Marko Zajc

LATE HABSBURG MONARCHY AS A FRAMEWORK OF POLITICAL COEXISTENCE: THE SLOVENIAN CASE

Why research 20th century political and social coexistence in Slovenia? Because the concept helps us include an important dimension of social and political practices significant for the comprehension of various processes that could be overlooked by a general historiographical analysis of democratization, modernization, parliamentarism and political/ ideological struggles. What do we mean with the concept of coexistence? We are using the term as a conceptual tool for the analysis of the processes of (dis)regard and inclusion/exclusion practised by social and political groups. Let us define social groups in a broader sense: as communities of people who acknowledge the

existence of these communities and their affiliation with them. This definition does not imply anything about the homogeneity and margins of these groups.[1]

The fundamental questions of our research are: Does the group acknowledge other groups that it perceives as antagonistic or as competition as equal (at least in principle)? Does the group's value system allow for the existence of other such groups? Does the value system upheld by the other group acknowledge the right to existence of the first group or does it see it as a threat to its values? We are interested in coexistence at two levels: as a value and as a practice. The levels are not necessarily equal. Such coexistence also doesn't require groups to associate or try to reconcile their beliefs; they may exist in "parallel worlds" and "respectfully ignore" each other while still acknowledging the existence of the "other".

COEXISTENCE AND DEMOCRACY IN GENERAL

We are also using the concept of coexistence because it complements other concepts necessary to understand such processes, e.g. modernization, parliamentarism, pluralism, liberalism, representation and – of course – democracy. Of all the concepts listed, the latter is perhaps the most heterogeneous and yet crucial for the period following the revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries. We cannot delve into a detailed analysis of the concept of democracy in time and space at this time; if we want to understand the relationship between coexistence and democracy in early 20th century, however, it is necessary to know some of the fundamental shifts in the meaning of the concept. Before the revolutionary period, only theoretical treatises ever used the concept of democracy. The great majority of theoreticians stuck to Aristotle's logic, according to which democracy was unachievable in large countries and only possible in small political entities if certain conditions are met. Democracy was understood to only mean the direct (pure, absolute) democracy of the idealized Athenian type where everybody (the whole demos) decides upon everything.[2] The great political philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries who are generally regarded as the "fathers" of the modern conception of politics saw the biggest issue with democracy in the feuding of different "factions". Montesquieu was convinced that the republican rule may be either aristocratic or democratic. However, the main precondition for the existence of a republican government according to Montesquieu was "public virtue" – a desire for the common good – of the ruling people. If the virtue is practically absent in despotism and unnecessary in a monarchy, it is crucial

---

1   Richard Jenkins: *Social Identity*. Routledge, 2008, p. 9.
2   Hans Maier: Demokratie, III. Auflösung der Tradition in der frühen Neuzeit. In: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, Band 1*. Stuttgart, 1979, p. 839.

to the operation of a republic.[3] Without a clear awareness of striving for the common good, the republic would dissolve in the struggles of various factions. The destructiveness of factions was also stressed by David Hume who preferred the concept of the republic to that of democracy. Hume resolved the problem of feuding factions by advocating representation of people from larger political entities. In his opinion, representatives of the people from larger entities would have to consider a broader range of interests, reducing the possibility of feuding between factions. Rousseau was even more critical of democracy. In The Social Contract, Rousseau upheld the belief that democracy was incompatible with representative institutions. According to Rousseau, the sovereignty of the people may not be taken away or represented.[4] Of all these philosophers, John Locke had the most faith in representative democracy, supporting (albeit ambiguously) the idea of a representative democracy.[5] Democracy got a new dimension with the creation of the USA and with the French Revolution. The idea of representing the people allowed for the implementation of democracy in large countries. However, the idea of representatives being elected by the people was accompanied by two fundamental problems: the inevitability of parties (movements, factions) and the question of the electorate. Both are central to the issue of the coexistence of differences.

The fact that the term "democracy" had freed itself from the grasp of social theory and started a political life of its own is also of some significance. "Democracy" thus came to mean more than it used to in the constitutional/political sense. It became a self-descriptive word for many different political groups and a name for new constitutional institutions. Most of all though, the concept was expanded with general social and historical/philosophical content. This led to concepts such as social democracy, Christian democracy, etc. [6] In the 19th century, as the advent of the bourgeois society coincided with the idea of popular representation gradually but surely becoming dominant and realized within state institutions (parliament), "democracy" came to mean unmanageably many things. Different breeds of radicals of various national convictions in 1848, such as the emerging socialists and conservatives, understood it differently from each other. The term "democracy" had a special relationship with liberalism as a political movement and as an ideology of the bourgeoisie. The form of political organization typical of liberalism was the representative government based on an elected parliament that did not represent social interests or communities (as it was under the old regime)

---

3   Robert A. Dahl: Democracy. In: *Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. Encyclopaedia Britannica.* Chicago, 2010, p. 23.
4   Ibid., pp. 24–25.
5   Ibid., p. 21.
6   Maier, Demokratie, p. 848.

but rather groups of legally equal individuals.[7] Behind the principles of personal freedoms, the constitution, the rule of law and parliamentary representation espoused by liberal movements there was always the issue of the participation of the "masses" in political decision-making. However, the liberals at the "top" did not trust the "masses" to be capable of rational political decisions. What to do? Limit the right to vote and act as popular representatives, as those who know what is best for the people.[8] As pointed out by Pieter M. Judson, few European liberals were ready to extend suffrage to lower classes, both in the United Kingdom and in France, as well in German and Austrian areas.[9]

