s, first national cultural institutions opened their doors. Because of the lack of educated people, the state authorities started to send young people to universities abroad (at first to Vienna, Zürich and German universities, and from 1860s on mostly to Paris). This is where the students heard about liberal political ideas and in the mid-1850s, the first small group of intellectuals started to publicly promote liberal political views. Together with some like-minded students from the Belgrade lyceum, they set themselves as a goal to reduce the powers of the prince and introduce the parliamentary system of elected deputies instead of the administrative state council. They succeeded in changing the regime and the dynasty, but they failed to materialize their constitutional political ideas [44]. Serbia did not get its first constitutional charter laying down the principles of a modern parliamentarian system, with the accountability of ministers to the parliament and the division of powers, before 1869.

But the Constitution of 1869 was only the first step. The constitutional order still conferred a prince (the ruler) some important powers (among others, much of the legislative and budgetary authority and the possibility to influence the composition of the assembly, as it was the prince who determined the number of deputies). It was highly restrictive also in the definition of personal and political freedoms and rights. Thus the efforts for its revision started immediately after the constitution was first adopted. There were two opposing political movements active in the Serbian policy of the second half of the 19th century. First, there was

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43 Andrej Mitrović, Problemi i pitanja modernizacije Srbije (Problems and Questions of Modernization of Serbia), Dialog Povesničara-Istoričara 2, Pecs 1999, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, Zagreb 2000, pp. 81-87.

44 Olga Popović Obradović, Parlamentarizam u Srbiji od 1903 do 1914 godine (Parliamentarism in Serbia from 1903 until 1914), Službeni list SRJ, Beograd 1998, p. 56.

a liberal political movement where the liberally-oriented intellectuals were educated at central or western European universities and they promoted the reforms and institutions according to the Western European liberal principles. In the 1880s, after the state was acknowledged full sovereignty at the Berlin congress and was pronounced a kingdom in 1882, this group succeeded in making a decisive step forward in the political arena. It enforced several liberal laws providing for the freedom of press, meetings and association and allowing legal formation of political parties [45]. Second, there was a radical-nationalist movement, which opposed the Western European liberal principles and aspired – on the basis of the ideas of early Serbian socialists and Russian populists – to a »national Serbian state«, based on »original« patriarchal institutions of the Serbian society. The main administrative unit of the »national or people's state« was supposed to be a »self-managed Serbian municipality«, with the »grand national assembly« comprising the representatives of municipalities and the »nation« as its highest representative, legislative and judicial authority. »The nation« would be politically organized in a »national«, i.e. Radical Party, which would – as a ruling party – hold a parliamentary majority and would be accountable only to the parliament. The main function of the state – in the opinion of the Radical Party – would not be the »protection of individual's rights and civic freedoms«, but the protection of »national (people's) prosperity«. By pursuing the radical policy and the system based on »people's traditions«, Serbia would avoid the »flaws of the western industrial society« and contradictions of the »western capitalism« [46].

By these paroles and the efforts for systematic political organizing, the Radical Party gained the mass support of the population. By their demands for a changed constitutional order and enforcement of their own political system, they also posed a threat to the crown and the ruling political system in the mid-1880s. In these strained conditions, the radicals were forced to consent to cooperation with their political adversaries. In their rivalry with the king and the liberals, they first thought about taking up the British parliamentary model, but eventually they adopted the constitutional-parliamentary system modeled on the Belgian constitution of 1831. In 1888 Serbia got a new constitution, which paved the way to the parliamentary system and the curbed king's powers. At the same time, it allowed the predominant Serbian party – the Radical Party – to start leading the government. But the king's regent, who ruled in the place of the minor king, adhered to the principle of parliamentary majority only for three years, when in 1892 it swapped the majority radical government with the minority liberal one. The young king, who forced his way to the throne

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45 Ibidem, pp. 57-62. Also: Latinka Perović, Milan Piroćanac – Zapadanjak u Srbiji 19. veka (Milan Piročanac – A Westerner in Serbia of the 19th century), Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. veka, Uloga elita, Beograd 2003, pp. 11-72.

46 Olga Popović Obradović, pp. 62-70. Latinka Perović, programi narodne demokratije u Srbiji druge polovine XIX. veka (Programs of the people's democracy in Serbia in the second half of the 19th century), Tokovi istorije 1-4/1999, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Beograd 1999, pp. 83-92.

in 1893, revoked the constitution of 1888 and reinstated the constitution of 1869. Serbia did not return to the constitutional principles of 1888 before 1903, when the dynasty was overthrown [47].

