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Beyond Rise, Decline and Fall

Comparing Multi-Ethnic Empires in the Long Nineteenth Century

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Europe is more than the sum of its national histories. Nonetheless, the European empires with their multi-ethnic societies have long been considered to be failures, and their history is often presented as a string of unavoidable disintegrative and anachronistic events. The still dominant historiographic concepts of ‘rise’, ‘decline’, and ‘fall’ is symptomatic in this respect: Against the early nineteenth-century background of nationalization, industrialization, and class conflict the complex structures of Europe’s multi-ethnic empires have mostly been seen as inferior to the apparently homogeneous and efficient nation-state with its promise of external strength and internal unity through the participation of all citizens. This model would seem to correspond much better to the premises of the modernization theories of recent decades, which assume that traditional loyalties – be it religious, local, or dynastic – are gradually replaced by the dominating paradigms of nation and nation-state. In this view, multi-ethnicity also serves as a historic argument to explain the perceived backwardness and anachronistic character of empires when compared with the apparently unstoppable progress of ethnically homogeneous nation-states.

1 Particularly illustrative is the antagonism between empire and nation-state in the classic work of E. Gellner, according to which industrialization enabled the peasants of Ruritania to form a nation directed against the Empire Megalomania, see idem, Nations and Nationalism (Oxford, 1983); cf. A. D. Smith, Nationalism (Oxford, 2001); idem, Nationalism and Modernism. A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism (London, 1999); E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Program, Myth, Reality (Cambridge, 1990); B. Anderson, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (London, 1983); J. Breuilly, Nationalism and the State (Manchester, 1993); for the older influential literature see H. Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism. A Study in its Origin and Background (New York, 1946); E. Lemberg, Nationalismo, 2 vols. (Reinbek, 1964); K. Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (New York, 1953); M. Hroch, Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas (Prague, 1968).
The disintegration and dissolution of all continental empires in the First World War underlined the notion that traditional ties of religion, estate, region, or ethnicity had, by then, become mere relics of the past, and had finally been replaced by the social categories of industrial societies as well as by the new concepts of national loyalty and ethnic homogeneity that were developed in the long nineteenth century. This notion is manifested in the paradigmatic formula of "rise, decline, and fall," which applies Edward Gibbon's historiographic model to the complexities of imperial structures in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Against the background of Germany's historical experiences of empires, ranging from the Holy Roman Empire's legacy to the Second Empire of 1871 and to the Third Reich, German historiography showed an ideological restraint towards imperial rule and imperial elites, which explains the tendency to neglect empires as objects of historical research. Only very recently have new attempts been made to better understand the concept of empire and to transcend the paradigm of the nation-state in order to apply the transnational character of political, economic, or social processes to the Second German Empire.

After a long dominance of nations and nation-states, empires seem to be back on the agenda. The political upheavals of 1989–1990 and the end of the cold war raised questions about established paradigms and led to a spectrum of contradictory experiences. First, the dissolution of the Soviet Union generated a number of new nation-states in Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe. Second, through an ongoing process of institutional Europeanization as well as economic and cultural globalization, the model of the nation-state has lost much of its legitimacy. Third, the outburst of extreme ethnic violence in some former parts of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia has


underlined the problem of how states can accommodate ethnic plurality. Fourth, the end of cold-war antagonism gave rise to a new international strategy of the United States to maintain and partly expand its international engagement in a world where conflicts have become asymmetrically dislocated. The role of the United States as the last remaining empire has provoked controversial discussions on the chances and limits of empires in past and present.

These developments have catalyzed a new interest in historical alternatives beyond the nation-state, not only among academic historians but also for a wider public, which may explain the focus on European empires of the early modern period and later. In contrast to the premise of unavoidable disintegration and decay, which dominated for a long time, the present analytical focus is rather on the questions: why did these empires last for so long, how were they able to function fairly successfully, in which ways have they stabilized the international order between 1815 and 1914, and where are the limits of their potential for integration? There is, in short, a clear shift from the paradigm of ‘rise and fall’ toward the question of chances and crises, which this volume seeks to illustrate.

1. Definitions and State of Research

What is called ‘empire’ today has come to embrace almost all spheres of popular life and academic discourse. The inflationary use of the word is obvious, and corresponding to this quantitative inflation is the qualitative spread. The meanings of empire and imperialism in everyday language have become so unlimited that Stephen Howe could conclude that “imperialism has gone imperial, colonialism has colonized our language.” Ideas about empire and imperialism have spread not only within the disciplines of political science and history, but also into economics, anthropology, literary

5 New States and Old Conflicts. Nationalism and State Formation in the Former Yugoslavia (Canberra, 2002).
6 For a critical assessment see Münkler, Imperien; M. Hardt and A. Negri, Empire (Cambridge, 2000).
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studies, and theology, to name but a few. The various meanings these concepts have absorbed in different contexts have further complicated the matter, above all through their repeated connection with other highly contested concepts such as colonialism, post-colonialism, globalization, and very recently neo-liberalism. The core observation relevant to most of these meanings is that they denote a relation between a more powerful agency of rule and less powerful subsystems, and they consider this relation problematic and negative. As with so many other concepts that contain in themselves a whole history of semantic change and, therefore, evade any isolated definition, the increasing inflation of connotations and usages has reduced the analytical value of empire. This has consequences for any comparative analysis, which needs to be founded on a more clear-cut and ideal-type definition of the term in order to allow a sensible implementation of analytical operations. Empires were characterized by huge size, ethnic diversity, a multitude of composite territories as a result of historic cession or conquest, by specific forms of supranational rule, by shifting boundaries and fluid border-lands, and finally by a complex and interactive relationship between imperial centres and peripheries. Already this definition shows that neither theories of economic imperialism nor concepts of imperial rule as hegemonic top-down practices suffice in order to understand and explain the ambivalent mechanisms of empires. Empires shaped the course of European history far more than historiographies of past nation-states still suggest. In comparison, the latter were rather late inventions in European history.