The theories of democracy that had developed in Western Europe and in the U.S. in the latter decades of the 20th century and that remain relevant even today do not pay much attention to the matter of coexistence. This is partly due to the fact that they deal with democracy as a political system and partly to the fact that the question of coexistence is supposedly embedded in the very system of democracy. Most of these definitions of democracy are multi-dimensional. E.g. Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan point out five aspects that should exist in consolidated democracies: a free civil society, an autonomous and valued political community, the rule of law, a comparatively efficient bureaucracy and an institutionalized political society.[10] A similarly multi-dimensional view of democracy is given by one of its foremost theorists Robert A. Dahl. At the very minimum, an ideal democracy should comprise: effective participation of the demos (members of the entity should be able to voice their political opinions), equality of elections, informed voters, a civil control over the functioning of the government (the demos decides what is important for the representatives' decision-making), involvement (everybody is free to participate) and fundamental rights.[11] Dahl's thesis that carries the most weight for our subject matter is that one element of a democracy cannot stand in for another. E.g.: a high level of political participation cannot compensate for unfree elections.[12] However, democracy is not just a political system, it is also a system of values. This aspect is particularly emphasized by American political/legal scholar Robert Post, who states that democracy should not immediately be equated with the sovereignty of the people, i.e. the situation where the people wield

---

7   Eric Hobsbawm: *The Age of Capital 1848–1875*. London, 2008 (1975), p. 123.

8   Alan S. Kahan: *Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe. The Political Culture of Limited Suffrage.* New York, 2003, p. 8.

9   Pieter M. Judson: *Exclusive Revolutionaries, Liberal politics, Social Experience and National Identity in the Austrian Empire 1848–1914*. Ann Arbor, 1999, p. 6.

10 Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, George W. Downs, Alastair Smith and Feryal Marie Cherif: Thinking inside the Box. A Closer Look at Democracy and Human Rights. *International Studies Quarterly*, 2005, No. 3, p. 441.

11 Dahl, Democracy, p. 23.

12 Bueno De Mesquita, Downs, Smith and Cherif, Thinking inside the Box, p. 442.

"ultimate control" over their government. Such control may instead go hand in hand with popular fascism in which the dictator enjoys the spontaneous support of the majority. Similarly, democracy does not equal majority rule, a system where the government is controlled by the majority. The majority of the electorate can force the adoption of undemocratic rules. Democracy is different from sovereignty of the people and majority rule because democracy is a normative idea associated with substantial political values, while "sovereignty of the people" and "majority rule" are descriptive terms that apply to individual decision-making processes.[13]

Two perspectives on democracy are particularly important for the history of our area and often ignored by authors from the West: the Marxist view and the Catholic view. However, the subject of relationships between democracy and Marxism and democracy and Catholicism is too complex for the scope of this article. The Catholic Church, as the most stable community conceived in pre-modern age, did not greet democracy with open arms. In continental Europe, parliamentary democracy was born out of revolution and secularization. The pluralism of political groups ran counter to the idea of a hierarchical, "harmonious" country.[14] However, ideologues of political Catholicism were quick to realize the signs of the times and were forced to accept the uncomfortable fact that it was necessary for them to enter the plural political sphere as well. Because Catholicism, which established itself as a bastion against godless modernization in the 19th century, used modern means to mobilize people, it had to modernize itself as well, at least to a certain degree. Democratic structures invaded Catholicism through societies and associations, through the press, through political parties, unions, Catholic manifestations, etc. Laymen started playing an increasingly significant role in the structure of the Church.[15] As clearly showed by Egon Pelikan, political Catholicism had an ambivalent attitude towards democracy, wavering between various shades of total rejection of constitutionality/parliamentarism and a deep confidence in the power of the people, between a pure monarchic principle and the glorification of universal suffrage. In general, however, Catholic theorists were using all available philosophical and sociological means to reconcile democracy with the Catholic model of an organic hierarchical community, usually according to the logic that democracy is acceptable only if it is true, i.e. "Catholic".[16] These

---

13 Robert Post: Democracy and Equality. In: *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 603: Law, Society and Democracy: Comparative Perspectives* (Jan. 2006), p. 25.

14 Egon Pelikan: *Akomodacija ideologije političnega katolicizma na Slovenskem* [Accommodation of the Political Catholicism Ideology in Slovenia]. Maribor, 1997, p. 40.

15 Ernst Hanisch: Der politische Katholizismus, Staat und Kirche in Österreich von 1919 bis zur Gegenwart. In: Oto Luthar and Jurij Perovšek (eds.), *Zbornik Janka Pleterskega* [A Collection of Texts by Janko Pleterski]. Ljubljana, 2003, p. 528.

16 See also: Pelikan, *Akomodacija ideologije političnega katolicizma*, pp. 40–95. Cf. Zvonko Bergant: *Kranjska med dvema Ivanoma. Idejno-politično soočenje slovenskega političnega katolicizma in*

visions of the society left very little space for the coexistence of significantly different social groups and beliefs.