Serbian historians traditionally described the political regime in the Kingdom of Serbia in the period 1903-1914 as a »liberal system … of true constitutionality and the golden age of the Serbian parliamentarism«, while more recent analyses are more critical. In her comprehensive monograph on the parliamentarism in Serbia before the First World War, Olga Popović Obradović convincingly showed that the constitution of 1903, which was in fact only a slightly amended constitution of 1888, significantly reduced the powers of the parliament in favor of the king and the executive power. It gave the king the possibility of a veto in adopting the parliament's rules of procedure, and it also conferred on him an exclusive right of assembling the parliament and prolonging the budget without the consent of the deputies [48]. In the first years of the constitutional regime, the king – without the consent of the parliament and under the influence of the army, which brought him to power – interfered in the formation and the work of the governments. Even at later periods, the army ran out of control of the parliament. At first, the Radical Party had a huge, almost absolute majority in the parliament (90% of seats). A gradual process of party pluralism only started in the parliament in 1908, when its multi-party composition became more expressed. Although the radicals as a dominant party preserved their majority in the parliament until 1914, the gradual rise of the opposition prevented to ever again achieving an absolute majority. The increasing pluralism of political life by emerging of ever-new parties is also thought to be the result of a relatively low census and a wide suffrage (22% of male population). The repeated successes of the »national« Radical Party and only difficult enforcement of the liberal opposition was also an expression of the social and cultural conditions, i.e. the majority agricultural population (87.30%) and cultural retardation (77% illiteracy) [49].

In the opinion of Olga Popović Obradović, the period 1903-1914 was too short to permit any expansion of Serbian parliamentarism and a clear division of powers between the crown, the government and the parliament. Some basic preconditions were not met which would have allowed political modernization, such as the tradition of political individualism and pluralism, positive valuation of political freedoms and more democratic political culture. The Serbian political arena before the First World War, as described by Dubravka Stojanović,

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[47] Olga Popović Obradović, pp. 71-94.

[48] Olga Popović Obradović's book on Serbian parliamentarism before WWI was because of its critical views polemically and critically commented by some Serbian historians. For example: Slobodan Antonić, Srpsko »zlatno doba« izmedju starog i novog mita (Serbian »golden age« between the old and the new myth), Nova srpska politička misao, vol. VI (1999), no. 1-2, pp. 234-254.

[49] Dubravka Stojanović, Nekoliko osobina procesa modernizacije u Srbiji početkom 20. veka (Some characteristics of the modernization in Serbia at the beginning of the 20th century), Dijalog Povijesničara-Istoričara 2, quot. in note 28, pp. 146-147.

featured the lack of tolerance, authoritarianism of political parties, extreme polarization and highly emotional and exclusivist political rhetoric. The radicals in particular called the progressive political pluralism a sign of national secession and disaster; they looked down on the opposition in the parliament and ignored the parliamentary procedures. The parliamentary elections revealed numerous irregularities. Nevertheless, under the influence of the functioning parliamentary institutions encouraging discourse and political alliances, the political conditions and practices gradually changed. In 1908, the results of the elections forced the radicals for the first time to form a coalition government, which positively affected the relations between the parties and opened the way to their better cooperation [50].

Despite many deficiencies and weaknesses, parliamentary institutions did encourage and speed up the process of political modernization. Because of the particularities of historical development, the political modernization was much ahead of the social and economic development, which resulted in huge discrepancies between the state institutions and political ideals inspired by the West and the agrarian, poorly developed, impoverished Serbian society. Like elsewhere in the Balkans (and in Central Europe), the politics and the state were the main generators of modernization also in Serbia; but this also contributed to the predominance of the politics over society, as pointed out by American historian Gale Stokes. According to Dubravka Stojanović, the Balkan and Serbian parliamentarism before the First World War was not only a facade concealing the authoritarian power of the ruling parties and the Court camarilla, but a system which with its constitution strived for disciplining political passions and political culture. Stojanović thus agrees with the opinion of the Bulgarian historian Diana Mishkova, that the modernization role of introducing parliamentarism in the Balkan states could be compared to similar processes elsewhere in Europe, with the differences in the level of political development between the nations and countries of the South-Eastern, Central and Western Europe being much smaller than the differences in their cultural and economic development [51].