As a central element of this definition and the key focus of this volume, multi-ethnicity deserves a closer look. Ethnicity no longer denotes 'objective' attributes of a group, as former research has for a long time suggested, but today refers to the subjective notion of otherness. By ethnicity we, therefore, understand the perceived notion of common culture, common lan-


12 In contrast to most historians, German political scientist H. Münkler, in his influential book Imperien, does not name multi-ethnicity as a significant feature of empires.
guage, and common descent, which integrates a group internally and allows distinguishing it externally. Ethnicity, to follow Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group.”13 Whereas German historiography has not paid much attention to this phenomenon, considering it an exception rather than normality,14 Anglo-American historians and political scientists, stimulated by their imperial legacy, the ethnic plurality of their own societies, and the impact of postcolonial studies, responded much earlier to the analytical challenges of multi-ethnicity.15 American intellectuals have been discussing concepts of multi-culturalism for some thirty years.16 British historiography on the British Empire has shown a major change from economic and classic political history to cultural aspects and the complex interaction between British and colonial societies. It has long since detached itself from the Whig interpretation of (English) history and focused more and more on the history of ‘four nations and three kingdoms’.17 Research on Central and Eastern Europe has also turned its attention to the heterogeneous nature of apparently uniform concepts, as Andreas Kappeler’s analysis of ‘Russia as a Multi-Ethnic Empire’ has convincingly shown.18 In many other European cases one can see a similar application of ethnicity and multiculturalism to national narratives.19

19 See for example Switzerland: B. Studer, ed., Etappen des Bundesstaats. Staats- und Nationsbildung der Schweiz 1848–1998 (Zurich, 1998); H.-R. Wicker, Nationalismus,
The new interest in empires and their ethnic plurality, fostered by a conceptual turn towards transnational history, is reflected in numerous recent publications. Several relevant studies have been published about the Habsburg Monarchy, Tsarist Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the British Empire. Research on the British Empire is certainly most advanced because it had already been an established historical sub-discipline and has benefited enormously from innovative approaches in methodological and conceptual respects. Yet, despite these publications on individual empires, systematic comparisons between the modern European empires have so far been the exception. This seems to repeat the development of the historiography of nations and nation-states: Some thirty years ago such research was usually limited to within the borders of each national society and their own historians, and only later developed a comparative interest that soon transcended the nationally defined containers of historical analysis.

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20 G. Budde et al., eds., Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien (Göttingen, 2006).


22 D. Quataert, The Ottoman Empire 1700–1922 (Cambridge, 2000); A. Pamuk, The Ottoman Empire in Comparative Perspective (London, 1988).


24 Yet, there are several works comparing two empires either within Eastern Europe or Western Europe, see R. Rudolph and D. Good, eds., Nationalism and Empire. The Habsburg Monarchy and the Soviet Union (New York, 1992); P. F. Sugar, Nationality and Society in Habsburg and Ottoman Europe (Aldershot, 1997); M. Kurz et al., eds., Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie in der Neuzeit (Munich, 2005); A. Miller and A. Rieber, eds., Imperial Rule (Budapest, 2004); F. Bosbach and H. Hiery, eds., Imperium, Empire, Reich. Ein Konzept politischer Herrschaft im deutsch-britischen Vergleich (Munich, 1999); J. Hart, Comparing Empires (London, 2003).

Comparative empire research today is still a far from common approach. Although Liah Greenfeld in her book *Five Roads to Modernity* compared England, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States, her analysis focused not on their imperial character, but on the various nationalisms in these states. A valuable contribution has been made by Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen with their volume *After Empire*, in which they highlight the problems and legacies of multi-ethnic empires in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Of fundamental importance is Dominic Lieven’s work on the expansion and decline of Russia, which includes valuable comparisons to the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as the Ottoman Empire, and the British Empire. In 2001, Aviel Roshwald published a study that compares imperial war experiences such as occupation, desertion, or ethnic resistance in Central-Eastern Europe and the Middle East during the First World War, thereby demonstrating the potential of such comparative approaches. Most recently, the interest in comparative analyses has clearly intensified; Jane Burbank’s and Frederick Cooper’s study on empires shows an impressive level of differentiation and historical scope.

In summary, one can discern three general trends in the current historiography on empires. First, comparative analyses on empires still tend to be separated along traditional borders between Western and Eastern Europe. Comparative studies weaving together Western and Eastern experiences are still the exception in this field of research. This reflects a general trend in European narratives that the iron curtain, although fallen in political reality, continues to exist in historiography. Europe’s past seems to still be split into two historical and analytical spheres.

Second, the contested relationship between empire and nation-state has barely been taken into consideration so far, because of the assumption of

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fundamental differences between both state structures. Yet, the imperial elites of all empires were increasingly influenced by a common orientation to the norms, inventions, and processes of the apparently successful nation-state. Exploring the ways in which empires responded to this dynamic competition can shed light on the transfers and entanglements between empires and nation-states.32

A third feature of comparative empire research is the focus on static structures, leaving aside the various interactions and transfers between the empires. The complexity of each empire's political, economic, social, and cultural structure has certainly contributed to this primary focus on individual cases. A closer look to the transfer of knowledge, people, or concepts across the empires' borders indicates that such transfers had an important impact not only on controlling and containing international conflicts in an era of growing competition between London, Vienna, St Petersburg, and Istanbul,33 but also extended to political culture and the ways in which imperial self-images were communicated.34

2. Cases, Chronology and Guiding Questions

In addition to three continental empires — the Habsburg Monarchy, the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire — the British Empire is also included in these comparisons. Four arguments stand behind the selection of these cases. First, this framework of comparative analysis enables us to compare different historical forms of political rule and their respective potentials, capacities and limits of integrating multi-ethnic societies. Whereas in the British case the object of consideration is a parliamentary monarchy, the


transition from absolute to constitutional monarchy is significant for com-
prehending the Habsburg Empire. The focus on Russia and the Ottoman
Empire allows us to include autocratic yet transforming forms of rule in this
comparison.