If the static nature of the Catholic view of society precluded coexistence with groups with significantly different world views, the dialectic nature of Marxist thought led to coexistence taking a back seat to class struggle. Marx and Engels (in their mature phase) considered the system of liberal democracy to be a tool of the bourgeoisie masquerading as representative of the whole society but in truth using democracy to protect capitalist exploitation. "The bourgeois equality (elimination of class privileges) is very different from the proletarian equality (elimination of classes themselves)."[17] Marx and Engels see liberal democracy through the glasses of teleology and dialectics: as a process leading from democracy to "social democracy" and then the "revolutionary leap", which finally opens the door to the "true" democracy of communism.[18] Unlike Leninism, Austromarxism was not opposed to parliamentary struggle. "The working class not only has no reason to abandon parliamentarism," thus believed Karl Kautsky, "it has unquestionable reason to resolutely do everything in its power to strengthen the parliament against the state administration and to strengthen its representation in the parliament."[19] The focus is not on the principle of coexistence but rather on the struggle for the inevitable victory of the proletariat followed by the elimination of capitalist relations and private property. In light of Slovenian history, we must mention Kardelj's conception of democracy and pluralism. Following Marx, Kardelj treats bourgeois parliamentarism as a tool of the bourgeoisie that muddles the true classist essence of the system of capitalism.[20] According to Kardelj, true democracy is not a list of formal rights but is rather rooted in appropriate socio-economic relations. In the context of the system of self-governing democracy, pluralism is not realized as a monopoly of political parties but rather as a "pluralism of self-governing interests" through various socio-political and other organizations. As "most social interests are not politicized" in the relations of socialist self-government, there is also no need for political parties.[21] In principle, Kardelj is not opposed to the coexistence of different social interests, but only as long as they fit his system. According to

liberalizma na prehodu iz 19. v 20. stoletje [Carniola between Two Ivans. Ideological-Political Clash Between the Slovenian Political Catholicism and Liberalism at the Turn of the 19th Century]. Ljubljana, 2004, pp. 335–395.

17 Friedrich Engels: *Gospoda Evgena Dühringa prevrat v znanosti* ("*Anti-Dühring*"). Ljubljana, 1948, p. 399.

18 Werner Conze: Demokratie in der Modernen Bewegung. In: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, *Band 1*. Stuttgart, 1979, p. 891.

19 Karl Kautsky: *Temeljna načela socialne demokracije*. Ljubljana, 1912, p. 57.

20 Edvard Kardelj: *Smeri razvoja političnega sistema socialističnega samoupravljanja* [Development Orientations of the Socialist Self-Management Political System]. Ljubljana, 1977, p. 41.

21 Ibid., pp. 96–97.

Kardelj, in order to preserve the freedom and democratic rights of the great majority of people working in the system of self-government and directing the society (through delegates), "freedom and activity must be limited for those social forces that wish to abolish our freedom".[22]

COEXISTENCE AND THE CONTEMPORARY SLOVENIAN PRESS

The aim of this article is simple: to contextualize the matter of political coexistence in early 20th century Slovenia. Why is this important? Slovenian press (and to a lesser degree historiography) is extremely partial to the idea of Slovenian divisiveness. Authors of various convictions and leanings see divisiveness as something a priori Slovenian, as a typical Slovenian trait. Let us look at a couple of examples. For instance, in his interpretation of Slovenian history, France Bučar posited that discrimination according to ideology was "characteristic of the whole duration of our national consciousness". Supposedly, a distinctive feature of Slovenian society at the beginning of the 21st century are the divisions "that had been created in the past". Bučar identifies the "fact" that Slovenian national consciousness developed through proclamations of Catholicism as an element of the national essence as the central problem in this regard. According to Bučar, any association with tendencies not originating in Catholicism (e.g. liberalism, socialism) was seen as disloyalty to the nation. This intolerance to anything even slightly different was supposedly exploited by communism that abused the emancipatory pattern of the Liberation Front to achieve domination and restore the old principle of division.[23] "Fighting" between liberals and clericals was also the subject of Marcel Štefančič Jr., a journalist for Mladina, who stated that the Slovenian situation in late 19th century amounted to "civil war". At the time, Slovenia was supposedly "acutely, intensely, brutally polarized. /…/ Although blood was not flowing, ink certainly was." Štefančič sees liberal anti-Catholic propaganda as a reaction to the intolerance of the Catholic faction.[24] Theologian and philosopher Janez Juhant has a completely different idea of the Slovenian divisiveness in this period. Due to their entanglement in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Slovenes supposedly found a "safe haven" in the Church. The Church became a "mother of the nation" and came to define the nation's existence. The development of democracy in the context of modernity was thus supposedly frustrated by

---

22 Ibid., p. 131.
23 France Bučar: *Slovenci in prihodnost. Slovenski narod po rojstvu države* [Slovenians and the Future. Slovenian Nation after the Birth of the State]. Ljubljana, 2009, pp. 101–103.
24 Marcel Štefančič: *Slovenci* [Slovenians]. Ljubljana, 2010, p. 32.

"liberalism and communism by limiting themselves to the culture war".[25] In his historiographical-philosophical monograph, Janez Markeš (a theologian as well) presented a critical, albeit somewhat historically liberal treatment of branching of philosophical and political ideas in Slovenia (liberalism, Catholicism, democracy, sovereignty of the people, Slavism, Yugoslavism). Markeš takes the ideological and political differences and connects them in an original manner (if somewhat too lucid for historiography) into various combinations.[26]

What is the common denominator of all these extremely different views of the "Slovenian schism"? It is primarily their unhistorical perspective, i.e. the assessment of historical development from today's perspective, from the viewpoint of the observer who is familiar with the future stages of development. However, such a viewpoint is only seemingly broad. In truth, it obscures important issues that are essential to the historiographical interpretation and can only be caught if we are very familiar with the characteristics of the space and time under investigation. The people who lived "then" did not know what we know "now". Another characteristic common to all the above views is the near (or complete) absence of the national and social contexts. The Habsburg Monarchy is presented as a kind of stage on which the history of Slovenian disputes is unfolding, not as an important factor whose mere structure of government determined various parameters of development (cultural, political, economic). A perennialist idea of the nation is also frequently typical: that nations supposedly existed in all historical period even though nationalist ideology is of a much later date.[27] Such analyses often hide a very contemporary "secret message" between the lines (e.g. clericals/liberals were evil/good in the past, so they are still evil/good). Another typical feature of these authors is their investigation of who was more responsible for the "culture war" and whose contributions to Slovenian history were positive/ negative. History is life's teacher, after all. Regardless of the potentially opposite intentions of their authors, such interpretations reproduce the myth of Slovenian divisiveness by newly constructing it through criticism. The author of this article does not wish to insinuate that the journalist viewpoint or the viewpoints of other humanities are wrong. Journalism (or political, philosophical, theological, literary analysis) can uncover many things that the historian would overlook.