In the national aspect, Serbian political elites together with the prince and his closest associates strived for strengthening the autonomy of the principality and in the second half of the 19th century also for its full independence. At the same time, already in the first half of the 19th century, there were plans to expand the Serbian principality to the territories inhabited by Serbian population or forming part of the »historical Serbia« (i.e. medieval »Serbian Empire«). The fact is that in the 19th century, only a third of the Serbian population lived in the Serbian principality. Therefore the aspirations for uniting all Serbian territories and for »liberation« of Serbs living in the Ottoman state (outside the principality) became the motto of the Serbian foreign policy. The first Serbian foreign and national policy program,

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50 Dubravka Stojanović, Poliitčka kultura i modernizacija u Srbiji početkom 20. veka, (Political culture and modernization in Serbia at the beginning of the 20th century), Dijalog Povijesničara-Istoričara 3, quot. in note 12, pp. 158-167.
51 Ibidem, pp. 168-169.

which was drafted under the influence of the Polish emigration in 1844, defined »the Serbian nation« on the basis of historical and language criteria [52]. On the other hand, as pointed out by Olivera Milosavljević, the understanding of »the national and the Serbian« by the Serbian (national and nationalist) elites in the second half of the 19th century was rather diverse and even contradictory. At times they founded the »Serbian nation« on all, historical, ethnical, religious and language factors but at other times only on some of them. There was a part of Serbian »patriots« of the 19th century who believed that Serbs were one single nation because of their »extraordinary and famous past, language and Orthodox Church«. Then there were others who assigned less importance to religion, but came to the conclusion that the Muslims were only »Serbs turned Turks« and Croats »Serbs turned Catholics«. Further, there was also a third group, who believed that the criterion of a historical state was crucial, and therefore they proclaimed Macedonians and Albanians, who at that time started to express their national demands, »fictional nations« [53]. There were a few liberal, educated Serbian politicians and intellectuals who defended peaceful and tolerant cohabitation with nearest and further Balkan neighbors; but the incoherent and contradictory Serbian notions of a nation have from the very beginning hindered the process of South-Slav approximation and integration.

III

The »Yugoslav idea« had been present among the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes before the First World War, but their views on their future integration and their final goal differed significantly. The Serbian supporters of the Yugoslav idea aimed notably at the expansion of Serbia to the territories inhabited by Serbian population outside the Kingdom of Serbia. Croats and Slovenes only became part of their plans at the beginning of the war. In the »continental Croatia« and Dalmatia, it was the union of Croatian and Serbian parties called Serbian-Croatian coalition which supported the integration of Croats and Serbs. They had as a goal an autonomous »Yugoslav unit« within Hungary. On the contrary, the two Slovene middle class parties called for abolishing dualism and forming of a special »trialist« South-Slav unit, joining together the Habsburg »Yugoslavs« (South Slavs) within the federalized Habsburg Monarchy. During the war, the notions of the »Yugoslav issue« further changed, and at the end of the war, the supporters of unification of Habsburg »Yugoslavs« with the Kingdom of Serbia could be found in all three nations. Nevertheless, their views on the form

52 Dušan T. Bataković, Načertanije Ilije Garašanina: problemi i značenja (The program of Ilija Garašanin: Problems and Significance), Dijalog Povijesničara-Istoričara 1, Pecs 1998, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, Zagreb 2000, p. 123.

53 Olivera Milosavljević, Elitizam u narodnom ruhu (Elitism in nationalistic cloth), Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. stoleća, quot. in the note 30, pp. 129-149.

of this union continued to differ largely, which was revealed also at the meeting of the representatives of the Serbian Government with the Croatian-Slovene political emigration at Corfu in 1917. They adopted a position that a »three-name« nation (Serbian-Croatian-Slovene) comprising of »three tribes« was to be united in a »democratic and parliamentary kingdom«, and also that only the constitutive assembly would decide on the form and the system of this new state. The next meeting of the representatives of the Serbian Government and the »Yugoslav emigrants« joined also by Slovene and Croatian politicians from the Habsburg Monarchy did not take place before late October 1918 in Geneva, and again it revealed their different views on the basic questions of their common future. The Serbian negotiators nevertheless agreed that the Habsburg provinces inhabited by the Yugoslav population would merge with the Kingdom of Serbia into a federalized community. Until the election of the constitutive assembly and its decision on the state system, this community would be divided into two parts, the former Habsburg and Serbian one, both of them enjoying a wide autonomy. But, the Serbian Government in Belgrade and the Court rejected this agreement and refused to discuss the state system and the dynasty. Thus, the agreement remained dead letter.