Second, the variety of cases sheds light on the wide spectrum of multi-
ethnicity, thus revealing chances for integration as well as conflict. While in
the Habsburg Monarchy only 23 per cent of the population were members of
the German-speaking 'state nationality', in the Russian Empire around 49
per cent of the population were considered to be ethnically Russian.

Third, this broader comparison reveals how religion and different creeds
were employed as instruments of integration and control. In Victorian Brit-
ain Anglicanism was at the core of a civilizing imperial mission, while Cath-
olicism was an important tool in the Habsburg Monarchy to strengthen the
bonds between dynasty, monarchy, and imperial subjects. Likewise, Russian
Orthodoxy in Russia and Islam in the Ottoman Empire became essential
tools for integrating the social fabric of those empires.

Fourth, revisiting the current state of empire-historiography shows that
past comparisons of empires have almost exclusively focused on Eastern and
Central-Eastern empires, avoiding the often desirable comparison between
West and East. By including the British Empire, this project seeks to close
that gap.

This volume spans the period from the late eighteenth century to the First
World War. This time-frame takes into consideration the challenges that all
multi-ethnic empires were facing with the rise of the modern nation-state
and its model of homogenizing societies. Particularly since the last third of
the nineteenth century, the empires' capacities for internal integration and
political stabilization had to compete with the perceived model of the
nation-state. Finally, the First World War and the experience of modern ind-
dustrial warfare based on large conscript armies not only radicalized the
criteria of political and socio-economic efficiency but also the meaning of
national loyalty and participation. That meant a particular challenge for
multi-ethnic empires.

The main object of this volume, which forms part of a larger research pro-
ject on 'Multi-Ethnic Empires in Comparison', is to analyse how these four
empires dealt with the experience of multi-ethnicity in a period of increased
competition and confrontation with the nation-state model. Which mech-
anisms of inclusion and exclusion provided stability to imperial rule? How
did this balance change when it was confronted with growing international
competition and with the new model of the nation-state? And in which ways
did the empires and their multi-ethnic societies respond to this dynamic
competition? These questions are vividly discussed from a Western Euro-
pean perspective, as in the current political controversy on 'imperial over-
stretch' with regard to EU integration. At the same time, Herfried Münkler’s analysis of empires as well as Niall Ferguson’s blueprint for successful imperial rule in the twenty-first century point to the attraction of empires as potential responses to the problems of global, yet dislocated, conflicts after the end of the Cold War. From this perspective, a comparative analysis of multi-ethnic empires contributes to writing Europe’s history no longer as a sum of isolated national narratives, but as a complex interplay of imperial and national inventions and challenges, experiences and agencies.

3. Research Themes and Preliminary Results

A comparison of four empires needs a clearly defined focus on the fundamental problems that all four empires faced throughout the nineteenth century. These problems, reflected in the six sections of this volume, were the challenge of imperial space, the experience of multi-ethnicity, the role of monarchy as an imperial instrument, religion and education as imperial tools, conflicts within the empires and the imperial experience of the First World War. Although these fields cannot detail the complexity of past empires, they allow meaningful analyses of the different experiences and challenges that characterized all four empires in the course of the nineteenth century. In order to condense the comparative approach of this volume, each section is followed by a concluding commentary.

Exploring and Mobilizing – The Challenge of Imperial Space

A belief in the general progress of civilizations and in the potential of technological change was vital for state building in the nineteenth century. The sheer size of empires confronted them with a challenge that nation-states did not experience to the same degree. In order to keep their peripheries together and to make imperial rule a concrete experience there, the enormous diversity of imperial space had to be explored and, if possible, mastered. Hence, large infrastructure projects such as railways, telegraphs or canals were implemented as a means to explore space, mobilize people and use modern technologies. Transfers of knowledge, technology and capital, often between empire and nation-state, were a consequence of this ambition. At the same time, these projects provided opportunities for encounters between colonizers and colonized, which often took a different shape and direction than originally intended by metropolitan elites. Reflecting on the interplay of imperial expectation and implementation allows us to better understand the limits of imperial projections when put to the test of practice.
As Valeska Huber shows in her contribution on the Suez Canal, a particular tension developed between imperial connotations and projections and the various expressions of local accommodation and perception. No doubt, the Suez Canal restructured the mental imagination of the British Empire and brought the British colonies, particularly India, much closer to the British Isles. Yet at the same time these projections of the canal as a highway of the British Empire came under pressure. As it became a highway of other empires as well, the Suez Canal reflected the degree of the empires' entanglement and competition in the international arena. What this example also illustrates is the complex multiplicity of imperial and local agents and actors: from competing empires with their financial involvement, to private commercial companies, to the coal and shipping companies. The canal contributed to a reconfiguration and closer integration of various imperial spaces, but this development was far from being monopolized by the British. It rather became a space of experience for competing empires and for dealing with local particularities.

Frithjof Schenk shows how railway-building in Tsarist Russia became a tool of social engineering and economic exploitation in the Asian peripheries following the defeat in the Crimean War. Contrary to the expectation of railway colonization in the eastern border-lands, regional elites in Siberia warned of the exploitation of the country's natural resources. The new technological opportunities made the government more dependent on those groups who were running the modern systems of communication and mobility. In contrast to these expectations, the autocratic system proved unable to meet the social demands of the new industrial workers. Paradoxically, the success in modernizing Russia's infrastructure underlined the vulnerability of the political regime, as the terrorist assault against the train of Alexander II in 1879 and the role of railways during the general strike of October 1905 demonstrated.

The same characteristic ambivalence can be derived from Marsha Siefert's analysis of telegraph communications in the Russian and Ottoman empires. On the one hand, imperial telegraph systems were a sign of overcoming spatial distances. Thus, merchants and commercial interests in the farthest borderlands of the empires could take advantage of the telegraph, and 'foreign news' found their way into imperial publications. On the other hand, the imperial telegraph infrastructure, implemented as an aid to imperial rule, could also be used to question that rule, as telegraph petitions and strike organizations in the early twentieth century proved. The Russian and Ukrainian Revolutions of 1905, as well as the 1908 Young Turk Revolution and the telegraph strike in British India in 1907, all illustrate the conversion of an imperial infrastructure into an instrument of national or social opposition. New technologies of communication served as tools of social mobility and
economic profit, but the paradox remains that these infrastructures could be used to challenge those very empires that had initiated and implemented their construction.