---

25   Janez Juhant: Ali je mogoče s totalitarizmom presojati demokracijo? [Is It Possible to Judge Democracy With Totalitarianism?]. In: *Problemi demokracije na Slovenskem v letih 1918–1941* [Problems of Democracy in Slovenia between 1918 and 1941]. Ljubljana, 2007, pp. 43–45.

26   Cf. Janez Markeš: *Točka nacionalnega nesporazuma* [The Point of the National Misunderstanding]. Ljubljana, 2001.

27   Although the author treats nationalism as a modern phenomenon, he is also well aware of the importance of the ethnosymbolic perspective ("prehistory" of the nation). A brief overview of theories of nationalism. In: Christian Jansen and Henning Borggräfe: *Nation, Nationalität, Nationalismus*. Frankfurt, New York, 2007.

However, this is not a historical analysis but rather something else. In parallel with the journalist, i.e. non-historical conceptualization of political divisions in early 20th century, there exists a developing discipline of academic historiography that deals with the issues of political coexistence in broad temporal and spatial contexts. In the next section, we will refer to this tradition and complement it with a list of comparative historiography monographs dealing with the Habsburg Monarchy.

POLITICAL CULTURE

In spite of the irreconcilable differences in the definitions of democracy, the period from 1848 to 1918 can be seen as the time of democratization of the sphere of politics. On the eve of the March Revolution, the "Austrian Empire" was an absolutist country that embodied Metternich's conviction that the monarchic principle is the only true principle of government. On the other hand, the Monarchy entered World War I as a democratic parliamentary state (at least in principle and in part).

Political coexistence in the Slovenian area in the early 20th century cannot be understood without the knowledge of social conditions in the Habsburg Monarchy. The complexity of the government system as well as general social circumstances in the country commonly called the "old Austria" places heavy obstacles before the historian. There are many reasons for this: the Habsburg context is not singular – rather, there are multiple contexts to the development of the Slovenian political and general social spheres. There is also the question of whether the historian of today is even able to understand the institutions of that time, e.g. the unclear relationship between provincial and state jurisdiction,[28] the even more unclear nature of the dualist system, etc.[29] Research of different aspects of life leads to different impressions of the nature of the Habsburg Monarchy. The economic interactions within the area say one thing, while intense national-political battles say something completely different.[30] It is not unusual that the most prominent historians of the period encompassing the final decades of the Habsburg Monarchy take recourse in theoretical conceptions that could help us understand the society of that time. In the past two decades, two such concept are especially prominent in historiography: political culture and civil society.

---

28   Cf. Sergij Vilfan: *Pravna zgodovina Slovencev* [The Legal History of Slovenians]. Ljubljana, 1996, p. 446.
29   Cf. Éva Somogyi: *Vom Zentralismus zum Dualismus. Der Weg der deutschösterreichischen Liberalen zum Ausgleich von 1867*. Wiesbaden, 1983.
30   Cf. section Macht über Räume in Andrea Komlosy: *Grenze und ungleiche regionale Entwicklung, Binnenmarkt und Migration in der Habsburgermonarchie*. Vienna, 2004, pp. 40–115.

The concept of political culture in the context of Central European history was defined in a book by Austrian historian Ernst Hanisch, and in the context of Slovenian historiography it is used convincingly by Peter Vodopivec. According to Hanisch, political culture is an "amalgam of tendencies, attitudes and relations towards political processes and structures". One part of political culture are the "behavioural patterns" that are transmitted through symbols and traditions. Political culture is the "politically relevant idea of the world held by populations, major social groups and functional elites".[31] Hanisch's basic idea is evident from the very title of his book on 20th century Austrian history (The Long Shadow of the State). According to Hanisch's interpretation, a strong tradition of state bureaucracy had developed in Austria. Modernization was usually handled from top to bottom and the civil society never completely shook off the influence of the state. On the other hand, the traditions of state bureaucracy was supposedly precisely the element that allowed for a relatively early development of the social state.[32] According to Hanisch, political culture of the Monarchy was at odds with the civil and representation-oriented Anglo-Saxon political culture of the time.[33] It was impossible to "truly" develop political individualism. This was partly also due to Austrian popular culture that was shot through with Catholicism. In late 19th century, the latter reformed into a defensive ideology that stood against modernization. The ideology's proclaimed main adversaries were liberals, social democrats and Jews. Catholicism's closed value system referred to the eternal order of Heaven, nature and society, which of course presupposes respect for tradition and authority.[34] In Hanisch's opinion, the roots of Austrian political culture were formed even before the 19th century, during the time of Baroque and Josephinism. The Baroque period supposedly left its mark on the Austrian sphere by encouraging the development of a rigid social hierarchy, ceremonies and theatrics and a roundabout way of speaking, as well as increasing the importance of personal connections to one's career.[35] The other, more reasonable part of political culture was the result of Josephinism, however, the aim of the enlightened-absolutist reforms of Joseph II was not to form a community of "free citizens" but rather a "unified association of subjects". Top-to-bottom modernization created

---

31 Peter Vodopivec: Politične in zgodovinske tradicije v srednji Evropi in na Balkanu (v luči izkušnje prve Jugoslavije) [Political and Historical Traditions in the Central Europe and the Balkans (in View of the Experience from the First Yugoslavia)]. *Zgodovinski časopis*, 2005, No. 3-4, pp. 461–462.