In the meantime, events unwound with an unexpected speed. On 29 October 1918, the Habsburg authority over its Southern provinces ended and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (SHS) was formed on the territory inhabited by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, with its capital in Zagreb. The new state found itself in great difficulties, the greatest of which being that it had no army nor clearly defined borders. This allowed the Italian troops to occupy the territory at the hinterland of Trieste, Istria and Dalmatia, which was promised to Italy by its entente allies in 1915 in exchange for its entry in the war against Central Powers. In the given situation, in late November 1918, all Slovene and most Croatian parties supported an »immediate and full integration of the State SHS with the Kingdom of Serbia«. On 1 December 1918 in Belgrade their deputies bowed to the Serbian Regent Alexander, demanding no special preconditions, only a wish for an early »democratic election of the constitutive assembly«. The regent declared the unification and establishing of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The former Habsburg Slovene, Croatian and Serbian politicians who attended this solemn act of unification in Belgrade, had no mandate of the constituency, elected parliamentary bodies or the population whatsoever for the decisions they took and they did not really consider it necessary. Only the leader of the Croatian Peasants Party, Stjepan Radić, who supported the unification but was in favor of a confederate and republican system of the new state, wanted to conduct a plebiscite on the unification of the State SHS with the Kingdom of Serbia.

By the order of Regent Alexander, the new Yugoslav kingdom got a new government already in December 1918. It was led by a Serbian radical Protić and comprised also of Slovene and Croatian ministers. At the same time it was decided that the legislation regulating the elections to the constitutional assembly would be drafted by a special »Provisional National Representation«. Its deputies were selected by agreement among the parties, with the interference of the minister of the interior. The two Slovene middle class parties, which by

then still approved of the slogans of one single Yugoslav nation with three names, were upset not so much by the method of selecting the deputies but by its result. They got fewer deputies than expected [54]. The main result of the work of the »provisional assembly« was the election law, which granted the right to vote to all adult men (21 years old) (except the military persons and representatives of national minorities). There were quite a few parties, among which was also Slovene Catholic Party, which advocated the right to vote for women, but this proposal failed to gain sufficient support. The deputies also rejected the attempt by the government and the king for the provisional assembly to adopt a provisional constitution. Also the views on the future constitution clearly revealed the divisions between the centralist positions represented by Serbian liberals and radicals, and more federalist oriented positions advocated by the »newcomers« from the Habsburg Monarchy [55]. The division line between the two did not run clearly along the former Habsburg-Serbian border, as the centralist aspirations were also supported by some small parties of the western part of the state (e.g. Slovene liberals), to whom assistance from the center would help to come to power in their own environment. Moreover, even a part of the later autonomists (e.g. the largest Slovene party – Catholic People's Party) at first did not object to the process of centralization. On the other hand, the Croatian leader Stjepan Radić strongly opposed to centralism from the very beginning, severely criticized Slovene Catholic leaders who submitted to the »Serbian centralists«. In Croatia he also launched a mass people's movement.

In the constitutive assembly, which began to assemble in November 1920, the debates on the constitutional system (centralism, federalism) strongly divided the deputies. Among about 40 political parties involved in the election campaign only two had a national – all-yugoslav program, all the other parties had clear ethnic orientation [56]. In the elections, both the strongest advocates of centralism, i.e. the Yugoslav Democratic Party (i.e. joined Serbian, Croatian and Slovene liberals) and Serbian Radical Party won around 38% of seats, whilst the autonomist and federalist groups got only slightly less. In Croatia, the republican and confederalist Radić was the winner of the elections, but he boycotted the work of the assembly and refused to send his deputies to Belgrade. The autonomist positions in the assembly were thus backed by the Croatian and Slovene catholic deputies and Croatian deputies of the party of the Right, as well as Bosnian Muslims. The Slovene People's Party and the Bosnian Yugoslav Muslim Organization advocated autonomy of their provinces and coalition governing of the central authorities. This was strongly objected to by the »Yugoslav democrats« (liberals headed by Serbian liberals) and Serbian radicals, who referred to the French model of »l'etat-nation« and were not prepared to accept the formation of

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[54] Andrej Rahten, Slovenska ljudska stranka v beograjski skupščini (Slovene People's Party in the Belgrade Parliament), Založba ZRC, Ljubljana 2002, p. 35.