At the same time, these infrastructure projects point to the importance of contacts between empires and West European nation-states, which Murat Özyüksel discusses in relation to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman government was dependent on importing foreign capital and know-how but ultimately it's freedom of action was diminished by the complex cooperation and competition with and between the Germans, French and British to build the railways. Many challenges had to be overcome with regard to the Hijaz Railway, which was constructed in order to integrate the holy sites of Medina and Mecca and to symbolize the sultan’s role as caliph. Although Sultan Abdülhamid’s administration had accomplished nearly all parts of this project, in the end they had to stop short of its completion because of resistance from the Amir of Mecca and the Bedouin, who had received British support. These regional groups feared that the Hijaz Railway could endanger their income resources. The dual challenge of regional resistance and competition with foreign railway companies on its own territory made it impossible for the Ottoman Empire to translate the success of an infrastructure project into political stability.

In essence, these examples demonstrate the ambivalence of infrastructure projects: The expectation that imperial railway-building, telegraph infrastructures, and canal-building would enhance mobility and make imperial rule more efficient was often contradicted, or corrected, by practice. The challenge of imperial space resulted in a particular paradox: Imperial projections could be questioned or converted into devices of opposition by the very implementation of these projects.

Mapping and Classifying — Surveying Composite States and Multi-ethnic Populations

In the course of the nineteenth century, new categorizations emerged as key tools for political rule, social stratification and national integration. Collecting statistical data on populations and surveying spaces became essential for the administration of newly acquired territories and for bolstering the legitimacy of the imperial state. The empires’ heterogeneous territories and societies necessitated new techniques of exploring the unknown. This part of our volume concentrates on the introduction of ethnic categories from ‘above’ — in the contemporary census or in attempts to map imperial spaces — and their reception from below. Which categories were used to classify the population? What sorts of maps were designed to conquer imperial spaces?
To what extent were ethnicity, creeds or social differences and affiliations registered and which models were used in this context? What expectations were related to censuses and maps among the responsible administrative elites, and how were imperial conceptions from above perceived from below?

The census as an imperial strategy to classify heterogeneous societies is the object of Ulrike von Hirschhausen's comparative analysis. The general rise of a statistical discourse in the nineteenth century culminated in the International Statistical Congress, where elites from nation-states as well as empires exchanged their know-how and their experiences. The inclusion of cultural criteria such as language, religion or caste in the imperial census could be used by imperial subjects for their own, often anti-imperial, agenda as demonstrated by the Czech national movement or the Christian borderlands of the Ottoman Empire. In autocratic Russia similar reactions developed only in regions where ethnicity had already been politicized. In British India, where colonial officers had introduced caste as a census category, this criterion turned out to strengthen internal integration within each caste and fostered the social basis of Gandhi's communitarian nationalism. Intentions and measures conceived in imperial centres often took an unexpected direction and could be converted into a tool of the colonized.

The problems created by such categorizations from 'above' become particularly obvious in Mehmet Hacisalihoglu's contribution. He analyses the impact of maps and the census in the Ottoman Empire. Here, the recruitment of soldiers and the identification of tax payers were the driving forces behind the development of census and maps. Because both depended largely on religious affiliation, the census mainly differentiated between Muslims and non-Muslims, leaving ethnicity out of consideration. However, representing the population mainly in religious terms came under increasing pressure from national movements inside and outside the Ottoman Empire. They tried to legitimize their national claims with ethnically defined numbers. Accordingly, the detailed military maps that were regarded as necessary by the Ottoman government in order to ward off local and regional revolts were often used by members of these local and regional resistance movements. In addition, the inclusion of 'Ottoman Europe' on the imperial maps, at a time when its belonging to the empire became ever more contested, infused the younger generation, among them many Young Turks, with growing distrust towards their own government.

The examples of maps and censuses confirm the general impression that the research on infrastructure projects has already indicated. By counting people and mapping vast and unknown territories, imperial elites and experts sought to implement control and knowledge as implied by the model of the nation-state. Yet in social practice, this knowledge of the empire as ex-
perceived through inventions of difference in ethnicity or caste could be increasingly instrumentalized by imperial subjects for their own purposes. When and why imperial tool-kits such as the census or maps could be converted into instruments of an anti-imperial agenda is a crucial question for further comparative research.

Mediating and Representing – The Monarchy as an Imperial Instrument

All four empires underwent attempts to strengthen the ties between subjects and the imperial state in the face of rising nationalism and a more competitive international situation. For that purpose, a broad arsenal of cultural symbols and practices was accentuated, revived, or newly invented. Against this background, monarchy assumed a particular function for the empires, and again it was the encounter with models of monarchical representation, in particular the French empires of both Napoleon I and III and the invention of Queen Victoria as an imperial queen, which had lasting impacts. How did imperial and dynastic symbolisms develop and function, and in which contexts? How were the contents of iconographies and rituals perceived against the background of the empires’ multi-ethnic character? How are we to understand the potentials and limits of ‘invented traditions’ in this context of multi-ethnic empires?