32 Ernst Hanisch: *Der lange Schatten des Staates. Österreichische Gesellschaftgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert. Österreichische Geschichte 1890–1990*. Vienna, 1994, p. 15.

33 Peter Vodopivec: O slovenskih političnih tradicijah v času nastanka Kraljevine SHS leta 1918 [On the Slovenian Political Traditions during the Establishment of the Kingdom of SHS in 1918]. In: *Problemi demokracije na Slovenskem*, p. 2.

34 Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates*, p. 30. Vodopivec, Politične in zgodovinske tradicije, p. 465.

35 Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates*, p. 27.

a powerful bureaucracy that had no qualms about interfering with the personal lives of the subjects.[36]

In historiography, the matter of political culture in the Habsburg Monarchy is connected to the great debate on Germany's special path, the "Sonderweg", that, in the late 20th century, raged throughout the German historiography of the 19th and 20th centuries. The proponents of the special path hypothesis explained the rise of National Socialism with the special, conservative modernization of Germany, in which the successful socio-economic modernization was not followed by an effective political modernization that would lead towards modern democracy. The rule of old, traditional elites supposedly blocked the parliamentarization of the system. The "Sonderwegdebatte" had various twists and turns, however, we cannot simply divide its participants into proponents and opponents of the special path hypothesis. That is, various proponents of the "Sonderweg" had very different interpretations of it. According to American historian James Shedel, the heart of the special path hypothesis is the conviction that France, Great Britain and the U.S. represent the "normative development models", meaning that the progressiveness of other countries should be measured by their success at "implementing" the fundamental characteristics of these models.[37] The Austrian version of the "Sonderweg" of course has its own characteristics. However, there is the background question that historians have been asking since 1918: Was the Habsburg Monarchy destined to fall? And of course: Why?[38] As shown by Shedel, many historians, those writing before (Josef Redlich) as well as those writing after World War II (Hugo Hantch, Erich Zöllner, Robert A. Kann), rationalized the problems of the Habsburg Monarchy by the failure of "true" constitutionality in 1848/89, which caused the Monarchy to miss the opportunity to transform into a healthy federal state based on liberal principles, and by the country's unsuccessful resolution of national disputes. The most famous proponent of the Austrian special path, cultural historian Carl Schorske, believed that "Austria" as a society plunged into a crisis in the late 19th century because of the decline of liberalism and the rise of Christian socialists, social democrats, anti-Semites and nationalists. These supposedly prevented the rational culture of the law espoused

---

36 Vodopivec, Politične in zgodovinske tradicije, p. 462.

37 James Shedel: Fin de siècle or Jahrhundertwende. The Question of an Austrian Sonderweg. In: *Rethinking Vienna 1900*. New York, Oxford, 2001, p. 84. Critics of the German special path question the relationship between the German and Western-European development: the "normal" path of social and political transformation does not exist, and although the German middle class wielded relatively little influence at the level of state politics, it was dominant in the social, economic and cultural spheres. Cf. the introduction to Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn: *The Peculiarities of German History, Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. Oxford, 1984, pp. 1–39.

38 For a brief overview of historians' opinions on the "inevitability" of the Monarchy's downfall, see Janez Cvirn: Zwittrov pogled na habsburško monarhijo [Zwitter's Outlook on the Habsburg Monarchy]. In: *Zwittrov zbornik* [Collection of Texts on Zwitter]. Ljubljana, 2008, pp. 35–46.

by the haute bourgeoisie from flourishing. According to Schorske, this had a good side as well: disappointed by politics, the children of liberal parents discovered intellectual inspiration. And thus developed the cultural phenomenon known as the Fin-de-siècle Vienna.[39]

In his book, Hanisch asks whether the special path model could also be used for Austrian history. Although he does not give a clear answer to this question, it is evident that he is, in his careful way, quite partial to the concept of an Austrian "Sonderweg". It is also obvious that the political culture of Western Europe serves as his comparative reference point. He often mentions "delayed" development of various nationalisms and democracy: "The political religion of various nationalisms functioned according to the politics of emotion and replaced the cool rationality of liberalism. Their remorseless populist demagogy rendered the new democratic political elites incapable of compromise."[40]

The distinctive features of the Austrian path are being researched by historians who are openly critical of the "Sonderweg" as well. Shedel concedes that the historical development of the Monarchy was distinctive – not abnormal but simply different from the development of Western Europe.[41] Shedel stresses the significance of legal order and the idea of a state of law (Rechtsstaat), the heritage of Josephinism that had formed the basis of the political culture. The rationalist and legalist spirit of the Enlightenment was an important source of lawfulness for the dynasty as well as an indispensable tool for the management of the Monarchy.[42] If the state support for modernization stalled in the post-Josephine period, the revolution of 1848 sent the dynasty back to the top-to-bottom implementation of various processes of modernization (economy, education). Due to military defeats, financial troubles and opposition of the bourgeoisie, the Monarchy was even forced into making constitutional concessions.[43] The constitution of December 1867 can thus be seen as a compromise (far-reaching authority of the ruler). According to Rumpler, the December Constitution strengthened the legal foundation of the Monarchy, however, it did not establish a constitutional state (in the Western sense) but rather bolstered the "Rechtsstaat", i.e. the legally regulated execution of state powers.[44] This allowed the society to function normally in the periods of the "hung parliament" after 1897. As stressed by

---

39 Shedel, The Question of an Austrian Sonderweg, pp. 86–88. Cf. Carl E. Schorske: *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: politics and culture*. New York, 1981, p. 117.
40 Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates*, p. 210.
41 Robin Okey has a similar view of the processes of modernization within the Monarchy: *Habsburg Monarchy from Enlightenment to Eclipse*. New York, 2000, p. 400.
42 Shedel, The Question of an Austrian Sonderweg, p. 94.
43 Vodopivec, Politične in zgodovinske tradicije, p. 463.
44 Helmut Rumpler: *Österreichische Geschichte 1804–1914. Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa, Bürgerliche Emazipation und Staatsverfall in der Habsburgermonarchie*. Vienna, 1997, p. 417.