[55] Ibidem, pp. 35-59.

[56] The two all-yugoslav parties were the Yugoslav democratic (liberal) party and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Holm Sundhausen, Geschichte Jugoslawiens, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1982.

administrative autonomies on religious, ethnic and language criteria. On Vidov dan (St. Vitus Day)), Serbian national holiday and an anniversary of the battle at Kosovo in 1389, (at the same time also an anniversary of the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian archduke Franc Ferdinand in Sarajevo), the constitutive assembly in Belgrade with only modest simple majority and with the generous government promises to all deputies who were ready to cast their vote in favor of it, adopted the centralist Yugoslav constitution. Slightly more than 50% of all deputies voted in favor of the constitution, a smaller percentage were against it and around a quarter of deputies abstained from voting, whereas the majority of deputies from Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and Slovenia boycotted the vote [57].

The Vidovdan Constitution, however, had indisputable liberal traits. In the economic, social and partly also in the political sense, it was modeled on the constitution of the Weimar Republic and assured the citizens traditional civil rights, individual freedoms, legal protection and freedom of religion (with the separation of church from the state). It introduced a one-chamber parliament with deputies protected by parliamentary immunity, and the government – called ministerial council – was according to constitution accountable to the parliament and the king. Before taking on their duties, the ministers had to swear on the constitution and to the monarch, which posed a particular difficulty to republicans. However, the main deficiency for most of the critics of the constitution was not its democratic deficits or a too strong role of the monarch, but its centralism. The Vidovdan Constitution enforced a national and a state unity. According to its provisions, Slovenes, Serbs and Croats belonged to three »tribes« of one (Yugoslav) nation, whereas other nations (e.g. Macedonians and Albanians) were not recognized at all. Moreover, without taking into account great national diversity, the Constitution divided the territory of the Yugoslav kingdom into 33 authorities (districts) by administrative-geographical criteria (modeled on the French departments), which were all directly subordinate to the central authority in Belgrade.

The idea that the South-Slavic kingdom established in 1918 could be organized as a kind of a Balkan France, where Serbia and its capital at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube rivers, would represent an »Ile des Yougoslaves«, was, no doubt entirely unrealistic. It stemmed from overly uncritical and unrealistic Serbian aspirations for transposing the western-European state-national patterns on the territory of South Slavs. To all non-Serb nations, and also to the Vojvodina Serbs, who used to live under the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until 1918, and to the Montenegrins always proud of their independence, the new constitutional system represented an unacceptable »straitjacket«. »The political theory underlying the Vidovdan Constitution was not based on real facts«, wrote a Slovene social democrat Albin Prepeluh in 1921, adding that »any further constitution of the state on this basis is not possible«. The state centralism founded on the idea of a single Yugoslav nation, which had its roots in the Serbian tradition of a uniform centralized national state and the pre-

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57 Jože Pirjevec, Jugoslavija 1918-1992 (Yugoslavia 1918-1992), Nastanek, razvoj in razpad karodjordjević evske in Titove Jugoslavije, Založba Lipa, Koper 1995, p. 24

war Serbian conceptions of the Kingdom of Serbia as a Yugoslav Piemonte, was in a striking contrast with the diversity of the multi-national state and was therefore a source of constant struggle throughout the era of the first Yugoslavia. The critics of the »Vidovdan« centralism (Slovenes, Croats, Vojvodina Serbs and Bosnian Muslims) imagined »a common Serbian-Croat-Slovene state« to be founded on completely different Habsburg historical traditions. It was a tradition of a struggle for national emancipation and national-cultural (in the case of Croatia even state-political) autonomy, which had been in constant conflict with the centralist politics [58]. While on the one hand the Serbian political and intellectual elites – influenced by western European, in particular French examples – associated the nation with the state, the elites (and also a large part of the population) of the former Habsburg nations regarded centralism a dangerous political force, against which one has to have certain self-management safeguards. The disagreements were further aggravated by the ideology of a single »three-in-one« Serbian-Croatian-Slovene nation, although a part of Slovene party leaders and intellectuals initially even supported it under the condition that this common nation and state would assure them »national equality«.