In Great Britain, royal representation was extremely restrained in the first two thirds of the nineteenth century. The problems caused by the long absence of Queen Victoria from the public after 1861 gave rise to a group of ‘democratic royalists’, who invented a new kind of royal ceremonies elevating the Queen to an integral symbol of the British nation and the empire. Similar expectations were connected with royal representation in the colonies. In India so-called Durbars, public gatherings of the viceroy and Indian princes, were initiated to foster the bond between the subject population and representatives of the Imperial Crown. Yet the enormous efforts to imitate the hierarchy of British society in India resulted in the integration of only traditional elites and princes, while the progressive and bourgeois elements of Indian society were excluded. This contradiction between imagined and real society could easily be used as a tool against British rule, as Gandhi’s successful appeal to reject all imperial orders proved. Despite attempts to show the greatness of the imperial monarchy, more and more Indians only perceived it as ‘the hollow crown of the Raj’.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the development and spread of national movements went hand in hand with an expansion of monarchical self-representation, as Daniel Unowsky illustrates with regard to the Habsburg Monarchy. Although imperial celebrations before 1914 were not
able to resolve national and social conflicts, they never reflected a deep conflict between the emperor and his subjects. The strong personal identification of the Habsburg Monarchy with Franz Joseph I, strengthened by his continuous role as territorial prince (Landesherr), instead contributed to bonds of loyalty between citizens and their nonpartisan emperor. Yet efforts to integrate as many nationalities as possible in monarchical mass celebrations yielded more and more visibility for Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, Poles and Ukrainians to stage their own national agenda. Hence, national orientations could be integrated into imperial celebrations and marginalize the latter. When Karl ascended the throne following the death of Franz Joseph in 1916, the limits of loyalty towards the person of the emperor were already more than obvious.

In Imperial Russia, the tsars invoked foreign images of rule to elevate themselves above the population of subjects, as Richard Wortman shows. With no native traditions of supreme power at hand, the theme of conquest became central in monarchical representations, in contrast to the Habsburg emperors, who legitimized imperial expansion mainly through marriage. However, the monarchy came to be trapped in its own mythology of conquest when the Russian colonization of lands, especially in the Caucuses and Central Asia, led to mass expulsions and extermination of native peoples. Although the images of conquest and domination integrated noble elites, they alienated intellectuals who sought national autonomy, as demonstrated by the Poles in 1863. Replacing the enlightened image of a ‘foreign ruler’ with a national myth that presented the tsar as an ethnically Russian ruler led to growing tensions between a tsar determined to forge an empire that was an ethnic Russian state and other nationalities claiming autonomy. Symbolic inclusion could, thus, become a catalyst for exclusion.

In his article on the ideal of the Ottoman sultan in the nineteenth century, Hakan Karateke highlights the fact that with the perception of European models of monarchy, the image of the sultan in the Ottoman Empire underwent a significant change. The modern sultan was no longer a transcendent figure who derived his ultimate legitimacy from God. Instead, he became a demystified, more visible, more accessible, and, hence, a more public figure. One way to respond to this situation was to transform the traditional concept of the sultan by inventing a monarchy that would rule segregated nations through new ways of communication. The sultan now claimed to be the caliph of all Muslims, and it was hoped that through this combination of roles the regime would be in a better bargaining position in the international climate during the 1870s, given British and French fears of a ‘holy war’ of all Muslims. However, the result contradicted the original expectations: The role of the caliph often weakened that of the sultan and the new combination of spiritual and political power also provoked resistance from the Young
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Turks. By freeing the sultan’s office of divine connotations, the sultan lost the traditional centrality of his personage in politics, thereby leaving space for alternative political actors.

When monarchical representations of empire were not only seen as symbolic realities and discursive constructions but also as social practice, a discrepancy developed between projections of inclusion through the imperial monarchs and an increasingly complex reality in which the public figure of the monarch provoked expectations that could no longer be fulfilled. In this context the nationalized monarchies of Western Europe were soon regarded as models that the empires imported in order to respond to new challenges for legitimate rule. However, the invented character of many late imperial monarchs could not compensate for growing social and political tensions. During the First World War, the relative distance of all imperial monarchs from their subjects’ daily lives contributed enormously to the erosion of traditional monarchical legitimacy.

Believing and Integrating – Religion and Education as Media for Imperial Images

Empires needed a common bond to justify expansion and to demonstrate a basic cohesion against the background of their multi-ethnic structure. Religion and education proved to be potent socio-cultural forces in all empires. What role did religion and education play in developing, upholding, or revising imperial self-images? How did the empires construct their religious and educational self-images? Did they use only the institutionalized areas of religion and education, or did they reach beyond that by forming new symbols and codes?

Benedikt Stuchtey looks at the relation between religion, creeds and the British Empire. Missionary organizations were present throughout the British Empire and brought the empire back home, which became a contentious focus of religious attention. Despite the contested nature of religion’s influence, it unified the nation as an imperial nation, legitimizing British rule and integration on the basis of religion, humanitarianism, and missions. Religious conquest in the British Empire had a modernizing effect in this context since it helped to emancipate single educated women of the middle and upper classes, as well as a colonizing consequence because it confirmed the social status and institutional authority of the British colonizers. Missionary activity, however, not only linked metropolis and colony, but it created a transnational network beyond imperial expansion and challenged the concept of an empire based on religious conformity. The myth of the one imperial family based on a mission of religious harmony was called into
question by a reality that was imbued with racial superiority and race consciousness.

Martin Schulze Wessel compares the relation between politics and religion in Tsarist Russia and in the Habsburg Monarchy. In both cases religious tolerance and a particular relationship between the state and non-state religions were intended to stabilize the multi-religious empires. A culture of negotiations between state, church, and religious minorities developed in the first half of the nineteenth century, resulting in flexible dealings with religious minorities, as the examples of Muslims in Russia and Jews in Austria demonstrate. In contrast, the second half of the century witnessed divergent paths for the two empires, although the nationalization of religion was evident in both cases. In Cisleithania the weakening power of the empire’s imperial integration went hand in hand with indifference towards Catholicism as the state religion. Political opposition to the empire also manifested as religious opposition to the Catholic Church, as the German–Austrian ‘Los-von-Rom’ (Away from Rome) movement and corresponding tendencies in the Czech national movement showed. The Russian Empire witnessed a more aggressive nationalization of religion, which went together with an increasing intolerance towards Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims, culminating during the First World War when religious oppression was used to defend the unity of an empire imagined as a Russian nation-state.