Hanisch, the mutual blockade of political powers did not threaten the privileges of the Crown or the domination of state bureaucracy. According to Shedel, the parties of the parliament often supported the rule of bureaucracy according to Article 14 during the periods of parliamentary impotence – meaning that they respected the traditional functioning of the "Rechtsstaat" as a "legitimate, useful and powerful force even in the constitutional period".[45]

CIVIL SOCIETY

In addition to the concept of political culture, the concept of civil society is another recent addition to historiography. This concept is championed by American historian Gary B. Cohen who notes that nationalist historiographies traditionally tended to present the national political movements within the Monarchy as independent of or counter to the state. However, the Habsburg Monarchy actually enabled the creation of political and institutional spaces necessary for the development of the modern civil society – along with nationalist politics. Cohen understands the concept of civil society in a broader, though not teleological sense: as a sphere of individual and collective discourses and actions, formally independent of the state that deals with public matters, politics and government. In the context of the 19th century, civil society includes public associations, magazines and newspapers, voluntary societies, civil activities, political movements and, last but not least, political parties.[46] It is the belief of this article's author that the concepts of political culture and civil society are not opposites, as are not the general concepts of culture and society. Cohen's conception of the civil society as a methodological aid for dealing with the history of the Habsburg Monarchy generally points towards the study of relationships between individuals, social groups and state institutions, while the concept of political culture is focused on long-term "cultural patterns" that are transmitted from generation to generation. In other words: The concept of political culture is closer to philosophy, while the concept of civil society is closer to sociology.

In late 1980s, John W. Boyer noted that, compared to the historiography of Germany, the historiography of the Habsburg Monarchy paid little attention to the relationship between the state administration and the civil society.[47] Already in Metternich's time, various societies and associations began appearing as a

---

45 Shedel, The Question of an Austrian Sonderweg, p. 97.

46 Gary B. Cohen: Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society in the Habsburg Monarchy. *Central Europan History*, 2007, No. 2, p. 245.

47 John W. Boyer: Some Reflections on the Problem of Austria, Germany and Mitteleuropa. *Central Europan History*, 1989, pp. 11–12.

characteristic of the bourgeois way of life, and the number of newspapers likewise increased. The revolution of 1848 naturally resulted in an explosion of daily newspapers and the beginning of the formation of political parties. Although the state greatly limited the freedom of the press during the period of neo-absolutism, it also tried to use it to manipulate public opinion. The liberal acts on societies and the press from 1859/61 and 1867 respectively treated the right of association as one of the fundamental freedoms.[48] As for the political sphere, the 1860s saw the development of political parties of patricians who staffed parliamentary bodies based on limited suffrage. Regardless, notes Cohen, the civil society by and large extended beyond the fences of limited suffrage. The development of industry, "capitalist" agriculture, urbanization and an increase in the level of education led to increased participation of the petty bourgeoisie and the working class in the affairs of civil society.[49] Following the European standards of the time, the Austrian half of the Monarchy provided its citizens with far-reaching freedoms of speech, press and association after 1867. Additionally, citizens were guaranteed impartial treatment by the courts. Various mass movements were thus able to openly develop oppositional policies and lay foundations for their activities in the period when the electoral system became more democratic.[50] According to John W. Boyer, the German liberal reformers of the 1860s played a larger part in the liberalization of state structures in the Austrian part of the Monarchy than acknowledged by past historians.[51]

After 1890, the relationship between civil society and the state became increasingly dynamic. All levels of administration became the subject of complex political negotiations between local political organizations and interest groups, elected political representatives and various governmental institutions.[52] In many areas of internal affairs, state administration faced "bottom-up" pressure from the civil society, while senior officials struggled to retain the tradition of state administration "from the top down". While these tendencies were definitely democratic in nature, the democratization stopped halfway through.[53] Rather than of democratization, Cohen thus proposes to speak of the penetration of public interest into some of the areas of state administration. In particular, he

---

48 Helmut Rumpler: Von der *"Bürgerlichen öffentlichkeit"* zur Massendemokratie. Zivilgesellschaft und politische partizipation im Vielvölkerstaat der Habsburgermonarchie. In: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918, Band VIII, 1. Teilband*. Vienna, 2006, p. 9.
49 Cohen, Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society, p. 249.
50 Ibid., p. 252.
51 Ibid., p. 254.
52 Ibid., p. 256. See Chapter 1 on the consolidation of power by the Christian Socialists in Vienna: John W. Boyer: *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna, Christian Socialism in Power 1897–1918*. Chicago, London, 1995, pp. 1–60.
53 Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates*, p. 210.

focuses on the cohabitation (Cohen's term) of the public interest of these groups and political parties with state bureaucracy.[54]