There was no real dialogue and readiness to make compromises between centralists and federalists even when the constitutional system was still under discussion. After adoption of the Constitution and enforcing of the centralist system, these conflicts further intensified. It is in the 1920s when most of the negative notions about each other first appeared among the Yugoslav nations. Slovenes and Croats called the Serbian radical system of governing »Byzantinism« and a political culture of an »Oriental Bazaar«, as it was known for a derisive attitude to the parliamentary procedures and an authoritarian decision-making based on the parliamentary majority, government and the monarch. The Serbs, on the other hand, considered Slovene and Croatian autonomist aspirations as »Austrianish« and »separatist«. The Slovene and Croatian press was full of articles on Serbian militarism and nationalism, whilst the Serbian newspapers wrote about Slovene and Croatian selfishness and chauvinism. The growing national tensions further increased political insecurity, which was reflected in repeating government crises. These political tensions tragically culminated on 20 June 1928, when the Montenegrin deputy Puniša Račić, after demanding that Slovenes and Croats repay the Serbian nation all the costs of their liberation, shot at the Croatian deputies and lethally wounded their leader Stjepan Radić.

At the same time, however, the centralist policy had supporters also among smaller non-Serbian parties, who preferred to ally with the governing political groups in Belgrade than with ideological and political adversaries in their own national environments. Furthermore, other parties also joined the government coalitions, in which despite having entirely different views on the constitutional system, they pragmatically »forgot« about their political principles during their participation in governing coalitions. Slovene catholic leader Anton Korošec, a

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58 Žarko Lazarević, Economy and Centralism in Yugoslavia, a manuscript. I am grateful to the author, who kindly agreed to be quoted in this context.

former deputy in the Austrian state assembly and the head of the catholic Slovene People's Party, was a master in this sense. His party acknowledged legitimacy to the Vidovdan Constitution, but tried to amend it to suit better its national and autonomist positions. In the period 1918-1940 Korošec was 12 times appointed minister, once vice-president and once even the president of the Yugoslav government – the only non-Serb president in the period between the wars. In the negotiations with Serbian radicals and the Court, he won different benefits for his compatriots, in the period 1927-1929 even a relatively high degree of administrative autonomy. He was, however, much less successful in relations with Stjepan Radić and the main Croatian opponent to Vidovdan centralism, i.e. Croatian People's Peasants Party, as he considered their ideas overly radical. Nevertheless, even the populist and extremely popular Radić, who even entertained his voters by playing a guitar and singing songs about the republic [59], gave up his republican position and entered the government (although under fierce political pressures). Although Radić's political transformations were of short duration, they further reveal the fact that the Serbian, Croatian and Slovene politicians during the first Yugoslavia easily gave up their political traditions for pragmatic reasons and that these traditions no longer prevented communication and cooperation.

In the light of the above it comes as no surprise that political dialogue at the national level was often more difficult than the dialogue at the state level. The decisions were taken (as in the Habsburg Monarchy) in the capital, and the national parties more easily found allies in the political groups with similar ideological positions there than reached a national-political consensus at home. The Slovene (catholic) People's Party thus allied not only with Serbian radicals, but also with Bosnian Muslims, while throughout the period 1918-1941 it failed to get along with Slovene liberals and socialists, who also sought their own allies in Yugoslavia. The Slovene national environment was thus marked by sharp ideological-political and party polarization while in a wider state environment, the party politics was led by pragmatism, readiness for compromises and concessions, and a relatively high degree of political realism. This, however, was not a characteristic of the Slovene political situation alone. In all the nations of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the party and political elites faced quite strong public criticism about them being authoritarian, of no principles and non-democratic, and the movements for greater pluralism and democratization of public life were almost everywhere too weak.

The cultural, economic and civilizational differences among the nations which united in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918 were no doubt huge (of which also its »founding fathers« have been aware from the very beginning). However, returning to the theses of the Bulgarian historian Diana Mishkova, the differences in the degree of political modernization and democratization of their national and political elites were much smaller than the differences

59 Igor Grdina, Slovenska politika in parlamentarizem v kraljevski Jugoslaviji (Slovene politics and parliamenatrism in Royal Yugoslavia), Analiza razvoja slovenskega parlamentarizma, inštitut za civilizacijo in kulturo, Ljubljana 2005, p. 229.

in their economic, social and cultural development. The question as to what was the share of the »Central European« legacy and what was the share of the »Balkan« legacy in their integration and their tragic disagreements remains open in the opinion of the author of this paper and calls for more thorough consideration and detailed research.