Joachim von Puttkamer’s article on educational infrastructures in the Habsburg Monarchy and in Tsarist Russia sheds light on another important means of imperial self-imaging. Both in Tsarist Russia and in the Habsburg Monarchy, establishing a highly differentiated system of education became a project that united the state with large segments of society. Both empires’ legitimacy was challenged because education was seen as a liability for their cohesion. In Austria, the introduction of a constitutional order based upon freedom of speech and political participation stimulated competing visions on education and, therefore, posed much more of a challenge to empire than the actual development of the educational system itself. While constitutional equality in Austria or ‘Russification’ endangered diverse traditions of schooling, religious schools served as a model that seemed less susceptible to nationalist mobilization and could help to balance the unifying forces of national statehood.

In his contribution, Azmi Özcan looks deeper into the tradition of the caliphate in the Ottoman Empire. As a reaction to international isolation and internal separatism among the non-Muslim citizens, Sultan Abdülhamid II decided to strengthen his political position by assuming the role of caliph and addressing both the Muslims of the empire and those abroad. Abdülhamid had some success in uniting the Islamic world around the Ottoman caliphate and in forming a common Muslim public opinion. However, during
the constitutional period following the revolution of 1908, the Young Turks decided that the caliphate's domestic influence should be restricted while its international respect was to be secured. The caliphate should represent the Muslim nation, but the caliph was not superior to the nation. Hence, this institution became more and more overshadowed by the new institutions of parliament and constitution. Still, the Young Turks relied on the caliphate whenever they were confronted with external pressures and the need to stress the state's legitimacy in the eyes of Muslims at home and abroad.

As the articles of this section underline, state religions did not simply function as institutional pillars of imperial rule, fostering the empires' cohesion by a common faith. The Russian and the Habsburg cases show how religious reform movements could take side with national movements and how traditions of creetal and religious autonomy served as a model that seemed less susceptible to nationalist mobilization. As in other arenas of imperial action, expectations of imperial cohesion and integration could be turned into the opposite, as the history of the caliphate in the later Ottoman Empire shows. Religion and imperial mission in the British Empire changed from a universal ideal in the early nineteenth century to a highly ambivalent experience of both emancipation of the colonized and racial segregation.

*Ruling and Bargaining – Confronting Conflicts within the Empires*

Increasing international competition as well as rising nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century posed a particular challenge to the multi-ethnic empires under review. New measures of imperial integration attempted to balance the centrifugal forces of nationalism. Various strategies were conceived to reconcile imperial sovereignty with demands for autonomy. In this section, different constellations of conflict in different parts of the empires are analysed, with particular focus on the motives and potentials of resistance as well as on the strategies used to respond to these conflicts. What motives for resistance can be distinguished, and what forms did conflicts take? How successfully did imperial conflict management develop in different crises? What does the analysis of such conflict situations reveal about the nature and structural character of the empires' integrative potentials?

In his article, Jörn Leonhard looks at particular conflict constellations in the history of the British Empire, focusing on the Indian Mutiny in the 1850s and the South African War in the 1890s. These two events highlight the structural differences between a conquered colony without a settler tradition and a white settler colony. In India the crisis resulted in a shift from an older ideal of inclusive Europeanization to a concept of economic modernization,
a ‘self-orientalized’ monarchy and a partial return to the fiscal military state and the negative notion of oriental barbarism. This constellation postponed conflicts, undermined Indian elites’ trust in Britain’s willingness to implement substantial reforms in India and, thus, fostered a new kind of Indian nationalism. In contrast, the South African War stood for the emergence of a new international audience for imperial crisis and challenged the notion of geographically distant imperial wars. The crisis led to a transfer of power to the dominant white elite, with the dominion model as a firm basis to secure British rule in that area, but at the cost of excluding native Africans from any participation. The dominion model also revealed the empire’s structural weakness: The increasing independence of dominions from London would sooner or later become a model for all parts of the British Empire. Thus, Britain came under pressure to expand into new territories or to control others in order to keep them as safe bases. Military success was not accompanied by decisive and carefully planned integration strategies but rather led to piecemeal solutions that tended to postpone major problems in order to solve others.

Alice Freifeld compares the two conflicts over Hungary in 1848–1849 and 1867 and their meaning for the Habsburg Monarchy. The revolution of 1848 underlined that Hungarian nationalism never succeeded in reconciling its own aspirations concerning the Magyar nation with those of other competing nationalities. Instead, the Hungarian revolution turned into a series of aggressions against ethnic minorities that tried to tear themselves away. The Monarchy’s military defeat of 1859–1861 replaced the older connection between nationalism and revolution with one between nationalism and war, and Hungarians began redefining the revolution of 1848–1849 as the war of independence. In contrast to 1848, the Ausgleich of 1867 was a legal construction, yet connected to 1848 in that it was based upon the fiction that the Habsburg monarch had agreed to the Hungarian reform agenda of April 1848. In contrast to their former efforts to demystify the monarchy, Hungarian nationalists now used the coronation rite as a symbol of the sovereign, recognizing the position of king of the Hungarians rather than that of a conquering emperor. However, the nation in 1867 was not only represented in the Buda cathedral but was also found among the urban crowds in Pest, thereby connecting and temporarily reconciling the crowd with the new imperial order – the same crowd that had been regarded as a revolutionary threat in 1848.

In an article on the two Polish uprisings of 1830–1831 and 1863–1864, Alexey Miller and Mikhail Dolbilov underline important differences between the two conflicts: In 1830–1831, when the Tsarist Empire was in a powerful position, the policy of careful limitation of autonomy could be replaced by the abolition of the constitution and by a drastic reduction of au-
tonomous rights. The 1863 uprising, on the other hand, took place after the defeat in the Crimean War and in the context of the Great Reforms, which precluded the restoration of the Kingdom of Poland’s autonomy. Fuelled by Russian nationalist public opinion and the press, in the 1860s the competition was between two concepts of nation and nationality: in contrast to 1830–1831, the Poles of 1861 wanted to create a nation that would unite the nobility and the underprivileged classes, whereas the Russian government now tried to impose a Polish identity from above that included concepts of loyalty to the dynasty and to a ‘Slavic unity.’ After 1863 the struggle over Russification between the Polish movement and the empire provoked local – Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Belorussian – nationalisms, further complicating the implementation of any all-Russian nation-building. While the 1830 uprising reflected a conflict between a traditional empire and a regional and noble elite, the conflict of the 1860s involved more and different groups of Polish society, now confronted with a modernizing empire that used nationalism as an instrument of popular legitimization and mobilization.