RADICALIZATION

In Slovenian history, the early 20th century is justifiably regarded as a time of political divisions. However, it was also a time of (incomplete) democratization and mass politics (or politics of the masses).[55] Hobsbawm points out that after 1870, the European ruling elites recognized that democratization was inevitable. The electorate started to expand. Universal and equal suffrage for men was spreading through Europe, with the matter of women's suffrage gaining increasing traction as well. This naturally resulted in the political mobilization of the masses and in the creation of parties of the masses. However, these parties of the masses did not replace patrician politics – patricians merely had to adapt to the new circumstances. Well-organized mass political movements were not "republics of equals". The combination of hierarchical organization and mass popular support provided these parties with great potential: such parties became potential states. Democratization, occurring in the time of great social transformations and crises, brought about new problems. The unity (and even the existence) of various countries came to be questioned due to ineffectual parliaments, demagogy and insurmountable disputes between parties. "Men of independent wealth" were being pushed out of politics by men who had founded their careers and wealth on success in the new political environment.[56] Parliamentary crises became part of everyday politics. From 1875 to 1914, France had as many as 52 governments, only 11 of which lasted more than a year.[57] However, parliamentary disputes were not limited to countries with governments that depended upon them. In 1870s, Germany, where the government was appointed by the Kaiser and the parliament was elected on the basis of universal men's suffrage, was being undermined by the dispute between Bismarck's government and the Catholic Church. The culture war unified Catholic voters and helped create the first German "people's party" with strong backing among all classes – the Catholic "Zentrum".[58] Social democratic parties were on the warpath, agitating during this time for universal and equal suffrage (including women) and simultaneously establishing mechanisms for permanent political campaign and a closed subculture (constant presence in the lives of supporters). A similar path

---

54   Cohen, Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society, p. 260.
55   Cf. Vodopivec, O slovenskih političnih tradicijah, p. 30.
56   Eric Hobsbawm: *The Age of Empire 1875–1914*. London, 2008, p. 96.
57   Cf. Robert Gildea: *Children of the Revolution. The French 1799–1914*. London, 2008, pp. 247–288.
58   Jost Dülfer: Deutschland als Kaiserreich (1871–1918). In: *Deutsche Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Frankfurt am Main, 2006, p. 557.

– though from an ideologically opposite starting point – was taken by Christian socialist parties in Catholic countries.[59] In 1870s, domination of classical liberal parties at the European level was slowly coming to an end, which was also the result of the "great depression" and the related social issues (that had been pressing even before the crisis).[60] In some countries, social liberals campaigning for a reformist correction of capitalism eventually gained power (Great Britain, Italy), while in others (e.g. in the German Empire) they failed to gain a relevant level of influence despite successes in non-governmental areas (creation of co-operatives).[61]

It therefore seems that radicalization of politics within the parliamentary system was generally characteristic of the whole of Europe. However, the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy was, in addition to ideological and social divisions, also plagued by national ones. Exacerbated conflicts and political instability were not only the result of nationalist sentiments as an independent factor, but rather of a transformation of civil society and the sphere of politics. The radicalization of nationalist politics was just one consequence of these transformations.[62] National disputes in Austria were not merely processes of destruction and divergence, they were also emancipatory and integrative, and after 1867, they changed the state in such a way that the "bourgeoisies" of all nations became masters of their own political destiny.[63] After 1890, mass political movements within the Monarchy threatened the positions of established parties of wealthy landowners, the conservative clergy and the moneyed and educated bourgeoisie. These new movements challenged the notions of the community espoused by the "old" conservatives and liberals, replacing them with their own populist conception of society/community, regardless of whether they were the proponents of radical nationalism and anti-Semitism, Catholic or secular agrarianism, urban social Catholicism or social democracy.[64] Particularly hard-hit were the German liberals, who dominated the Austrian part of the Monarchy as the ruling formation until 1879. The German liberals espoused a pluralist vision, according to which individuals must be free to develop their own potentials. However, as noted by Judson, the individual's choice was limited to the possibilities available within the context of the German bourgeoisie. The liberals' problem was not that they did not (in a certain sense) expand the rights to new groups of people, but rather that they made these rights too conditional: "Have these rights, but be like us." Other groups preferred to fight for their rights on their own terms, for which

---

59   Geoff Eley: *Forging Democracy*. Oxford, 2002, p. 113.
60   Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p. 98.
61   Jurij Perovšek: *Na poti v moderno* [On the Way to Modernity]. Ljubljana, 2005, pp. 43–48.
62   Cohen, Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society, p. 266.
63   Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna*, p. Xii.
64   Cohen, Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society, p. 267.

they used the basic political structures left behind by the German liberals.[65] The fall of liberalism was not sudden. After (different) Central European liberals claimed for decades that they represent the common interest, it became increasingly clear after 1880 that they in truth represent nobody but themselves. The German liberals jumped on the wagon that they had been following for decades: integral German nationalism. They were thus able to preserve the role of their parties deep within the period of mass politics, especially in nationally mixed areas.[66] The Young Czechs movement developed in much the same way.[67]

The radicalization of politics took place in numerous parts of the Austrian political space. The expansion of voting rights for parliamentary election in 1882, when the tax census was decreased from 10 to 5 Gulden, opened the door to real mass politics. And after the parliamentary reform of 1896, when the fifth curia that was to be elected based on universal men's suffrage was established,[68] mass movements started dominating the political sphere. A point of interest in the Austrian case, according to John W. Boyer, is the fact that the crisis of political liberalism was the result of the invasion of civil movements that represented the "middle" of the bourgeoisie.[69] In Vienna, "middle class" politics was (along with anti-Semitism) one of the common points of Lueger's Christian Socialists and Schönerer's anti-Catholic pan-German movement. Movements that would supposedly protect the middle class were against both "socialism" and "capitalism". Although middle class proved hard to define (it seemed to include both the mill owner and the junior clerk, but not the manual worker or the rich capitalist), the middle class ideology created a strong sense of belonging in the middle.[70] However, a separate sense of belonging was also cultivated by the Social Democrats who were becoming the foremost proponents of anti-Clericalism in the capital. The rise of the Social Democrats in Vienna showed that the political and ethical power of the working class had turned against the interests of other bourgeois classes, even the middle ones. "Red" workers' organizations opposed the Viennese bourgeoisie in the cultural sense as well – they espoused cultural egalitarianism that the middle classes did not agree with.[71]