Maurus Reinkowski surveys the experience of conflicts between reform policies and nationalism in the Ottoman Empire. Traditionally, the Ottoman state had not interfered with its peripheries as long as a minimum of stability and loyalty was secured so that ethnic conflicts could be contained. During the time of the Tanzimat reforms of the nineteenth century, this policy came under increasing pressure because Ottoman authorities were determined to introduce direct control, for instance in the virtually autonomous mountain regions of Northern Albania. However, in order to integrate the Catholic tribes of the Albanian highlands into the Ottoman administrative and fiscal regime, the authorities had to revert once again to their proven policy of cooptation of and bargaining with the local population, refraining from enforced taxation and conscription and contradicting the Tanzimat ideology of civilization and rigid order. This combination proved to be much more fragile than the traditional practice of flexible ethnic containment. The idea of a final order, which the Ottoman elite propagated, thus upset the imperial routine and brought into question the elite’s ability to deal with diversity.

All empires experienced a change in the character of their interior conflicts and a transformation in the means of responding to them. The later conflicts – be it the second Polish uprising of the 1860s, the Ausgleich of 1867, the South African War, or the conflicts in the Ottoman Empire – were characterized by two fundamental factors: the dominant model of a homogeneous nation-state, indigenous nation-state building, and international competition on the one hand, and the relative loss of traditional imperial routine in dealing with ethnic, legal, and religious diversity on the other. New actors and media – from national movements and the urban masses to
the penny press — reduced the flexibility of imperial elites’ responses and manifested a widening gap between projections of imperial rule, designed for the order of a well-regulated nation-state, and the practical need for piecemeal bargaining or violent forms of repression.

Defending and Fighting — The Empires’ Experience of the First World War

With the exception of the British Empire, the First World War ended with the dissolution of all multi-ethnic empires on the European continent. The last section of this volume explores the experience of the First World War and its repercussions in the respective imperial realms. The character of this first ‘total war’ represented a fundamental challenge to political rule, social cohesion and national loyalty in all societies. The triple experience of mass mobilization, militarization of societies, and new expectations of political participation developed into a potentially revolutionary constellation. What did the ideal of a ‘nation in arms’ mean in the concrete situation of multi-ethnic empires? How did the crisis of integration and loyalty affect the empires’ stability during the First World War?

Santanu Das changes the perspective from the colonizing British Union to the colonized within the British Empire. In his article on India, the empire and the Great War, he underlines the enormous importance of India, which contributed more than a million soldiers and labourers to the war theatres of France, Mesopotamia, East Africa, and the Mediterranean. Indians fought for the empire at the same time as the national movement in India turned against British imperial rule. This explains a dual marginalization of Indian soldiers by Indian national history, which focused on the independence movement, and by the mainly Eurocentric war narrative of the British. India’s war contribution was, thus, closely connected with anti-colonial resistance: with mass conscription and middle-class support for the war on one side, and the nationwide Home Rule agitation and more aggressive demands for self-government on the other.

Although nationalist propaganda and ethnically motivated distrust destabilized the Habsburg Monarchy during the First World War, traditional loyalty and the army as an integrative institution survived for a long time, as Martin Zückert reveals in his contribution. Contrary to the widespread pessimism before the war, the military of this multi-ethnic empire was no more affected by mutinies and desertions than other nations in arms. Nationalism was not an isolated factor that could explain the empire’s disintegration. Instead, the ethnic factor served as a means to mark social conflicts, which became more radical in the course of the war. Structural differences and inconsistencies within the Monarchy were made more visible
during the war: while in Hungary identification with the nationally defined state was supported, in Cisleithania acts of nationalism by Slavic soldiers or civilians were suppressed as a result of the collective German obsession with an apparent inner enemy. It was the combination of a supply crisis, military defeats, and general war-weariness that led to a collapse of economic, social, and administrative structures after 1916–1917.

In his contribution on the Russian Empire in the First World War, Eric Lohr shows that Russian core nationalism (and not just the national movements of the peripheries) became a vital factor during war time. It relied on a broad social base of the core population and employed radical measures against the domestic and international status quo. Although the Tsarist regime entered the war with a cosmopolitan model of modernization, it was soon confronted with a dynamic Russian core nationalism, which it ultimately embraced and encouraged. The new state practiced mass deportation of certain enemy populations and the nationalization of their private property. This shift towards war-time nationalization, purges, and internal-enemy politics went far beyond the limited aims of pre-war concepts of Russification. The imperial state was now regarded less as a single entity and more as a combination of antagonistic nationalities. Ideas of imperial assimilation gave way to mobilizing, manipulating, segregating and punishing distinct national groups, which pointed to the future policy of the Soviet Union.

Finally, Erik-Jan Zürcher looks at the combination of demographic engineering, the army, and the Ottoman Empire’s disintegration. The empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers because the Young Turk leadership feared that neutrality would result in the empire being carved up by the victors. From the beginning of the campaigns the Ottoman authorities questioned the loyalty of the Armenian and other Christian communities. Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army were disarmed or put into labour battalions, followed by pogroms against Christian villages and piecemeal deportations of Armenians behind the front. When Armenians tried to join forces with the advancing Russian army, the Young Turk government decided to deport the Armenian population of Anatolia to Syria and northern Mesopotamia. Deportations had been a traditional Ottoman policy to create loyalty, but the scale and character of the deportations of 1915 were without precedent. Mass deportations and forced migrations during and after the war were based on mainly religious criteria with no references to linguistic or ethnic categories; religion had already become an ethnic marker in the previous decades. The Young Turkish elite failed to turn the army into a truly Ottoman nation in arms, yet through its war experience and its role in the ethnic cleansing of Anatolia the army did become the nucleus of the future Turkish nation-state.
The First World War put the different paths of mass loyalty and military efficiency to the test: although the Habsburg multi-ethnic conscript army did not disintegrate, both the Ottoman national army and the Russian army suffered serious defeats, and thus, contributed to a rapid crisis of imperial legitimacy. The British experienced what had already been anticipated by the crisis in the South African War: the reality of a global war in which Britain became increasingly dependent on the empire's war contributions. These results suggest that ethnicity was not, per se, a disintegrating factor in the everyday life of soldiers and on the home front, as the examples of the British Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy indicate. A dynamic and radicalized core nationalism such as was found in the Ottoman and Russian empires could have a strongly disintegrative effect when it was directed against groups at the peripheries. Yet much more important were the individual combinations of supply crises, general war-weariness, and the ethnicization of social and economic conflicts. This constellation proved to be the radical test of state efficiency in a totalized war.

4. General Observations and Hypotheses

The object of this volume is to analyse how empires dealt with the experience of multi-ethnicity in a period of rising nationalism and increased international competition. Case studies in different fields of imperial agency and experience contribute to a more systematic comparison between empires. The following hypotheses and observations resulting from the six research themes seem to be of thematic, conceptual, and methodological relevance.

First, there are good reasons to focus on the complex interaction between multi-ethnic empires and nation-states. On the one hand, this competitive constellation is not the result of historians' retrospective invention. Instead, it formed part of the immediate experience of contemporaries who focused on the apparent weaknesses of multi-ethnic empires and their clouded future, as shown by the many efficiency debates of the late nineteenth century, the increased mutual perception of strengths and weaknesses, and the obsession with progressive models. Focusing on this constellation, on the other hand, carries the danger of putting too much weight on the nation-state for modernizing, of idealizing the nation-state model of homogenization, and hence, overemphasizing the differences between empires and nation-states. In recent research these differences have been approached critically, for instance by a new interest in the limits of homogenization in nation-states; by a new focus on the 'imperial' character of nation-states such as Germany, France, or Britain; and by a fresh look at the reality of multi-ethnic societies.
Nonetheless, there remain good arguments for not completely removing the differences between multi-ethnic empires and nation-states. There is still a stark contrast between both in regard to the meaning of space and frontiers, contemporary concepts of citizenship, the nation in arms, schooling, and political representation. Against the background of this debate, it will be useful to differentiate more carefully between the reality of ‘imperializing’ nation-states and that of ‘nationalizing’ empires that came to incorporate particular features of the nation-state model.

Second, many contributions in this volume underline the importance of refining, redefining, and questioning the hitherto much addressed difference between ‘imperial’ and ‘colonial’, and therefore to overcome the classic dichotomy between ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’. In the context of the British Empire, Ireland was both ‘ imperial’ and ‘colonial’. The Irish performed imperial functions in the colonial military and administration, but at the same time they perceived of themselves as subject to imperial rule from London. Similar observations could be made about the Hungarian elites before and after 1867. Taking a stand against the Habsburg Monarchy, the Hungarian aristocracy often stressed their colonial status while at the same time applying imperial policies when dealing with the Slovak, German, and Rumanian groups in Hungary. The two perspectives did not exclude each other, contrary to what was suggested by the paradigm of orientalism with its clear antagonism between ‘imperial’ and ‘colonial’. Instead of these dichotomies we would underline an ever-changing spectrum of situational self-images. As a result, the analytical focus should be on the plurality and interaction of functions such as imperial and colonial, or agencies such as centre and periphery. It may be a peculiarity of multi-ethnic empires in contrast to nation-states that these relations were often more complex and led to a broader spectrum of contemporary responses.

Third, these observations and assumptions have methodological consequences. Approaching empires in a comparative manner, as this volume aims to do, strengthens our awareness of the differences and common features between them. Yet the contemporary perception of dynamic political, economic, and military competition increased the pressure on empires to compete with the nation-state and, thus, became a decisive factor of imperial policy. At the same time, a more intensified exchange between elites – at international conferences or on educational tours through European capitals – served as a precondition for discussing international models, for example with regard to statistics, military reforms, or infrastructure-related projects. The contemporary interest in exchange and entanglement, which these examples demonstrate, makes it necessary to go beyond a catalogue of structural, yet static, differences. It requires integrating transnational processes, that is to say the transfers of norms, phenomena, or agency, as a core aspect
in order to better understand European empires as part of Europe's entangled history in the long nineteenth century.

Fourth, many case studies of this volume that use the potential of transfer analysis underline a specific feature of empires in very different arenas of imperial agency. Strategies of imperial rule that were developed in the metropolises and were expected to help integrating and controlling the colonized subjects very often proved counter-productive and led to results that were the opposite of what had been originally intended or at least were highly ambivalent. The dimension of such conversions from imperial instruments into devices of the colonized seems of particular importance because it challenges long-held notions of a one-way relationship between centre and periphery and an apparently clear distinction between dependency and suppression. Thus, the examples illustrate the enormous flexibility of means and diversity of agencies and actions, which helps us to better identify and decipher the complexity of imperial rule as an expectation and as a concrete experience and practice.

Fifth, and finally, the comparative approach, with its focus on analyzing similarities and differences, questions the traditional division between Eastern and Western, continental and maritime empires, as dominating past and present historiography. The specific experiences that this volume illustrates, ranging from conversions of imperial means, a situational interplay between colonial and imperial agency, to the ambivalent consequences of importing the nation-state model by imperial elites, were — at different times and to varying degrees — constituent elements for all empires. We can, therefore, no longer perceive maritime or continental empires as isolated entities that stand for an allegedly 'Western' or 'Eastern European' experience. Instead, we have to understand and narrate their histories as different, yet entangled, pathways of a common European past.

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Exploring and Mobilizing –
The Challenge of Imperial Space