65 Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*, pp. 268, 269.
66 Ibid., pp. 193, 194.
67 Catherine Albreht: The Bohemian Question. In: Mark Cornwall (ed.), *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary. A Multi-National Experiment in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*. Exeter, 2002, p. 79.
68 Vasilij Melik: *Volitve na Slovenskem 1861–1918* [Elections in Slovenia, 1861–1918]. Ljubljana, 1961, p. 8. Janez Cvirn: *Razvoj ustavnosti in parlamentarizma v habsburški monarhiji, dunajski državni zbor in Slovenci 1848–1918* [Development of Constitutionality and Parliamentarism in the Habsburg Monarchy, Vienna National Assembly and Slovenians 1848–1918]. Ljubljana, 2006, p. 144.
69 Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna*, p. X.
70 Lothar Höbelt: Well-tempered Discontent: Austrian Domestic Politics. In: Cornwall (ed.), *The last Years of Austria-Hungary*, p. 54.
71 John W. Boyer: *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna. Origins of the Christian-Social Movement 1848–1897*. Chicago, 1981, p. 412.

Regardless of the situation in Vienna, the main element of political instability in the country was the growing nationalism of political groups. Among other things, the rise of nationalist parties (e.g. Schönerer's pan-Germans, the Czech national socialists, the Polish national democrats) also represented a populist revolt against the elitism of old conservative or liberal nationalists. The new national parties focused less on the fight against national enemies and more on the battle with established parties within national camps.[72] This is also the context of the Slovenian Catholic-liberal dispute in Carniola (the liberals' 1896 coalition with the Germans, obstruction tactics by the Catholic side).[73] The political discourse of various party demands became radicalized in all directions. New, mass parties offered competing ideas of community, civil identity and loyalty. As the relationships between the old parties and the state bureaucracy had broken down, the Austrian provinces saw invigorated political battles over every clerical position, every school board, every city assembly, etc.[74]

Unfortunately for Austrian parliamentarism, however, the quarrelling parties within national camps were able to stand united in the National Assembly. The parliamentary crisis due to Badeni's language ordinances for Bohemia and Moravia in 1897 and the brutality of parliamentary obstruction as well as riots within and outside the parliament became a symbol of the impotency of the parties and the political system.[75] The crisis also brought the "art" of parliamentary obstruction to a higher level: obstruction became an everyday means used in order to achieve concrete political goals. Various parties obstructed the functioning of the parliament in order to obtain certain concessions, returning to normal political practice only when they got what they wanted. The other face of the Cisleithanian political system in the final decades of the Monarchy was represented by the complex mechanisms of political negotiation between the parties and state administration that allowed the latter to function. Among the more successful ones was the Moravian Compromise of 1905.[76] The notorious Article 14, which allowed the adoption of legislation without the parliament, played a part in the negotiations as well. Article 14 could only be used when the parliament was not in session. Once the parliament reconvened, the government

---

72 Cohen, Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society, p. 267.
73 Andrej Rahten: Der Krainer Landtag. In: *Die Habsburgermonarchie, Band VII: Verfasung und Parlamentarismus, 1. Teilband*. Vienna, 2000, pp. 1739–1768. Dragan Matić: *Nemci v Ljubljani 1861–1918* [Germans in Ljubljana 1861–1918]. Ljubljana, 2002, pp. 299–401.
74 Cohen, Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society, p. 268.
75 Cvirn, *Razvoj ustavnosti in parlamentarizma*, p. 187. Rumpler, *Eine Chance*, p. 513. Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates*, p. 230. For more details on the Badeni Crisis, see Berthold Sutter: *Die Badenische Sprachenverordnungen von 1897. Ihre Genesis und ihre Auswirkungen vornehmlich auf die innerösterreichischen Alpenländer*, *I* and *II*. Graz, Cologne, 1960–65.
76 Cvirn, *Razvoj ustavnosti in parlamentarizma*, p. 196.

had to present it with all the acts it had adopted in accordance with Article 14. These acts were often passed by the parliament as well. According to Lothar Höbelt, extraordinary acts passed by the government often broke the stalemate in the parliament and opened doors to negotiations and productive legislative work.[77] Although the implementation of universal suffrage for men effected by the reform of 1906 changed the balance of power (increasing the number of workers' and peasants' representatives), it did not wholly eliminate the unequal representation of provinces. Also, in spite of a lively suffragette movement, women remained disenfranchised.[78] But most of all, the reform did not vindicate the hopes held by the government and the Crown that it would provide the basis for a functional national assembly that would relegate national disputes to the back burner. The situation was still dominated by individual interests "that were unable to reach further than the interests of their nation, province or party".[79]

A tongue-in-cheek view of the political culture of quarrelling parties before World War I was offered in 1911 by Jaroslav Hašek who, together with his bohemian companions in Prague, "established" the Party of Moderate Progress within the Bounds of the Law. His speech on the opposing candidates is particularly illuminating: "Dear voters! I cannot say anything nice about the opposing candidates. This is very unpleasant for me, even more so, as I would very much like to say all the best in order to prove that the sweetest revenge could be /.../ using this fact to avail them of the arms they plan to use against me."[80]

---

77 Cohen, Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society, p. 270.

78 Cf. Brigitta Bader-Zaar: Frauenbewegungen und Frauenrecht. In: *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918, Band VIII, 2. Teilband.* Vienna, 2006, pp. 1005–1027.

79 Cvirn, *Razvoj ustavnosti in parlamentarizma*, p. 214.

80 Jaroslav Hašek: *Politična in socialna zgodovina Stranke zmernega napredka v mejah zakona.* Maribor, 1987, p. 248.